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**DAUGHTERS OUT OF LINE: THE MARRIAGE PLOT IN THREE
PARADIGMATIC TEXTS OF THE CRETAN RENAISSANCE, EROTOKRITOS,
PANORIA AND VASILEUS O RODOLINOS**

by

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Daughters out of Line: The Marriage Plot in Three Paradigmatic Texts of the Cretan Renaissance, *Erotokritos*, *Panoria* and *Vasileus Ho Rodolinos*

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A neglected and marginalized area of Renaissance studies, the role of daughters in the representation of marriage in Cretan literature of the seventeenth century offers a unique perspective on the crisis of Byzantine aristocratic values and feudal structures of authority. Colonized by Venice, the powerful Cretan Byzantine aristocracy was confronted with alien rulers, a new commercial economy and a disruptive Latin/Italian Renaissance culture. In the context of this confrontation between Byzantium and Venice, between feudal kin structures and a modern politics of expediency, traditional marriage roles and alliances were strained. My dissertation focuses on three paradigmatic texts which, in different genres and with different outcomes, dramatize the resistance of aristocratic daughters who, acting out of line, challenge their roles as political objects of exchange among powerful men. *Erotokritos* (1713) by Vitsentzos Kornaros is an epic romance in which a royal daughter refuses to marry an appropriate suitor chosen by her father because of her love for a man who is not her social equal, thus threatening the consolidation of national identity. The conflict is finally resolved after the princess and her suitor disguised as an alien warrior prove their worth to the king through extraordinary feats of loyalty and heroism and are allowed to marry. The pastoral

Panoria (1585-1590) by Georgios Chortatzis represents the crisis of traditional paternal authority and social equilibrium when a daughter refuses a convenient marriage and chooses a pastoral retreat in the name of her autonomy and independence. Paradoxically, this crisis is resolved by Eros, recruited, against the odds, in the service of the arranged marriage. However, in *Vasileus O Rodolinos* (1647) by Andreas Ioannis Troilos a bizarre arrangement to reconcile the values of feudal kingship, romantic love and male friendship through a marriage based on lies and betrayal, tragically fails and, as in *Hamlet*, social chaos results. Epic romance, pastoral and tragedy, these texts, which provide insights into a world of cultural, economic and ideological transformations, present their different resolutions and dissolutions of problematic marriage plots.

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INTRODUCTION

This dissertation investigates the role of daughters in the marriage plot in three paradigmatic texts from the Cretan Renaissance, the epic romance *Erotokritos* (1713) by Vitsentzos Kornaros, the pastoral *Panoria* (1585-1590) by Georgios Chortatzis, and the tragic drama *Vasileus O Rodolinos* (1647) by Andreas Ioannis Troilos. I explore the ways daughters deviate from their traditional role as passive objects of economic and political alliances in Byzantine-Cretan marriage arrangements, the reasons for these deviations and the narrative strategies used to bring errant daughters back into line. I argue that crisis in the marriage plot evident in these texts expresses and responds to cultural and historical conditions specific to the Cretan Renaissance.

The Cretan Renaissance has been a neglected area of Renaissance studies. It is generally situated within the 465-year-long Venetian occupation of Crete which ended with expulsion of the Venetians from Crete in 1669 by the Ottoman Turks. During this period, significant disruptions to existing practices caused major changes to the merging identities of the Byzantino-Cretans with the Venetians. Well-established social practices and even religion, the staple of ethnic identity of Byzantino-Cretans, came under pressure. The Byzantino-Cretans were exposed to western ideas, especially those imported from the Byzantine colony founded in Venice after the Fourth Crusade in 1204, and with the Fall of Constantinople to the Ottoman Turks in 1453, as a complex network of new social and political relations developed. In all these developments, as Chryssa Maltezou reasons, the collective Cretan memory centered on their Byzantine ancestry that encouraged the preservation of traditional practices, των συνηθειών της Ρωμαιοκτης ημών γενεάς, as it appears in the sources, an idea which the archontic class “promoted and disseminated in order to further its political claims”

(279).¹ As representatives of all that was considered Byzantine and as defenders of the rural population that “lived in remote and inaccessible mountain areas, in villages and settlements ... without ever coming into contact with foreign elements” (279), the archontes were in a position to inspire allegiance and to manipulate the laity's allegiance to secure their political and social interests.

Therefore, what differentiates the Cretan Renaissance from that of other southern European countries is a colonization that produced political, social and economic tensions between the ruling Byzantine aristocracy and the Venetian administrators of the new order. At the same time, emerging from the unique interaction of Greek, Byzantine and Venetian cultures,² Crete produced literary works written in the vernacular, a specific Cretan version of Greek, that draw on classical Greek and Byzantine sources as well as literary and philosophical influences from France, Italy and Spain.

There has been very little study of the texts of the Cretan Renaissance and general study of its literature for several reasons. For one thing, the dating of the texts proves difficult. Thus, although *Erotokritos* was printed in 1713, some critics believe it was written earlier.³ The oral tradition of epic poetry was strong in Crete, often delaying the necessity of publication and plays were often published long after performances. For another, as the editor of *Vasileus Rodolinos* elaborates, the tragedy was not intended for publication, suggesting an unreliable chronology. Finally, translations of these works are

¹ See Chryssa A. Maltezou, “Byzantine “consuetudines” in Venetian Crete.” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, Vol. 49, Symposium on the Italians and Byzantium, 13th to 15th Centuries (1995): 269-280. The power and influence of the archontic class originated in the Byzantine period when the emperor sent the twelve archontopoula, descendants of prominent Byzantine families, to Crete.

² Although this study focuses on the interaction between these three powers, the Ottomans were very crucial in the developments that were taking place. See Molly Green, *A Shared World Christians and Muslims in the Early Modern Mediterranean*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000; also, see Speros Vryonis, Jr. *Byzantine Δημοκρατία and the Guilds in the Eleventh Century*. *Dumbarton Oak Papers*, Vol. 17 (1963):287-314, especially page 289.

³ See Stefanos Xanthoudidis, the introduction of *Erotokritos*, especially pages XLV-LIII.

lacking. Because these texts are written in Cretan Greek, a language inaccessible to many Renaissance scholars, translations are few and inadequate.⁴ It is not surprising but unfortunate that literary works of the Cretan Renaissance have been neglected. This study opens up new perspectives on Cretan literature and, at the same time, reveals the need for a remapping of the boundaries of Renaissance studies.⁵

While my focus is indebted to the scholarly work of literary critics and historians, it is in the interest of furthering the study of the literature originating during the period that Crete was under Venetian rule that this dissertation was conceived. In particular, I want to investigate the ways that traditionally structured marriage, pivotal to the transmission of power and to social harmony, is destabilized when daughters, for different reasons, do not fulfill their traditional obligations as passive objects of exchange in the patriarchal, social contract.

Several works are essential to my interpretation of the structure of marriage in *Erotokritos*, *Panoria* and *Rodolinos*. First are the anthropological theories of Claude Lévi-Strauss, who, in *Elementary Structures of Kinship*,⁶ considers the exchange of women as the basic tactical maneuver of marriage systems. As he claims, “marriage is considered everywhere as a particularly favourable occasion for the initiation or development of a cycle of exchanges” (63). This “favourable occasion,” regardless of the form taken, “whether direct or indirect, explicit or implicit, closed or open, concrete or

⁴ *Rodolinos* has not been translated yet to my knowledge. The *Erotokritos* was translated by John Mavrogordato in 1929, followed by Theodore Stephanides's translation in 1983. *Panoria* was translated by F. H. Marshall in 1929. The translation of *Panoria* is based on the text published by K. N. Sathas in the *Cretan Theater* (Venice, 1879).

⁵ *Erotokritos* by V. Kornaros, for instance, ranks as the masterpiece of the Cretan Renaissance, yet few scholars recognize it as belonging in the same category of the romance epics of Ariosto, Boiardo, Tasso, or Spenser. It is unfortunate that a work linked with the history of Crete should suffer such lack of appreciation.

⁶ Lévi-Strauss, Claude. *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*. Translated by James Bell, John Sturmer, and Rodney Needham. Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1969.

symbolic, it is exchange, always exchange, that emerges as the fundamental and common basis of all modalities of the institution of marriage” (479). Marriage, therefore, as one form of exchange, is instrumental in creating kinship systems whereby men expand their political power or prevent rivals from acquiring greater power. Moreover, the social value of the exchange through arranged marriages provides “the means of binding men together,” and through the “natural links of kinship” control “chance encounters or the promiscuity of family life” (Lévi-Strauss, 480).

Gayle Rubin's reading of Lévi-Strauss provides a refinement crucial to my work. Rubin challenges the institution of marriage as a “sex-gender system' ... a set of arrangements by which the biological raw material of human sex and procreation is shaped by human social intervention” (165). The sex-gender system generates “traffic in women” and “it is the men who give and take them who are linked, the woman being a conduit of a relationship rather than a partner to it” (174).⁷ Marriage then becomes an exchange in which male dominance “passes through women and settles upon men” (Rubin 192).

