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Liebestod, Eros and Thanatos

in the Cretan Renaissance: Women's social role as depicted
by Georgios Chortatsis in the Tragedy *Erophile*

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Master's Thesis, 30 hp

Modern Greek Language and Linguistics

June, 2013

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Acknowledgements

I would like to express my deepest appreciation and deeply felt gratitude to all those who provided me with the possibility to complete this thesis. Sincere thanks to my supervisor Dr Vassilios Sabatakakis whose guidance and support has been vital to my work.

I am also grateful to Professor Stathis Gauntlett for his invaluable proof-reading of my Master`s thesis. Any mistakes or inadequacies that may remain in this work are entirely my own.

Furthermore I am indebted to Dr Rosemary Bancroft-Marcus for her generous and kind support offering me material for this thesis.

I would also like to thank Dr Marianna Smaragdi, for her kind willingness to support me throughout the development of my work.

Last but not least I would like to deeply thank my friends and, especially, my family for their moral support in helping me to accomplish this thesis.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Aims

This thesis will primarily investigate how the social role of women is delineated in the tragedy *Erophile*, written by Georgios Chortatsis around 1595,¹ during the period of the late Renaissance in Crete. Through the examination of the close and powerful relationship between *Eros* and *Thanatos* in the tragedy *Erophile*, light will be shed on women's inferior social role and their intense potentiality to victimhood through forced and arranged marriages. Accounts of women's history throughout the centuries commonly represent forced and arranged marriages as the rule, and marriages based on love and passion as the exception. In this thesis the role of women will be examined in the light of the theory of Levi-Strauss who states in *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*² that "marriage is regarded everywhere as a particularly favourable occasion for the initiation or development of a cycle of exchange." He further points out that women have been nothing more and nothing less than an exchanged object, the supreme gift among "other goods, material and spiritual" in an arranged marriage. Through exogamy men "continuously circulated their most important assets, their wives and daughters" in order to strengthen alliances or attain superiority over another social group. Women as exchanged gifts confirmed a new alliance by means of a new social bond and manifested the supremacy of the social group over the biological.³

I will argue that the two polar opposites of *Eros* and *Thanatos* as manifested in the text of the tragedy, the former by its irrational and universal power and the latter in the refusal of the heroin to accept her arranged marriage might reveal cultural and historical conditions that prevailed under the Venetian rule of the island of Crete during the late Renaissance period.⁴ My thesis will utilise historical sources relevant to women's role during this period and will examine whether and to what extent the theatrical text reflects the historical reality.

In my thesis, I will further investigate whether the *Eros* and *Thanatos* of both protagonists of the tragedy could be linked to the general theme of *Liebestod*⁵ as it is delineated in various literary works from the early Middle Ages to the present.

1.2 Objectives and Method

This thesis will examine the reflections of the social role of women in the tragedy *Erophile*. It will undertake a close reading of the text with particular attention to the theme of love and death, *Eros* and *Thanatos*, and their close intermingling in the play. Insights from other literary, historical and philosophical sources will be combined with the products of the close

¹ This date is proposed by Alexiou (1988: 12). Other scholars date the tragedy to between 1573 till 1600.

² Levi-Strauss (1969: 63).

³ Ibid., (1969: 479).

⁴ The climax of Cretan Renaissance Literature is generally dated to the period between 1580 and 1669.

⁵ Bijvoet (1988).

reading of *Erophile* to shed light on women's social role as it is depicted in the Cretan Renaissance play.

Eros (ἔρως) in Greek mythology was the god of love. I will use the term *Eros* as glossed by Liddell and Scott, to denote love in the sense of mainly sexual passion.⁶ In my thesis, *Eros* will symbolise the erotic love between Erophile and Panaretos, the protagonists of the tragedy *Erophile*. The term *Thanatos*, on the other hand, (θάνατος) will denote death, whether natural, voluntary or violent.⁷

Love and death have been studied from various intellectual points of view ever since antiquity. The influence of the Hellenic heritage is evident in medieval and subsequently Renaissance thought which produced tragedies and dramas based on the same destructive poles of human nature, love and death, *Eros* and *Thanatos*. Indeed, towards the end of the 15th century a closer connection between Love and Death can be discerned in works of literature and art drawing attention to this association.⁸

The basic thesis advanced here is that historical and social circumstances regarding women's primary choice of a suitor were the main reason that love could be disastrous and sometimes incur harsh consequences or even lead to death. Being motivated from Claude Levi-Straus's⁹ work *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* I will investigate the extent to which the female protagonist's death in the paradigmatic Cretan Renaissance text *Erophile* is a result of her subordinate gender role and her defiance of an arranged marriage. My approach is basically deductive and qualitative in method, since I will first analyse the theme of love and death and their blending in the verses of *Erophile* within a literary framework, and then proceed to further inquiry as to whether the woman¹⁰ portrayed in this play did really have a Renaissance - or not, as Kelly-Gadol contends.¹¹

Byron's¹² statement in *Don Juan* "All tragedies are finish'd by a death. All comedies are ended by a marriage" (*Don Juan*, III. 9) might be seen to endorse my choice of the paradigmatic tragedy *Erophile* for the analysis described above: *Eros* and *Thanatos* pervade the whole play, and the conflict of opposing forces foreground the contemporary social rules governing the role of the sexes in Renaissance Crete. Exploring the deep connection between love and death in the chosen text will also elucidate various other dimensions of love and death and their constant interlacing as part of the inevitable human destiny.

My literary and historical investigations will further take into account the intermingling of Cretan, Byzantine, Venetian and European culture on the island during the late Renaissance period. There is some evident that Cretans regarded themselves as the continuation of a Byzantine heritage¹³ and as custodians of that culture and those traditions which distinguished

⁶ Liddell & Scott (1968: 695).

⁷ Ibid., (784).

⁸ Ariès (1974: 56-57).

⁹ Levi-Strauss (1969).

¹⁰ By way of definition of "Renaissance woman" I will simply accept this formulation by King (1991: xiii):

"Renaissance women are defined broadly and simply: all women whose lives unfolded between 1350 and 1650, and occasionally the grandmothers of the earliest and granddaughters of the latest."

¹¹ Kelly-Gadol (1977: 139).

¹² Neill (1997: 29).

¹³ Maltezou (1991: 22) states that "Although we cannot of course speak about a national consciousness in the modern sense, the fact that some of the revolutionary movements were concerned with the restoration of the

them from their Venetian rulers. But given the long duration of the island's subjection to Venetian rule (from 1204-1669) and the fact that the Cretan nobility tended to be educated in Italy, the population was inevitably exposed to a new culture, and this set in train "a syncretism" on which the intellectual and artistic Renaissance of Venetian-ruled Crete was to be based.¹⁴

Historical sources such as Detorakis *History of Crete*, Maltezou's articles on "The historical and social context"¹⁵ and "The Everyday life in Venetian-occupied Crete: Situation and research perspective"¹⁶ will help to contextualise the text as will McKee's¹⁷ two historical articles, "Greek women in Latin households of fourteenth century Venetian Crete" and "Women under Venetian Colonial Rule in the Early Renaissance: Observations on Their Economic Activities", even though they refer to an earlier period of the island's history.

However, while my aim is to link the narrative content of the tragedy to its contemporary historical context with a view to shedding light on women's social role in Cretan society during the late Renaissance period, I am well aware of the implications of the fact that *Erophile* is a work of poetic imagination and theatrical form. It is certainly not to be confused with a work of historiography, and accordingly the correlation of the narrative content of the play with historical data will be cautious and tentative. The interpretation of aspects of love and death impinges on philosophical thought where the play suggests their deep connection, and consequently my study will also of necessity venture into philosophy.

Due attention must be paid to the fact that Chortatsis deliberately employs *anachronism*¹⁸ and locates his tragedy in the ancient city of Memphis in Egypt, at a considerable geographical and chronological distance from Crete of the Renaissance period in which he lived. And yet his contemporary society is amply in evidence throughout the play, as we shall see.

Regarding *Liebestod*, whose importance is signaled in the title of this thesis, I will argue that *Eros* influences the characters of the protagonists of *Erophile* to the extent of motivating both their creative and their destructive actions in their quest for union. The detrimental power of *Eros* over the protagonists causes them to confront the omnipotence of *Thanatos* and gradually overcomes their survival instinct. Unrequited or thwarted love in combination with inexorable social pressure triggers a death wish resulting in *Liebestod*. The term *Liebestod*¹⁹ was first used by Richard Wagner in the second act of his opera *Tristan and Isolde*,²⁰ where two lovers face the hostility of a world that does not allow them to unite as lovers and consequently their mutual passion leads to a double *Liebestod*. I will investigate in my thesis

Byzantine state indicates that the social groups which took part in the uprisings linked together the concepts of empire and Orthodoxy."

¹⁴ Detorakis (1994: 191).

¹⁵ Maltezou (1991: 17- 47).

¹⁶ Maltezou (2000: 7-30). The translation of the article's title is mine.

¹⁷ McKee (1993, 1998).

¹⁸ Baldick (2001: 9). "anachronism is the misplacing of any person, thing, custom, or event outside its proper historical time".

¹⁹ Bijvoet (1988: 1).

²⁰ *Tristan and Isolde* is a Celtic legend which became popular in the 12th Century through French medieval poetry and exists in many literary variations. The romantic love of the knight Tristan and the Irish princess Isolde culminates, due to insuperable impediments, in a double *Liebestod*. The model of romantic love has exercised a wide influence on subsequent literature.

if the death of Panaretos and Erophile could be linked to the *Liebestod* motive as delineated in Bijvoet's work by that title.

“By the very nature of its composition the *Liebestod* pattern implies certain thematic particularities; absolute romantic love incapable of compromise and therefore in conflict with the world; engendered, threatened, and eventually destroyed by fate because of the inevitable transience of life and all things human. Hence we can speak of a *Liebestod* theme.”²¹

Thanatos will be examined in this study not only in the literal sense but also the metaphorical. The death of human instinct for survival, one of the most basic instincts according to Freud, the “giving up” attitude of the protagonists of *Erophile*, will also be examined in this thesis and will delineate a further metaphorical dimension of *Thanatos*. *Eros* and *Thanatos* appear as immense motivating forces; their fusion and manifestation in the protagonists' lives will be comprehensively examined in the chosen play since it lends itself to such an interpretation.

Regarding the text of the tragedy *Erophile* I have used the version of Stylianos Alexiou and Martha Aposkiti.²² Although the verses are in polytonic system I have used monotonic for practical reasons. When quoting verses from the text, I will denote the five acts of the tragedy as A, B, C, D and E respectively, before the number of the verses. The four chorales of the play will be denoted with numbers. When referring to the Greek verses from the tragedy a translation will be given in footnote. The translation which will be used in this thesis is from Marshall's book “*Three Cretan Plays, The Sacrifice of Abraham, Erophile and Gyparis*”²³ published in Oxford in 1929. A more recent translation has been completed by Bancroft-Marcus,²⁴ but unfortunately it cannot be used here as the publication date will be after the submission of this thesis.

²¹ Bijvoet (1988: 5).

²² Alexiou & Aposkiti (1988).

²³ Marshall (1929).

²⁴ Bancroft-Marcus (forthcoming).

2 The Cretan Renaissance

2.1 The Historical and Social Background of the Cretan Renaissance

Seven years after the capture of Constantinople in 1204 by the fourth Crusade, Crete was occupied by the Venetians. This occupation period lasted more than four and half centuries and produced some instances of fruitful cultural interchange, but we should not assume that the native population of the island accepted foreign rule without resistance. The native Cretans repeatedly revolted against the harsh living conditions and the obligatory military service imposed by the Venetians and various other forms of exploitation. Men aged between 14 and 60 were conscripted for duties such as “the construction and repair of fortifications and other defence structures, guarding of the coast, and the manning of war-ship”, all of which were resented by the native peasants as exhausting, unfair and otherwise objectionable.²⁵ The first two centuries of the 450 years of occupation were especially marked by frequent insurrections. Detorakis records twenty seven uprisings or local episodes of resistance on the island in the first two hundred years, ranging from armed rebellion to disobedience.²⁶ Crete was considered by the Venetians as one of its most vital colonies on account of its situation at the crossroads of the Mediterranean Sea, which facilitated the trade and advanced the maritime interests of the *Serenissima*.²⁷

The Venetian occupation of the island altered the composition of the population somewhat, but the Venetians remained a remarkably small minority, accounting for about 3% of the total and never exceeding 10,000, mostly resident in urban areas.²⁸ Although we do not have official data about the exact size of the population in the first period of Venetian occupation of the island, it is estimated that there was a decline of the population as a result of the persistent revolts of the natives against the Venetians, in addition to various epidemics and adverse living conditions.²⁹ After the fourteenth century more population data are available in the reports of the dukes and *Providetors*³⁰ living on the island, and one not very reliable source according to Detorakis estimates the total population in Crete in 1510 to 300,000. This number decreases drastically two decades later according to another source to 175,268 due to the plague.³¹ Alexiou writes of the dissolution of the old society order under Venetian rule and its replacement with a new order. The bourgeoisie residing in the four main cities, namely Chania, Chandax,³² Rethymno and Siteia, numbered around 30,000 people in the last Venetian period of the island’s history.³³ Detorakis³⁴ outlines a stark division of Cretan society living in the cities into four social classes: The first social class was the nobili veneti,

²⁵ Detorakis (1994: 194-195). In particular compulsory service on Venetians ships was considered as a “death penalty” because of the various dangers to which seamen were exposed.

²⁶ Ibid., (153).

²⁷ Venice was formally known as the *Most Serene Republic of Venice (Serenissima Repubblica di Venezia)*.

²⁸ Detorakis (1994: 184).

²⁹ Ibid., (184).

³⁰ The role of the *Providetor (Provveditore)* was to maintain law and order within the city. He was responsible for the administration of the city and its surrounding area.

³¹ Detorakis (1994: 184).

³² Chandax or Candia is known in present day as Heraklion.

³³ Alexiou S. (1985: 49).

³⁴ Detorakis (1994: 186-189).

Venetians aristocrats who upon occupation of the island were sent to “colonise” it. They were able to maintain their noble status and lived in considerable affluence especially in the first 300 years of Venetian rule. Papadaki reports several instances of hereditary noble men who compromised their status through financial or other improvidence and needed to plead in defence of their titles in Venice before the Avogatori.³⁵ The second social class consisted of the Cretan nobles *nobili cretensi* who owed their title to their Cretan aristocratic descent or services rendered to Venice. Detorakis reports that the inordinate growth of this social class resulted in the gradual undermining of its status. The majority belonging to this class were Orthodox and involved in trade while a minority owned land. The third social class living in the cities was the bourgeoisie *cittadinini*, comprising practitioners of various professions, such as merchants, doctors, lawyers and others, some of who gained considerable wealth. Their religious denomination was also Orthodox. The fourth class, remainder of the population of the cities were designated *villani*, *parici* and *contadini*.³⁶ This social class lived in very harsh conditions and cultivated the fields of their lords or offered unpaid services to the Venetian rulers. Xanthoudidis³⁷ additionally mentions the Jews, who completed the picture of the population in the four major cities of Crete, and especially Candia, and who have been estimated to have numbered around 700-1200 by the last year of the Venetian occupation. They were involved in trade and money-lending and had to pay heavy taxes or endure other injustices.

After the first two centuries of frequently strained relations with the local population, the Venetians established their dominance sufficiently to be able to adopt a more tolerant attitude in matters of religion, education and local governance; this made for more fruitful cultural interchange between colonisers and colonised. The Venetians were influenced to a great extent by the local culture. A “steady Hellenization” of the Venetian population resident on the island slowly took place. At the beginning of the sixteenth century the Greek language was used, not only for everyday mundane purposes, but also in official circumstances, and by the end of the same century the Provveditore Giacomo Foscarini drew the attention to the alarming fact that the Venetians living on the island had lost the ability to communicate in their native language.³⁸ At the same time wealthy Cretans took the opportunity to study abroad and bring their experience and knowledge back to the island, offering their duties as lawyers, doctors and artists of all kinds. After the first period of resisting the conquerors, Cretans seemed to live in harmony with Venetians, intermarriage was accepted and the society on the island gave a homogenised impression. The fall of Constantinople to the Turks in 1453 forced some Byzantine intellectuals to come as refugees to Crete and they contributed to the Cretan Renaissance by setting up educational institutions and teaching in them.³⁹ Another factor that contributed immensely to the Cretan Renaissance was the foundation of Academies in the three main cities on the island. The first was the Academy of the Vivi

³⁵ Papadaki (1991: 431). Papadaki states further that the offspring of noble Venetians living in Crete during the occupation could only defend their noble title by presenting themselves before the Avogatori in Venice. Although the Venetian nobles living in Crete had already in 1356 sought the right to prove their noble status on the island itself, Venice never acceded to this request.

³⁶ Alexiou S. (1985: 49) calls them *plebe*, *gente minuta* referring to the same social class.

³⁷ Xanthoudidis (1939: 132-133).

³⁸ Detorakis (1994: 190-191).

³⁹ *Ibid.*, (208-209).

founded in 1561/62 in Rethymnon by the intellectual Francesco Barozzi. Barozzi referred to the aim of the institution in an oration as “to achieve virtue and wisdom, the best and most precious things that can be given a man.”⁴⁰ Three decades later the Academy of the Stravaganti was founded by Andreas Cornaros who was of Veneto-Cretan heritage. The third Academy, the Academy of the Sterili in Chania also offered its services as a “gateway” of the Italian Renaissance into the island.⁴¹

Alexiou points out that especially in the last century of Venetian rule of Crete there is a long period of peaceful coexistence between conqueror and conquered, a fact that enables Cretan society to reach a peak of cultural creativity while the “old feudalistic system declines.”⁴² The Academies contributed to the establishment of theatres in Crete, and the intellectuals of the island who were disposed to the composition of poetry introduced genres and literary styles derived from the Italian literary Renaissance: tragedies, comedies, pastoral dramas and romantic poems based on Italian and western exemplars. Although the Cretan intellectuals followed western prototypes, it was in no case a process of translation, but rather a new literary creation with a Greek character which arguably exceeds the literary value of the prototypes. The Cretan Renaissance is moreover manifested not only in literature and poetry but also in fine arts such as painting, architecture and sculpture.⁴³

2.2 Georgios Chortatsis and his contribution to the Cretan Renaissance

Although Georgios Chortatsis was a distinguished and popular playwright of his time in Crete,⁴⁴ little is now known about his life. Chortatsis’s name was not mentioned in the contemporary list of nobles in Rethymno, which suggests that he may have belonged to the bourgeois class. The name Chortatsis, however, has deep roots at Byzantium, and his ancestors may have belonged to the byzantine Aristocracy. Politis⁴⁵ places his date of birth around the middle of the 16th century and finds strong indications of further studies in Italy, where most Cretan noble men received their higher education at that time, in the facts of his obvious familiarity with three different types of theatrical plays, tragedy, comedy and pastoral comedy, and works of contemporary Italian literature.

Chortatsis wrote not only the 3,205 verses of the tragedy *Erophile*, which according to Puchner was beyond question the best known, most performed and printed play of the Cretan Renaissance theatre,⁴⁶ but also the pastoral mode *Panoria* and the urban comedy *Katzourbos* (circa 1601). The dating of Chortatsis’s theatrical works only became possible after the discovery of the Dhapergola manuscript,⁴⁷ written in 1673, which confirms his authorship of

⁴⁰ Detorakis (1994: 212-213).

⁴¹ Ibid., (212-213).

⁴² Alexiou S. (1969: 14-16).

⁴³ Alexiou S. (1969: 14-16).

⁴⁴ Puchner (2007: 9).

⁴⁵ Politis (1973: 55).

⁴⁶ Puchner (1991b: 129).

⁴⁷ Kriaras (2007: 15-16, 31). The Dhapergola manuscript of the drama *Panoria* is dated in 1673 and reveals the name of the poet Georgios Chortatsis. In the introductory dedication to the nobleman Marcantonio Viaro of Chania there are allusions to the tragedy *Erophile* which was written after *Panoria*. “...ειςέ λιγούτσικο καιρό

Panoria and the dating, and also attests to the authentic title *Panoria* (previously titled as *Gyparis*).

Despite the paucity of evidence as to his identity, Georgios Chortatsis⁴⁸ is “recognized today as the great innovator of the language and literature of his time and as the founder of the Cretan theatre.”⁴⁹ His three recognised theatrical pieces contributed immensely to the Cretan Renaissance, revealing aspects of their contemporary Cretan society and shedding light on its culture, morals, economy and ideology. Their influence can be seen not only in the monumental verse-romance *Erotokritos* by Vitsentzos Kornaros,⁵⁰ but also in other creative output not only of the island of Crete, but also in other parts of the Greek-speaking world such as the Ionian islands.

2.3 The tragedy *Erophile* and its Italian exemplar, the tragedy *Orbecce*

The tragedy *Erophile* consists of 3,205 verses and is divided into five acts and four chorales. Kriaras⁵¹ characterises the first and fourth of the chorales as the best qualitatively, while he states that the other two are inferior in the dynamism of their content. The metrical structure of the verse in the five acts is the so-called “political verse” with its fifteen-syllable line, arranged in rhymed couplets, while the choric odes consist of eleven-syllable lines. Chortatsis tends to organise both the ideas and the form of his verse quite strictly: for example, he avoids hiatus and therefore most of his verses begin with a consonant.⁵²

Georgios Chortatsis used his contemporary Cretan vernacular in the play, elevating it consciously to a literary language. Bursian⁵³ was the first scholar to deal in detail with the literary style of *Erophile*, but unfortunately he failed to appreciate the sophistication of the Cretan idiom as used by Chortatsis. Decades later the editor Xanthoudidis committed the same mistake. He likewise linked the language and verse technique to that of contemporary Greek folksongs.⁵⁴ Alexiou, however, demonstrated from his first studies on *Erophile* the sophistication of the language of the play, making a sharp distinction between the tragedy and the folksongs. He described the “manieristic”⁵⁵ organisation of the play as Chortatsis’s individual poetic style. Chortatsis’s writing is complex and demanding, he sometimes uses excessively long sentences and he changes the natural order of words by putting adjectives apart from nouns and subjects apart from verbs. He also elaborates the language of his plays with continuous repetitions, alliterations and word play.⁵⁶

γδέχου την αδελφή σου / να ῥθει να σ’ εύρει συντροφιά να ῥναι με το κορμί σου. / Και μη βαραίνεις εις εμέ, γιατί βασιλιοπούλα / εκείνην έκαμα κι εσε στην Ἰδα βοσκοπούλα.” (47-50).

⁴⁸ For further information and conjectures as to the identity of Georgios Chortatsis, see Kriaras (2007: 26-36); Holton (1991: 83-84).

⁴⁹ Alexiou S. (1999: 249-250).

⁵⁰ Alexiou & Aposkiti (1988: 50).

⁵¹ Kriaras (1935: 257).

⁵² Alexiou & Aposkiti (1988: 55).

⁵³ Bursian (1870: 549-635) taught classical philology and archaeology in Munich, Tübingen and Zurich. His main work was *Die Geographie von Griechenland*.

⁵⁴ Alexiou & Aposkiti (1988: 51).

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, (53).

⁵⁶ Alexiou & Aposkiti (1988: 52-53).

The prototype of *Erophile* was first identified by Bursian as the Italian tragedy *Orbecce* by Giambattista Giraldi,⁵⁷ performed for the first time in 1541 in Ferrara. The main persons in the plot are Orbecce, the daughter of the Persian King Sulmone. She is secretly married to Oronte, and they have two children. When the King arranges a marriage to a prince for his daughter, the secret marriage comes to light. The King prepares his pitiless revenge plans for Oronte and Orbecce. After pretending to forgive the couple, he kills both their children in front of Oronte and then, after killing him, he mutilates his body. Then he presents the corpses of her children and the head of her husband as a wedding gift to his disobedient daughter. Orbecce is devastated, stabs her father and commits suicide. The tragedy ends with the heartbreaking mourning of Orbecce's nurse.

The difference in plot between *Orbecce* and *Erophile* lies in the incest theme between father and daughter in the tragedy *Orbecce* and also in the fact that Orbecce had two children. The patricide forms another difference between the two tragedies. Alexiou⁵⁸ claims that the omission of the patricide theme from Chortatsis's tragedy was deliberate. Instead of the individual revenge of Orbecce against her father, Chortatsis makes the whole chorus of women kill the cruel King and thus contrives a female rebellion, quite remarkable for its time. Although late Cretan Renaissance works were strongly influenced by Italian Renaissance literature, this does not diminish their excellence or the originality of the Cretan literary stamp applied to them. Despite the substantial resemblance in themes, structure and characterization, the Cretan writers managed to expound their own philosophy and ideas and to differentiate their creations from the Italian prototypes they chose as a starting-point. Alexiou explains the relationship between the Cretan and Italian works in terms of "intertextuality"⁵⁹ and different perceptions of intellectual property and originality in literature from those current in the modern period.

The tragedy *Erophile* contains a resounding condemnation of tyranny, arrogance and avarice, coupled with a yearning for a lost "golden age" when peace and abundance prevailed, and affairs of the heart were not subordinated to considerations of social class.⁶⁰ The resonance of these themes is reflected in the fact that the play was still being performed in the Ionian islands at the beginning of the 20th century.⁶¹ Moreover, Puchner⁶² argues that *Erophile* served as "an archetype of classicistic dramaturgy till about 1800 AD and as a link between the learned and popular tradition."⁶³

⁵⁷ Giraldi (1504-1573) used the literary pseudonym Cinthio, Cintio or Cinzio, naming himself after the holy mountain Κύνθιος on the island of Delos. He taught philosophy and rhetoric at Ferrara University and is also considered to have influenced Shakespeare.

⁵⁸ Alexiou & Aposkiti (1988: 33).

⁵⁹ Ibid., (38).

⁶⁰ Alexiou (2010: 396).

⁶¹ Aposkiti (2000: 33).

⁶² Puchner (2000: 381).

⁶³ The translation from Greek is mine.

2.4 The plot

Filogonos, ascending to power after having murdering his brother, the King of Egypt, proceeds to marry his widowed sister-in law and maintains his reign by force. The Queen dies very young leaving Erophile, her only daughter and heir to the throne, motherless and vulnerable. The King adopts Panaretos, a boy of royal origin, who spends his childhood alongside the Princess Erophile. When the two grow up, they fall in love and secretly marry. Upon uncovering their secret, King Filogonos ruthlessly sets in train his elaborate plan of revenge. Erophile's eloquent attempts to soften her father's heart and secure his forgiveness are in vain. The King firstly tortures Panaretos and finally kills him in a brutal fashion and takes revenge on his daughter Erophile by presenting to her as a wedding gift with a casket containing the mutilated head, heart and hands. Devastated, Erophile mourns the remains of Panaretos and commits a spectacular -on stage- suicide. Nena, Erophile's nurse, leads the final retaliation, supported by the women of the chorus: they kill the King, and complete the "catharsis."

3 *EROS*

3.1 Contributions to the tragic plot

Erophile⁶⁴ spends her childhood in the palace in the company of Panaretos, whom the King adopted for the purpose of providing companionship for his motherless daughter.⁶⁵ Being of the same age and having spent their childhood “κοπελίστικο καιρό” together it is not surprising that a deep affection forms between them and develops on Erophile’s part into an exclusive preference for Panaretos, which awakens the jealousy of the other young men in the palace environment. Erophile’s feelings for Panaretos are described by Chortatsis as sisterly,⁶⁶ “σά νά ’θελά ’σται αδέλφι τση μ’ αγάπησε περίσσα” (A 154).⁶⁷ Erophile comes to regard Panaretos as a brother, a friend and a guardian. Holding hands and promenading together “νά ’βγει για περιδιάβαση, δεν ήθελε άλλο χέρι / στη στράτα να τηνέ κρατεί” (A 158-159)⁶⁸ is seen as harmless since they are as children considered to be “innocent”, but when they reach adolescence, they are seen to be at risk of not being able to contain themselves and of compromising their honour, and the King therefore separates them. “Μ’ απείς αναθραφήκαμε και με διχώς σκονάδι / δεν εμπορούμα τση τιμής να στέκομεν ομάδα, / μας χώρισεν ο βασιλιάς, με πρίκα μας μεγάλη” (A 161-163).⁶⁹

Bancroft-Marcus remarks on the danger faced by young women of staining their reputation as “the smallest unsanctioned physical contact stir malicious gossip, since only officially engaged couples were permitted to talk freely, hold hands, embrace and kiss.”⁷⁰ Upon entering the age of consent to an arranged marriage, Erophile constantly ran the risk of harming her reputation for chastity and modesty and thereby diminishing her “marriageability”.⁷¹ As an unmarried girl, her honour should have been protected by the male members of her family, but her trustworthy nurse is charged with the laborious task of keeping a constant eye on her. The playwright does not provide us with much information about Erophile’s everyday life beyond saying that she was sheltered from the outside world. We may surmise, following Bancroft-Marcus, that her daily routine most probably would include reading, women’s tasks and small talk with other family members. Outdoor dining,

⁶⁴ Holton (2000: 124-125) points out that the Cretan poets selected names for their heroes to their character, social status or profession. Hence, the name Erophile that means the one who loves *Eros*.

⁶⁵ Although Erophile and Panaretos were separated when they reached puberty and Erophile entered marriageable age, King Filogonos is deemed by his close advisor to have contributed to the development of amorous sentiments between the two children by allowing children of different sexes to consort with each other.

⁶⁶ The incest theme explicitly mentioned in Erophile’s immediate prototype *Orbecce* is perhaps distantly echoed here. Chortatsis most probably considered the subject incompatible with the sensitivities of his Cretan audience. Bursian (1870: 549) considers the incest theme in *Orbecce* to be unsuccessful and states that its omission in *Erophile* is a great advantage “grosser Vorzug” of the Cretan tragedy.

⁶⁷ Translation: Showed to me love no less than that which sister brother bears.

⁶⁸ Translation: No other hand than mine in hers would she to hold consent, / As up and down the streets she paced;

⁶⁹ Translation: But when we had reached grown estate, and could not without stain / On honour, as before, in close companionship remain / Then the king parted us, and great the grief which us beset.

⁷⁰ Bancroft-Marcus (1983: 20).

⁷¹ Hansen (1993: 11).

attending tournaments, excursions or celebrations of any kind would have been the only opportunity for taking part in the life of the outside world.⁷²

The peaceful, carefree and happy childhood of Erophone is juxtaposed to the worrisome and stressful life that she led after falling in love with Panaretos and which culminated in a tragic end for both lovers. The King's advisor characterises Erophone's privileged childhood thus: "Μια κορασίδα ευγενική κι ομορφοκαμωμένη / με τόσα πλούτη κι αφεντιές και χάρδια αναθρεμμένη" (D 123-124).⁷³ Being the only child, she enjoys the exclusive and boundless love of her father, but at the same time she is the only heir and bears the responsibility for serving her family's interest commands. In due course the sheltered and happy life she led in the palace during her childhood turns into the exact opposite. In the second chorale, the women's chorus touches upon the instability of human destiny. Everything once worked to perfection, people were happy, there was an abundance of everything and women could choose among their suitors, until the "Περηφάνεια" Pride⁷⁴ entered the sphere of mortals bearing all subsequent human sufferings. "Μ' απείς από τον Άδη εβγήκε κάτω / τούτη η Περηφανειά η ασβλωμένη / βρύσες τ' αμμάτια εμείνα των κλαημάτων"⁷⁵ (Chorus 2, 503-505).⁷⁶ The concept of fate is widespread in Renaissance culture and Erophone depicts the deep rooted superstition that happiness can turn into unhappiness, laughter to crying, love to hate and Eros to Death, foreshadowing the heroine's destiny. "Τα γέλια με τα κλάματα, με την χαράν ή πρίκα / μιαν ώραν εσπαρθήκασι κι ομάδι εγεννηθήκα. / γιαύτος μαζί γυρίζουσι και το 'να στ' άλλο αλλάσει, / κι όποιος εγέλα το ταχύ, κλαίγει πριχού βραδιάσει" (C 1-4).⁷⁷

Hence, the protected and happy childhood of Erophone forebodes the tragic end of the plot. The fact that she is a motherless child is a decisive factor in determining her tragic end. According to Gediman's psychoanalytic investigation of the legend of Tristan and Isolde⁷⁸ the loss of a parent in childhood can lead to a longing for parental love and this in turn can lead to a death wish, in order for the child to be eternally reunited with the lost parent: "Yearning for the lost bliss, fusion, and merging feelings of symbiosis underlies the movement of the lovers toward eternal reunion through death together."⁷⁹ Gediman further states that early parental loss most often develops into trauma among children, which becomes a lifelong struggle.⁸⁰ It is striking that also in some other Cretan Renaissance works the female protagonists are motherless, namely Panoria, the Sheperdess and Aretousa, in the pastoral mode *Panoria*, the

⁷² Bancroft-Marcus (1983: 20).

⁷³ Translation: If maid of noble birth and with a peerless beauty dight, / Bred amid royal wealth and all that can a heart delight.

⁷⁴ "Περηφάνεια" is here literally translated as "Pride", but in the text it carries the negative connotations of "Arrogance".

⁷⁵ Translation: Since from Hades where she'd lain / Cursed Pride came issuing out, / Eyes are dim with floods of tears.

⁷⁶ Hugh G. Evelyn-White (transl., ed.) *Hesiod, Homeric Hymns and Homeric* (1914: 11-17). The verses of the second chorale allude to Hesiod's five generations, the golden being the first and unblemished one, and the iron being the last generation, full of misery for humans.

⁷⁷ Translation: Laughter and tears and joys and griefs are all together sown, / And as one crop you see them born and to their fullness grown, / Therefore it is they turn about, and one takes other's place; / Who laughed at morning ere the eve to tears will change his face.

⁷⁸ *Tristan und Isolde* (c. 1210-1215) by Gottfried von Strassburg.

⁷⁹ Gediman (1995: 36).

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, (36).

pastoral mode *Shepherdess* and the tragedy *King Rhodolinos* respectively.⁸¹ The psychological effect of orphanhood was compounded by the sociological, inasmuch as her early deprivation of her mother exposed Erophile to the full force of patriarchal system without the protection of motherly love. On the other hand, not having a female role-model to follow, Erophile develops her own female identity, much more influenced by the male identity of the era and in particular that of her father. A mother figure might have inspired Erophile to develop a compliant and obedient character disposed to accept the role of an exchangeable commodity for which she would normally have been destined. The absence of maternal influence allows Erophile to transgress the boundaries of her sex and social class, and contributes to her tragic suicide. Hirsch succinctly states the multidimensional importance of mothers as role-models in the following dictum:

“There can be no systematic and theoretical study of women in patriarchal culture, there can be no theory of women’s oppression, that does not take into account woman’s role as a mother of daughters and as a daughter to mothers, that does not study female identity in relation to previous and subsequent generations of women, and that does not study that relationship in the wider context: the emotional, political, economic, and symbolic structures of family and society.”⁸²

The Mother’s role in Medieval and Renaissance society was to prepare their daughters for marriage to a suitable partner of their parents’ choosing. The role of daughters in the socio-economic system was to consolidate their family’s status and security through a new marital bond and alliance. The mother herself became a feminine role-model whose actions and precepts instilled in her daughter the means of appearing as a compliant and desirable object to the opposite sex.⁸³ This form of femininity, “translated” as conforming to the social rules and obeying to the patriarchal system, perpetuated the social order and kept women in a subordinate role. Although Erophile’s maternal figure is replaced by Nena, her nurse,⁸⁴ Nena is torn between her love for Erophile and her obligations to keep her mistress in line. Her desperate attempts to convince Erophile of the necessity to conform to her father’s orders are in vain and she finally becomes complicit in her mistress’s plans. Unlike a biological mother who would have gained social or economic benefits from an arranged and forced marriage of her daughter, Nena stands to gain no benefit of any kind, but places her own life in danger by becoming an accomplice to the King’s disobedient daughter. Her deep devotion to her mistress justifies her yielding to Erophile’s entreaties. She represents the voice of logic in the tragedy and portrays the majority of Renaissance women who did not revolt against male authority. Trying to remind Erophile of the duties and responsibilities of her social rank she

⁸¹ In the Arthurian tradition the female protagonist is also motherless (Queen Guinevere) and Shakespeare, a contemporary of Chortatsis, also presents motherless female protagonists.

⁸² Hirsch (1981: 202).

⁸³ Rasmussen (1997: 117).

⁸⁴ Klapisch-Zuber (1985: 135-8) states that giving a child to a nurse normally meant separation from it. Usually boys were nurtured at their home by a nurse while most girls were given away to the nurse’s home. Erophile enjoys the benefits of being the only child and having her own nurse not only breast-feeding her but also being a permanent companion during her whole life.

hopes to protect her from harm. Consequently, Erophone is well aware of her designated role, while also freed from the maternal pressure which might have prevented her from going beyond the proper limits.

In addition to growing up without maternal affection and supervision of her mother, another factor that determines Erophone's tragic destiny is her superior social status. Being the King's daughter seriously constrains her options. She expresses this burden thus: "Ωφου, κακό μου ριζικό, κ' ίντα 'θελα τα πλούτη / κ' ίντα 'θελα να γεννηθώ στην αφεντιάν ετούτη! / Τι με φελούνε οι ομορφιές, τι με φελούν τα κάλλη, / και τσ' όρεξής μου τα κλειδιά να τα κρατούσιν άλλοι; / Χώρες να ρίζω αρίφνητες, τόπους πολλούς και δούλους, / και να τιμούμαι σα θεά από τσ' ανθρώπους ούλους" (B 49-54).⁸⁵

On the one hand, being born wealthy and aristocratic provided her with a better life not only as an unmarried girl, but also in her marital life she could have expected to enjoy favourable living conditions. In contrast to the peasant women who lived with the constant risk of starvation and the conscription of their husbands to perform chores for the ruling classes in Venetian Crete, rich and noble women would have had a safe and secure marital life, provided they conformed and fulfilled society's expectations of their gender.⁸⁶ On the other hand, the wellborn royalty were not exempt from the restrictions to personal freedom that affected women in the Renaissance. Their status could be seen as both a kind of blessing and a curse at the same time. While a peasant girl might enjoy greater freedom when choosing a future husband, an upper class woman had to obey the demands of her family's interests through a strategically arranged marriage.

In the following verses Erophone delineates her social boundaries and expresses her envy of women who are able to enjoy all the things she has to sacrifice. "Πάσα φτωχή κι ανήμπορη, καθώς θωρώ, τυχαίνει / να 'ναι από μένα σήμερα περίσσα ζηλεμένη, / γιατί ανισώς κι ορίζουσιν άλλοι την εμαυτή μου, / τη βασιλεία σκλαβιά κρατώ, την αφεντιά φλακή μου" (B 57-60).⁸⁷ In her eyes the limitations of her personal freedom equates to slavery and imprisonment.

Apart from her orphanhood, which allowed the protagonist to move beyond her gender limits and her aristocratic origin, another determinant of the course of the plot is Erophone's beauty, which enhances her marriageability. The poet skillfully emphasises her physical attractiveness. Her beauty was unmatched (τέτοια κάλλη; το πρόσωπο τ' αγγελικό; το πρόσωπο τ' όμορφο; Βασιλοπούλα όμορφοκαμωμένη; τα πλουμισμένα κάλλη; μιας κόρης όμορφης; με δίχως ταίρι σ' τσ' ομορφιές κ' εις τα περίσσα κάλλη; η νεράιδα ή όμορφη; στα χιόνια του προσώπου τση). Women have tended to primarily be identified as either beautiful or not, as a 16th century text declared "Of an ugly girl nothing is expected."⁸⁸ Andrew the Chaplain (Andreas Cappelanus), the theoretician of courtly love in the Middle Ages, believed

⁸⁵ Translation: Alas! How evil is my lot! What use my wealth so great? / What boots it that I have been born into this royal state? / Of what avail are all the charms my beauty can inspire, / If others are to hold in hand the keys of my desire? / What if I rule a thousand towns and many slaves and lands, / And men do listen to my words as to a god's commands?

⁸⁶ Bancroft-Marcus (1983: 21).

⁸⁷ Translation: For as things stand to-day, I deem I should not any lass, / However poor and weak she be, without great envy pass; / Since other's wills must o'er mine own and o'er my life prevail, / My kingdom I hold slavery, my lordship but a jail.

⁸⁸ Nahoum-Grappe (1993: 86).

that beauty is the only foundation for love to the extent of claiming that blind people are unable to love.⁸⁹ Physically attractive women predominate in literary works from the classical era through the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, and medieval love poetry extolled their almost divine beauty. In many cases the generosity of nature to a heroine was closely connected with her tragic destiny.

Nahoum-Grappe points out that beauty alone was not enough to compensate for a girl's bad economic situation or other social disadvantages, including a stain on her reputation. But beauty was regarded as a random birth gift of the same significance as social class. "Such beauty was the formal concomitant of other tokens of good fortune such as wealth, rank, and moral purity... Beauty complemented other, truer gifts and gave physical evidence of their legitimacy."⁹⁰ It is striking that Chortatsis delineates Erophile's beauty throughout the text up to the last but one scene,⁹¹ in contrast to texts from the 12th to the 15th century, but in keeping with the classical Greek and Latin tradition of portraying female beauty. A 12th century canon of beauty specified, among other attractive characteristics in women, the following: "rosy cheeks, not pale, golden hair, "milky-white" neck, black eyebrows, bright eyes, red and delicate lips."⁹² The distinguished Byzantine historian Anna Komnene in her work *the Alexias* portrays the beauty of her future mother-in-law, Maria of Alania, in terms that reveal the beauty standards of that time, which do not differ greatly from the western model: "Maria was considered Love incarnate... a living work of art, an object of desire to lovers of beauty."⁹³

In the last act and the second last scene Chortatsis makes the lamentation of Nena over the dead body of Erophile dwell upon the description of his heroine's beauty, which was fully in harmony with the beauty standards of the Renaissance period and the "chivalrous romantic Petrarchists" who considered woman "as a beautiful goddess, a pure and celestial angel. Her hair was of gold, her eyes of sapphires, her lips of rubies, her teeth of pearl, her neck of crystal, her bosom of silver, her hands of marble."⁹⁴ While Nena laments the loss of her mistress's ideal beauty, the writer evokes the omnipotence of death over everything mortal. "Πώς να μαδήσου τα μαλλιά τα παραχρυσωμένα, / πώς να χυθού τ' αμμάτια σου στη γη τα ζαφειρένια; Πώς τ' όμορφο σου πρόσωπο κ' η μαρμαρένια χέρα / θροφή σκουλήκω να γενεί, χρουσή μου θυγατέρα;" (E 569-572).⁹⁵ Women's beauty was further linked to their chastity and last but not least their youth, which in its turn ensured their reproductive potential and justified the arranged and forced marriages. Erophile forms a triptych of beauty, youth, and virtue, all of which both endear her to the reader and contribute to the tragic plot.

⁸⁹ Bergman (1987: 97).

⁹⁰ Nahoum-Grappe (1993: 89).

⁹¹ The only explicit information about Erophile's beauty before the lamentation scene from her Nena is of her white complexion "χιονάτο πρόσωπο", a noble characteristic since peasant women acquired dark and wrinkled skin through their exposure to the sun when working in the fields.

⁹² Da Soller Claudio (2010: 95-111).

⁹³ Herrin (2007: 233). Anna Komnene (born 1083 AD) daughter of the Byzantine emperor Alexius Komnenos the first, when only seven years old, was sent by her father through an arranged marriage to spend her childhood with her "future husband" and his mother.

⁹⁴ Bancroft-Marcus (1983: 28).

⁹⁵ Translation: Shall then those locks gold-tinted fall from off that comely head? / Shall those blue eyes, like sapphires bright, dissolve in earthly bed? / Shall that fair face and those fair hands as a pure marble white / Become mere food to feed the worms, my daughter, my delight?

3.2 *Eros* the instigator

Erophile's physical attractiveness, virtue and social status as above demonstrated made her a desirable object of love and immediately justify Panaretos feelings. Belonging to a lower social class, he would clearly stand to gain substantially from a marital union with her. On the other hand, Erophile's awareness of her nobility does not deter her from pursuing a liaison forbidden by her social status. Their love ignites in defiance of the common belief that passionate love finds no fertile ground in a common childhood. Although Panaretos and Erophile spend their childhood together, her "sisterly feelings" for him transformed slowly into erotic. Growing up with Panaretos, she had the opportunity to admire his heroic virtues and wise attitudes. In her desperate attempt to convince her father of Panaretos's qualities, she reminds him of her lover's commendable attributes and wisdom (χάρεις, αρετές, γνώσεις), virtues that could compensate for the lack of aristocratic origin of a vassal, if not upgrade his social status.