Applying the theories of Lévi-Strauss and Rubin, Ann Marie Rasmussen in *Mothers and Daughters in medieval German Literature*,⁸ a study of literary marriage plots and the ways they “depend on genre, time and class” (25) provides a model relevant to my study of Renaissance Cretan texts. Rasmussen represents daughters “learning female gender from their mothers. Through their mother's instruction, women learn their “instrumental function and sexualization” (23) and are transformed into “an attractive compliant object of male desire” (25). Rasmussen builds her interpretation on

⁷ Gail Rubin. “The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex.” In Rayna Reiter, ed., *Toward an Anthropology of Women*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975.

⁸ Ann Marie Rasmussen. *Mothers and Daughters in medieval German literature*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1997.

Trude Ehlert's article, "*Die Frau als Arznei*" (1986), in which Ehlert argues that male-authored texts construct images of women from a male perspective and a patriarchal ideology (25).

The most useful historical source for my investigation of the marriage plot is Sally McKee's *Uncommon Dominion, the Myth of Ethnic Purity* and various articles. McKee writes that "Cretan [marriage] practice conformed broadly to codes shaped by the revival of Roman Law in the twelfth century" (350).⁹ As a historian,¹⁰ McKee seeks through the examination of marriage contracts, wills, property contracts, and the like, to find the woman's place within the social, political and economic structures of Venetian Crete, a place where a man was "defined by his membership in a single patrilineal family" unlike the woman whose place was defined by "multiple family allegiances" (Parsons, 77).¹¹ McKee's research efforts differ on many points from those of the traditional versions of the history of Venetian Crete where the "fundamentally antagonistic ethnic groups" (McKee, 168) dominate. McKee's study turns the attention to the social relations between Byzantino-Cretans and Venetians. She uses governmental, literary and notarial sources (vii) to examine the official and popular pictures that emerge. While the archives used in the study are based on materials surviving from Candia¹² and "do not reflect the colony as a whole," they reach "far enough to understand what was important about the colony" (viii). For as long as traditional marriage practices were accepted, the patrilineal

⁹ Sally McKee. "Households in Fourteenth-Century Venetian Crete." In *Medieval families: perspectives on marriage, households, and children*. Carol Neel, ed. The Medieval Academy of America, 2004): 347- 404; originally published in *Speculum* 70 (1995): 27-67. Also, see by the same author, *Uncommon Dominion Venetian Crete and the Myth of Ethnic Purity*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000.

¹⁰ Even though McKee's version of the history does not emphasize the violence that men and women of the time experienced, we cannot ignore the Psilakis *History of Crete* (Ιστορία της Κρητης), a narrative dominated by the heroic acts by the Byzantine elites.

¹¹ John Carmi Parsons. "*Mothers, Daughters, Marriage, Power: Some Plantagenet Evidence, 1100-1150*" *Medieval Queenship*. New York: St. Martin's Press, (1998): 63-78.

¹² Candia, modern-day Irakleion, was the capital of Crete, "a name by which the island was known during the medieval and pre-modern periods" (McKee viii) .

kinship structures remained in force and women were constrained within the existing social order, regardless of social status.

The marriage plots in the texts I study reveal the process of “performing cultural work” through which women's lives were ordered in constructing kinship and the different ways of “sexualizing women” (Rasmussen 25, 23) in the developing Veneto-Cretan society. These marriage plots explore the issues of “masculine identity and conflicts ... through the female characters and the culturally more marginal positions they occupy” (Foley 3).¹³ Furthermore, they reveal the absolute importance of the control of the marriage plot by patriarchal power when daughters willfully or otherwise fail to perform their necessary roles in the reproduction of political, social, and economic structures. Arguing that the marriage plots as presented in these texts embody the tensions caused by the Venetian presence in Crete, the transmission of Renaissance ideas from Italy, and the inevitable changes that were taking place, socially and culturally, I explore the extraordinary strategies used to bring daughters back into line to avoid the fate of complete social disasters that we see in the tragedy of *Rodolinos*.

From the classical Greeks to writers of the Renaissance, male authors have represented rebellious and powerful women. The women in these texts are no exception. Although we know that Byzantine aristocratic women were powerful because of their rank, and other women had some financial independence, it is hard to find the voices of the women living in the transitional society from Byzantine Crete to Venetian Crete.

Lamentably, Cretan women seem to have left no written legacy¹⁴ in contrast to the Italian

¹³ Helene Foley. *Female Acts in Greek Tragedy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001.

¹⁴ Cassandra Fedele who lived in Crete for five years (1515-1520) with her physician husband can be assumed to have had some exchanges with Greek women who were married to Venetian men. One wonders if there were any communities where educated women wrote, read and debated issues or, if they were simply confined to the house. Fedele seems to have no records of her five-year stay because her property was lost when the ship on which she was traveling on her return to Venice capsized. See, Fedele, Cassandra. *Letters and Orations*, edited and translated by Diana Robin. Chicago: University of

women who wrote and published extensively.

As Virginia Cox points out, a “little noted event in Italian cultural history” (513)¹⁵ took place in 1600. It was the year that Lucrezia Marinella's *La nobilita et l'excellenza delle donne* and Modesta Posto's (recognized as Moderata Fonte) *Il merito delle donne* were published in Venice. Cox further elaborates, the “intellectual context of these works” is found in the tradition of defending women and that publications in defense of women were common by that time. These two women were able to contribute to the debate of the defense of women through their writing and publishing. They transcended were able to straddle between the conventional roles of women through a combination of the strength of their minds, writing talent and humanistic values, but they also supported the traditional roles of women as wives and mothers. Even though the event was “little noted” their work reflects the literary and intellectual atmosphere of the times in which women's voices were expressed.

Thus, Ludovico Ariosto in the *Orlando Furioso* uses Vittoria Colonna, a contemporary female writer as an example whose behavior is admirable enough to be emulated (Benson 136).¹⁶ She displays her intellectual prowess and fortitude through a position that may be readily identified with conventional female conduct and sensibility because she maintains a stance where love and fidelity to her husband are central in her decisions and actions. Yet, she is not as obedient to social convention as she appears because she “achieved her desired end and married the man she wished” (Benson 136). Being able to marry the man of one's choice in upper class society often created a

Chicago Press(2000): 6.

¹⁵ Virginia Cox. “The Single Self: Feminist Thought and the Marriage Market in Early Modern Venice.” *Renaissance Quarterly*, Vol. 48, No. 3, 1981, 513-581.

¹⁶ Pamela Joseph Benson. *The Invention of the Renaissance Woman: The Challenge of Female Independence in the Literature and Thought of Italy and England*. University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania University Press, 1992.

political crisis for the family and especially the woman in question. Although she may have represented a more modern woman who did not need male vindication for her actions, in her writing she manages to honor not only her husband but is able to create expectations for the way men will be viewed in the future. In other words, she manages to pacify male anxiety that a woman's ability to participate in the masculine domain of writing does not pose a threat to “domestic or social peace” (Benson 138).¹⁷ Even as outspoken writers, these women nevertheless bow to prescriptions concerning female virtue and the priority of their roles as wives and mothers.

In the three literary texts of this dissertation, authored by men, we find examples of articulate and principled women defying patriarchal authority concerning marriage or, in the case of *Rodolinos*, women tragically used in a failed marriage plot. However, the three texts show the extraordinary efforts and interventions required to reestablish union and social stability through marriage. In *Rodolinos*, the failure of the marriage plot coincides with an apocalyptic disintegration of the social order.

In Chapter 1, “*The Historical and Social Background of the Cretan Renaissance*,” I establish the historical and social factors that led to the lively period known as the Cretan Renaissance by using material relevant to Crete during the Venetian presence. This approach allows us to register the Byzantine continuity in the social, political and cultural domains of Venetian Crete. It has thus been possible to supplement the historical sources by using the literature to trace the development of the Cretan Renaissance. The introductory remarks of the historical and social context are followed by an examination

¹⁷ Unlike Vittoria Colonna, Cassandra Fedele “went on record in 1492 that an educated woman could not have both her profession and marriage. She could choose either a career of scholarship and writing or she could marry and settle for a life of domestic servitude (6). See note 13 above for bibliographical reference.

of the “*Abduction of Aēdonitza*” which provides a historical example of the abduction of a fifteen-year-old woman during the Venetian presence in Crete. The abduction, a recurrent event in Greek myth, literature, and historical accounts, contextualizes the marriage plot and reveals the political climate of that society. The abduction and eventual marriage of Aēdonitza to her abductor corroborates intermarriage as a threat to what Sally McKee refers to as “the myth of ethnic purity.”¹⁸ The abduction also reveals leading aspects of the social relations between the Byzantino-Cretans and the Venetians during the transitional period, especially the threat of assimilation posed to Byzantine-Cretan identity, the Orthodox faith, and to the social standing of the Byzantine aristocracy. Most importantly, however, the violence heaped on the young woman makes the explicit connection between female chastity and family honor or shame. The reenactment of such a violent act attests to contemporary practices and reveals the prevailing social and political structures in Venetian Crete.

Chapter 2, *Of Romance and Chivalry: The Marriage Plot in the Erotokritos*, tells of the love between Aretousa, the daughter of King Iraklios, and Rotokritos, the son of the king's trusted councilor. Central to the marriage plot in this chivalric romance is the crisis caused by the desire of the protagonists to choose their mates which causes rupture within the family. By focusing on the conflict individual choice plays as the determining factor in marriage, *Erotokritos*, complicates what appears to be only “a story of love,” as George Seferis¹⁹ calls it. The potential unsanctioned marriage challenges the established social order and endangers class and kinship structures. The passionate love that binds the two young people is unacceptable and initiates the various obstacles that will test their moral and physical endurance.

¹⁸ See Sally McKee's *Uncommon Dominion*, especially the concluding chapter.

¹⁹ George Seferis, *Dokimes* Vol II. Athens: Ikaros, 1981.

Chapter 3, *Panoria: The Taming of the Virgin Huntress*, presents another version of the marriage plot centered on the crisis caused by the eponymous heroine who rejects marriage and family life entirely. The protagonist's refusal to marry challenges the popular belief of marriage as the only possible choice for an acceptable and satisfactory life for a woman. More significantly, the rejection of marriage conveys the fear of the power of women who renounce their expected roles as wives and mothers and therefore abdicate their function of biological reproduction and the continuity of future generations. Thus, it becomes imperative to persuade the young woman to accept the dominant view of marriage and to become a willing participant in the tradition of marriage. The ploys used to cause the young woman to step into line underscore the importance of marriage as a system where women are essential to the continuity of culture through their part in the economic and social reproduction.

A third version of the marriage plot in Chapter 4, “*The Tragic Marriage Plot in Vasileus Rodolinos*,” a complex and dark play, represents the failed version of the marriage plot. Troilos uses the conventions of tragedy to situate and emphasize the pressures and constraints familial obligations exert on the female characters. The deception by which an aristocratic woman is abducted and the violation of kinship ties creates a conflict that threatens the power and survival of three royal houses. *Rodolinos* exposes the trafficking of women most blatantly as two marriageable women are caught in the machinations of two men which highlight the “functional use” (Rasmussen 23) of women. Joining the men's efforts to bring about a successful marriage, the queen mother becomes complicit in the arrangement.

Thus, the literary version of the marriage plots in *Erotokritos*, *Panoria*, and *Vasileus Rodolinos* reveal not only the ingenious schemes used to rein daughters back in

line but challenge and deepen our understanding of the constraints placed on the human worth, sexuality, identity, and physical and ethical freedom of women, which are issues that concern us still.

CHAPTER 1

**THE HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL BACKGROUND OF THE CRETAN
RENAISSANCE**

The Cretan Renaissance exists as a remarkable and creative time affected by the intellectual and political ambitions of the Cretans of Byzantine heritage, the Venetian colonists, and the neo-ethnic Veneto-Cretans who emerged during the years of Venetian dominion. Many aspects of the Cretan Renaissance remain vague or open to debate. This is because the number of literary texts available is limited and the historical accounts of the period are based mainly on “fiscal and institutional history” (Jacoby, 875)²⁰ found in the archives. Despite the abundance of archival records, they mainly represent bureaucratic and administrative concerns.

Although studies have increased in the last fifty years,²¹ many aspects of a renaissance during this time remain obscure and uncertain. Still, elements found in the surviving literary texts offer a glimpse of the Veneto-Cretan culture. Attempts have been made to recover these works but their importance has not been widely recognized. Moreover, the role of women, historical or fictional, during this time period has been obscured. In effect, the Venetian period, the texts, and the women in the texts have been largely ignored by historians, scholars and theorists. This neglect, therefore, fails to recognize the importance of the historical context and the importance women play in

²⁰ See David Jacoby. “The Encounter of Two Societies: Western Conquerors and Byzantines in the Peloponnesus after the Fourth Crusade.” *American Historical Review*, Vol. 78, No. 4, (1973): 873-906.

²¹ See for example, Alexandre Embiricos, *La Renaissance Crèteoise XVIe and XVIIe siècles* (Paris, 1960) focuses on the seventeenth century in Crete; Deno J. Geanakoplos, “Cretan Transmission of Byzantine Culture” in *Byzantine East and Latin West*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, (1966): 139-164; the volume edited by David Holton, *Literature and Society in Renaissance Crete*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991, surveys the literature of Venetian Crete; Sally McKee, *Uncommon Dominion The Myth of Ethnic Purity*; Molly Greene, *A Shared World*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000; Monique O'Connell, “The Venetian Patriciate in the Mediterranean: Legal Identity and Lineage in Fifteenth-Century Venetian Crete.” *Renaissance Quarterly* (2004): 466-493.

these texts. Indeed women are largely unrecorded in the historical records, suggesting the limited importance of their official role in the social and political contexts.

Any attempt to analyze the Cretan Renaissance texts and the representation of the female characters, will not reveal the woman's place in the world of Venetian Crete comprehensively and will predictably be limited by the lack of sources found in the historical accounts. However, the fact that the women appear in an array of roles suggests not only their influence their presence had on society but their complexity. For this reason the study of the literary depictions of the women in these texts must consider the context and the general perspective of the writers. The woman becomes the figure through which the writers attempt to grasp, represent and resolve the political tensions at a time of social transition and evolution of the relations between Cretans and Venetians. Undoubtedly, the evolving socio-political circumstances in Crete helped to shape a distinctive culture which was influenced by the intermingling of the Cretans and the Venetians.

Since ancient times Crete has held a crucial position in the Mediterranean area because of its self-sufficiency and, more importantly, of its strategic location. Nature may have provided the island with certain physical advantages but those advantages created many crises for its inhabitants. Because of its enviable geographic position as a crossroads on the sea routes to and from the Eastern Mediterranean and northern Africa, Crete was the sought-after target of other city states whose attempts to possess and dominate the island were based exclusively on Crete's economic potential. It is the largest of the Greek islands, framed by Africa, Asia Minor, and Europe and has hosted numerous civilizations or empires.

Similar to the gradual development of the European Renaissance, the Cretan

Renaissance unfolded through a series of events and its culminations resulted from the combination of several factors: first, the Fourth Crusade of 1204; second, the Venetian acquisition of Crete as part of the settlement among the leaders of the Crusades and the systematic colonization of Crete which began in 1211; third, the intellectual exchange between the Cretans who traveled or migrated to Venice and returned to Crete; fourth, the invention of the printing press; fifth, the continuous trade and Crete's role as a stable channel for Venice's commercial activities; and, finally, the Greek studies in the West as a source for the European Renaissance. The dynamic literary and artistic expression triggered by those factors set the stage for the Cretan Renaissance.

In studying the circumstances of the Cretan Renaissance in the context of the Renaissance that was sweeping Europe, it becomes necessary to look at the conditions that brought about the development of an intellectual, artistic and literary movement in the urban centers. The time period identified as the Cretan Renaissance extends, according to David Holton, roughly from the "fourteenth century to the baroque."²² The movement associated with this time "has a primarily bourgeois character," Margaret Alexiou contends, which emerged only in the cities suggesting that the rural population did not play a major role, if any, in its high-point. More specifically, Molly Greene concludes that the Cretan Renaissance was "the best-known product of extraordinarily fertile mingling of Orthodox and Catholic elites in the urban centers" (8)²³ and this mingling took place during the last two hundred years of Venice's presence on Crete. In general, the familiarity of the Byzantino-Cretans with the European culture impacted on

²² Holton, David. *Literature and Society in Renaissance Crete*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991. The dates are not definitive. Holton is writing about a time that from the distance of our present seems ancient, yet it seems that the effects of the contact between Crete and Venice created the pathways for change and continuity to the present days.

²³ Greene, Molly. *A Shared World Christians and Muslims in the Early Mediterranean*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000.

various aspects of daily life. Essentially, J. E. Powell's remark encapsulates the phenomenon of the Cretan Renaissance: "During the second half of the fifteenth century, Crete was what it never had been before and never was again, "a prime centre of Greek culture" (103).²⁴ Crete became a kind of "mid-point" between the old Byzantine world and the rising Italian centers of humanistic scholarship, especially Venice (Geanakoplos 143).

The most decisive and major factor that affected the fate of Crete²⁵ took place in another part of the Byzantine Empire. On April 13, 1204, Constantinople, Christendom's greatest center of civilization, was plundered, its inhabitants overcome and devastated²⁶ by the events perpetrated by the Fourth Crusade. As Jonathan Phillips explains, the containment of the plundering was not the only issue confronting the French and the Venetians. The more basic and crucial issue was that they were not "just conquering a city or a castle" but in the event Constantinople fell, they would "gain control over an entire empire" (238). If the anticipated outcome were such, the pressing concern required agreement on the choice of an emperor from within the ranks of the crusaders and although the leaders of the crusading enterprise, Enrico Dandolo, Baldwin of Flanders, and Boniface of Montferrat, were influential men in Europe, they were not monarchs. A formal pact was drawn to set parameters amongst the leaders of the crusade and to ensure "unity and lasting concord" among them (Phillips 238).²⁷

The impact of the fourth crusade in heightening the status and power of Venice is

²⁴ J. Enoch Powell, 103 "The Cretan Manuscripts of Thucydides." *The Classical Quarterly*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (Apr., 1938): 103-108.

²⁵ Crete was a Byzantine province since the Byzantine takeover from the Arabs in 961 and the province was governed by a Duke.