McKee, referring to Veneto-Cretan women during the Venetian occupation of the island, remarks on the low percentage of intermarriage between Latin noble women and Cretan men due to the valuable property that would have been transferred by way of wedding dowry to the benefit of the husband's family. Although society did actually accept intermarriage, with some reluctance, there are only five marriages between Latin women and Greek men recorded among the nobility in the legal will-documents of that period.⁹⁶ This reflects the relative status of aristocratic women and lower class men in Venetian Crete and the potential of the marriage of a noble woman to redistribute wealth and power on the island. Little wonder then that the King rages at his son-in-law and ironically refers to him as worthy, "τον άξο μου γαμπρό". Panaretos, confronting the King's rage, claims to have aristocratic origins "γιος του βασιλιού του πλούσου τση Τσέρτσαζ". This might have given the King some scope to accept his son-in-law, but in the event his rejection sheds further light on Medieval and Renaissance society, where patricians distinguished themselves from the masses, not only by the title acquired at birth, but also by their wealth. Panaretos claims to nobility are not consistent with his financial situation. Erophile confirms the complementarity of wealth and royalty in beseeching her father "πλούσο κι αδυνατότατο⁹⁷ και βασιλιό μεγάλο / θες τονέ κάμει να γενεί παρά κιανέναν άλλο" (D 341-342).⁹⁸ The King is also absolutely convinced that nobility, wealth and virtues are sides of the same coin and indispensable prerequisites for Erophile's prospective husband: "Οπού' ν' τα πλούτη, οι αρετές κ' οι χάρεις⁹⁹ κατοικούσι, / κ' εις πάσα τόπο φρόνιμοι πάντα κρατούνται οι πλούσοι" (D 323-324).¹⁰⁰

In keeping with Medieval and Renaissance conventions, the sense of sight is the primary catalyst of Panaretos's love for Erophile: "Μα κείνο οπού 'θελε κουρφό να μου κρατεί εσυντήρου / συχνότατα στα μάτια τση τα πλουμιστά τριγύρου. / Λυπητερά μ' εβλέπασι,

⁹⁶ McKee (1993: 233).

⁹⁷ "αδυνατότατο" here means quite the opposite of what it denotes in current standard Greek. In this verse it equates to "δυνατό" and is translated as "strong".

⁹⁸ Translation: Then may he rich and powerful as mighty monarch stand / By thy creation; so shall he, raised to this high estate.

⁹⁹ The term αρετές denotes intangible charms and virtues, while the term χάρεις represents physical charms.

¹⁰⁰ Translation: Where wealth is present, there likewise virtues and graces dwell, / And riches ever amongst men a mind of wisdom spell.

γλυκιά μ' εσυντηρούσα, / σ' τσι πόνους τση, σου φαίνεται, βοτάνι μου ζητούσα; κ' ελόγιασα χίλιες φορές να βρω αφορμή να μείνω, / για να θωρώ το πρόσωπο τ' αγγελικόν εκείνο; (A 239-242; A 245-246).¹⁰¹ Erophile on the other hand follows the Renaissance prototype regarding the ideal man, deeming other qualities and virtues more important than beauty. “Στην ευγενειά σου την πολλή, στη χάρη σου την τόση, / στη δύναμη, σ' τσι διάξεις σου και την πολλή σου γνώση / τον πόθο μου εθεμέλιωσα, και πλια από κτίσμα άλλο / μέσα στα φύλλα τση καρδιάς τονέ κρατώ μεγάλο” (C 117-120).¹⁰² It is noteworthy that she does not refer at all to Panaretos's physical appearance¹⁰³ while he is alive, though in the last act of the tragedy, when lamenting over his dead body, she surprisingly addresses his beauty more than his virtues. “Πανάρετέ μου αφέντη μου, πού ν' τα πολλά σου κάλλη, / πού κείνη η νόστιμη θωριά και πάσα χάρη άλλη;” (E 453-454).¹⁰⁴ The Renaissance vision of love closely associated beauty and love, and according to Dronke this can be tracked back to the identification in medieval love poetry, of the secular love of a lady and the divine love for God.¹⁰⁵

While Petrarch distinguished divine love¹⁰⁶ from the ephemeral mortal love which is hurtful and difficult to avoid, the humanist philosopher Marsilio Ficino points out that human love is a microcosm of divine love and there is not necessarily a contradiction between them. Hence “Love is a most blessed God because He is both most good and most beautiful.”¹⁰⁷ Goldstein illustrates Petrarch's and Ficino's contribution to the theory of love not only in Italy but throughout France, Spain and England. Petrarch spiritualised love and feminine beauty and added an unparalleled vocabulary which pervades love poetry.¹⁰⁸ Therefore Erophile's beauty which is perceived through the eyes of Panaretos as angelic “αγγελικό πρόσωπο” is constant with the vision of love in Renaissance. On the other hand men's beauty was closely related to masculinity and heroic virtues. Since Panaretos does not belong to the nobility and cannot identify himself by the lineage of his family and the purity of his bloodline he has to present other virtues in order to attract his beloved one. Aristocratic origin and wealth were usually closely connected, and we know that although Panaretos claims to be son of the King of Tsertsas, he is still considered to be a mere servant of the King of Egypt and his daughter. His subordination is obvious in many verses where the protagonist uses words and phrases denoting his inferiority, such as the nouns accompanied by possessive pronouns that he uses to address the King's daughter, “την κερά μου-αφέντρα μου¹⁰⁹ / βασίλισσα μου”, and the

¹⁰¹ Translation: But that which she was fain to hide, I could not but surmise, / For, every time that we two met, 'twas writ in those fair eyes. / She looked at me with pity's glance and with a mien so kind, / It seemed that she some healing herb for her distress would find; A thousand times I me resolved to make excuse to bide, / That still for me angelic charm her fair face might provide.

¹⁰² Translation: It is upon thy noble mind, upon thy boundless grace, / Upon thy strength, thy conduct firm, thy wisdom, that I place / As on foundation strong my love, and in my inmost heart / I have that noble building set, surpassing in its art.

¹⁰³ The only confirmation of Panaretos's beauty apart from Erophile's lamentation verses is provided by the King's advisor in act 4, verse 126 “με κοπελιάρην όμορφο”.

¹⁰⁴ Translation: Panaretos, my master dear, where now thy lovely face, / Where are thy many beauties fled, and where thy matchless grace?

¹⁰⁵ Dronke (1965: 1, 5, 95, 99,106).

¹⁰⁶ Divine love here denotes spiritual love.

¹⁰⁷ Marsilio Ficino, Transl. by Jayne (1944: 164).

¹⁰⁸ Goldstein (1974: 339).

¹⁰⁹ Both terms are repeated many times in the tragedy.

King himself, “τον αφέντη μου”. His use of phrases recognising his vassal status, such as “σκλάβος σου / δούλος σου”, further confirms his lower social class. Social changes took place in the sixteenth and seventeenth century making it possible for a man not born into the aristocracy to achieve a gentleman’s status by elegance, intellect, knowledge acquired through higher education and other abilities. The advancement of men’s intellect paved the way for women’s progress and a significant narrowing of the intellectual disparity between the two sexes. Despite the objections and mistrust of women’s intellectual capacity, in the sixteenth century some noble women were educated as humanists by their families.¹¹⁰ Although the text of Chortatsis’s tragedy *Erophile* provides no evidence of the protagonist’s literacy,¹¹¹ Erophile’s independence of mind and assertiveness meets the tendency of education of noble women in the Renaissance.

Once noble women reached a higher level of education they were better able to apply critical thinking to assess the men who approached them and redefine the criteria for attractiveness in men and desirable husbands. “Expected to read and to have literary opinions, seventeenth-century noble women became more assertive in their dealings with men and more critical of those who approached them without the proper elegance.”¹¹²

Hence Panaretos has to present other qualities of character or intellect to compensate for his lack of status, thereby justifying Erophile’s choice. He adopts the techniques of courtly lovers as portrayed by poets and romance writers from the eleventh and twelfth century onward, where courtly love¹¹³ made its appearance in the intellectual world and subsequently influenced the Medieval and Renaissance conception of the ideal man and woman. Following the patterns of courtly love both men and women in Renaissance had to present special characteristics. Men should in first place be devoted, dauntless, eloquent, knowledgeable and admirable. The virtues expected of women, on the other hand, were truthfulness, attractiveness, sensibility and elegance.¹¹⁴ Panaretos seems to personify the courtly model of masculinity as portrayed by Duby.¹¹⁵ Although his lady is not married as the perfect courtly woman model would have been, she is still not master of herself. Her father replaces the male authority that she has to obey and honour. The “lady” in this case, or borrowing Duby’s¹¹⁶ term the “prized body”, is only won through great effort and risk. Like a knight in Medieval poetry or romance he falls in love with the daughter of his master and has therefore to confront the dilemma to serve or betray him. Although Panaretos’s devotion to the King is indisputable, his feelings for Erophile predominate. “Στο ’στερο σ’ δυο μοιράστηκα κι άφηκα

¹¹⁰ Davies (1986: 25). To mention but one among many misogynistic views, Erasmus and Sir Thomas More held that woman’s brain is the size of a pea and should only be educated as a kind of learned freak.

¹¹¹ In contrast to Aretousa, the protagonist of Kornaros verse romance *Erotokritos*, who is highly literate.

¹¹² Dewald (1996: 172).

¹¹³ Marchello-Nizia (1997: 147-162). Courtly love was a literary creation and more precisely a poetic one in the 11th and 12th century in southern France, and was a result of social necessities. The adjective *courtois* makes its appearance in the *Chanson de Roland* for the first time. In the later 12th and 13th centuries the concept of adventure arrived to complicate the courtly characteristics; adventure served to test the courage, bravery and heroic virtues of a man.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., (149).

¹¹⁵ Duby (1992: 250) explains the courtly model as a social necessity in response to a crisis in male-female relations in 12th century France. The medieval model of *fine amour* (refined love) was renamed as courtly love to describe the “emotional and physical” relations between men and women.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., (251).

στην κερά μου / με πικραμένα σωθικά, το νου και την καρδιά μου” (A 251-252).¹¹⁷ Panaretos is filled with remorse when confessing to his friend Carphoros that in loving Erophile and secretly marrying her, he deceived his King and behaved fraudulently: “κι αρίφνητος μεταγνώμος με σφίγγει να θυμούμαι / και πίκουλος να κρίζομαι κι άπιστος να κρατούμαι,” (A 421-422).¹¹⁸ Wounded by love he endeavours to awaken love feelings in Erophile or to unconsciously manipulate her into confessing a mutual passion for him. He demonstrates his full submission and willingness to undertake any risk in order to compensate for his social inferiority and get his “final reward”, the love of his lady. Duby’s description of the sequence of actions required of a man in order to win the love of his lady wholly corresponds to Panaretos’s course of action.¹¹⁹

“According to the social hierarchy of the time, she ranks above him. He calls attention to this fact through various gestures or allegiance. He kneels down, assuming the posture of a vassal [*κι ομπρός τση γονατίζω* (A 307)]. He speaks pledging his faith, promising, like a liege man, not to offer his services to anyone else [*καθώς πάντα ’μου σκλάβος σου και δούλος μπιστικός σου / κι ουδένα πράμαν έκαμα δίχως τον ορισμό σου* (A 311-312)]. He goes even further; in the manner of a serf, he makes a gift of his person [*μ’ αντίς εκείνα την ψυχή και το κορμί μου δίνω / της αφεντιάς σου χάρισμα, πρόθυμα πάντα ομάδι / σ’ πάσα μικράκι σου ορισμό να κατεβού στον Άδη* (A 368-370).]”¹²⁰

Although the main subject of my thesis is the social role of women as reflected in *Eros* and *Thanatos* primarily of the female protagonist of Chortatsis’s work, *Erophile*, the fact that little relevant information can be derived directly from verses spoken by Erophile herself,¹²¹ necessitates recourse to Panaretos’s detailed description of the stages from beginning, via development and resistance, to final surrender and the fatal passion of the two protagonists. The common childhood was primarily the basis for the love between Erophile and Panaretos. Although the King separated them when Erophile entered the marriageable age, the prohibition only served to intensify their feelings: “Μην το ’χεις για παράξενο, γιατί τ’ αμποδισμένο / πράμα αγαπάται πλιότερα και πλια ’ν’ πεθυμισμένο” (A 169-170).¹²² It is striking that Panaretos initially defines his love as passion, “η φωτιά του πόθου; οι λάβρες κ’ οι φωτιές μου; η πεθυμιά; τον πόθο,” while later upon hearing the first implicit confession of love from Erophile, he first uses the word love, “σαν το ποτίσει το νερό, τέτοιας λογής τ’ αζάπη / στο λογισμό μου αρχίνισε κ’ εμένα η αγάπη / γροικώντας τέτοια ευγενικά λόγια, να

¹¹⁷ Translation: But in the end I bowed to fate; from her I made depart, / Pierced through and through with torments fierce in marrow, mind and heart.

¹¹⁸ Translation: But limitless remorse to me recalls my deeds unkind, / And makes me “Traitor” call myself and “Man of faithless mind.”

¹¹⁹ Duby (1992: 251).

¹²⁰ Translation: and there upon my knees I fell (A 307); Since I have ever as your slave and faithful servant true / Done nothing save at your command, nothing apart from you (A 311-312); Instead therefore let my whole soul and body here be laid / An offering to my princess, for at thy slightest sign / Both soul and body I’m prepared to Hades to resign. (A 368-370).

¹²¹ Erophile’s spoken verses nowhere refer to the development of her love to Panaretos.

¹²² Translation: Do not account the thing as strange; forbidden fruit is sweet, / And lovers love with fiercer flame who opposition meet.

ξεφουντώνει / κ' εις την καρδιά μου το ζιμιό πλιότερα να ριζώνει” (A 347-350).¹²³ The passion based on the carnal desire flamed up instantly “γιαμιά γιαμιά”, while love needed more time.

In the beginning Panaretos bases his responses on her glances, “το πρόσωπο ὄδα τ' όμορφο, κ' η σπλαχνική θωριά τση / μου ὄδειχνε πως εστέρευγε τον πόθον η καρδιά τση” (A 299-300),¹²⁴ taking them as evidence that she was capable of reciprocating his feelings. Having the first sign of her potential interest in him, he will strive further to prove his chivalry and valiant nature. In his endeavours to win the love of his lady he uses all art of rhetoric dexterity, and his eloquence added to his other virtues make him an admirable representative of the Renaissance man. Humanistic education of the time described the new man as a wondrous creature.¹²⁵ Castiglione portrayed this ideal man as a person who, apart from his grounding in Latin and Greek, would also be competent as a poet, historian and orator and dexterous in writing prose and poetry in the contemporary language, abilities that would contribute, besides his own satisfaction, also to women's admiration since they favour cultivated men.¹²⁶ Carpophoros corroborates this assumption in referring to women's “vulnerability” to nice wording and considers eloquence as the instigator of passion among young girls: “τέτοιαις λογής και τσι καρδιές, τα λόγια που γρουκούσι / με τάξη απού τσ' αγαφτικούς οι κορασές, κινούσι / στον πόθο πλια παρά ποτέ περιτοπλιάς πωμένα / να ὄναι με τέχνη κι όμορφα περίσσα σοθεμένα” (A 327-330).¹²⁷ Panaretos on the other hand, refuses to exploit rhetoric when addressing Erophile and claims that passion and suffering have made his language skills seem eloquent and authentic.

In his *Book of the Courtier* Castiglione further delineated the perfect Renaissance man. He not only had to be noble, but also display marital prowess and the courage to confront his enemies.¹²⁸ Lacking aristocratic breeding, Panaretos has to prove himself doubly. A war with Persia¹²⁹ would provide an opportunity for him to reveal his potential and to impress the King and his daughter by putting his own life in danger as commanded. “Μα μέσα σ' τούτο τον καιρό, σαν ξεύρεις, εσηκώθη / τση Πέρσιας ο πόλεμος, κ' η εξουσιά μου δόθη / η πρώτη απού το βασιλιό, κ' ήτονε χρεία στανιώς μου / να πάγω εκεί απού μ' όρισεν αφέντης ο δικός μου” (A 205-208).¹³⁰ His brave confronting of danger would also strengthen his credentials as a dauntless young man and worthy suitor. Panaretos duly proved himself in the Persian war as a fearless warrior to the extent that his friend Carpophoros compares him with the Homeric

¹²³ Translation: When it receives a copious flood; e'en so then love began / To stir with hope my hapless heart, and through my being ran, / When I first heard such kindly words from out her lips forth shoot, / And when these in my inmost heart took ever deeper root.

¹²⁴ Translation: The beauties of my lady's face her mien compassionate / showed me how by the loss of love her heart was desolate.

¹²⁵ Payne (1970: 92).

¹²⁶ Ibid., (92).

¹²⁷ Translation: In such wise do the words she hears fall from a lover's tongue, / E'en spoken softly, stir the heart of maid with passion wrung. / They make that passion higher rise, and more they stir that heart, / If with due care they are composed and framed with comely art.

¹²⁸ Payne (1970: 92). Baldassare Castiglione (1478-1529) was not only a soldier, but practiced diplomacy and poetry. His *Book of the Courtier* became a very popular handbook among young noble men seeking a training in gentlemanly virtues.

¹²⁹ Chortatsis makes deliberate use of anachronism when placing the war in Persia.

¹³⁰ Translation: But in the meantime, as thou knowst, there rose the Persian war, / And by the orders of the king command supreme I bore / Over his army; thus was I compelled in my despite / Thither to go where my lord commanded me to fight.

hero Achilles, implicitly attesting (in the process) to Chortatsis's classical education and predilection for names and places drawn from classical antiquity.¹³¹

Other favourable circumstances arise subsequently to allow Panaretos to demonstrate his chivalrous virtues and convince Erofile of his "fine Amor". When the war finishes and he returns triumphant to his country, a joust¹³² organized by the King provides both a new challenge and a beneficial outcome. The Byzantine emperor Kantakuzenos stated the origin of such tournaments to be in the west: "και την λεγόμενην τζουστρίαν και τα τερνεμένα αυτοί πρώτοι εδίδαξαν Ρωμαίους ούπω πρότερον περί των τοιούτων ειδότας ουδέν."¹³³ Panaretos visits the princess in order to receive her permission to take part in the joust, even though this would not have been strictly necessary. He uses this opportunity to see her again, to gauge her reactions and to "manipulate" her feelings. Though he proved himself in the war as an excellent warrior, his humble presence in front of the princess and the expression of his full submission to her, in keeping with chivalric practice, aim to enhance his image.

This is the last but one phase in the amorous conquest of Erofile. She responds, in a commonplace manner in romantic poetry of Chortatsis's time, by giving Panaretos a valuable amulet¹³⁴ or "γκόλφι"¹³⁵ from her own bosom, as a first token of her affection. The precious jewel is the first hint of her secret priceless love and carries connotations of women's power to "dispose their own wealth" and carry their dowry in the form of a "title, property, jewel gifts or cash out of the natal family to alien households after their marriage."¹³⁶ The poet skillfully introduces the challenges of war and the "giostra" to allow Panaretos to prove his heroism and also to express his full submission to the princess through the verses "Μ' απείς η μάχη εσκόλασε...; Μ' απείς η γκιόστρα εσκόλασε" (A 297, A 359),¹³⁷ which reflect the gradual and industrious endeavours and the difficult ordeals he had to endure to build up his image and secure the love of Erofile. A further hint of Panaretos's strategic plan, aimed at evoking mutual feelings in the heroine, is seen when he, as the winner of the tournament, visits her immediately "ζιμιόν".¹³⁸ He kneels down as a sign of his full submission, expresses his gratitude once again and apologises for not being able to offer her the "prizes" or "χαρίσματα"¹³⁹ of the tournament since they are not appropriate or useful to a maiden. The inadequacy of Panaretos's material possessions, symbolised here by the "giostra's gifts", are

¹³¹ Holton (2001: 90-92).

¹³² Puchner (1998: 437) distinguishes between "torneo" and "giostra". The former represents Group-tournament (Gruppenkampf) while the latter is rather one-man tournament (Einzenkampf). But he notes further differences between the two kinds of tournaments. "Zunächst ist zwischen Gruppen- and Einzelkämpfen, mit wirklichem oder fingiertem Feind, zwischen "torneo" und "giostra" zu unterscheiden. Beide Arten können zu Fuss oder zu Pferd mit den verschiedensten Waffen ausgeführt werden...der Gruppenkampf mit Schranken "alla barbiera" oder "in campo aperto", der Zweikampf "giostra" in verschiedenen Duellformen, abhängig von Lanzenart oder anderem Waffengebrauch."

¹³³ Puchner (1998: 440).

¹³⁴ Levi & Schmitt (1997: 153). In the twelfth century romance of Thomas of Britain, *Tristan and Isolde*, there exists an exact parallel when Isolde gives Tristan before separating a ring of green jasper and promises to love him with the perfect love: "Je vos pramet par fine amor" (line 2722).

¹³⁵ Bancroft-Marcus (2000: 354) links *golfi* with *enkolpion*, which could be a Byzantine reliquary.

¹³⁶ King (1991: 49).

¹³⁷ Translation: But when we had returned again (for finished was the war) (A 297); But when that tourney finished was (A 359).

¹³⁸ Reflecting the popular folk saying "το γοργόν και χάρη έχει."