²⁶ Geanakoplos, Deno. *Medieval Western Civilization and the Byzantine and Islamic Worlds*. Lexington, MA: D. C. Heath and Company, 1979.

²⁷ Phillips, Jonathan. *The Fourth Crusade and the Sack of Constantinople*. New York: Penguin Books, 2004. Phillips in this study traces the events that led to the sack of the capital of Byzantium and the power players that brought about the cataclysmic event.

unquestionable. The Venetians secured three eighths of Constantinople, including the Aghia Sophia, fortified ports in Greece and numerous islands in the Aegean Sea, and they were even exempted from swearing allegiance to the Latin Emperor. In effect, the Venetians were able to attain a more powerful and influential position than the Latin emperor himself. The great colonial empire came into being and it seemed that Genoa and Pisa, its major rivals, were dwarfed by the turn of events (Geanakoplos 296). Venice and Genoa continued to clash in the maritime rivalry and contest for control of the Mediterranean region and even though Venice's possession of Crete added to Venice's colonial catalog and increased its commercial growth, it also increased her efforts to maintain her positions as the major power in the Mediterranean.

Just as the conquest of Constantinople by the Latins (as the Crusaders and the Venetians were identified),²⁸ placed Venice in a commanding and dominant position in the Mediterranean and Europe, it also initiated a new age in the history of the Byzantine lands under Latin rule (Jacoby 1). The impact of the transition from Byzantine to Latin rule as recorded by the historians and chroniclers of the time, focuses mainly on the military aspects and the political changes that took place rather than the recording of the events of daily existence as “expressed in the social structures, legal and administrative institutions, or economic patterns and practices” (Jacoby 1).²⁹ The allocation of Crete to Venice³⁰ as part of the settlement among the crusaders was the single most decisive factor

²⁸ Alexander Kazhdan mentions the term first appears as a generic appellation of Westerners in a patriarchal decision of 1054; Michael Attaleiates, at the end of the eleventh century used the term several times; but the meaning of the ethnonym is confused: his Latins are evidently good warriors, but their ethnic identity obscure. Anna Komnene uses *Latinos* (97 times) in the *Alexiad* and *Latinikos* interchangeable with *Keltikos*; the Celts. Alexander Kazhdan. “Latins and Franks in Byzantium: Perception and Reality from the Eleventh to the Twelfth Century.” In Angeliki E. Laiou and Roy P. Mottahedeh, eds. *The Crusades from the Perspective of Byzantium and the Muslim World*, Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, (2001): 86.

²⁹ Jacoby, David. *Latins and Greeks in the Eastern Mediterranean after 1204*. Arbel, Benjamin, Bernard Hamilton, David Jacoby, eds. London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1989.

³⁰ Originally Crete was allocated to Genoa who sold her to Venice.

affecting the fate of Crete. It was at this time that Byzantine Crete collided with Venice, and this encounter involved matters of language, religion, nationality, economy, and politics. The conflict and contention that stemmed from the Crusaders' sack of Constantinople, was easily transferred to Crete as the newly-assigned Venetian territorial dominion was enforced. The relegation of Crete as a Venetian colony did not necessarily persuade the Cretans to accept or comply without resistance

The takeover of Crete as a colony, which officially began in 1211 and ended in 1669, is what Sally McKee calls, the "premier example of pre-modern colonization" (6). The Venetians whose decisions were made back in Venice by the same governing body, the Senate" (McKee 7) had to govern from afar through their designated officials sent to Crete. Even though Crete was surrendered to Venice, the Byzantine traditions in place could not be altered or extinguished immediately. Neither was Venice interested in exercising "cultural imperialism" (269),³¹ to borrow Peter Lock's phrase. Venice's objective was to interfere as little as possible with local institutions provided her sovereign status was upheld. The main objectives were focused on the continuity and expansion of trade, security for her citizens and the avoidance of conflict with the native inhabitants. As histories elsewhere in similar situations³² attest, continuity is inherently embedded in change and change does not happen abruptly but gradually. Change entails conflicts, compromises, and deliberate effort in order to negotiate a reasonably secure environment. Change also generally takes place during the collapse of long-standing institutions and turmoil and violence usually accompany the transition before the new social order is secured. This process involves a "dialectical process in which institutions

³¹ Peter Lock. *The Franks in the Aegean*. The phrase is used to describe the situation of the Frankish presence in Greece.

³² The situation of Ireland and the continuous conflict with Great Britain may be comparable especially since much of the strife is religious-based.

are simultaneously destroyed and preserved as a previously existing institution is re-contextualized into a new social order, serving new functions within the new totality” (Garner 54). Since co-existence in this case was unavoidable and the integration of practices and traditions was also foreseeable, the transition and formation of another social order and culture was bound to take place.

The Venetian domination of Crete was a source of defeat and disgrace to the ruling class and the inhabitants of the island. The occupation of Constantinople by Latins was the most effective and undeniable symbol of western triumph (Lock 278). Members of the Byzantine elite clashed with the Venetian authorities not only because they were ideologically committed to Byzantine traditions but also because they were not willing to give up the material symbols of their aristocratic status, that is, the land, villas, including the serfs that worked the land which, in effect, would eliminate their political and social power as well. The island’s population was distraught by this development while the importance of the ruling princely nobility, the *archontes*,³³ was challenged and reduced considerably. The newly-appointed rulers met with persistent rebellions by the Cretans. Moreover, the continued Byzantine mistrust of Latins rooted in the Crusades and the intense hostility and opposition expressed by members of the Eastern Orthodox Church toward the Latins, caused the most effective setback to the assimilation of the two cultures. The transition, therefore, was not peaceful. In fact the volatile allegiances and alliances stemming from the opposing factions of Byzantino-Cretans and Venetians who competed for control placed Crete at the center of various political interests.

One of the first matters Venice had to address was the distribution of properties held and occupied by Byzantine nobles, *archontes*,³⁴ involved a range of obstacles the

³³ The Byzantine *archontes* are equivalent to the Western knights.

³⁴ The twelve *archontopoula* as they came to be known, were designated representatives of the Byzantine

Venetians had to overcome. According to Psilakis, there are official documents in the archives in Venice, indicating the ways in which the confiscation and distribution of properties were implemented (214). If Venice was not interested in practicing cultural imperialism, she was certainly not opposed to territorial domination and the acknowledgment of her authority. The redistribution of these properties meant the removal of the *archontes* of their territorial claims and the owners themselves – a process that could not be implemented easily or without resistance. Another matter of concern for the Venetians was their physical survival as individuals in their claim of authority gained through the conquest. Thus, their first concern was to find ways to ensure a smooth transition, to create an impression of order and uniformity as well as to secure physical and economic stability. In order to succeed in this undertaking, they had to rely on the administrative and economic institutions and practices of the past and to integrate familiar practices that the population would not find too drastic and would enable them to adapt to the new conditions.

The means to accomplish Venice's intention to render and keep the Byzantine Cretans "socially, juridically and economically inferior to the Latin population" (McKee 41) lay in the approximately six hundred families who agreed to migrate to Crete with the promise of land and positions of authority within the governmental structure while expediting the rise of Venice to empire status in the Mediterranean area. Furthermore, Monique O'Connell, uses information provided by Antonio Morosini who "similarly described the initial settlers as including a variety of social classes, saying "all the island was divided and given to various people of Venice to rule, and they were sent there with

emperor, Alexios II Komnenos (Psilakis 207) who were given land, properties and human labor in order to move to Crete following the Arab expulsion from the Island. It has been suggested that the *archontopoula* was a legend used to create an aristocratic genealogy to secure privileged status on Crete. See Bartusis, 206.

their households, and great advantages were given to those who were willing to go” (475). “Of those,” she further elaborates, “thirty-seven of them were of the “most prestigious” families while the remaining colonists were from “less prestigious Venetian families that eventually became part of the patriciate, or from families . . . that were neither prominent in Venetian politics in the thirteenth century nor part of the post-Serrata patriciate” (474). Essentially, the settlers came from a variety of social classes but “great advantages” were given to those who agreed to emigrate (475).³⁵

The settlers would retain all the rights of Venetian citizens as if they lived in Venice although as representative subjects of the *Serenissima*,³⁶ they were obligated to be prepared to bear arms in support of the Venetian Republic – which they would have been expected to perform if they lived on the mainland as well. Their loyalty was a given. When the first settlers (colonists) arrived in Crete in 1211, the Greek Cretans were immediately “disenfranchised” and under the new rule most of the Greeks were relegated to the status of “unfree *villeins*” (McKee 232).

Despite the change of status for the Byzantino-Cretans, the Venetian project of the takeover required more intense administrative interest and the allocation of considerable military force to ensure order and submission. In theory, the mobilization of citizens volunteering to serve their country and self-interests seems somewhat tenable but, in practice, it becomes much more involved. In a predictable response, the privileged Byzantines accustomed to an affluent lifestyle and probably served by a majority of landless, dependent people, would face a cultural and economic upheaval that, understandably, would cause friction and unrest. The Venetian authorities understood

³⁵ O'Connell, Monique. “The Venetian Patriciate in the Mediterranean: Legal Identity and Lineage in Fifteenth-Century Venetian Crete.” *Renaissance Quarterly* (2004): 466-493.