¹³⁹ Puchner (1998: 442) mentions tournaments whose prize was a wife, "Brautgewinnung". Panaretos refers to his material prize though.

balanced by his offer of his whole existence, “his body and soul”, “η ψυχή και το κορμί μου”, to his lady. He admits to only fighting for her honour and says that his reward - the love of his lady - will form the highest of the rewards he could ever expect. That was the last trial before Erophile confessed her love. She finally surrenders and admits her strong mutual feelings towards Panaretos, and a secret marriage by exchange of wedding rings and vows comes to crown their unconditional love and deep devotion.¹⁴⁰

In the first act, 514 verses present a lively exchange between Panaretos and his friend Carpophoros in which the hero confesses his passion for Erophile and gives all details of the development of their love. One of the weaknesses of the tragedy according to critics is the lack of an introductory segment in the second act when Erophile and her nurse make their first appearance on stage. Although Chortatsis named his tragedy after his heroine Erophile, the theatrical structure of the play gives rhetorical priority to Panaretos, whose 700 verses comprise more than one fifth of the whole play, while Erophile’s 520 verses afford her less rhetorical space to express herself. This disparity is not fully compensated by the fact that Panaretos gives all the necessary information about the secret love in act one. Erophile’s account of the development of the love story is lacking. Panaretos’s subjective version addressed to his friend uses the plural form to include his beloved. Like an omniscient narrator and a knower of a woman’s psyche, he interprets Erophile’s acts and words to reflect his own desire and passion, when he refers to their feelings: “Κι όλη να αλλάξει το ζιμιό κι άλλες να γεννηθούσι / μέσα στο νου μας πεθυμιές κι αλλιώς να μας κρατούσι / τυραννισμένους και τσι δυο σ’ μια λόχη απού ποτέ μας / δεν είχασι πρωτύτερα γνωρίσειν οι καρδιές μας.”; “για κείνον έπασκε κι αυτή, τον πόνο τον περίσσο / τω σωθικό τση, ως φρόνιμη, να μην τονέ γρουικήσω”; “Λυπητερά μ’ εβλέπασι, γλυκιά μ’ εσουντηρούσα, / σ’ τσι πόνους τση, σου φαίνετο, βοτάνι μου ζητούσα” (A 171-174, A 235-236, A 241-242).¹⁴¹ He describes her surrender in advance, confident that his endeavours and striving will bear fruit in the end.

¹⁴⁰ There is no mention of a marriage ceremony. The secret marriage included an exchange of wedding rings and vows leaving us to wonder if it would have been legally accepted. An illegitimate marriage would be easy to cancel, but Erophile strongly rejects this when Nena suggests it to her by way of “correcting her mistake”.

¹⁴¹ Translation: Swiftly our feelings changed; there grew within us new desire, / And this did hold us as it were tormented with a fire / Such as in previous time had ne’er enwrapped us with its flame, / Such as our hearts had never known until that moment came (A 171-174); So that is why she ever strove, being so wise of heart, / No sign of all the secret pain that tore her soul to impart (A 235-236); She looked at me with pity’s glance and with a mien so kind / It seemed that she some healing herb for her distress would find (A241-242).

3.3 Erophile's "inappropriate love" / love and social class

As stated before it has been regarded as a major weakness of the tragedy that it lacks an account from Erophile of the development of her feelings towards Panaretos. In Kornaros's *Erotokritos* a formula introduced the verses which described the gradual development of the love of Erotokritos and Aretousa respectively.¹⁴² Unlike Chortatsis, Kornaros contrived to give to both protagonists the same poetic space through this formula to express their own version of the growth of their love.

In the second act and second scene (verse 23) Erophile makes her forthright theatrical appearance. From her very first spoken verses she quickly gets to the point, directly confessing to her nurse her secret marriage to Panaretos and her attitude envisages her right to comport herself as she wished without any remorse. Nena, Erophile's nurse¹⁴³ reminds her of her social status and the fact that she has to follow her father's commands since he is her master. In her spoken verses she exhibits the lucidity of a Renaissance woman in foreshadowing the tragic end and acknowledging the role of women: "Να ρίξει ο κύρης το παιδί σ' όλους μας είν' δοσμένο / κι όποιο παιδί το θέλει αλλιώς, είν' καταδικασμένο" (B 61-62).¹⁴⁴ Erophile's rhetorical outburst in justification of her choice of Panaretos as her husband and her refusal to consider it a mistake, "Σφάλμα ποτέ δεν έκαμα με τέτοιο νιον αντάμι / παντρεία να κάμω, νένα μου, μα σφάλμα θέλω κάμει" (B 39-40),¹⁴⁵ is countered by Nena with warning of the dangers she faces if she does not correct her "mistake". Nena's advice that Erophile should keep her marriage secret and allow it to lapse glosses over the issue of the legal status of the "παντρεία", as Erophile refers to the lover's intimate arrangements.

On the other hand Chortatsis could also be reflecting the Venetian society which exercised great influence in Crete during the occupation. The humanist Marco Antonio Altieri described, in circa 1500, at great length the wedding rituals practiced by noble families. His description of the "nuptial customs" of the fifteenth century would at once define Erophile's marriage as illegal, since no marital ritual was performed; its secrecy prevented the members of the bride's and the groom's families from conducting negotiations regarding the dowry before ratifying the wedding, and last but not least, socialising at the event by way of

¹⁴² Sabatakakis (2004: 131-132). Erotokritos begins his narration with the verses "Αρχή ήτονε πολλά μικρή κι άφαντη δίχως άλλο / μα το μικρό με τον καιρό εγήνηκε μεγάλο / ελόγιασα να τη θωρώ κι ως τη θωριά να σώνω / και μετά κείνη να περνώ και να μηδέν ξαπλώνω" (A 297-300) while Aretousa follows a repeating pattern of verses to express her own view: "Αρχή ήτονε πολλά μικρή κι ανήφιστη την πρώτη / κι ούδ' ήλπίζα να σκλαβωθή έτοιας λογής η νιότη / μια κάποια λίγη πεθυμιά θυμούμαι κι ήρχισε μου / και το τραγούδι κι ο σκοπός εγροίκουν κ' ήρεσε μου" (C 225-228).

¹⁴³ The name of Erophile's nurse is Chrisonomi, derived from χρυσός + νόμος and translated as the "golden rule/golden law", which makes allusion to her role as a wise woman, advising her mistress to accept the social rules applicable to women of that time. On the other hand Erophile's name (etymologically from the classical Eros (love, or God of love/son of Aphrodite + the verb φιλέω=to love) foreshadows her strong attitudes regarding love. Cf. Babiniotis Lexicon (2002).

¹⁴⁴ Translation: It is a law that o'er his child a father should hold sway, / And rightly men condemn that child who would not thus obey.

¹⁴⁵ Translation: Error in no wise did I make when I resolved to take, / My nurse, in wedlock youth like him; but I shall error make.

welcoming the newly-weds to their new social roles.¹⁴⁶ Though Erophile's nurse defines the feelings of her mistress towards Panaretos as "love" and not as "infatuation", that acknowledgement does not stop her from trying to convince her mistress of the inappropriateness of that love: "Έτσι, κερά μου, λόγιασε λιγάκι για καλό σου / πώς η αγάπη σου κρατεί τυφλό το λογισμό σου / μ' αν αναβλέψεις, θες ιδεί το πώς δεν ειν' τιμή σου / να θέλεις ένα γι' άντρα σου, οπού 'ναι δουλευτής σου" (B 63-66).¹⁴⁷

How could love prove to be so disastrous as in this paradigmatic Cretan Renaissance tragedy? When might a woman's love be characterised as inappropriate and have such an impact on the life of people that it leads them consciously or unconsciously to death? To answer those questions a consideration of women's situation and status in Renaissance Crete is necessary. As evidence regarding women's life on the island in that period is sparse, we will also take into consideration data on women's life in Venice, which exerted major influence on the island, and furthermore corresponding information about women's role in the Renaissance derived from parallel accounts of women's lives in Europe.

McKee states in her historical article concerning women in Crete under Venetian occupation that Greek women were ranked lower than Greek and Latin men and explains that this is due to the intention of the conqueror to downgrade the natives in social, juridical and economic areas. Women had to suffer doubly in this situation, by virtue of being Greek added to the disadvantage of being women.¹⁴⁸ Women living in the late Renaissance period in Crete did actually follow the destiny of other European women and especially Venetian women, due to the occupation of the island by the Venetians, and spent most of their lives being the daughters or wives of men who also "were their legal guardians".¹⁴⁹ At the very dawn of the 17th century two Venetian women published a work asserting women's equality with the opposite sex. They were Lucrezia Marinella and Modesta Pozzo (Moderata Fonte). The former wrote the combative discourse *La nobilita et l' eccellenza delle donne*, and the latter the dialogical work *Il merito delle donne*. Both dealt with topics that were especially controversial at the end of the 16th century regarding women's rights and abilities, and sought to counter contemporary misogynistic attitudes.¹⁵⁰

In the essay "Did Women Have a Renaissance" Joan Kelly-Gadol¹⁵¹ considers aspects of the regulation of women's sexuality in comparison with that of men, their role in the economic and political areas, the impact of women on their social environment, the accessibility of education to them and the prevalent ideology about women of that time, and

¹⁴⁶ Klapisch-Zuber (1985: 181-6). Marco Antonio Altieri presents the structure of wedding rituals in fifteenth century Roman society as a triptych. In the first phase, the negotiations of the families, assisted by a "sensale" or marriage broker, would most probably be written down "scritta" and most probably be kept secret, and would be followed by the ratification of the alliance "fermare il parentado", sometimes involving a handclasp or kiss on the mouth. In the second phase, which took part in the house of the bride, a notary "poses the question prescribed by the Church" and the exchange of wedding rings followed, which positioned the betrothed couple among married people. The third phase comprised the socialising of the event through festivities held in the groom's house.

¹⁴⁷ Translation: And so, my lady, for thy weal ponder awhile in mind, / And thou wilt learn thy passion's force keepeth thy judgement blind. / But when that judgement eyes regains, then wilt thou fully see / It fits not honour man to wed who servant is to thee.

¹⁴⁸ McKee (1998: 37, 41).

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., (41).

¹⁵⁰ Cox (1995: 513-514).

¹⁵¹ Kelly-Gadol (1977: 139).

concludes that Women did not have a Renaissance. Although Italy was at the time a step ahead of the other European countries, due to its economic progress and advances in the social system, all these changes which might have helped women to improve their social status, unfortunately served to marginalise them further. Joan Kelly-Cadol argues that the “feminine” virtues of being chaste and passive “suited better the needs of the expanding bourgeoisie, and the declining nobility.”¹⁵² Christiane Klapisch-Zuber with her essays of 1985 corroborates Joan Kelly’s negative view with further material about the exploitation of Florentine Renaissance patrician women “for the purpose of their men folk.” Women’s role according to Chojnacki was a central concern of the male members of their families inasmuch as their advantageous marriage was a means to achieve their goals in social economic and political areas.¹⁵³

Furthermore women should honour and obey their fathers, brothers, or husbands, who for their part were responsible for the woman’s well being, which was in most cases “translated” as agreement to an arranged marriage in order to strengthen the family’s status and compensate the responsible men for the years of “sheltering and protecting” their female family members. Thus marriage served as an implement of social and economic advancement, a process in which women were treated as a marketable commodity.

Even after a good marriage women did not have the power most of the time to make major decisions either on their marital life or on the upbringing of their children. Stanley Chojnacki refers in his essay “The most serious duty” to the Venetian patrician Francesco Barbaro, who in his “*patria potestas*”, a treatise on marriage which he wrote in 1415-1416, declared motherhood to be the most important role for women while also advocating the restriction of their power and authority. Patriarchal principles continued to prevail whereby women’s role was to contribute silently to the upbringing of their children by obeying the orders of their husbands.¹⁵⁴ Characteristic of Medieval and Renaissance women’s subordination is the “Manual for his Wife” written in c.1392 by an anonymous author. In his “marital guide” in a form of articles, he describes what a perfect housewife should look like, what her duties are and how she should please her husband.

The following quotation from the articles reveals women’s inferior position and also the virtues of chastity and obedience, which characterised the ideal Renaissance woman. “The fourth article is that you should dwell in continence and chastity, after the example of Susanna, of Lucretia, and others. The fifth article is that you should love your husband after the example of Sarah, Rebecca and Rachel. The sixth article is that you should be humble and obedient to him after the example of Griselda... The seventh that you be careful and heedful of his person.”¹⁵⁵ The authority of the Father was unquestioned in all aspects of the life of a young unmarried girl. She was sheltered and protected by him till the day she would pass from the authority of her father or brother to that of her husband. From the day she wed, her husband was responsible for her and her well being. This responsibility allowed prospective husbands in the course of determining the contract of marriage to negotiate large dowries in support of their new households. Marriage arrangements were considered to be the

¹⁵² Kelly-Gadol (1977: 137).

¹⁵³ Chojnacki (1998: 63-64).

¹⁵⁴ Chojnacki (1991: 133).

¹⁵⁵ Amt (1993: 319).

“weightiest business” for a family. This financial transaction was rationalised in terms of providing for women’s financial protection and the enhancement of her kin.¹⁵⁶ Hufton further states that sometimes the magnitude of a dowry required for one prospective bride was such to make it impossible to provide for all female family members. Sometimes in the middle classes only the first born daughter could “compensate” a future husband with her dowry, while another daughter sometimes could get married due to the financial support of an unmarried aunt. The other female members of the family were to remain unmarried in order to keep family property within the family.¹⁵⁷ Women had to accept the husband chosen for them or risk disaster. A rebellious, disobedient and undutiful daughter threatened social stability and the patriarchal system and might face death in challenging parental rule. A marriage in which a father’s and daughter’s choice of the husband coincided was probably the exception.¹⁵⁸

The authority of fathers in the Renaissance was considerable, although dramatists such as Shakespeare and his contemporary Cretan poets Chortatsis and Kornaros called it into question. Are there any limits? What about love? How far can an enraged father go? Tragedies written at that time graphically depict the verbal and physical violence that a father might inflict on his defiant daughter. A female rejecting the “masculine code”¹⁵⁹ is always mistreated and sometimes has to pay the ultimate price for her disobedience.

The social status of women in Crete during the Cretan Renaissance (1570-1669) was similar. Bancroft-Marcus¹⁶⁰ points out that even women belonging to the upper classes of Veneto-Cretan society were subject to the authority of the male members of their families. Unmarried daughters were kept in their houses usually guarded by a reliable nurse like Frosyni in *Erotokritos* or Chrisonomi in *Erophile* in order to protect their honour and “marriageability”, in other words the potential for a socially and financially advantageous transaction. The fate of Cretan women was closely intertwined with the interests of the male members of their family. At the top of the hierarchy was the father figure, and a daughter was obliged to follow his rules and obey his orders. If she was lucky, the marriage arranged by him would satisfy her longing for love and security within the patriarchal society.¹⁶¹

In the tragedy *Erophile*, Chortatsis depicts a desperate clash between the two sexes. The authoritarian father and the inferior but defiant daughter give an account, even through the imaginative art of a drama set in a different time and place, of the existing social boundaries in women’s lives. Although women seem to have equal abilities with men of that time, at least those among the protagonists of the Cretan tragedies, this status seems to be fictitious and it could be claimed to reflect prematurely “feministic” views on the part of the Cretan authors. Cathy Jorgensen Itnyre¹⁶² refers in her book *Medieval Family Roles* to the special relationship in some sentimental novels and romances of chivalry between the father-king and the daughter-princess. This description applies to Aretousa in *Erotokritos* or the two female protagonists in *Erophile* and *Rhodolinos*. They are all victims of an arranged marriage and

¹⁵⁶ Hufton (1993: 16).

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., (16).

¹⁵⁸ Hansen (1993: 13).

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., (1993: 11).

¹⁶⁰ Bancroft-Marcus (1983: 19-37).

¹⁶¹ Ibid., (19-37).

¹⁶² Jorgensen-Itnyre (1996: 199).

they serve their families as exchanged object to strengthen family alliances and status. All three protagonists in some way deceived their fathers or ignored the social and patriarchal rules and in all cases the price to pay was high. Loss of their family protection, deprivation of all benefits connected with their social class and further exposure to the revengeful acts of their enraged fathers. Nena expresses in the verses she addresses to Erophile the great danger to which her mistress is exposed: “γιατί φοβούμαι και δειλιώ, κι ο νους μου δίχως άλλο / μου λέγει τίβοτας κακό πως θα σε βρει μεγάλο” (B 85-86).¹⁶³ The “bad thing” denotes the social impact the revelation of the secret marriage will have on Erophile’s life and foreshadows her death. She senses that this is only the beginning of a series of revelations which will trigger the revenge of her father: “πρίχου άλλη μεγαλύτερη κακομοιριά πλακώσει” (B 94).¹⁶⁴ Nena characterises the love as inappropriate: “τσ’ αγάπες τσ’ άπρεπες” (B 101). On the other hand, Erophile manifests the opposite of her nurse, as a strong young woman with all the innocence of her youth, the absolute conviction of her decision and unquestioned confidence in her feelings towards her beloved.

The recipe for a good tragedy often relies in the inescapable destiny of a strong female character captured in a passionate relationship and refusing to compromise in any way. Erophile combines all these. She is in love; she fights for her right to make her personal choices and leaves no scope for compromise. It is striking that she makes frequent use in her rhetoric of the negative particle “not=δεν” (act 2, throughout the second scene) when justifying her secret marriage and passion for Panaretos. These negative verses serve to avert Nena from striving to convince her to “cancel” the secret marriage and also to strengthen her own resolve and leave no room for regrets or doubts. She admits to no mistake, nor to having the option of abandoning Panaretos, and will not entertain the notion that her passion for her beloved is in any way inappropriate. These continuous negations delineate Erophile’s unyielding character and her defiance of social convention, which determine the course of the tragic plot.

Despite her full conviction as to the flawlessness of her decisions, Chortatsis reveals his heroine’s doubts and fears through her dreams. Stewart¹⁶⁵ states that the nature of dreams is involuntary in their occurrence and they “expose the individual to powerful novelties that must somehow be accommodated in the psyche and personality.” Dreams formed a major theme in literary works not only in the late Renaissance but also in the early Cretan Renaissance. However, the interpretation and importance of dreams varied among the genres, their use in the tragedies being mostly to foreshadow the tragic destiny of the protagonists.¹⁶⁶ In both tragedies of the Cretan Renaissance, *Erophile* and *Rhodolinos*, the dreams-nightmares cause the heroines much anguish, and the “shadows” and “signs” give rise to primarily negative interpretations. The shadows may reflect death itself, the underworld or the bad conscience of the heroines. Jung distinguished in the interpretation of dreams between the

¹⁶³ Translation: But as for me, I faint with fear, and I forebode in mind / Some mighty evil cometh on and me will surely find.

¹⁶⁴ Translation: Ere that another greater ill upon the sufferer seize.

¹⁶⁵ Stewart (2002: 297).

¹⁶⁶ There are in all four genres of Cretan Renaissance literary works in which dreams play a significant part. In the tragedy *Rhodolinos*, the dream of the heroine closely follows Erophile’s dream in Chortatsis’s tragedy, not only in the almost identical verses “Ασκιές φοβούμαι κι όνειρα κι άλλα σημάδια τόσα” (A, 517) but also in its symbolism.

“prospective” and the “retrospective”, arguing that dreams reflect the dreamer’s past but also provide indications of his future goals and aims. “On the one hand, the psyche gives a picture of the remnants and traces of the entire past, and, on the other, but expressed in the same picture, the outlines of the future inasmuch as the psyche creates its own future.”¹⁶⁷ In the case of Erophile this is distinctive. She expresses all her anguish and fear to her nurse. Her nightmares reflect her agony of knowing too well the full extent of the consequences that would be sure to follow upon revelation of her secret marriage; this indeed would be the catalyst to the wrath of her father. Her dreams prophesy her tragic destiny. The dangers she is exposed to in her nightmares symbolise the real confrontation of insuperable obstacles in her real life. Darkness, shadows of dead kings from the past, lions, wild animals, blood, dark caves and wild waves in the sea¹⁶⁸ announce her vulnerability and her awareness of the perils of fighting against the whole “dark” patriarchal system, complete with ancestors still striving to keep things as they are in order to secure their superiority (shadows of dead kings), cruelty directed against disobedient women (blood) and dangers lurking in wait for anyone who dares to question the social order (wild animals). Freud pointed out that dreams are

“a psychic phenomenon of full value and indeed the fulfilment of a wish; it takes its place in the concatenation of the waking psychic actions which are intelligible to us and it has been built up by a highly complicated intellectual activity.”¹⁶⁹

In the light of Freud’s statement, one would argue that Erophile’s nightmares and her repeated exposure to the threat of death in her dreams could be effectively connected with her inner wish to be united with her beloved, except as the expression of her pure and sacrificial love. She senses the insuperability of the obstacles to her love, impediments already existing before the two protagonists fell in love, and foreshadows the loss of Panaretos: “Πώς παίρνουσι το ταίρι μου μέσ’ από την αγκάλη / τούτη, συχνιά μου φαίνεται, και μ’ απονιά μεγάλη” (B 119-120).¹⁷⁰ This loss will negate her will to live.

Chrisonomi considers her mistress’s passion for Panaretos disastrous since it alienates her from her former self and motivates all her actions against her destined social role; nevertheless she tries to settle the fears of the Princess. One might have expected her, due to her age, to be more superstitious than the young Erophile. However, her explanation of the dreams is based on practical thinking and manifests her wisdom and rationality. She interprets them as fears, worries and suggests that her mistress should not allow them to turn against her: “Φόβοι εύκαιροι, Ερωφίλη μου, φόβοι εύκαιροι είν’ αυτείνοι, / κι ο νους σου να σε πολεμού δεν πρέπει να τσ’ αφήνει” (B 137-138).¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁷ Jung (1951: 94-95).

¹⁶⁸ In Kornaro’s verse romance *Erotokritos*, which was influenced by Chortatsis, the heroine Aretousa also dreams of the wild sea which symbolizes the danger to which she is exposed, *Erotokritos* (D, 53-76).

¹⁶⁹ Freud (1913: 1).

¹⁷⁰ Translation: I oftentimes dream that they my spouse snatch from my loving arms, / And with a hard and cruel heart – unheeding my alarms.

¹⁷¹ Translation: My Erophile, these thy fears are but an idle thing, / Nor should they, if thy mind is sound, to thee annoyance bring.

Chrisonomi's opinion on the interpretation of dreams is inconsistent with her subsequent position when she is faced with the dead body of Erophile and regrets not having foreseen the tragic message of the dream and not having protected her mistress, whose intuitively "right" interpretation had not saved her from a tragic fate.