³⁶ Venice was known as the *Serenissima*, Most Serene Republic.

well enough that the social position of the Byzantine nobility could jeopardize the successful transition of the takeover of Crete. The appropriation of Byzantine-owned properties to the settlers meant the replacement of one establishment for another which left in its wake a group of loyal Byzantines who, in their attempts to preserve their titles, properties and their power, could regroup and prepare to carry on continuous combat against the Venetians and, often, their fellow Cretans. As the Psilakis³⁷ account of the history of Crete emphasizes, there were thirteen major revolts against the Venetians in a period of one hundred fifty years (1212-1366). Thus a climate where much energy was diverted and directed to stirring animosity between the Cretans who considered themselves Byzantines and those who had Venetian ties or sympathies³⁸ towards the Venetian colonists or settlers³⁹ intensified. Yet, according to Chryssa Maltezou, the number of aristocratic families and their offspring in Crete who still considered themselves as Byzantines and who still viewed Constantinople as Byzantine despite its loss to the Turks, was significantly large. The number was such that if they all united and cooperated with each other, it would have been easy to take over the island and render Venice ineffective (50).⁴⁰ Despite their ethnic pride, instead of forming powerful political alliances, each competed for separate power which prompted civil war among the aristocratic families and against the Venetians. When concessions were made, peace was temporarily restored but set the ground for future uprisings. These leaders could claim entitlement and perform atrocious acts toward the Venetians and members of their own ethnic group even if harsh retaliation followed. This stance may be seen as a radical

³⁷ Psilakis, Vasileios. *The History of Crete*. Volume II (844).

³⁸ See below for the historical episode reflecting the situation.

³⁹ There must have been Venetians who settled in Crete before the Venetian colony, if indeed, there was an active mercantile exchange.

⁴⁰ Maltezou, Chryssa A. *Crete during the Venetian Period (1211-1669)* in Greek. Crete: Vikelaia Demotiki Vivliothiki, 1990.

form of preserving ethnic identity, but, more obviously, it is a form of resistance to the competition the presence a new political power introduces and magnifies the stakes for power.

Out of this situation, the Cretans found themselves living under appalling conditions, exacerbated by the violent strife between Byzantino-Cretans and Venetians. However, the most important objective of the Venetians was the competent administration and utilization of the resources found on the island with minimal social unrest and the containment of any type of disturbance arising from local resistance which became a constant problem for the administration. To this end, Venice allowed Byzantino-Cretans relative autonomy, yet, at the same time, virtual subordination was required. Thus political and cultural identities were maintained and cultivated and that persistence of distinct identities fueled hostility between the two cultures. The Venetians needed the support of the *archontic* class in order to maintain control over the population. To this end they were prepared to forfeit rights over the Greek Church and not to impose the Roman Catholic religion on their newly-acquired subjects. They also allowed the *archontes* to display the visible signs of their inherited titles as long as they did not cause a problem to either the Venetian authorities or to the public order. For example, Alexios Kallergis,⁴¹ one of the most influential Byzantine dignitaries in Crete and whose role in negotiations with the Venetians is often contradictory, is described as maintaining the appearance and character of his former title. One form of acknowledgment of the aristocratic status accorded to Kallergis was demonstrated when he rode into the marketplace of Candia accompanied by a number of servants. At the moment of meeting,

⁴¹ The spelling of the patronymic “Kallergis” appears with a single “l” in the Psilakis text. As a matter of convenience, the name will be spelled as Kallergis throughout which conforms with the Xanthoudidis spelling.

regardless of the status of the other person, even clerics were not excluded, had to dismount and bow down to the ground as was the custom (Psilakis 250). This outward display of respect legitimized the authority of the *archontas* and the loss of such power would certainly prove to be a source of discontent.

The contempt with which the Byzantino-Cretans viewed the Venetians mixed with the religious conflict was fueled by the portrayal of the Venetians as materialistic, cruel and contemptible in their dealings with the Cretans. This image of the Venetians satisfied both the conscience and the social status of the presumably more benevolent Byzantine nobility. The Byzantine *archontes* who wanted to hold on to their patrimonial lands and their status as local dignitaries brooded over the Latin presence on Crete. That the population seemed more susceptible to the Venetian influence and the spread of the Roman Catholic faith was a major concern for those wishing to maintain ethnic purity.⁴² But, according to Angeliki Laiou, the Venetians of Crete, “within two generations from the time of the conquest, had children who learned Greek from Greek mothers or nursemaids, and in their middle age, made wills leaving property both to Greek and Latin churches” (171).⁴³ It would seem that the process of assimilation that was taking place rather rapidly was connected to the Venetian presence in Constantinople prior to the Fourth Crusade when the Venetians were still considered “Byzantine subjects” and were given “judicial and fiscal privileges” (Laiou 172) as members of the merchant class. That Venetian familiarity with Byzantine culture may have eased the efforts of assimilation informally.

⁴² Sally McKee in *Uncommon Dominion* elaborates on this aspect of the Venetian presence and the illusion of ethnic purity and also points to the intense hostility between the members of the Eastern Church toward the Latins.

⁴³ Laiou, Angeliki E. “*Institutional Mechanisms of Integration*” in *Studies on the Internal Diaspora of the Byzantine Empire*. Ahrweiler, Hélène and Angeliki E. Laiou, eds. Washington, D. C.: Dumbarton Oaks, (1998): 161-181.

On the formal level, however, “internal peripheries,” to use H el ene Ahrweiler’s term, were created within the social structure in the painstaking effort to maintain separate and distinct identities. While the general aspects for the development of the Italian Renaissance are well-known, the development of the Cretan Renaissance remains relatively vague. In order to understand the full significance of the Cretan Renaissance, it is important to learn more of the Byzantino-Cretan and Venetian relations and the way everyday reality was affected by the contradictions and uncertainties the future seemed to hold.

At the time when Europe was thriving with “the literary bequests of antiquity, Greek as well as Latin,” (Burckhardt 140), Crete was still immersed in Byzantine culture.⁴⁴ The Eastern Roman Empire, what we know as Byzantium, came into being through Justinian’s desire to recover the glorious Rome of the past and it was during his reign that the Greco-Roman world experienced a kind of renaissance, a revival of classical literature and the Greek Orthodox church became the custodian of this literature. In fact, the Byzantine Greeks referred to themselves, as sometimes modern Greeks do as well, as *Romoi*,⁴⁵ Romans, descendants of Rome. The Byzantine Empire continued for a thousand years after the fall of the Roman Empire to the Germanic tribes.

The coming of the Venetians to Byzantine Crete officially in 1211 created a volatile political situation whereby the socio-political systems were challenged and induced the strife and hardships that followed. In general, Cretans are reputed for chronic

⁴⁴ Since ancient times, Crete holds a special position in the Mediterranean area because of its envious geographic location which was contested for its commercial potential. The island has been influenced by the occupations of diverse populations such as the Arabs, Byzantines, Venetians and the Ottoman Turks—who have all left their traces on the physical landscape as well as on the culture. Yet, Cretan culture and traditions were modified little since Byzantine times and especially where the language is concerned.

⁴⁵ See Mark C. Bartusis *The Late Byzantine Army Arms and Society 1204-1453*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992.

violence.⁴⁶ However, the violence directed toward the Venetians⁴⁷ is viewed by loyalists to the Byzantine heritage as acts of allegiance, heroism, patriotism, selflessness, and each uprising is viewed as an attempt to restore the honor of Byzantium.

If anything, the Venetian period accelerated and heightened a process of social and political transformation which was percolating in Crete and in the Mediterranean world before the Venetians conquered the island and had its origins as much in Byzantine politics and society as in Venetian motivations and force. For example, the Venetians were integral members of the merchant class in Constantinople and society and “were the most privileged foreigners” (Laiou 172). In fact, if Venetians were “privileged foreigners,” it would raise the question if those who lived in Crete prior to the conquest would be classified as colonizers or as settlers.⁴⁸ When the Venetians established their hold on Crete, transferred their trade to Crete, a cross culture began to emerge even in this contentious environment, a middle class, between the aristocratic and the lower classes. Eventually, the Cretan and Venetian populations moved toward a more civilized co-existence through the tolerance of their respective cultures. As time passed, the Venetians who lived in Crete were influenced further by the land and its people. Comparably, the Cretans, as beneficiaries of a rich intellectual and artistic tradition, were adept at “assimilating and reshaping the foreign influences, grafting on to the Byzantine tradition the cultural borrowings which came from the European Renaissance (Maltezou 32-33).

During the first two hundred fifty years of Venetian presence in Crete, from 1204

⁴⁶ This aspect of Cretan character features prominently in Vasileios Psilakis’ History of Crete.

⁴⁷ Aggressive actions would have been directed at any outsider; the Venetians were not singled out.

⁴⁸ Sally McKee, *Uncommon Dominion*, comments on Freddy Thiriet’s little distinction “between the Venetian merchant quarters in cities around the Mediterranean and the colony established in Crete (191), ff. 7.

to the fall of Constantinople in 1453, Crete remained in a “culturally stagnant existence” (Geanakoplos, 140). The exposure to the Italian Renaissance was the major influence on the development of the Cretan Renaissance. But as Panagiotakes observes, it should be emphasized that these “literary works are not simple translations or adaptations from the Italian, and still bear the imprint of Byzantine culture.” The most conspicuous quality is the language, the fifteen-syllable also known as *politicos stichos*, political verse. Of course, “Byzantine influence goes much deeper than metrical form” (283). Following this train of thought, Margaret Alexiou notes that “they had no Dante or Chaucer on whom to draw, only Byzantine literature” (250). Considering, however, the volatile and violent atmosphere and the competition for wealth, opportunities for the emergence of a Cretan Dante or Chaucer seemed remote. As it becomes obvious from the slim extant corpus of Cretan literary texts, written legacies were virtually unattainable. Yet, despite the constraints, around 1400, “there flourished on the island of Crete a number of poets who utilized conventions only in order to question them” (M. Alexiou 250). Venice channeled possible cultural exchanges between the east and west in the unfolding saga of its influence on Cretan history. Despite the sense of doom that pervaded Crete, Byzantine scholars and artists as well as Cretans, migrated to Venice. The Venetians and the Byzantines were no strangers to each other because of their earlier commercial interactions and had already established communities in Constantinople and the cultural exchange between East and West had been in progress. However, Crete was still predominantly Byzantine and the preservation of that heritage and the continued practice of common attitudes, acceptable behavior, and morality were of utmost importance. The hope of preserving Byzantine culture, or rather the ecclesiastical culture also lay in the Greek émigrés to Venice, especially after the fall of Constantinople to the Turks in 1453.

Venice was still more focused on “utilitarian, profit-minded” skills rather than scholarship and literature. But by mid-fifteenth century Venice showed a growing interest in the usefulness and prestige attached to learning because of neighboring influences. Various cultural initiatives were put into place and the founding of the St. Mark’s library was included in this effort. The Greek Cardinal Bessarion (1403-1472), an honorary member of the Council, recognized Venice as “the main hope for the survival of Hellenic culture” in the face of the Turkish threat and contributed his sizable library which included approximately five hundred Greek books and many copies of classical texts⁴⁹ to Venice and the Library. The books were used by Aldus Manutius as well as by Erasmus and, as Bessarion writes in his letter of intent, the Greeks who would come to Venice would “feel they are entering another Byzantium” (Chambers and Pullan 355, 358).

As the petition of the Greek community to the Council of Ten in 1498 to “permit the Greeks to found a Scuola at the church of San Biagio in the sestier of Castello, as the Slavs, Albanians and other nations have already done and the Greeks ask this on the grounds of their devotion,” (334)⁵⁰ suggests a benevolent Venetian attitude toward foreigners, especially Byzantines. Moreover, these enterprising settlers played an important part in Venice’s success in commercial supremacy especially in the Mediterranean basin. They astutely reminded the Council of Ten in 1511 of their contribution to Venetian success in a petition submitted by the Greek soldiers to purchase a site and at their own expense build the Church of San Giorgio Dei Greci.⁵¹ This

⁴⁹ See L. D. Reynolds, *Scribes and scholars: a guide in the transmission of Greek and Latin literature*. 3rd edition. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991, 149-152.

⁵⁰ Chambers, David and Brian Pullan, eds. with Jennifer Fletcher. *Venice a Documentary History, 1450-1630*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1992.

⁵¹ The church is still found in Venice to this day and it houses the Istituto of Byzantine and Metabyzantine culture.

proposal provides some idea of the numerical strength and importance of the Greek community in Venice and the visionary aspects of the émigrés:

...most of us have brought with us our families – that is, our wives and children – with the intention living and dying under your protection. We have no church to give the thanks due to Our Lord by celebrating divine service according to the Greek rite, since the chapel of San Biagio, previously granted by your lordships to our nation for this purpose, no longer suffices, for the place is too small and our people have increased to such an extent that they cannot be accommodated either inside or outside it.

Furthermore, the request of this “special favour” is to confirm that the Greeks are

...no worse than the Armenian heretics and the Jewish infidels who here and in other parts of your lordships’ dominions have synagogues and mosques for worshipping God in their own misguided way.

(Chambers and Pullan, 334-335)

The Greek communities situated in Venice felt the first impact of the Renaissance and were instrumental in spreading the new learning among other Greek communities, including Venetian Crete. The appearance of the printing press at the end of the fifteenth century opened the way for a new range of expression and availability of texts. Significantly, the printing press served as a strong link of the renaissance among the Greeks and its contribution was as singularly important for them as it was for early modern Greek literature. The first Greek Press in Venice (1486), for example, in attempting to imitate contemporary scribal practice, possessed a font of over 1,350 characters. In addition to the basic problem of printing the accents and breathings which accompany almost every Greek word, the printing houses faced more difficulties in creating a Greek font. The script was written by the huge number of exiles fleeing from the devastated Byzantine Empire was characterized by “an extravagance of complicated and convoluted ligatures, abbreviations, and contractions.”⁵²

⁵² Kenneth Snipes. Review of Nicholas Barker. *Aldus Manutius and the Development of Greek Script in*

The successors of Aldus Manutius, especially the printing establishment of Zaharias Kalliergis, whose entire staff consisted of Cretan compatriots (Geanakoplos, 144), benefited the Greek community in Venice. It was in Kalliergis' establishment that the first *Great Etymological Dictionary* was produced in 1499 and remains a milestone in Greek publications. As Geanakoplos points out, Zaharias was not only a competent technician of printing but “an excellent scribe and first class editor.” Additionally, like many other Cretans, he was “motivated by a high degree of ethnic pride” and he used the double-headed eagle as his printer's mark (Geanakoplos 144). The publication of the *Great Etymological Dictionary* and other works revived antiquity and memory of the culture and had an important effect on Venetian Crete as well as on the Mediterranean world because the integration of the eastern and western civilizations became possible. The work of these settlers to preserve the Byzantine heritage through the medium of the printed page was an important factor in the survival of Byzantine culture and Crete's cultural revival. In effect, the printing of the texts preserved through the Church perpetuated the “slavish Byzantine imitation of the ancient literary models” (Geanakoplos 27). As in Europe where the printing press made the printing of texts in the vernacular languages possible and available, likewise the Cretan language reflected the language of the mainstream populace even if the texts were intended for an upper class audience. On the whole, the labors of the printing houses were beneficial to the Cretans who inspired writing (even in imitation) but it still furthered the exchange between Venetian culture and that of Byzantine Crete.

The ability to regulate language in this framework is essential in establishing

the Fifteenth Century. Renaissance Quarterly, Vol. 41, No. 1 (Spring 1988) 120-122. The book was priced at \$500.00, but what added to the outrageous exorbitant price was the inclusion of numerous typographical errors.

political, class and national identity. Martin Leake in considering the connection between Crete and Venice contends that the Cretan authors had an advantage over the rest of the Greeks by having their work printed because of the connections with the printing houses. The only fact Leake's comment reflects is that Venice was considered the principal printing center, not that the production of Cretan texts were favored. By the start of the sixteenth century, printing establishments had sprung up in almost all Italian cities with the greatest accessibility in the north. However correct Leake's assumption may be, the activities of the Cretans in Venice demonstrate the readiness with which they welcomed the spirit of the European renaissance and the willingness with which they labored to disseminate western thought to their compatriots. For this reason, "the greater part of the old Romaic poetry, preserved in print, consists of the compositions of Cretan authors, although they seem generally less interesting than the productions of Constantinople" (Leake 73).

Despite Leake's reductive commentary, we cannot begin to guess or imagine what was lost to the world during the time Crete and Venice co-existed. The enduring small number of surviving texts cannot provide a satisfactory basis of either the variety or the volume that may have been produced. It is more than likely that only a tiny portion of Cretan poetry and literature was written or recorded on paper and, in all probability, never reached the publishing houses. And if the assumption that the Cretan Renaissance came to a halt as the historian Theoharis Detorakis (271)⁵³ declares with some conviction, because of the Ottoman takeover of Crete in 1669 and the dissolution of the Venetian dominion and the removal of the Venetians from Crete, then we only glimpse at the possible literary and artistic enterprises that may have been possible. But what should be

⁵³ Detorakis, Theoharis. *Istoria tis Kritis (History of Crete)*. Athens, 1986.

apparent is that only a small number of people participated in the literary and artistic life during this time.

The impact of western civilization through the inevitable cultural diffusion of Venetian and other Italian city-states in the fourteenth and then again in the sixteenth centuries constitutes a second major factor in the Cretan literary revival. What developed as a result of the exchange between Venetians and Cretans was a relationship whereby the two cultures meshed, each borrowing from the other. Religion and language remained the two determining factors of this inevitable clash of cultures and affected the process of assimilation. The most bitter disputes were over the question of religion. For the average person, religion pervaded his or her very existence and that perception of faith was transferred to the whole structure of society. It was entwined with every daily activity and offered the sanity and refuge to persist living with an almost blind submission to the Orthodox Church.