The realm of dreams with its symbolism and allegories will soon reflect Erophile's real life. Erophile recounts to Nena another dream she had the previous night. Erophile's dreams belonged according to Artemidoros to *oneiroi*¹⁷² since they in general foreshadow the danger to which she is exposed and reflect her anxiety and bad conscience about the secret marriage with Panaretos. Therefore her nightmare functions as prophetic as it is a delineation of her current situation: "δύο περιστέρια πλουμιστά μου φαίνετονε νένα, / σ' ένα ψηλότατο δεντρό κ' εθώρου φωλεμένα, / κ' εσμίγασι κανακιστά και σπλαχνικά εφιλούσα, / κ' ένα τ' αλλού τα πάθη τως, σου φαίνετο, εμιλούσα" (B 147-150).¹⁷³ The two pigeons symbolise her and her beloved and portray their relationship; being in love with each other, enjoying their tender moments while on the other hand trying to alleviate their woes, until a hungry wolf takes one from the tender arms of the other and swallows it. The other pigeon, not being able to handle the death of its partner, commits suicide. "Και τ' άλλον απού πόμεινε τόσα πολλά λυπήθη, / απού κ' εκείνο να μη ζει μιαν ώρα εβουλήθη, / και το ζιμιό τη μούρη του προς τση καρδιάς τα μέρη / μπήχνει κι αυτό και σφάζεται για τ' ακριβό του ταίρι" (B 155-158).¹⁷⁴ The way one of the two pigeons dies is crucial to the interpretation of the dream. It has been devoured after being badly mauled by the wolf. Panaretos's death will follow the same pattern. He not only will be killed by the vengeful King, but also be mangled and offered as a gruesome wedding present to Erophile.

The dream, correctly deciphered therefore summarises the tragic plot and foreshadows in almost every detail the tragic end of the protagonists. Jones states that "the attacking animal, demon, or vague pressure really represents the parent. It is probable that the extreme classical form of nightmares occurs only in persons with a considerable masochistic element in their constitution."¹⁷⁵ It is striking that Erophile's interpretation of the dream bears witness to her awareness of her social role and of the consequences of her defiance of the predestined gender role of a noble woman. She defines herself and her beloved as the prey and her father as the predator "λούπης μην είν' ο κύρης μου τρομάσσω και φοβούμαι, / κ' εμείς τα περιστέρια αυτά κι ομάδι σκοτωθούμε" (B 161-162).¹⁷⁶ The double death of the pigeons evincing their unconditional love and devotion alludes to the theme of *Liebestod*.

Chortatsis lived in the Renaissance period and probably incorporated in his verses historical and social features of his own era. Despite the progress beyond Medieval thought and

¹⁷²Artemidorus, transl. White R.J (1990: 1.1). Artemidorus distinguished between "enypnia" i.e. dreams expressing desire or state of the body and "oneiroi" that could be interpreted since they considered being prophetic, products of the soul or more probably a message from the gods.

¹⁷³ Translation: Methought I saw two turtle-doves of from surpassing fair, / Who did their nest amid the boughs of lofty tree prepare. / So lovingly and tenderly they billed and cooed away, / That each the other tale of love was telling, you might say.

¹⁷⁴ Translation: But the remaining one this loss such bitter grief did give / That she desired not e'en an hour beyond that time to live. / And so her beak into the depths of her own heart she plunged, / And for the loss of her true love her own life straight expunged.

¹⁷⁵ Jones (1974: 113).

¹⁷⁶ Translation: I know that kite my father is; therefore I shake with dread, / For we two are those turtle-doves of which the blood was shed.

superstition, some Renaissance thinking retained the deep-rooted belief that fate and destiny are unavoidable. Erophile's final dream manifests this thought. Her fate is already prescribed and any action to avoid the tragic end will happen only for the sake of the plot. Fate, destiny, or luck (ριζικό, μοίρα, τύχη) contribute immensely from the very beginning of the love story to the tragic end of the protagonists. Naiburg's statement that "classical tragedy presents us with a double vision - of the individuals as acted upon as agent, as subjected to fate and as possessing character that determines action"¹⁷⁷ is applicable to the perception of fate or destiny in Chortatsis's tragedy. However, a contradictory opinion of the protagonists' share of predictable and unpredictable events occurring in their life is well expressed in the verses spoken by Carphoros, Panaretos's best friend, when advising his desperate friend to blame fate for all mistakes of the past in order to be consoled and avoid mental anguish: "μα δίνοντας του ριζικού το φταίσιμο, θα πιάνει / παρηγοριά στην πρίκα του, να μην τον αποθάνει" (A 103-104).¹⁷⁸ He assures his friend that heaven¹⁷⁹ and destiny dragged them to this situation: "και να λογιάζεις μοναχάς πώς ουρανός κ' η μοίρα / εσέ κ' εκείνην ακομή σ' τούτο το πράμα εσύρα" (A 439-440).¹⁸⁰

Erophile, on the other hand considers herself subjected to fate as a result of her social obligations as a princess, a fact that will further define her actions as inappropriate. The tragic aspect of her presence is her acceptance of her own contribution to the love affair and the awareness of the intertwining of fate and character. She blames her destiny for her immensely bad luck (βαρόμοιρης) and further defines her social status as "bad destiny". Destiny therefore predetermines her private life and abolishes her right to choose her mate, the crucial fact that will lead her into conflict with her father and master. The character of Erophile plays the major role in her destiny. A defiant daughter, uncompromising and till the end combative for her right to be her own master, "ορίζουσιν άλλοι την εμαυτή μου" (B 59), while trying to escape her social boundaries, she will face the cruelty of her only close blood relative. It is obvious that both lovers consciously gave in to their "inappropriate" love, increased the potential for tragedy by a secret marriage and further provoked their destiny by being absolutely uncompromising thereafter. A love affair which is ratified with a "marriage" and further consummated leaves no scope for retrieval and irreparably harms Erophile's "marriageability". The fact that she cannot further serve her father as an exchangeable object since there are no negotiable "remains" of his noble daughter, challenges her destiny and contributes to the condemnation of Erophile.

Although fate, fortune, destiny, chance and luck are not underlying themes in *Erophile*, as in the verse romance *Erotokritos*,¹⁸¹ they are very often mentioned in a variety of different nouns such as "ριζικό, μοίρα, τύχη, κακομοιριά" and accompanying adjectives or phrases such as "ασβολωμένα, πρικαμένα, κακορίζικη, τροχός της τύχης, τον κύκλον του ριζικού."

Nena's inconsistency also reflects her attitude to the role of fate or destiny in human life. When listening to Erophile's confession about her passion and secret marriage to Panaretos,

¹⁷⁷ Naiburg (2006: 445).

¹⁷⁸ Translation: He should set down his error's blame unto Dame Fortune's count, / And comfort win, in that the sin cannot to death amount.

¹⁷⁹ With "heaven" he most probably refers to the contribution of god.

¹⁸⁰ Translation: Thou shouldst ponder that nought else it is save heaven and fate / That have brought thee and her alike into your present state.

¹⁸¹ Betts, Gauntlett & Spilias (2004: xx).

she not even once justifies her mistress's actions as Carphoros did for his friend Panaretos, that is by blaming fate for everything. She calls the marriage a "mistake" ascribing the challenging of fate only to Erophile's irrationality and passion. She believes in human contribution to creating one's own destiny and represents the voice of reason regarding life's misfortunes: "Κι απείς το σφάλμα γίνηκε, μη στέκεσαι σε θλίψη, / γιατί κ' εις τούτη τη δουλειά γιατρεία δε θέλει λείψει / κι άλλα σαν τούτα εγίνησα κ' εφτιάστηκα με γνώση, / κ' η γνώση σ' τούτο δύνεται τέλος καλό να δώσει" (B 167-170).¹⁸²

It is striking to see that Chortatsis through the verses spoken by Nena illustrates the ambivalence of attitudes regarding the contribution of fate and destiny to human behaviour. He makes her contradict herself in a monologue delineating the omnipotence of luck. Rich and poor, noble and underclass all remain under the sway of luck: "Πλούσοι και μπορεζάμενοι, φτωχοί, μικροί και δούλοι, / τση τύχης αποκατωθιό βλέπω πως στέκουν ούλοι, / κ' η τύχη σαν ασύστατη μηδένα δεν αφήνει, / παρά όσο τσ' είναι μπορετό, τόσο να τονέ κρίνει" (B 197-200).¹⁸³

Throughout the tragedy, fortune seems to rule human actions and their outcomes, as expressed in the symbolism of the wheel of fortune. As Campbell states, fortune is "symbolized by the wheel, whose circular shape signifies closure and whose function of turning suggests the possibility (indeed the inevitability) of reversal" and it is self-evident that the good fortune of a person "necessitates someone else's failure."¹⁸⁴ The King's advisor, referring to his Master's bad luck, expresses the deep-rooted belief that destiny is changeable and good luck turns into bad fortune in an instant. The wheel of fortune cannot be controlled and its turn from high to low (από ψηλά χαμηλά) or from one direction to the opposite (ξανάστροφα) determines human destiny. "Αν έν' κ' οι καλορίζικοι τον κύκλον εμπορούσα / του ριζικού, με τα σκοινιά δεμένο να κρατούσα, / γή αν είν' κ' η τύχη σαν τροχός¹⁸⁵ δεν ήθελε γυρίζει, / κ' εκείνους απού κάθονται ψηλά, να μη γκρεμνίζει,.... / μ' απείτις κάποιο ριζικό τον κόσμο ανακατώνει / και πλούσους ρίχνει χαμηλά κι ανήμπορους σηκώνει" (A 559-566).¹⁸⁶ The wheel of fortune is an exceedingly old concept becoming prominent in the ancient Greek world in the fourth century BC where at that time major political shifts took place and "τύχη" "chance", was interpreted as a ruler of human life.¹⁸⁷ Through the centuries the concept of "τύχη" has been adopted by literature to explain "the endless misfortunes of the hero and heroine."¹⁸⁸

¹⁸² Translation: But since what has been done is done, let not thy grief prevail, / For to the healing of this work a balm will not thee fail. / Other things like to this have been, and were by judgement healed, / And by good judgement issue fair for this will be revealed.

¹⁸³ Translation: The rich and powerful and the poor and men of low estate / must, as I see, impartially bow to decrees of fate. / And Fortune, who so fickle is, in this doth constant grow, / In that to every man alike she deals some heavy blow.

¹⁸⁴ Campbell (2003: 6).

¹⁸⁵ The following introductory verses in Kornaro's poem *Erotokritos* "Του κύκλου τα γυρίσματα που ανεβοκατεβαίνουν / και του τροχού που ώρες ψηλά κι ώρες στα βάθη πηγαίνουν" seem to be influenced by Chortatsis above mentioned verses referring to the wheel of fortune.

¹⁸⁶ Translation: Now if the fortunate had power the goddess to hold fast, / And could o'er Fortune's circling wheel a rope to bind it cast, / Again, if Fortune did not like a wheel round spinning go, / And daring wights who sit aloft send crashing down below, / ...But since some fate the things of earth seems upside down to turn, / And raises poor men to a height and doth the wealthy spurn.

¹⁸⁷ Betts, Gauntlett, Spiliadis (2004: xx).

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., (xx).

Erophile is portrayed by Chortatsis as a dynamic young girl whose personal choices contradict the concept of misfortune. She is the one who decided to enter a relationship inappropriate to her social status. Her actions are clear and the consequences predictable. The poet most probably wanted to temper the responsibility of his heroine by making destiny contribute to her fate. Chortatsis is aware of the social norms regarding women but he calls them into question through his heroine's deeds. The power of *Eros* as it is delineated in the chorus justifies the dynamic and defiant character of his heroine. *Eros* who lives only in the greatest minds derives his power from the strength of his followers. The omnipotence of *Eros* in all human beings and gods, the ruler of all earth and water and animator of fauna and flora requires strong characters who enamoured will strive to unite with their beloved withstanding any impediments. “Ερωτα, που συχνιά σ’ τσι πλια μεγάλους / κι όμορφους λογισμούς κατοικημένος / βρίσκεσαι, τσι μικρούς μισώντας τσ’ άλλους” (Chorus 1, 585-587).¹⁸⁹ *Eros* is the initiator of everything, the instigator of defiance and the one who promises a new beginning. *Eros* could symbolise life in opposition to death, the change in old patterns and rules, while death could represent a submissive attitude towards social norms and patterns. Erophile could portray the voice of Renaissance women who wanted to define their own lives. *Eros* in its irrationality and strength forms a source of defiance of inequality and injustices in reference to the two sexes in the Renaissance period.

Hence Erophile is portrayed by Chortatsis as a dynamic young woman in love, experiencing most of the tremendous range of emotions and sensations, distinctly from the euphoric to the cataclysmic. The universal power of love has been extolled from the ancient world and through the centuries. Womack, though, argues that in the sixteenth century love became an essential philosophical theme and the main subject of poets and musicians, and this resulted in an unusually rich idiom for conveying love feelings.¹⁹⁰ While Andreas Capellanus stated “all are equal in love's court”¹⁹¹ the social norms and demands placed insuperable obstacles in the way of a young girl wanting to choose her own mate. Hierarchy played the major role and love was not important when it came to marriage matters since a girl was “given away” by her father or a male member, always for the advantage of the family. Hence there were to be found among the misogynistic attitudes to marriage also some intellectual voices in the sixteenth century praising love as an important element in marriage. To the former category belongs Antonio Brucioli who in the *Dialogo del matrimonio* commended marriage as “a way of preserving the human race, an outlet for male lust, a service to the state, a source of pleasure in a man's youth and of comfort in his old age”, while in the latter category Ariosto wrote in his fifth *Satira* (1523) “a husband-to-be should caress his wife and love her as he wants her to love him.”¹⁹²

¹⁸⁹ Translation: Love, who oft amid the greatest / And the fairest wits art found, / Thou the small ones of earth hatest.

¹⁹⁰ Womack (2006: 70).

¹⁹¹ Scattergood (2006: 63).

¹⁹² Richardson (2000: 195).

4 The resistance / *pothos*, *pathos*, *ponos* (desire, passion, pain)

4.1 Resisting *Eros*

Erophile's dynamic character is portrayed by Chortatsis in two different ways. Firstly, it is evident that she strives to resist the desire and passionate feelings of love that she finds herself developing for Panaretos, and secondly, she resists her destined social role and her father's condemnation of her love as "inappropriate". Three words delineate *Eros* between the two protagonists in the tragedy. In the beginning there is "Πόθος", the physical attraction which gradually becomes Passion "Πάθος" and contributes because of its "inappropriate nature" to great pain, "Πόνος". As Callaghan¹⁹³ points out, desire symbolises the motivation for a change, upheaval or disruption in the social, economic, political or sexual area and is vital for "female transgression". She further defines desire as a "force of disorder in terms of both conceptual and social systems." Consequently Erophile's desire and passion for Panaretos could form a threat to the social order and call into question the patriarchal system.

Peri, referring to *Erotokritos*, argues the close connection between *Eros* and disease and illustrates in his scheme five main functions of *Eros*, namely the "attack of *Eros*, the passive reactions of the person in love, the active resistance of the enamored, the domination of *Eros* and the surrender."¹⁹⁴ Erophile's resistance against the attack of *Eros* is described in her spoken verses as very active. Chortatsis portrays his heroine striving to resist to the amorous feelings because she foresees the social consequences. "Χίλιες φορές μ' εδόξευγε, χίλιες να πιάνει τόπο / στο νου μου δεν τον άφηνα μ' ένα γη μ' άλλο τρόπο / χίλιες τ' αφτιά εμολύβωνα, για να μηδέ γροικούσι / τσι σιργουλιές του τσι γλυκειές, τα μέλη να πονούσι / χίλιες με την πορπατηξιά, χίλιες με μια και μ' άλλη / στράτα τη θέρμη του έσβηνα στο νου μου τη μεγάλη" (C 19-24).¹⁹⁵

In an outburst against her destiny which she holds responsible for her unhappiness, Erophile admits to being very young when confronting the cataclysmic power of *Eros*. "Στη δούλεψη κ' εις τσι καημούς μικρή περίσσα εμπήκα / τσ' αγάπης, κι όλα τα κακά κ' οι παιδωμές μ' ευρήκα. / Μόνια μου με τον έρωτα καθ' ώραν επολέμου, / και κιανενός τα πάθη μου δεν έδειχνα ποτέ μου" (C 15-18).¹⁹⁶ *Eros* is powerfully presented in the tragedy as an archer¹⁹⁷ (μ' εδόξευγε), a soldier (ήτο του πολέμου; στρατιώτης), a master in love matters

¹⁹³ Callaghan (1989: 140).

¹⁹⁴ Peri (1999: 130). The translation from Greek is mine.

¹⁹⁵ Translation: A thousand times he pierced my heart, a thousand times I strove / to banish him this way or that lest he my heart should move. / A thousand times I, as it were, did fill my ears with lead / To keep his sweet enticements out and free myself from dread. / I thousand times paced to and fro and sought a path to find / Wherein I could refreshment seek to cool my burning mind.

¹⁹⁶ Translation: When I was yet a little lass love's slavery I knew, / And all the ills which from him come and torments round me grew. / All single-handed every hour with Love I had to fight, / And never dared what I endured to bring from dark to light.

¹⁹⁷ Cupid shoots his victims in the heart with his bow, and they immediately fall in love.

(μάστορας καλός) who makes his victims suffer (μ' επιίδευγε) until they give in. On the other hand *Eros* is also illustrated as sweet (γλυκύς), as a small child (παιδάκιν ίσα)¹⁹⁸ and as a friend (φίλος). He is described as a teacher (εδιδασκάλευγέ με) and as a manipulator of the human mind “χίλια ακριβά τασσίματα μου ἔτασσε κάθα μέρα / και χίλια μου ἔκτιζε όμορφα περβόλια στον αέρα” (C 33-34).¹⁹⁹

It is striking that Erophile does not regret falling in love and secretly getting married to Panaretos “μεταγνωμός δεν πολεμά, μηδέ ποτέ μου κρίνω, / δε θέλω πει κακά ἔκαμα να σμίξω μετά κείνο” (B 105-106),²⁰⁰ while Panaretos on the other hand is divided between two opposite feelings, the love for his lady and the devotion to his King and his striving to balance his conflicting desire and duty makes him suffer. “Γιαύτος δυο πάθη αδυνατά πάντα βαστώ συμμένα: / μεταγνωμό κι αμέτρητην αγάπη μετά μένα, / και δίχως να σκολάσουσι πάσκουσι και κοπιούσι / στην Κόλαση να με κρατού και να με τυρρανούσι” (A 413-416).²⁰¹ Ferrante states that a man without honour in his environment is also deprived of the possibility of becoming a “perfect lover” and this deprivation also results in his failure to become a “complete knight”. Ferrante further explains, referring to the legend of Tristan and Isolde, the existence of a paradox in a man’s life in that love between the two protagonists is not purely spiritual, so that there is always a “danger of the physical impulse asserting itself and taking control. Then love, for all its ennobling powers, becomes an anti-social force. The only way out of the dilemma is death.”²⁰² If Erophile and Panaretos had not consummated their love and had not been secretly married then both would be able to fulfil their social obligations and that would protect them from the King’s rage and vengeful acts. However, the power of *Eros* is described by the King’s advisor as so great that only those few mortals having a stone heart could ever resist his attacks. “Τον έρωτα κατέχομε πώς πάντα του γυρεύγει / με το δοξάρι κοκιαστό τσ’ ανθρώπους να δοξεύγει, / κ’ εκείνοι πόχου την καρδιά πέτρινη και μπορούσι / τση δύναμής του τση πολλής να παραντισταθούσι” (D 129-132).²⁰³ Hence Erophile’s refusal to accept her love for Panaretos as a weakness or mistake, as well as the fact that she admits to her nurse not being able to abandon her beloved, makes it obvious that the resistance that she verbally confesses was more of a fictitious nature, for the sake of the plot.

Chortatsis’s protagonist might be said to represent the Renaissance woman who would not be allowed as a young girl to bear sexual feelings for a man, nor to fulfill her deepest desire in her private life. Matthews-Grieco²⁰⁴ points out that sexuality during the Renaissance period became a concern aim for both “secular and religious authorities” and the human body was the object of a “conflicting attitude”. The Medieval mistrust of the body because it was

¹⁹⁸ The child is Cupid, the Latin name of *Eros*, the ancient god of love and desire, son of Aphrodite. He is often represented blindfolded symbolising that love is blind.

¹⁹⁹ Translation: A thousand precious promises he’d every day supply, / And thousand gardens fair for me he’d build aloft in sky.

²⁰⁰ Translation: Fight for my judgement; nor can I, e’en in thought, contemplate / That I shall say I’ve done ill-deed by choosing him for mate.

²⁰¹ Translation: And so two passions I do bear together fast combined / A love which never limit knows and a remorseful mind. / These without rest between themselves do strive and toil and fight / To keep me fast in torture’s grip and hold me down with might.

²⁰² Ferrante (1973: 12).

²⁰³ Translation: We know that Love is on the watch and ever on his bow / He hath his arrow ready strung to deal at man a blow. / And they who have a heart of stone are few, and rarely found / And they who are with strength endued to turn aside that wound.

²⁰⁴ Matthews-Grieco (1993: 46).

considered weak and “ephemeral” still survived in people’s mind, while on the other hand the Renaissance rediscovered the nude body and rehabilitated its physical attractiveness. However, sexuality was only acceptable in combination with marriage and “then solely in the function of procreation, sex was subject to a wave of control and repression that strove to mold the mores of urban and rural population along lines strictly defined by both church and state.”²⁰⁵ Erophile’s sexual desire for Panaretos echoes in the language as “τα μέλη να πονούσι; τη θέρμη του έσβηνα στο νου μου τη μεγάλη” (C 22; C 24)²⁰⁶ and emphasises bodily reactions more than the spiritual, and this demonstrates a conflicting attitude towards body and spirit, ephemeral and divine, secular and religious, that was a remnant from the Medieval era. That is the reason why Erophile rhetorically maintains that she with all her strength tried to avoid this passion. “Μα κείνος μάστορας καλός γιατί ήτο του πολέμου, / μέρα και νύκτα δυνατό πόλεμον έδιδε μου / κι ώρες με τ’ άρματα ως εχθρό κι ώρες ξαρματωμένο / τον έβλεπα σα φίλο μου περίσσα αγαπημένο” (C 25-28).²⁰⁷ In her spoken verses she further illustrates the power of *Eros* and touches upon the main psychological issue regarding the distinction between love and dependence: “Ποτέ δεν είναι μπορετό, μηδ’ είναι στην εξά μου, / για μεγαλύτερη αφορμή να τον αφήσω πλια μου” (B 67-69).²⁰⁸ Love is described by Erophile as a pleasure, though a painful one. In the end she gives in to passion for Panaretos and surrenders to the great power of love. She admits being beaten by him and becoming a slave: “τόσον, απού μ’ ενίκησε και δούλη απόμεινά του / και τση καημένης μου καρδιάς την εξουσά έδωκά του” (C 39-40).²⁰⁹

4.2 The obstacle

*And, as we may know from our readings of the poetry, if not from practical experience, love is seldom simple. Sexual desire pulls the lover one way, affection another, ambition a third, friends and family a fourth, society a fifth, religion a sixth, honor a seventh, idealism an eighth and so on.*²¹⁰

Although the love of Panaretos and Erophile is free of “interior” obstacles as their romantic and unconditional love manifests all through the play, “exterior” impediments will contribute to the inevitability of their tragic destiny. Erophile’s *Eros* towards Panaretos would not evoke such social conflict and create such dramatic intensity if it were not for “the obstacle”. Obstacles could take the form of restrictions imposed by the family environment or social

²⁰⁵ Matthews-Grieco (1993: 64).