Despite the contempt with which the Byzantine saw the Venetians, the Cretans were able to practice their religion freely as long as they recognized Venetian authority. The fact that eighteen Orthodox parish churches existed within the fortified city of Candia in the fourteenth century implies that the Orthodox population had religious freedom and a strong presence in the life of the city (Georgopoulou 175). The education offered and provided to the masses by the Church included the promotion of Christian teachings and entailed contact with an audience of the lower socio-economic classes. In order to educate the masses, the aristocratic culture necessarily was exposed to and accepted some of the “diffuse tendencies, general ideas and mental images” (Duby 39) of the lower classes. And, as time passed, the Venetian settlers, having forgotten their own heritage, and because there were no Latin churches, they attended masses along with the

Cretans which led to eventual conquest of the conqueror, as Stergios Spanakis rationalizes (134).⁵⁴

Thus, while the masses were tutored in the practice of the faith and the language of the Church, the upper-class Byzantines and those lacking inherited aristocratic status, were also educated by the Church. Although the Church followed an ecclesiastically-based instruction, the literary Greek of Byzantine intellectual circles, according to Geanakoplos, “was different from the spoken every day Greek” (17) and most writers used an “artificial form of ancient Greek rather than the living vernacular spoken by the Byzantines themselves” (Geanakoplos 28). The classical works preserved by the Byzantine Greeks included the works of Homer, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Aristophanes, and other poets and dramatists. The classical texts were included in the educational curriculum and knowledge of the ancient writings as well as the ability to manipulate them “was a necessary condition for any type of social advancement especially in the absence of inherited aristocratic status or the possession of a political appointment” (M. Alexiou, 249).⁵⁵ The preservation and transmission of these works by the well-educated scholars who sought refuge in the Latinized world following the collapse of the Byzantine Empire became instrumental in introducing the Renaissance.⁵⁶

The introduction and proliferation of Greek studies in the west contributed more than any other factor in the development of the Italian Renaissance. The “encompassing knowledge” or *ενκυκλιος παιδεια* of Greek studies consisted mainly of the study of

⁵⁴ Spanakis, Stergios. “*The Religious Circumstances in Crete during the XVI century.*” *Kretika Chronika* 21 (1969): 134-152.

⁵⁵ Margaret Alexiou in David Holton, ed. *Literature and Society in Renaissance Crete*. New York: Cambridge University Press, (1991):

⁵⁶ On the influence of Byzantine scholars in the West, see Deno J. Geanakoplos, *Byzantine East and Latin West Essays on the Late Byzantine (Palaeologan) and Italian Renaissances and the Byzantine and Roman Churches*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989.

grammar, rhetoric, history, and "philosophy, the capstone of all secular learning." This form of study was facilitated by the appointment of Greek scholars to head and guide the teaching of Greek programs in major universities and this was also a major factor. The Italian-Greek Leontius Pilatus held the first appointment to a Western Europe university. In 1396, the appointment of Manuel Chrysoloras to the University of Florence and his role for the enthusiasm generated for Greek letters during his tenure is "certainly most influential of all." The creation of a Greek studies program at the University of Padua was begun under Demetrius Chalcondyles in 1463. Finally, the selection of Marcus Musurus may be seen as the most influential because of the "remarkably large number of humanist students" who were later instrumental in the promotion of Greek letters in their own countries (Geanakoplos 113, 141, 118-119).⁵⁷ The learning of Greek literature and civilization was what the Quattrocento humanists valued the most and, after having exceeded the earlier interest in the revival of the classic works, they wished to apply those values of Greek civilization to their own lives and to the institutions of their own city-states. This inclination prompted the appearance of the Renaissance. What is probably considered the most important aspect of the Renaissance as the mark of the first modern period is the discovery of the individual. Along with the validation of the individual and the individual self, the refusal of previously existent attitudes were replaced. The influence of the church, the most dominant agent of daily life, was challenged. The church was also the most obvious symbol of the medieval attitude and with the rise of Renaissance ideals the institution of the church lost its force. A similar situation developed in Crete as the interrelationships between Cretans and Venetians changed. Four hundred sixty five years of the Venetian occupation undermined

⁵⁷ See Geanakoplos, Deno. *Medieval Western Civilization and the Byzantine and Islamic Worlds*. Lexington, MA: D. C. Heath and Company, 1979.

Byzantine institutions and allowed for the emergence of Western influences.

While there were many advocating the new learning, persistent conflicts and friction provoked by the older Byzantine aristocracy continued. Contact with Europe was the factor that impacted most on the development of the Cretan Renaissance. The Cretans were exposed to European thought for the purposes of becoming educated and preparing to confront a new competitive world. Those returning to Crete were part of a new generation, one too young to have been affected by the religious fervor or the more ingrained traditional culture. This situation created a social elitism that introduced a new-found style and intellectual sophistication and became the means to participate in the larger arena of the Renaissance world. This interaction provided the Greeks with the Latin scholarship on philosophy, rhetoric and grammar which encouraged the translations of Greek works into Latin and vice versa. Under such circumstances friendships and personal relationships could easily develop and flourish and the religious barriers loosen their hold.

An indication of the diminishing hold of the religious differences took place in 1363. At that time, the Venetians and Cretans united and formed a new republic and declared their independence from Venice. The alliance suggests a new phase in the political and social relations of the Venetians and Cretans and also a shift in the relationship of the Venetians toward their mother country. Apparently, the Venetians were not “Italian or Greeks” (Psilakis 317) at this time and their loyalty to Venice had taken a turn. Likewise, the Byzantine-Cretans also expressed their shift of loyalty. The harshness with which Venice treated the rebellious group quickly restored its dominion over the island. The reaction from Venice alerted the members of the coup who were

mostly from the upper classes to the hardships the peasants had suffered all along. Still, the fact remained that a new society had evolved and the citizens of this new breed of Venetians and Cretans constituted a more amiable society whose principal characteristic from the sixteenth century to the conquest by the Ottoman Turks in 1669 was social cohesiveness sustained by common interests and, effectively, a common culture. Essentially, Crete was more like a province than a colony of the Venetian state.

The St. Titos revolt is presented as highly successful even though the rebels were crushed and many died on both sides. The importance of the revolt is not so much the unsuccessful formation of a new republic, as was intended, but rather the recognition of the Greek element, the Byzantine element, symbolized in the flag of the double-headed eagle instead of the Venetian lion of St. Mark. This event is what becomes the high point that defines the meaning of the end, while the death of both the Venetians and the Cretans glorify the courage and commitment of both groups without diminishing its importance because of its failure; the battle and the sacrifices were not pointless even if the episode fades into the background. Consequently, the symbolism of the double-headed eagle reformulated the Veneto-Cretan society that was for hundreds of years in the making and significantly challenged the Venetian interests in Crete and threatened “the unity that the Venetians imagined they had once enjoyed” (McKee, 145).

By the end of the sixteenth century, as the dissolution of the Venetian Republic approached, Crete assumed a new role as “a centre for the cultivation and dissemination of Greek letters” (Maltezou 46). The 465-year co-existence between Cretans and Venetians forged a society that retained its intensely Greek character, its language and religion. The bourgeois grown rich set the style. Even if the island did not produce great intellectuals, the role of the aristocracy cannot be ignored. The nobility’s retention of its

Byzantine character even after the Venetian domination, shaped the social progress.

“Trade, migration, and cultural exchange affected the development of the assimilation process; but these direct transfers of goods, persons, books, and ideas reflect the profound fact that Crete was a province, culturally as well as politically and economically and from this orientation certain elements of cultural growth flowed (Maltezou 38).

Although the pronouncements of the European Renaissance impacted Veneto-Cretan society, the practical needs of the majority of the population along with new political attitudes and leadership, prepared the stage for Crete’s new role. Along with the end of the Venetian rule, the Veneto-Cretan culture that evolved during that period was eclipsed by the appearance of the Ottoman Turks in 1669. The political climate changed. Within the Turkish regime, the Phanariotes⁵⁸ played a vital role who, as descendants of Byzantium took on the scepter of education in a totally different direction than the Veneto-Cretan civilization. The influence they built within the Turkish Empire, the progress in Greece, Asia Minor and the creation of urban centers beyond the Danube influenced by the French Enlightenment and the spread of education in the early nineteenth century, limited the dissemination of the Cretan works (S. Alexiou 53-54) which remained popular mostly in Crete and were carried by refugees to the Ionian Islands.⁵⁹

Aligned with this changing environment of adaptation and integration, the thinkers and writers of the Cretan Renaissance were caught in the formative stage of a

⁵⁸ If indeed the Phanariotes played such a crucial role in what followed after the Turkish occupation, certainly the Cretan language would be out of favor thus justifying the statements of Detorakis and Hatzidakis that if this event had not taken place, the dominant language of Greece would have been the Cretan tongue.

⁵⁹ See the monograph by Stylianos Alexiou, *Cretan Literature during the Venetian Period*. Vikelaia Demotiki Vivliothiki, 1990. Alexiou claims that the Phanariotes held powerful positions in the Turkish government and their allegiance was not with the Cretan culture which remained remarkably Byzantine.

culture that was disorienting and exciting at the same time. Transitional states quite often cause a kind of anxiety between generations. This was especially the case during the Cretan Renaissance. The literature of this period addresses this complex convergence of old and new, authority and transformation.