²⁰⁶ Translation: free myself from dread; I could refreshment seek to cool my burning mind.

²⁰⁷ Translation: But he could hold me well in check as captain skilled in fight, / And day and night as doughty foe would make display of might. / Sometimes I saw him arms in hand, sometimes without his bow / In guise of friend, and that a friend most deeply loved, he’d go.

²⁰⁸ Translation: It is not possible, nor yet for my good name is’t fit, / Even for greater cause than this, my plighted troth to quit.

²⁰⁹ Translation: Therewith he won a victory, and I became his slave, / And o’er my miserable heart I him full empire gave.

²¹⁰ Low (1993: 32).

impediments relating to the hierarchy, gender issues, the morals of the relevant period of time or they could arise from other economic or social factors. Low²¹¹ states that in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries vast changes in the concept of people's private sphere started to "crystallize into recognizably modern form." These changes were according to scholars, due to further shifts in various areas such as economy, science, politics, and religion in early modern times. Though Kelly-Gadol²¹² recognises these changes in Renaissance Italy, she states that the "procapitalistic economy, its states, and the humanistic culture" did not promote women's power but rather contributed to "mold the noble woman into an aesthetic object: decorous, chaste, and doubly dependent."

Cretan tragedy, through the depiction of a strong woman who defends her right to her private life, could be reflecting the endeavours of contemporary noble women to participate in the social changes that took place during the Renaissance period on the island. Accordingly Erophile exceeds the noble woman of her time at various levels. She falls in love and of her own accord chooses her future husband, ignoring the social code and the hierarchical rules. She is aware of the impediments and the consequences of her choice and will employ all kinds of rhetoric before her father in order to defend her rights. Although Erophile's actions surpass women's behavior of her time, her private choices and desires were not heeded and there was no support from her family environment added to the fact of the condemnation by her father, confirms the view of Kelly-Gadol that Renaissance concepts of love and social behavior articulated the submission of women to their "male-dominated kin groups and served to justify the removal of women from an "unlady-like" position of power and erotic independence."²¹³ Erophile, with her beauty and femininity as described by Chortatsis, matches the ideal for Renaissance noble women, who were deprived of an active social life and any scope for independent thought or action.

On the other hand, the King's confession to his advisor of his intention to "give away" his daughter confirms women's subordinate social role. He expresses his deep love for his only child, an affection that has held him back hitherto from marrying off his daughter, although many noble men had asked for her hand. It is a tragic irony that he uses the same argument for delaying to arrange his daughter's wedding as does Erophile. He admits that the reason is that it would tear his heart apart to see his only daughter leave him and follow her future husband to his country. When Erophile later strives to avoid the arranged marriage she invokes the same reason, trying in vain to soften her father's heart in order to cancel the arrangements. The King though, due to his old age, has to secure his kingdom, and by arranging and regulating the wedding arrangements he wishes to ensure new alliances through the husband chosen for his daughter. On the other hand, Erophile's age, described as "δότομη²¹⁴ οι χρόνοι πλιότερα την κάμασι κ' εγίνη"²¹⁵ (A 537), makes the decision to give his daughter away unavoidable. Referring to the family life in Renaissance Crete, Maltezos states that a little girl's purpose is to reach maturity quickly in order to get married and to engage herself at a

²¹¹ Low (1993: ix).

²¹² Kelly-Gadol (1977: 161).

²¹³ Ibid., (161).

²¹⁴ Alexiou (1988: 256) finds the etymology of the word "δότομη" given by M. Parlamas to be quite accurate.

Δότομος comes from the classical δότιμος, δόσιμος. It could be translated as mature / ready to be given away.

²¹⁵ Translation: and her the years have brought / To time whereat her hand is ripe in wedlock to be sought.

very young age in all the responsibilities and burdens of marital life.²¹⁶ We have no indication as to Erophile's age, but according to verses spoken by her father, she reached marriageable age a long time ago and most probably there would be no scope for delaying it further. A girl in Venetian Crete was considered to be a child till the age of 12 when she reached puberty, but many girls got married at an earlier age to avoid the possibility of pre-marital loss of their virginity.²¹⁷ As Chojnacki states, "family interest weighed heavily on fathers, and marriage was one of the chief weapons in the arsenal of family strategy."²¹⁸ The King, being in ignorance of his daughter's love for Panaretos and their secret marriage, will strive to find for her the most suitable mate, thus serving his own interests and secondly ensuring a proper match for his only heir. He most probably would have expected her immediate agreement to the marriage and he would further have wished for his daughter to meet all her needs for affection and love with this chosen husband. Chojnacki further states that wills and testaments in late Medieval Venice are evident for the fact that it was rather the rule and not the exception that mutual feelings of love developed between patrician couples even if the way they were brought together and married was through arrangements made by their families.²¹⁹ This attitude is also reflected in verses spoken by Nena: "Συνήθιν ἐν' τῶν κορασῶ, Πανάρετε, να κλαίσι, / ὄντα τσι προξενεύγουσι, κι "ὄχι" ὀλωνῶ να λέσι, / μα στο 'στερο συβάζουνται κ' εἶν' ευχαριστημένες / τση τύχης τῶνε τση καλῆς, πῶς εἶναι παντρεμένες" (B 299-302).²²⁰ The verbs (κλαίσι; ὄχι λέσι; συβάζουνται) fully illustrate women's submissive social role, inasmuch as their wishes and needs are ignored and their refusal of an arranged marriage is interpreted as very common and proper "girl behavior", while saying "no" and spilling tears form part of the whole arrangement and forced procedure, whose end-result is the inescapable degradation of women. Marriage was considered to contribute to a happy life and it further distinguished women's "good luck".

Therefore the King considers the wedding of Erophile to be the most important issue of the moment and a crucial matter calling for the utmost prudence and careful evaluation of eligible suitors. Two matchmakers have been sent by two rich and famous kings. The marriage of Erophile has to be decided by the King's advisors, who after taking into consideration all the merits and advantages of each prospective groom, are to advise as to the worthier of the two. The relationship between father and daughter is comparable to that of an employer and his employee, or even worse, a tyrant and his vassal. Erophile's destiny will be a round-table issue, and her feelings and her own voice will be ignored. "Ἐτσι επειδὴ μας ἤρθασι τούτοι οἱ προξενιάδες, / πεμπάμενοι ἀπὸ δυὸ ψηλούς²²¹ και πλούσους βασιλιάδες, / ὅλοι μου οἱ συμβουλάτοροι θέλω να μαζωχτήτε, / και με περίσσα προθυμιά κ' εξέταση να δήτε / ποιος εἶν' ἀπού τσι δυο καλλιὰ, για να μπορῶ να κάμω / με τη βουλή σας ὀλωνῶ τον ἐδικό τση γάμο" (A 541-546).²²² The fact that the King subsequently expresses the wish to inform his

²¹⁶ Maltezou (2000: 15).

²¹⁷ Bancroft-Marcus (2000: 351).

²¹⁸ Chojnacki (1988: 133).

²¹⁹ Ibid., (127).

²²⁰ Translation: Panaretos, thou'lt find it is the wont of maids to weep, / When men are sent to seek their hand, and yet deep silence keep, / But in the end they give consent, and pleased withal remain / With their good fortune, that they are by man in wedlock ta'en.

²²¹ "Ψηλός" literal translated as "tall" here means "famous" or "of great social status".

²²² Translation: And so, since envoys have arrived, on this same errand sent, / Who monarchs twain of great estate and riches represent, / I will that all ye counsellors forgather and with zeal / And careful judgement hold

daughter about the matchmaking and let her choose between the two future husbands is a tragic irony and contradicts his former decision to involve the advisors in the decision procedure. Her father's "generosity" is worthless since Erophile had already exchanged vows with her beloved.

4.3 Defending *Eros*

After the revelation of the secret marriage of his daughter, the King's rage is tremendous. He will carefully prepare his plans of revenge in order to punish both lovers for their disobedience. As a tyrant or an absolute ruler of a country, he exercises all three powers: executive, judicial and legislative. Between the lines of the tragedy is exposed the obvious corruption of the King as well as the absolutism of the political system. Having all these powers, he has Panaretos arrested, with a view to executing him, and no one can obstruct him and his destructive power. The King carries all the traits of a vicious monarch; he is absolute, merciless, cruel and unjust. He puts his own welfare before that of his people, and in this case his own daughter's. As Holden states, "retaining power becomes as much of a priority as exercising it; and that exercise is all too often self-interested, with personal security a higher priority than the general good."²²³ In his daughter's secret marriage he sees a threat to his power and he "translates" all her acts as shameful and immoral.

She and her lover will be confronted by the King as criminals. Trying to give a definition of the word "crime" in regard to women in Renaissance Castan²²⁴ connects it with the "behavioral norms" of the period. Further statement that crime is not "only violations of the law subject to judicial punishment but also at various kinds of misbehavior and deviancy subject only to the sanctions of social control"²²⁵ also applies to Erophile's "crime". Her secret marriage with Panaretos and the consummation of their love form a violation of the religious and social morals of the time. Castan touches upon the vulnerability of "Daughters and widows" who "were the first to feel the effects of institutional repression when public scandal threatened."²²⁶ In the Renaissance period women, whether belonging to the low, middle or upper social classes, were under the control of the *paterfamilias*, who could be the father or the husband and strictly watched over the maintenance of the family law and who further were "entrusted with the task of punishing behavior" that "were it to become public, would have impinged upon the honor of the family itself."²²⁷ Though in the late sixteenth century, as a result of the development of the "science of criminal law", there is a tendency to annihilate or to temper the responsibility of women in "criminal" acts in keeping with the conviction that "women were incapable of being fully responsible because of their extensive physical and mental weakness."²²⁸ Erophile would be doubly eligible to be treated with

debate, and after that reveal / Which of the two ye better think, that I your aid may use, / And counselled by you I may thus a bridegroom for her choose.

²²³ Holden (2000: 135).

²²⁴ Castan (1993: 475).

²²⁵ Ibid., (475).

²²⁶ Ibid., (477).

²²⁷ Graziosi (2000:167).

²²⁸ Ibid., (167).

leniency. She is a woman and she belongs to the upper social classes. As a woman belonging to the upper social classes she would according to Castan²²⁹ most probably have been protected by her family members. But Erophile is motherless and the only family member is a father who does not take into account any extenuations before judging and condemning his daughter to an even harsher punishment than her lover's death sentence. The King has already decided on his verdict on the two lovers, and the only purpose of listening to his daughter, as he admits, is to see her suffering and begging for pity. “Όχι για να τη λυπηθώ, μα για να δω πως κλαίγει, / να δροσιστώ, θε να σταθώ ν' αφουγκραστώ τα λέγει” (D 241-242).²³⁰

Kerrigan points out the responsibility of tragic heroes and heroines in a play to contribute to their destiny through their own decisions and relieves the revenger of such responsibility since “urged towards vengeance...he is forced to play a role” and undergoes a “narrowing down of his personality to the bare demands of action.”²³¹ Vengeance was and still is a necessary and important ingredient for tragedies and dramas. Its close relationship with violence and injustice makes for powerful theatre and intensely passionate scenes. Papamanousakis claims that

“So from juridical point of view *Erophile* is nothing but a sensational court case. This schematic illustration of the trial... is not far from the existing rules in an autocratic monarchical country of the time, where there is no independent judiciary or individual rights.... But we must recognise that in any case a procedural line is kept which aims at the confirmation of the offense, the potentiality of an apology and perhaps advocacy and the execution of the sentence after the judgment.”²³²

Erophile's defence goes through six stages. Bancroft-Marcus states that Erophile's arguments in her own speech are in part original and in part derived from Malecche's speech in the tragedy *Orbecce*²³³ (*Orbecche*, III.ii.249-72) and from another part from a previous monologue by Orbecce (II.iv.21-6).²³⁴ Chortatsis offers his protagonist ample rhetorical space to develop her defence arguments. In her lengthy defence speech, comprising 152 verses, while the King has only 28 verses, she reveals her defiant nature and dynamic character. In the first stage of her defence, in contrast to her past claims to her Nena, she admits to having acted badly by marrying Panaretos without the consent of her father. “Κύρη, με τον Πανάρετο δίχως το θέλημά σου / δεν ήτο το πρεπό ποτέ να παντρευτώ χωστά σου. / Κατέχω το και λέγω το κ' είμαι μεταγνωμένη / και τούτο μόνο, σήμερα, με κάνει πρικαμένη” (D 263-266).²³⁵ She

²²⁹ Castan (1993: 486).

²³⁰ Translation: Not that I may her pity give, I'll hear what she will speak; / But from the bitter tears she sheds I will refreshment seek.

²³¹ Kerrigan (1996:12).

²³² Papamanousakis (1991: 506). The translation from Greek is mine.

²³³ Orbecce is the female protagonist of the homonym Italian exemplary tragedy on which *Erophile* is based. Malecche is the King's advisor who defends Orbecce and her lover before the King.

²³⁴ Bancroft-Marcus (2000: 362). Bancroft-Marcus further states that Chortatsis may as well have taken into account the protagonists' speeches in Boccaccio and Camelli da Pistoia.

²³⁵ Translation: My sire, I own that when I thus Panaretos did wed / In secret without thy consent, I was to error led. / I recognize it and confess, and now of that repent, / And this, and this alone, with grief to-day doth me torment.

senses that the only chance she has is to soften her father's heart by showing a humble and apologetic attitude. The verbs “κατέχω το” and “λέγω το” “I know it” and “I confess it” are not haphazardly used here by the poet. Erophile admits through these verbs her awareness of the impropriety of her acts and utters it aloud as in a court, confessing her “social and moral crime” in front of the King-Judge, most probably hoping for an abatement of the sentence. In the second stage of her defence, Erophile reminds her father of all the virtues, knowledge and charms possessed by her beloved and points out that his only disadvantage is lack of nobility. In the third phase of her defence, Erophile both puts forward her arguments and offers solutions to the problem. Referring to the husbands proposed by the King, she expresses her mistrust towards these former enemies and distinguishes between nobility and wealth. “Την ευγενειά, αφέντη μου, τα πλούτη δε γεννούσι, / και δίχως γνώση φρόνιμοι ποτέ δεν είναι οι πλούσοι,” (D 325-326).²³⁶ What does it matter if Panaretos is not a prince? Her father could anoint him as such and award him rule over land and people. What if he is not wealthy? He could become one by virtue of the King's charity. The heroine further reminds her father of the fact that she is his only child and consequently the only heir of the throne. In the fourth stage of her defence Erophile appeals to the King's feelings. She reminds him of her happy childhood, his endless love and adoration towards his only child and reminds him of the fact that she is motherless. With this she puts the whole responsibility for her destiny in his hands, since he is her master and decides on her life and death. She invokes the special love between child and father, distinguishing it from all other kinds of love.

Bancroft-Marcus points out that “the real-life condition of women in Venetian Crete varied according to their class; nearly all were subject to male control.”²³⁷ The desperate attempts of Erophile to convince her father to forgive her could reflect the subordinate role of women in Renaissance Crete. “Κι αν εν' και τούτη δε μπορώ τη χάρη να γνωρίσω, / κιας άφισ με τα πόδια σου να σκύψω να φιλήσω, / για ν' αποθάνω σήμερα σα σκλάβα αγοραστή σου, / στη χάρη σου, άξε βασιλιέ, κι όχι καθώς παιδί σου” (D 405-408).²³⁸ The loss of the family protection, the deprivation of all benefits according to her social status and the threat of degradation from a princess to a slave form the first punishment if not the danger of losing her very life. Since the King remains unmoved and harsh, Erophile proceeds to the fifth and emotionally strongest stage of defending herself, namely an entreaty to him to show mercy. The early loss of her mother equates with the lack of any further defender and supporter on her behalf. Her mother most probably would have begged and pleaded profusely for her daughter's life. “Ω μάνα μου γλυκότατη, ώ μάνα μου Ερωφίλη, / γιάντα δεν είσαι ζωντανή, με πρικαμένα χείλη / ν' αναστενάξεις σήμερα, πολλά να με πονέσεις / κι ομπρός στα πόδια ταπεινή τ' αφέντη μου να πέσεις” (D 413-416).²³⁹

²³⁶ Translation: But no my lord; mere riches ne'er argue a noble mind, / Nor without wits in wealth alone wilt thou true wisdom find.

²³⁷ Bancroft-Marcus (2000:351).

²³⁸ Translation: But if so be that from thy hand I cannot favour know, / Let me, that I may kiss thy feet, before thee bend me low, / That I to-day may meet my death as though I were a slave / (And not thy child, O worthy king), whom purchase to thee gave.

²³⁹ Translation: O Erophile, mother mine, O name of memory sweet, / Why art thou not alive to-day that me thou mightest greet, / Though with but groans and pity's sighs, and humbly mightest fall / At my lord's feet, and falling there on him for mercy call.

In the last stage of her defence, Erophile recognises that any further striving to soften her father's heart would be in vain and gives up. The invocation to her lost mother and the wish to be reunited with her "appears to be basic, once again, to love fueled by Liebestod fantasies".²⁴⁰ "Μάνα ακριβή μου, κιας εσύ σ' τούτο συμπάθησέ μου / το φταίσμιον απού 'καμα, και τόπον άδειασέ μου / κάτω στον Άδη, να μπορώ να στέκω μετά σένα, / δυό πρικαμένες να 'μεστα μ' όνομα μόνον ένα" (D 439-442).²⁴¹ The curtain falls on Erophile's defence when she leaves the stage and gives dramaturgical space to the King's Counselor to continue using the same arguments as his master's daughter with a view to defending her and forestalling the vengeful acts of the King. In the dialogue between the King and his counselor an "overthrow of the theory of the Prince in Machiavelli" is manifested. A real King is not one who uses violent ways in his regime, but one who knows how to forgive the mistakes of his citizens, especially if the instigator was love.²⁴² The counselor foreshadows in his speech the tragic end of the disobedient daughter and, overestimating the King's fatherly sensitivity, he foretells the suicide of the King when realizing the loss of his beloved child and only heir of his throne "το πως η θυγατέρα σου σφάζεται, κι απομένεις / με διχωστές κληρονομιά, κ' ίντα άλλον ανιμένεις / παρά μιαν ώρα να σφαγείς κ' εσύ και να τελειώσει / η πρίκα απόχει στο 'στερο το νου σου να πλακώσει;" (D 541-544).²⁴³ His voice could represent the enlightened male Renaissance voices acknowledging women's intellectual abilities and further defending and supporting women's struggles for independence, their rights to freely choose their partners and live in social equality with the male members of their society. In his maneuvers to convince the King not to punish the lovers, he expresses his admiration for the young princess who according to her own defence, had the courage to transgress the social norms and wisely chose a gifted husband with virtues to counterbalance his lack of nobility.

As for the King's intentions and plans to strengthen his throne and through the arranged marriage of his daughter to one of his former enemies create new alliances and avoid future wars and hostilities in his country, these cannot be fulfilled any more and this causes him considerable pain. His daughter is of no further use as an exchangeable object since her marriageability has been irrevocably harmed. "Και τούτον είναι απού πονεί κ' εμένα πλια περίσσο, / γιατί τσι μάχες έλπίζα και τσ' έχθηρες να σβήσω / με τέτοιο τρόπο μια φορά, κι αγάπη στο λαό μου / ν' αφήσω με το γάμο τση κιας εις το θάνατό μου" (D 499-502).²⁴⁴

²⁴⁰ Gediman (1995: 41).

²⁴¹ Translation: O my loved mother, thou at least wilt give me pardon's grace / For this my sin which I have done, and at thy side make place / For me within the realm below, that I may stand with thee, / And we, as we are one in name, in sorrow one may be.

²⁴² Cappellaro (2005: 196).

²⁴³ Translation: Thy daughter will take her own life, and then thou'lt have no heir / Thy kingdom to inherit. Thus herein dost thou prepare / For thyself too a speedy end, for without doubt thou'lt find / Remorse for this which thou hast done will overwhelm thy mind.

²⁴⁴ Translation: Nay, this is that which above all allows my mind no peace- / For I had hopes that I should make battles and wars to cease / In this wise one for all, and leave as offering to my folk / By this her marriage at my death relief from conflict's yoke.

Papamanousakis²⁴⁵ claims that

In a world with great inequalities in the social, economic and political situation of the people, the only thing that can be declared from the stage of the Cretan Theatre is the natural equality of human beings in the face of Love and Death. So in *Erophile*, Charos makes in the Prologue his presence felt with the verses:

“εγώ ’μαι από τσι βασιλιούς τσι μπορεμένους ούλους, / τσι πλούσους και τσ’ ανήμπορους, τσ’ αφέντες και τσι δούλους, / τσ’ νέους και τσι γέροντες, μικρούς και τσι μεγάλους, / τσι φρόνιμους και τσι λολούς κι όλους τσ’ ανθρώπους τσ’ άλλους, / γιαμιά γιαμιά, όντε μου φανεί, ρίχνω και θανατώνω, / κ’ εις τον αθό τση νιότης τως τσι χρόνους τως τελειώνω” (Prologue 11-14).²⁴⁶

Though there may be a kind of equality between humans where the causes of death are natural, there is no justice or equality where death results from a violent act. We can make also a further distinction between violent acts against women and men. Assessing Erophile’s treatment by her father it is evident that he reigns with complete power over his daughter’s life and well being.

If we examine all the Cretan plays of the Renaissance period we observe that Erophile is not an exception, but conforms to a pattern of cruelty and victimisation suffered by female members of a family. In the verse romance *Erotokritos*, we find that the female protagonist Aretousa, though a princess, is imprisoned and physically and verbally abused by both parents, while her lover Erotokritos, though not of noble origin, receives the much milder sentence of exile. Aretousa does not face the death penalty since her “crime” is still reversible. She has not consummated her love to Erotokritos and remains viable as marriageable merchandise, while the incorrigible nature of Erophile’s “crime” determines the course of her tragic destiny. In the tragedy *Rhodolinos*, the heroine’s mental and physical balance is cruelly violated by her lover. She has to respond to three contradictory agendas, one set by her father, one by her lover and one by her future husband, while she is in ignorance about the role she is destined to play in their transactions. Her exposure to various kinds of exploitation by men, who should in fact be protecting her, leads her to commit suicide. Even in the pastoral work *Panoria* of the Cretan Renaissance period, it is remarkable that daughters encounter mental and verbal abuse if they challenge the masculine order and refuse to comply with an arranged marriage. Thus Panoria, the only daughter of the shepherd Giannoulis, refuses to accept the wealthy Gyparis as her husband, which causes her father to explode into misogynistic expressions, while Gyparis in cooperation with Frosyni, the matchmaker, will unfold his cunning plans to cheat and manipulate his beloved into fulfilling her destined social role and surrendering to the power of *Eros*.

²⁴⁵ Papamanousakis (1991: 455). The translation from Greek is mine.

²⁴⁶ Translation: For I am he who when I list hurl suddenly to death / Kings and the great ones of the earth, and take away their breath / From rich and poor impartially, from master and from slave, / From young an old, from great and small, from lively and from grave, / From wise and fools-from every sort that is of human kind, / Whether they be in flower of youth or grip of years confined.

In the works of Chortatsis's contemporary, Shakespeare, the brutality with which fathers treat their daughters is also evident. One would hardly believe that noble male members of a family would have to suffer or to be deprived of their freedom or social status for just committing the crime of falling in love and wedding a woman not belonging to their social rank. In *Erophile*, the way in which the King plans his revenge against the two lovers further illuminates women's vulnerability to becoming victims of retribution and rage from men. In killing Panaretos after torturing him, the King's actions can be explained as a demonstration to his enemies of his absolute power and a warning of what to expect if they were ever to incur his wrath. He recognises only too well that a strong and remorseless King would inspire fear in his enemies and obedience in potential dissenters: "Σήμερα θέλω πάσα εις να δει τη μπόρεσή μου, / για να φοβάται, ώστε να ζει, περίσσα την οργή μου" (D 625-626).²⁴⁷

However, when it comes to planning the revenge against his only child, he displays a more advanced level of brutality. A quick death such as he inflicted on Panaretos would not assuage his extreme indignation. After long consideration he decides to take revenge on his daughter by presenting her with the mutilated body of her lover. He aims to make her suffer for the rest of her life and wish to join her beloved in death. The King aims to leave no scope for any consolation of her broken heart. "Κρίνω, σα δει τα μέλη του νεκρά και χωρισμένα, / πάντα τα φυλλοκάρδια τση να στέκουσι καημένα, / το θάνατο να πεθυμά, να κλαίγει, να θρηγνάται, / να μεταγνώθει, ώστε να ζει, και να μηδέ φελάται" (D 637-640).²⁴⁸

There is no room for the King's love for his daughter when issues of his regal authority are at stake. Power determines his personal set of morals and displaces affection for his beloved daughter. Ego rules the crown he wears and blinds him to the insanity of the course of devastation on which he embarks. He indulges his hatred and ignores its devastating results. One can only conclude that the King's mind is covered with a veil of impenetrable darkness that destroys hope, love and life. *Erophile* cannot exist in the King's new paradigm. She takes her fate in her own hands while at the same time fulfilling her father's intention, but she does so in the conviction that he cannot control the joining of the betrothed in the afterlife, where Panaretos and *Erophile* wish to join eternally as man and wife.

In the fifth and last act of the tragedy there is a culmination of horror, and all the gruesome details of the murder of Panaretos by the King reveal his despotic and inhuman nature. The King's uncontrolled rage and thoroughly sadistic instincts are evident in the verses where he wished that Panaretos had a thousand lives, a thousand bodies and souls in order to torture him: "Χίλιες ψυχές, χίλια κορμιά, χίλιες ζωές οϊμένα, / γιάντα δεν έχεις πίβουλε, σήμερα μετά σένα, / να στέκω να σε τυραννώ, μια μια να σου σηκώνω, γιατί δε φτάνει σ' τόσο μου θυμό η ζωή σου μόνο" (E 75-78).²⁴⁹ The harm to his honour and the damage to his absolute power could only be alleviated through the eternal condemnation and suffering of the two lovers. His ironically named "worthy son in law" will experience the cruelty, horror, callousness and

²⁴⁷ Translation: To-day I will make manifest to all the world my might, / That all, as long as my life lasts, my anger may affright.

²⁴⁸ Translation: I deem that when she sees his limbs dead and asunder hacked, / Her inmost heartstrings will be torn and with fell torture racked. / She will desire her death and weep and utter bitter cry, / And feel remorse while she shall live, nor benefit thereby.

²⁴⁹ Translation: Why art thou not of thousand lives and thousand frames possessed, / And why do not a thousand souls lie hidden in thy breast, / That these, thou miscreant, I may take in torment one by one, / For this thy single life my rage sufficeth not alone.

monstrous revenge of the King until his death, while his daughter will suffer the deprivation of her beloved till the end of her life.

Comparing *Erophile* with its Italian prototype *Orbecce*, in which Giraldi strives to “impress the audience through horror”,²⁵⁰ there are, remarkably, less acts of cruelty in *Erophile*. Chortatsis also seems to have deliberately avoided the contentious theme of patricide which occurs in *Orbecce* when the heroine discovers the murder of her lover and her own children by her father.²⁵¹

²⁵⁰ Alexiou (1988: 32). The translation from Greek is mine.

²⁵¹ Chortatsis also departed from the Italian prototype where the protagonist Orbecce had children born out of wedlock. He thus also obviated the unpleasant need to dispose of them at the end of the tragedy.

5 Thanatos

5.1 *Thanatos* omnipotent

In his tragedy *Erophile*, Chortatsis presents *Eros* and *Thanatos* as binary opposites. At the very beginning of the play he acknowledges the power of death over all human beings, the temporality of human nature and the vanity of human existence. Omnipotent *Thanatos* is here personified in the medieval manner as a monstrous, dark and emaciated creature holding a scythe:

“Την άσπρη σάρκα χώματα και βρώμο καταστένω,
την όψη λειώνω και χαλώ, και κάθα μυρισμένο
στήθος, σκουλήκω κατοικιά κάνω ζιμιό και βρώση,
κι η χέρα μου καθημερινό γυρεύει να τελειώσει”
(Prologue 87-90)²⁵²

Macabre art featuring death personified was an artistic legacy of the late medieval disaster known as the “Black Death”, a plague estimated to have affected between one third and two thirds of the population of Europe.²⁵³ Allegories of Death from antiquity and the middle ages now evolved into an on-stage protagonist, “humanity’s grand antagonist”, to quote Neill.²⁵⁴ Death is no longer an abstract term but envisaged as a merciless, ruthless and cruel creature. The triumph of Death in *Erophile* is already assured from the Prologue. Personified as Charos, the lord of the underworld, death forewarns the audience and foreshadows on stage the end of the tragedy. The King and his daughter will die in accordance with Zeus’s order.²⁵⁵ Although “revenge tragedy”²⁵⁶ implies heavenly glorification and justification, human vengeance rather reflects the adverse conditions of life in the Renaissance period.²⁵⁷ Though the King will at the end pay for his civil and private crimes, Chortatsis’s masterly representation of the absolute tyrant will by poetic exaggeration provoke a reaction out of offended sense of justice. This triggers the final act of revenge performed by the female servants of the princess, who till that moment have been merely verbal supporters to their suffering mistress. The chorus of young women will define the cruel death of Panaretos and the ensuing suicide of their mistress as an offence against divine and moral law and will exact a very public form of vengeance by mercilessly killing the ruthless King on stage, thereby

²⁵² Translation: The whiteness fair of flesh through me foulness of earth infests, / The face I blot out in decay, the sweetly-scented breasts / I on a sudden make the home of worms that therein breed; / Daily my hand is firm resolved to ruin’s train to lead.

²⁵³ Binski (1996: 126-127).

²⁵⁴ Neill (1997: 4-5).

²⁵⁵ The verb “σκοτώσω” applies to direct or indirect murder. Although *Erophile* commits suicide, Charos claims to be the one taking her life too.

²⁵⁶ “Revenge tragedy” is a modern term referring to Renaissance plays. The Elizabethans did not use it, as Broude notes (1975: 38).

²⁵⁷ Broude (1975: 57).

gaining “the illusion of agency”²⁵⁸ against tyranny and injustice. The fact that *Eros* once again becomes associated with violent and terrifying acts of vengeance in *Erophile*, as in many other Renaissance plays, and “its corrupting entanglement with Realpolitik, ambition, lust, and murder” reveals the preoccupation of tragedians with the “self destructive and tyrannical power of love” rather than the ideal manifestation of *Eros* in their plays.²⁵⁹

Though “the decline and decay” of every human being and the degradation of mortals have been much discussed over the centuries, the Renaissance period produced many variations on the confrontation of death.²⁶⁰ The omnipotence of *Thanatos* manifested anew in the last act of the tragedy through the last verses spoken by the chorus of young women, where they extol his superiority over everything alive and reaffirm the old saying “vanity of vanities, all is vanity” (Eccles.Ch.1, verses 2-4).

“Γιατί όλες οι καλομοιρίες του κόσμου και τα πλούτη
μια μόνο ασκιά ‘ναι στη ζωή την πρικαμένη τούτη
μια φουσκαλίδα του νερού, μια λάβρα που τελειώνει
τόσα γοργό όσο πλιά ψηλά τσι λόχες τση σηκώνει.”
(Final Chorus, 671-674)²⁶¹

In the late sixteenth century love was a major theme for playwrights and poets in both its creative and its destructive manifestations. Love could lead noble women into torment and directly or indirectly to a voluntary or violent confrontation with death. This applied especially to women in Renaissance Crete, where they were considered citizens of “inferior class” even if they belonged to the middle or upper classes.²⁶² They had to be chaste and obedient and accept the husband chosen for them, usually by their father, with a view to strengthening the familiar status and power. Referring to Cretan Renaissance family structures, Maltezou wonders if and to what extent the native family model was influenced by the occupying Venetians. She distinguishes three basic characteristics of the Cretan family structure, namely a Christian orientation, an industrious mentality and the incorporation into the family not only of biological relatives but also of persons without a biological connection to the family.²⁶³ The Cretan family maintains strong bonds between its members, bonds that serve as a protection for its weaker members such as children and widows and at the same time “contribute to social clusters” or potential rebellions against the Venetians. In this extended family, the role of the sexes was quite clear: boys and girls had to reach adulthood quickly in order to assume the responsibilities of their social role. It was incumbent on male members to support themselves financially as soon as possible, through some form of work,

²⁵⁸ Findlay (1999: 55).

²⁵⁹ Forker (1975: 213).

²⁶⁰ Engel (2002: 14).

²⁶¹ Translation: For all the blessings of this world and all the wealth it holds / Are but a shadow which this life of misery enfolds, / Or like a bubble on a stream, or like a blazing fire, / Which as the higher shoot its flames, the sooner will expire.

²⁶² Bancroft-Marcus (1983: 19).

²⁶³ Maltezou (2000: 12-13).

and on female members to undertake responsibilities from a very young age in respect of the household they would enter upon marriage.²⁶⁴

Erophile's family though is composed of merely two members, herself and her father. She has no recourse to the protection of an extended family when she refuses to accept the arranged marriage. As a young princess she has to articulate a political alliance between two aristocratic houses. As a result of her disobedience towards the patriarchal laws and her refusal to become an object of exchange she must pay the ultimate price. Death seems to be the only alternative. Hansen's²⁶⁵ statement "for the fate of the undutiful daughter, one may substitute the word death" perfectly illustrates the protagonist's prospects. Her resistance and the revolutionary courage with which she faces her father triggered his instinctive vindictiveness and cruelty. According to Bancroft-Marcus, Cretan Renaissance poets successfully delineated woman's desires and agonies of that time most probably foresensing their more active role and achieving of their autonomy in the future.²⁶⁶

Thanatos is predominant in this tragedy. The role of *Eros* as the instigator of death is obvious. Both lovers suffer by keeping their love secret and finally they reunite through death. Erophile can only imagine her life with her beloved, and when he is cruelly killed by her father, there is no meaning in her life. Love is described in the whole tragedy as a form of martyrdom. Vocabulary borrowed from religion comes to strengthen this deadly or morbid dimension of love.

κ' έλεγα η τόση παιδωμή πώς θέλει μ' αποθάνει. (A 204)
Ψυχή δέ βγαίνει εκ' το κορμί με τόση λύπη, κρίνω. (A 211)
κι αναστενάζω μοναχάς και ν' αποθάνω κράζω. (A 428)
Σώνει τα πάθη οπού 'χουσι τη δόλια την καρδιά μου (B 97)
Θεέ μου, τέτοια παιδωμή μη δώσεις στο κορμί μου,
μα πρώτας με το θάνατο τέλειωσε τη ζωή μου. (B 361-362)
Ω Άδη και τση Κόλασης τση σκοτεινής καημένες
Ψυχές, με λόχες και φωτιά πάντα τυραννισμένες,
καινούργια ακούσετε φωτιά και λόχη πλιά μεγάλη
και παιδωμή χειρότερη παρά ποτέ κιαμιά άλλη. (B 431-434)
Τό θάνατο και τη σκλαβιά τόσα πρικιά δεν κράζω
σαν έν' πρικό το βάσανο που τώρα δοκιμάζω. (C 103-104)²⁶⁷

In contrast to Renaissance poetry where the word "death was often avoided and replaced by euphemisms",²⁶⁸ Chortatsis uses the word most of the time directly and he refers to the

²⁶⁴ Maltezou (2000: 15, 21).

²⁶⁵ Hansen (1993: 15).

²⁶⁶ Bancroft-Marcus (1983: 37).

²⁶⁷ Translation: So that I thought that of my pains I should of surely die (A 204); I deem no soul with such fell pain is from the body driven (A 211); And pray that I may meet my death and sigh and groan and weep (A 428); Sufficient are the sufferings that compass my poor heart (B 97); O God, my body suffer not such torture to endure, / But rather take my life, and thus effect a lasting cure (B 361-362); O wretched souls that in the murk of gloomy regions dwell, / Which ever are burned up with fires which issue forth from hell, / Ye now will hear of fires lit greater by far than these / And tortures set by side of which all others are but ease (B 431-434); Nay, death itself and slavery I call not such a woe, / As is that bitterness of pain which I now undergo (C 103-104).

²⁶⁸ Dubruck (1964: 152).

afterlife and the destination of the deceased, namely the realm of Hades, or even worse, Hell itself.

5.2 Mourning

“All animals die, but only human beings suffer death - and their sense of what they suffer is, to a very large degree, imposed by the culture to which they belong.”²⁶⁹

Goodland describes the lamentation process extending from the Homeric era to Shakespeare’s time as a “grief performance incumbent upon the female relatives of the deceased, simultaneously a responsibility, a right, and a source of pride.”²⁷⁰ Erophile’s lament over the remains of the dead body of Panaretos is her last mortal act. As the only kinswoman of her beloved, she fulfils two duties with her mourning. She expresses her deep sorrow and inner pain for the loss of her husband and in parallel she pays the last homage to him. Her heartbreaking verses when facing the mutilated body of her lover have much in common with the words of Shakespeare’s female protagonist in the contemporary tragedy *Romeo and Juliet*.²⁷¹ “Καρδιά μου, πώς δε σκίζεσαι, μάτια μου, πώς μπορείτε / τέτοια μεγάλην απονιά σήμερα να θωρήτε;” (E 401-402).²⁷² While the ritual lament does not express spontaneous compassion since it is an art of performance, “an aesthetic channeling of intellectual, physical and emotional response to death”,²⁷³ Erophile’s mourning is free of ritual and starkly expresses her unbearable suffering. Her pain is so immense as to make wonder how her heart is not torn apart and how her eyes can behold such a sight.

Maltezou states that lamentation over the dead is evident in the contemporary official documents of the Venetians and also from travellers’ accounts. One such traveller was Daniel Ecklin who traversed Crete in 1552. He describes how Cretan women lament over a relative and “cry out, beat their breasts and tear out their hair by the roots.”²⁷⁴ Though Erophile does not exaggerate her lamentation with such actions, as the contemporary Cretan women would have done, her inner pain is no smaller, as she reveals when asking her father why she had not been the first victim of his revenge rather than having to see such an abhorrent sight. “Γιάντα δεν έσφαξες εμέ πρώτα, γιατί ν’ αφήσεις / τόσο κακό τ’ αμμάτια μου να δούσινε, νά ζήσεις;” (E 413-414).²⁷⁵ The King’s response reveals his sadistic nature and his irony manifests the full extent of his awful character. “Όσο σε βλέπω, κάτεχε, περίσσα πρικαμένη, / τόσο μου κάνεις την καρδιά πασίχαρη και μένει / μα κλαίγε και τα κλήματα ποτέ σου μη σκολάσεις / κι αφού την πρίκα το θεό παρακαλώ να σκάσεις, / τ’ αγαπημένο πρόσωπο συντήρα του καλού

²⁶⁹ Neill (1997: 2).

²⁷⁰ Goodland (2005: 9).

²⁷¹ Belies (2007). Greek translation of act 3, scene 2 of *Romeo and Juliet*. “Αχ καρδιά μου σπάσε! Τα ’χασες όλα, σπάσε! Κι εσείς, μάτια μου, στην φυλακή, ποτέ να μη δείτε λευτεριά!”

²⁷² Translation: My heart, why art not rent in twain? Mine eyes, how can ye see / Unfalt’ringly to-day this act of awful cruelty?

²⁷³ Goodland (2005: 12).

²⁷⁴ Maltezou (1991: 45).

²⁷⁵ Translation: Why didst thou not slay me the first? Tell me, as thou wouldst live, / Why was it needful this fell sight unto my eyes to give?

σου, / κ' όσες μπορείς ευχαριστιές δίδε του ριζικού σου” (E 427-432).²⁷⁶ Chortatsis uses irony in a diverse and subtle way, and once again his theatrical genius avoids the mechanical imitation of Italian prototypes.²⁷⁷

Ariès²⁷⁸ touches upon the erotic meaning of death in the late fifteenth century where especially in the iconography “death raped the living” and there was an association of *Eros* and *Thanatos*: “these...erotic macabre themes...which reveal extreme complaisance before the spectacles of death, suffering and torture.” Seen in this light, Erophone’s lament over the dead body of Panaretos with its exaltation of the beauty of his lifeless body alludes to the erotic nature of death and the yearning of the protagonist to unite erotically with her beloved in eternity. In her paroxysm of lamentation she refers to all mutilated parts of the body of Panaretos revealing an intimate connection with each part of it and a sexual admiration of his once sexually active body. “Για ποια αφορμή δεν πιάνετε τα χέρια τα δικά μου, / γιάντα στο στήθος σπλαχνικά κι απάνω στην καρδιά μου / δεν γγίζετε, ν’ αλαφρωθεί, τσι πόνους τση να χάσει, κ’ ετούτη την τρομάρα τση την τόση να σκολάσει;” (E 471-474).²⁷⁹ *Thanatos* in his ugliness “ασκήμια” (E 450) holds an erotic attraction for the living, obsesses them to the extent of inspiring a conscious desire to finish their own lives. “Πάντα, ακριβέ μου, ταίρι μου, μ’ έθρεφεν η θωριά σου / τώρα στον Άδη τη φτωγή με βάνει η ασκημιά σου” (E 449-450).²⁸⁰ Erophone’s suicidal act of stabbing herself, stirred by her desire to reunite with her beloved, reveals the *Liebestod* motive and alludes to the sexual act. “Πανάρετε, Πανάρετε, Πανάρετε ψυχή μου, / βουήθα μου τση βαρόμοιρης και δέξου το κορμί μου” (E 523-524).²⁸¹

5.3 Having the last word. Erophone’s theatrical suicide

Chortatsis’s contemporary William Shakespeare wrote in 1600 the most famous question in the history of literature. The simplicity of Hamlet’s question “To be or not to be?” (*Hamlet* act 3, scene 1)²⁸² summarises the candour of human doubt and perplexity over life as well as human helplessness in confronting it. It provides justification for those individuals who call into question their existence and for their own very private reasons chose to terminate it. Hamlet’s famous question might also have been posed by the heroines of Cretan Renaissance literature. Their emotional fading, their deprivation of family protection, their exclusion from social life precedes the physical death of their body. Their moral condemnation according to the ethics of their time results in a mental and intellectual decline and leads them to their

²⁷⁶ Translation: Yes, know this well, the more I see thy heart with anguish torn, / The greater is the triumph’s joy which in my heart is born. / Weep on thy fill, and may this flood of tears be never checked; / I pray the heavens that by thy grief thy very life be wrecked. / Gaze on the features now so fair of this thy much loved mate, / And render all the thanks thou canst unto thy kindly fate.

²⁷⁷ Puchner (1991a: 540).

²⁷⁸ Ariès (1974: 56-57).

²⁷⁹ Translation: Why is it that ye cannot seek and grasp these hands of mine? / Why must I your fond touch upon my breast and heart resign? / For ye to them had given rest and ease from all their pain, / And caused them from this fluttering wild a little calm to gain.

²⁸⁰ Translation: My love, it was from thine own heart that I drew my life’s breath, / And now the marring of thy limbs sends down my life to death.

²⁸¹ Translation: Panaretos, Panaretos, Panaretos, my life, / Help me in my distress; receive the body of thy wife.

²⁸² Growther (2003: 3).

irreversible end. Suicidal thoughts pervade all the Cretan tragedies and dramas and are closely connected with the heroines. Confrontation of these thoughts sometimes results in an active suicidal act or a more indirect way of committing the crime. Their actions attest to the deep connection between *Eros* and *Thanatos*. The death, deprivation or betrayal of the beloved diminishes the woman's willingness to confront life. Most women in the various genres of Cretan Renaissance literature have a more or less dramatic confrontation with *Thanatos* as a result of their destructive passions and "immoral" or "inappropriate" feelings and acts.

Hill²⁸³ referring to Emile Durkheim's influential book *Le Suicide*, published in 1897, explains the categorization of the suicidal act according to the writer. Any suicidal act of a person is "ultimately the result of a maladaptive level of integration with his or her social group." His further distinction into the categories of "egotistical and fatalistic" suicide²⁸⁴ could be an apposite description of the suicide of Erophile. She is aware of the responsibilities she bears as the only child of the King. Belonging to the nobility, she has to accept the husband already chosen for her by her father. She refuses though to keep to the beaten track and she transcends her social boundaries from the very beginning of the tragedy. She chooses as her partner a man of lower social class. She goes even further, justifying her choice in her rhetoric to Nena and to her father, and refuses to observe the existing social norms. Her suicide is the result of the perception "of her own desires as incapable of satiation within the boundaries of the social group."²⁸⁵

Death seems to be the only way out of the martyrdom of love. The women's chorus uses a well-worn saying to describe the capacity of *Thanatos* to assuage human pain.

Πώς; Δεν τελειώνει ο θάνατος πάσα καημό και πόνο;
Βοτάνι τονέ κράζουσι πούρι στα πάθη μόνο (E 181-182).²⁸⁶

The voluntary death of an individual often signals a problematic private or social life.²⁸⁷ Erophile seems not to have any control over her own life; the only thing that remains within her control is her own death. Chortatsis allows his heroine to have the last word and to dominate the scene through her spectacular on-stage suicide. Her body becomes a tool for manifesting resistance, her struggle against discrimination and injustice, and her self-destruction displays her feminised silent revenge against her tyrannical father. The mortal temporality is juxtaposed to the triumphant omnipotence of *Eros* in *Thanatos*.

²⁸³ Hill (2004: 4-5).

²⁸⁴ Ibid., (5). In an *egotistical* suicide the person can not obey and follow the social norms while the *fatalistic* suicide is a result of the inability of satisfying his own desires into the contemporary social environment.

²⁸⁵ Ibid., (5).

²⁸⁶ Translation: What! Does not death put final end to suffering and woe? / Men say that death is soothing herb which heals each bitter blow.

²⁸⁷ Minois (1999: 13).

5.4 Liebestod

So stürben wir / um ungetrennt,
Ewig einig, / Ohne End',
Ohn' Erwachen / Ohne Bangen,
Namenlos / in Lieb' umfängen

(Richard Wagner, *Tristan und Isolde*, act 2, scene 2)²⁸⁸

In the second act of the opera *Tristan und Isolde* the author Richard Wagner for the first time uses the term “*Liebestod*”²⁸⁹ to describe the yearning of two lovers to unite in death, unable to confront the hostility of the world and the insuperability of the obstacles to their love. Since then the term has been overused in literature for its very symbolism of the perfect love. Linda and Michael Hutcheon identify Wagner’s *Liebestod* as “the ability for the lovers to transcend individuation, to lose the self in a unity with a larger force-passion.”²⁹⁰

The *Liebestod* pattern demands absolute romantic love, clashing with social norms and refusing to conform, until checked and finally ruined by destiny.²⁹¹ Erophile and Panaretos fulfill the substantial requirements; their absolute romantic and unconditional love is in conflict with the contemporary social norms where love and deviation in social rank are incompatible, where women are treated as second-class citizens and where the political system enables leaders to exercise absolute power over their vassals. In Chortatsis’s tragedy both protagonists and lovers die at the end. The timing of their deaths is not simultaneous as is usually the case in the *Liebestod* motive, and the fact that only Erophile commits suicide in order to be united with her beloved in eternity form a slight deviation from the *Liebestod* motive in literature. In *Erophile*, one lover’s death is not voluntary since he is executed by the King in an act of revenge.

Nevertheless, the lovers are absorbed by their mutual passion whose physical and sexual intensity turns out to be fatal. Erophile and Panaretos are analogous to other “famous” pairs in literature such as Tristan and Isolde, Romeo and Juliet, Pyramus and Thisbe and Troilus and Cressida who all strive to fight against contemporary restrictions or rules, regulating the relations between the sexes, regarding age, social rank and religious beliefs.²⁹²

Historical circumstances and contemporary social norms regarding the incompatibility of marriage of people belonging to two different social classes form the insuperable impediment. An obstacle already exists at the outset, but the lovers once in the grip of passion ignore it. Erophile holds the centre of the stage to unfold her defiant character and to defend her love. The obstacle in the form of the difference of the lovers in social rank will take shape in response to the marriage arranged by her father. The preexisting obstacle will prove the lovers’ deep and unconditional love and the protagonists’ combative nature.

²⁸⁸ Translation (Hutcheon, 1999: 280): So, let us die, undivided, / eternally one, without end, / without awakening, without fearing, / nameless embraced in love.

²⁸⁹ O süsse Nacht, ew'ge Nacht! / hehr erhab'ne Liebesnacht! / Wen du umfängen, / wem du gelacht, / wie-wär ohne Bangen / aus dir je er erwacht? / Nun banne das Bangen, / holder Tod, / sehrend verlangter / Liebestod! (Richard Wagner, *Tristan und Isolde*, act 2, scene 2).

²⁹⁰ Hutcheon Linda & Michael (1999: 281).

²⁹¹ Bijvoet (1988:5).

²⁹² Ibid., (6).

On the one hand Panaretos's death is represented in the tragedy as a result of the King's rage and not as the self-determination of the protagonist. This fact does not exclude Panaretos's death from the *Liebestod* motive, though, since he had in various ways expressed in the past his will and wish to die if deprived of his beloved. The following verses manifest these suicidal wishes and thoughts in the event of his failure to achieve unification with Erophile:

“κι αναστενάζω μοναχάς και ν’ αποθάνω κράζω” (A 428).²⁹³

“κι αληθινά α δεν έβλαφα την κόρη τη δική μου, / με το σπαθί μου ετέλειωνα μιαν ώρα τη ζωή μου” (A 407-408).²⁹⁴

“ Χίλια κομμάτια πλια καλλιιά τα μέλη μου ας γενούσι / κι όχι ποτέ τ’ αμμάτια μου να τηνέ στερευτούσι” (A 493-494).²⁹⁵

“Στον Άδην έχω πλια καλλιιά πάντα να τυραννούμαι, / παρά στον κόσμο ζωντανός δίχως τση να κρατούμαι” (B 247-248).²⁹⁶

“Θάνατος μόνο το λοιπό, τούτο ανισώς και λάχει / να δώσει τέλος σ’ τση καρδιάς μόνο μπορεί τη μάχη. / Κι ο θάνατος τα πάθη μου πως να τελειώσει τάσσω, / γιατί ανισώς κ’ οι ουρανοί κ’ η μοίρα μου να χάσω / μ’ αφήσουσι την κόρη μου, δεν εν’ παρά καλλιιά μου / να πάψει κιας ο θάνατος ζιμιό τα βάσανα μου. / Τούτη έχω την απόφαση στο νου μου κατωμένη” (B 457-463).²⁹⁷

His *Liebestod* intentions are clear in the last verse, where he confesses to having already decided to end his life. Love forms for him the absolute meaning in his life and although he is executed by the King, his death could easily be characterised according to his spoken verses as a “silent suicide” and representative of *Liebestod*, as opposed to Erophile, who commits the crime against herself in a very active way and forms a triumphant example of the *Liebestod* motive.

Consequently Erophile's physical death is a result of her emotional death when facing the dead and mutilated body of Panaretos. Like her beloved, she had wished for and thought of *Liebestod* as her previous verses attest. Being more intuitive than her lover, she foresees her own death and asks Nena to bury both lovers in the same grave so that at least in death she will be united with her husband. The wish for union in death which permeates *Liebestod* stories is manifested in the following verses: “Γιατί κατέχω σήμερα πως έχω ν’ αποθάνω / και πως σ’ αφήνω δίχως μου σ’ τούτο τον κόσμο απάνω.../ Νένα, ποθαίνω, λέγω σου, κι αν είναι μπορετό σου, / σ’ μιαν άρκλα με το ταίρι μου τα χέρια σου ας με χάσου, / τα κακορίζικα κορμιά τ’ αδικοσκοτωμένα, / χώμα στον Άδη ας γενού τον πρικαμένον ένα, / καθώς τα δυο με

²⁹³ Translation: And pray that I may meet my death and sigh and groan and weep.

²⁹⁴ Translation: And truly if the deed would not have harmed my maid beloved, / I would have straightway with my sword my wretched life removed.

²⁹⁵ Translation: Twere better far my limbs should be to thousand pieces torn / Than that my eyes lose sight of her and I live on forlorn!

²⁹⁶ Translation: And I would sooner evermore suffer the pains of hell, / Than without her I love consent in this world still to dwell.

²⁹⁷ Translation: So death and death alone remains...This, this if I can gain, / Will put an end unto the strife that rends my heart in twain. / Thus death I promise you the end of all my woes must prove; / For if the heavens and my fate permit that I my love / Should lose, then better far it were for me to lose my breath / And once for all find resting-place in the kind arms of death. / This resolution firmly fixed my mind has therefore ta'en.

μια ψυχή στον κόσμο απάνω εξούσα, / κι αγαπημένα πάντα τως μια θέληση εκρατούσα” (E 285-286, E 295-300).²⁹⁸

In the *Liebestod* motive, the belief that lovers will be united after their death pervades the lovers’ thought. Bijvoet,²⁹⁹ though, suggests another interpretation of *Liebestod*. The lovers awareness of the obstacles and their inability to overcome the impediments obstructing their love and union, forces them to commit suicide and to manifest in this way the “ineluctable temporariness of passion itself” which forms an indisputable evidence of the vulnerability of love “against time”. The *Liebestod* of the protagonists’ could be characterised as compensation for enduring the hostile world, where the lovers could only secretly and conditionally enjoy their love, whereas death does not place such conditions and social rules, and norms are in its realm annihilated. Erophile’s passion for Panaretos can only be destroyed through death, as she admits in a declaration of love to him, and even after death their love will grow stronger since it is based on mutuality.

“Για τούτο μόνο ο θάνατος μπορεί να τον χαλάσει / σ’ τούτο τον κόσμο, κ’ οι ψυχές πάλι στον Άδη αν πάσι, / πως θέλου σμίξει κ’ εδεκεί με πλιαν αγάπη ελπίζω, / γιατί κ’ εσύ πιστότατα πως μ’ αγαπάς γνωρίζω” (C 121-124).³⁰⁰

Her wishes of *Liebestod* make her intentions and deep devotion obvious. *Eros* will be the instigator of her suicidal thoughts,

“με τον πρικό μου θάνατο πως ταίρι του απομένω, / και μόνο πως για λόγου του στον Άδη κατεβαίνω” (C 167-168).³⁰¹

and finally of her theatrical suicide, the last act of the protagonist.

“Μα κείνο που δε δύνεται τόσος καημός να κάμει, / θέλει το κάμει η χέρα μου και το μαχαίρι αντάμι, / στον Άδην άς με πέψουσι, κι ο κύρης άπονος μου / τη βασιλείά του ας χαίρεται και τσι χαρές του κόσμου” (E 511-514).³⁰²

Through her on-stage suicide the deadly aspect of *Eros* together with the erotic aspect of *Thanatos* are strongly manifested at the end of the tragedy and corroborate triumphantly the nexus between love and death in the play.

²⁹⁸ Translation: For well I know within myself that I this day must die; / How can I bear to leave thee here and from this world to fly?.../ My nurse, I tell thee I shall die; and if ’tis willed by fate, / Bury within the selfsame tomb myself and my love-mate. / And let our hapless bodies thus so all unjustly slain, / As mingled dust in Hades’ realm their common rest obtain, / E’en as we two on earth above lived as one single soul, / And knit by love one common will shared as united whole.

²⁹⁹ Bijvoet (1988: 223).

³⁰⁰ Translation: And thus it is that in this world nought can this building wreck / Save death and death alone; and still that ardent love will deck / With greater beauty, as I trust, our souls in realm of hell, / For with most faithful love e’en there we shall together dwell.

³⁰¹ Translation: By my untimely death that I remain his loyal mate, / And only for my love to him meet this my death and fate.

³⁰² Translation: Yet that which so much suffering has not the power to do, / That deed my hand and sword combined as one will carry through. / To Hades these will send me down, and let my cruel lord / Take pleasure in the joys which him kingship and world afford.

Simultaneity of the death of the two lovers is not an absolute prerequisite for *Liebestod*. Chortatsis's *Erophile* magnifies the plight of victorious *Eros*, and the death of the protagonist, her suicide, in physical locality is in harmony with the *Liebestod* motive, while Panaretos's death is not of his volition and deviates from the *Liebestod* motive regarding the physical locality but is in harmony with the mental.

Like the Duchess of Malfi,³⁰³ who dominates the theatrical scene and defies the dictates of her brother by marrying the man she loves, and whose tragic presence is extolled in "her acceptance of death", Erophile's decision to end her life perfectly aligns her words with her deeds and underlines her dynamic nature even in this tragic way. The inability to cope with life does not imply weakness of character but celebrates the power of love that transcends the boundaries of mortals and verges on death. The lovers manifest with their death the inseparable and unindividualised love and the liberation of their "imprisoned" mortal existences in pursuit of eternal unification.

³⁰³ Hansen (1993: 126). *The Duchess of Malfi*, originally published as *The Tragedy of the Duchesses of Malfi* is a macabre, tragic play written by the English dramatist John Webster in 1612-13.

6 Summary and Conclusions

This thesis has given an account of the social role of women as it is delineated in the tragedy *Erophile*, written during the late Renaissance period by Georgios Chortatsis. Through the examination of *Eros* and *Thanatos* and their close and powerful interrelation in the tragedy *Erophile*, light was shed on women's inferior social role and their exposure to mental, physical and psychological abuse by close male members of their family. As stated at the outset, the manifestation of the very opposite forces of *Eros* and *Thanatos* all through the tragedy justified the choice of this paradigmatic text, and its close reading and correlation with various historical data have provided evidence regarding the social role of women during this period of time.

One of the more significant findings that emerge from this study is that the social role of women in the tragedy *Erophile* confirms Levis Strauss's theory³⁰⁴ in *The Elementary Structure of Kinship* that women serve the male members of a family as exchanged objects, "reciprocal prestations",³⁰⁵ in order to strengthen family alliances or increase the family's status. The exchange took the form of "arranged marriages" in which the female members had to comply for the enhancement of the family. *Erophile* was intended to serve to her father as an exchangeable object and through her arranged marriage she was to enhance her family's status and wealth to countervail future hostilities, by marrying a former enemy of her father's kingdom.

Furthermore, there is profuse evidence of the inferior social role of women during the late Renaissance period as presented in the tragedy *Erophile*. The tragedy provided us with sufficient information about the protagonist's life and death, about her social inferiority and her classification as a woman among the least powerful members of society, even though she belonged to the upper social classes. As a noble woman she has limitations placed on her social life when she grows up and reaches marriageable age. Her social life is restricted to female company. A nurse constantly keeps an eye on her in order to protect the most "valuable asset" for a young girl and ensure her marriageability. Marriage is a matter of negotiation between the heads of the families, who do not include women, and a dowry is the crowning feature of an advantageous marriage. As described in this thesis, *Erophile* belongs to the upper social class and could represent the noble Latin women on the island, who through a marriage to a Cretan man would reduce her social status and bear her precious dowry into Greek hands.

At the opposite extreme of the social spectrum in the tragedy is Chrisonomi, *Erophile*'s Nena. She manifests her "low social and economic status" by working as a nurse, the main profession, together with that of a maidservant, for peasant women during the Renaissance period in the Mediterranean area.³⁰⁶ Ultimately representing the obedient and compliant female Renaissance model, she does not call into question the social restrictions and rules which apply to her sex, and she strives to convince *Erophile* to conform and avoid suffering

³⁰⁴ Levi-Strauss (1969: 63, 65, 233, 478-479).

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, (65).

³⁰⁶ McKee (1998: 42).

the consequences of disobedience to the “masculine code.”³⁰⁷ Although the Renaissance brought new standards and benefits to men, women continued in a condition of dependence and inferiority. This condition did not, however, prevent women from revolting against injustice and oppression. The act of revenge perpetrated by the chorus of young women, in addition to that of Erophile’s nurse, demonstrates the implicit need of women to redefine themselves and put an end to the exercise of violence and injustice against them in their contemporary society.

Eros and *Thanatos* are very closely interrelated in this work. While seemingly love should be unproblematic when based on harmony and reciprocity, it is love that ultimately drives the young couple directly or indirectly to death. Love follows the well-worn path. Both lovers fully match the ideal Renaissance model of beauty and character and there would be no complication if Erophile were not of higher social rank than Panaretos. Erophile belongs to the upper class, and contemporary social norms require that her intended should possess the same social status. Panaretos’s claim to be of royal origin is not heeded by the King on the grounds that he lacks the concomitant affluence. Social disparity proves to be an insuperable impediment in the eyes of Erophile’s father, whose plans for his only daughter illustrate the social role of women. In ignorance of his daughter’s secret marriage, he has already scheduled a marriage for her, in his capacity of the only male representative and head of his family. As the “giver of Wife”³⁰⁸ he proceeds to exchange the female member of his family, regardless of his feelings for her, as he would exchange other “goods material and spiritual”³⁰⁹ in order to ensure a peaceful kingdom in the future and strengthen alliances through her marriage. Her worthy marriage “άξια παντρειά” (C 360) is the crux of the conflict between father and daughter since the interpretation of the word “worthy” follows divergent priorities and values. For Erophile, her beloved is a gifted person lacking only in wealth and aristocratic origin, a lack not important for a happy marital union. For the King, riches and social rank are essential to the maintenance of his family’s status. A potential marriage between Erophile and Panaretos could be said to represent the mixed marriages between the Latins and the Cretans on the island during the Venetian occupation. The fact that historical documents of the time, such as wills, attest to only five marriages between noble Latin women and Cretan men, but sixty nine between Latin noble men and Cretan women, could manifest, according the historians of the Renaissance period, disapproval on the part of the Venetian conquerors towards the merging of the two ethnic communities.³¹⁰ The vain endeavours of Erophile to cancel the matchmaking, “τσι προξενιές τούτες να ξηλωθούν” (C 187),³¹¹ the loss of everything related to her social status as well as the cruel execution of her lover by her father, further illustrate women’s immense potentiality for victimhood.

The deadly aspect of *Eros* is highlighted in this tragedy more than anything else. The power of *Eros* and the unconditional surrender of the protagonists to its power advance the tragic plot and inspire all the revolutionary actions of the lovers. *Eros* led the two protagonists of the tragedy to wed in secret, which in turn resulted in the inevitable condemnation of Erophile

³⁰⁷ Hansen (1993: 11).

³⁰⁸ Levi-Strauss (1949: 233)

³⁰⁹ Ibid., (65).

³¹⁰ McKee (1993: 230, 233).

³¹¹ Translation: these envoys for my hand may find themselves in foil;

and Panaretos. Unlike the protagonists in various other Cretan works of the Renaissance period, Erofile suffers the severest of punishments because her “crime” is irreversible. The consummation of the couple’s love invalidates the key component in her arranged marriage. The loss of her virginity thwarts her father’s plans and triggers his horrible revenge.

The erotic aspect of *Thanatos* as well as the deadly aspect of *Eros* is manifested throughout the tragedy. Following the late Medieval and Renaissance pattern, the personification of death reveals not only its cruel and awesome nature but also its erotic dimension. Erofile’s lamentation over the remains of Panaretos also contains erotic nuances and the deadly aspect of *Eros* is evident in its detrimental power over its victims which pushes them beyond their limits and forces them to commit fatal actions. *Thanatos* is the predictable destination of an undutiful and defiant woman such as Erofile, who dares to challenge the social inferiority of her sex and the limits imposed on her private life and choices.

The final chapter of my thesis highlighted, through the tragic suicide of the heroine, the destiny of women who rejected the rules constraining their sex. The social circumstances did not allow Erofile scope to negotiate her wishes and to balance her inner longings for unification with her beloved. Her living body belonged to her master and father and the only way out of the social constraints on her sex was death. As a woman she failed to play the role of an obedient and compromising woman willing to conform to the characteristic Renaissance female model. Her body became a weapon against tyranny and injustice and with her voluntary death she freed her existence from all the social restrictions imposed on her sex. Erofile performed her last act of resistance with her suicide on stage, a location that most probably served as a conduit for the distribution of liberal ideas such as those expressed in this play by Chortatsis. Her suicide highlights the intractability of the social norms and rules and could be said to represent the extremes to which the female voices of resistance to the patriarchal system needed to go in order to be heeded.

Women in Crete “were always present but unnoticed”³¹² unless they transgressed their destined social role and defended their rights. Erofile’s theatrical act of suicide symbolises the escape from social conventions and constraints upon her sex, and with her self-destruction she displays her “feminine despair”. Paradoxically she regains some power and control after her death, when the girls of the chorus and her Nena take revenge on her behalf and kill the King. This is testimony to her feminine power that could find no other outlet in the strictly patriarchal society of Renaissance Crete.

Another aim of this study was to investigate whether the death of the two protagonists could be linked to the *Liebestod* motive. The close reading of the tragedy supported an interpretation of the death of Erofile and Panaretos as an instance of the *Liebestod* motive as both protagonists die for love. Though their death is not simultaneous and only Erofile commits suicide, both lovers express their deep and unconditional love all through the tragedy, and their suicidal thoughts and words manifest that “love is an absolute for which they are willing to suffer and die.”³¹³ Chortatsis further enlarges the *Liebestod* motive and extends it in the sphere of animals by describing the pair of pigeons whose death adds another triumphant example of *Liebestod* to the tragedy.

³¹² McKee (1998: 36).

³¹³ Bijvoet (1988: 5).

Finally, two important limitations to the above findings need to be considered. Firstly, as stated at the outset, literature and theatrical poetry are fictitious and therefore any historical juxtaposition, comparison or identification can only be tentative. Secondly, *Erophile*'s plot is nominally set by Chortatsis in the ancient city of Memphis in Egypt, in a very distant, undefined time. Nevertheless, there is no evident attempt to recreate the local colour of this ancient time and place whereas anachronistic allusions to Medieval or Renaissance society abound, such as the "giostra" (tournaments) in which Panaretos took part to win the love of Erophile in keeping with the *courtly model*³¹⁴ of a knight in Medieval poetry or romance.

The limitations inherent in the fact that this thesis focuses on interpreting verses from the imaginative art of the remote past and attempts linkages to historical data are thus duly acknowledged. However, this approach is arguably justified by the supplementary (albeit speculative) light cast on the meagre amount of objective and mundane evidence on the circumstances in which the women of Renaissance Crete lived and loved.

³¹⁴ Duby (1992: 250).

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