If, however, the cultural and intellectual change between the arrival of the Venetians in Crete to their forced departure in 1669 by the Turkish conquest encapsulate the transitional movement from the Byzantine sensibility to the point of contact with the European Renaissance, these changes are necessary to the understanding of the process culminating in the Cretan Renaissance. That the Cretans have left few records for posterity of their experiences and perceptions of the Venetian period only encourages such an inquiry into the particular history.⁶⁰ The statement that the Cretan Renaissance ended abruptly because of the Turks may be justified but it is not supported by historical evidence. Furthermore, to merely mention the time period in passing simplifies and diminishes the importance of its existence. If the Turkish conquest and the expulsion of the Venetians from Crete seems as a counter-Renaissance, it is not because of the rejection of the Renaissance values and attitudes but because the process comes to a halt. The implication is that with the arrival of the Ottoman Turks, there was a return to the dark ages or medieval times, or more explicitly, a return to Byzantine traditions. But what the reader is led to overlook through this inference is the fact that the disintegration of Byzantine culture had been in progress for centuries. The Venetian presence over the passage of time brought together the critical and essential elements of the Renaissance to Crete and with the Veneto-Cretan culture receptive to new ways of thought brought about the formation of the Cretan Renaissance.

⁶⁰ Maltezou, Chryssa. in David Holton, ed. *Literature and Society in Renaissance Crete*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

THE MARRIAGE PLOT AS ABDUCTION: THE EXAMPLE OF AEDONITZA

In his *History of Crete* (*Ιστορία της Κρητης*) published 1909, Vasileios Psilakis characterizes the Venetian domination as a most distressing time for Crete. He painstakingly charts the various stages of Cretan history, from ancient times to the more recent past. He devotes many references to the Byzantine *archontes* whom he discusses in connection to their part in the revolts and their heroism in their efforts to preserve ethnic and religious unity. It is therefore not surprising that the role of women and their contributions to the Byzantino-Cretan cause, domestic or otherwise, coerced or voluntary, will be represented. Thus, it is startling to find an incidental but very revealing episode buried in the pages of his historical narrative. Although historical circumstances surrounding the episode are scant, the fact that this episode exists in the middle of a narrative predominantly focused on rebellions and the atrocities of violence, gives it heightened significance.

The abduction of Aēdonitza provides an extreme example of the violence of the marriage plot. In Venetian Crete where Byzantine influence was waning, traditional ways of life were being challenged and the outgoing aristocratic class was affected by the “polluting” effects produced by intermarriages. The episode, therefore, depicts not only the very real violence inflicted on the young woman, but it also invokes the long history of violence heaped on women. Thus, the various plot lines of this short episode create a vast and intricate web of meaning. Even for Psilakis who exhibits patriotic sentiments and an unabashed hostility towards the Venetians, the inclusion of what seems a treacherous act perpetrated by a Byzantine aristocrat hints at an aversion toward a particular behavior as well as his understanding of the political realities of the times.

During the time Crete was under Venetian rule,⁶¹ there lived a man called Ioannis Kallergis⁶² who vowed to slaughter any of the Byzantine nobles who were even remotely sympathetic to the Venetians. He was blamed for murdering numerous families but the authorities were not able to prevent his actions. He relied on the hatred of the populace against anyone of Italian⁶³ ancestry, a loathing that he encouraged himself. He did not distinguish between his fellow Cretans or members of the Eastern Orthodox Church.

*Among the victims of his fanaticism and intolerance was a priest of the Orthodox faith from the prefecture of Chania who was accused of being a lawbreaker for two reasons: he was wealthy and he was the father of a beautiful daughter. The daughter, fifteen years old and an only child, had become engaged a few months earlier to the firstborn son of a nobleman from Chania, orthodox by faith, Italian by descent. Another man⁶⁴, a rival from the same province as the priest with more than a passing interest in the priest's property and possessions, charged that the intermarriage was a Latin-concocted scheme. Kallergis, impulsive and vindictive by nature, after feigning devoutness to the ancient customs, promised the plaintiff⁶⁵ he would denounce the *ανοσιον μνηστειον*,⁶⁶ immoral betrothal and have him marry the young woman instead.*

And so, on the following Sunday, as Aēdonitza⁶⁷ was coming out of the church with her mother, two henchmen⁶⁸ rushed suddenly from some fence and abducted her. After they gagged her, she was brought to Kallergis' tent which he had conveniently set up in town.

Upon hearing the mother's cries, the father⁶⁹ ran out of the church terrified. Still dressed in his ceremonial garments, panting and weeping he hastened to Kallergis' tent because he intuited where the abduction originated. The leader refused to see the father-priest but none of the soldiers dared to touch the priest who was still dressed in his church vestments. "Lord," he cried with the tears and shrieks of a distressed parent. As he neared the entrance of the tent, falling on his knees, he begged, "Lord, have mercy on me,⁷⁰ in the name of God. Have mercy on me and my heartbroken wife. Behold, I fold my hands before you. If I have offended you, Lord, forgive me as a Christian and give me back my daughter."

⁶¹ The time is known as Venetokratia, literally governed by Venice.

⁶² The Kallergis family was one of the twelve legendary *archontopoula* who were sent to Crete by the Emperor Alexios Komninos after Nikiforos Fokas reconquered Crete from the Saracens in 941. As a member of the Kallergis family, he felt privileged and expected the courtesy accorded to the nobles as they always did; that is, they bowed and kissed their hands, a show of respect.

⁶³ Psilakis uses the word Italian anachronistically; he probably meant the more common term of Latin.

⁶⁴ The priest and the informant are also not named, nor the mother who is simply acknowledged as the mother of the young woman.

⁶⁵ The author uses the equivalent of plaintiff as if he were reporting and requesting justice for a personal affront. The man's identity is unknown and the rivalry presented as fact.

⁶⁶ The words used in the text *ανοσιον μνηστειον* have connotations of offending the gods, ancient and contemporary, a form of pollution, through the marriage of the two young people.

⁶⁷ Aedonitza translates to a small nightingale and the name would not be unusual.

⁶⁸ The word actually translates to mercenaries but "accomplices" seems more appropriate. Mercenaries were members of a different class with roles that cannot be addressed at this time.

⁶⁹ The word used is *πατερα* which removes him from his duties as priest and personalizes his plight not as a man in the service of god but as a common man who has just suffered an injustice and that he is not immune from misfortune because of his wealth or his social position.

⁷⁰ In an ironic twist of words, the priest appropriates ecclesiastical language to beg for clemency the same way the faithful ask for mercy from god. He may as well have said, "*Kyrie eleison*," which translates to "Lord, have mercy on me."

“Your ploy, you immoral priest,” replied the pitiless Kallergis, “has been exposed. Be silent and leave at once so that you don’t lose your head in exchange of your disobedience; your life hangs by a thread.” The priest, shrieking rather than speaking, answered. “You want my head? Take it, your lordship. Take it with your own hands, you, yourself take the life of the father and priest whom you accuse of irredeemable disgrace. But if I am the one who is guilty, as you claim, what is my daughter’s fault in all this?” But, the father’s pleas, the mother’s laments and the cries of all the relatives were in vain. Kallergis ordered the crowd away. But since the crowd remained persistent, Kallergis jumped on his horse and fled the scene.

*Two weeks later, Aēdonitza, lamenting, was handed over to the informant as his wife*⁷¹ (Psilakis, 321-323).

What, indeed, is Aēdonitza’s fault in all this? The abduction of the young woman, therefore, serves as a well-founded point of entry into the issue of the women’s literary representation during this period and the event offers insights into the developments of the Cretan and Venetian world. It is not only a reenactment of a mythical event; it serves as a preliminary example that illustrates the way violence is tightly linked with the appropriation of power by certain members of society and the façade of social conventions and traditions that only lead to the “traffic in women.”⁷² However incomprehensible or revolting such an act appears, the anecdote manages to record a glimpse of the structures of power and the female experience in such an environment. It creates a context representative of the energies of the political and social conditions and draws attention to the woman’s role as part of a trade, as a sacrificial substitute between warring factions.

As the modern Persephone episode suggests, an intimate connection between myth and history exists and it introduces issues that explore the enormous consequences for women found not only in the historical context but in the literary texts of this study. Despite the fact that this episode is presented as historical, the plot is simply a variation

⁷¹ The priest also places a curse on Kallergis reminiscent of the scene in the *Iliad* of Briseis’ father before the final, curt paragraph of the outcome.

⁷² The term is coined by Gayle Rubin in “The Traffic in Women: Notes on the ‘Political Economy’ of Sex” in Rayna Reiter, ed., *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975.

of an old theme based essentially on the religio-political system that organized Byzantine-Cretan and Venetian society, a structure that could be easily maneuvered to serve various political purposes. The abduction is quite revealing despite the omission of many details. We do not know enough to specify the context of the episode with confidence, but as we try to situate the story and probe the information we have, the narrative intimates intricate and complex structures that seem at times obvious while other elements remain elusive. Despite the plot of the episode which was probably quite common at the time, the cultural background offers conjectures and implications that cannot be addressed without doubts or difficulties.

The abduction of Aēdonitza is a prime example of various practices that expose the horrific nature underlying cultural arrangements used to control not only women's behavior but the behavior and lives of most people. The abduction of young women of marriageable age was practiced in Byzantium and other parts of the Empire even though it was prohibited in the legal system. The original abduction law of Constantine was preserved in the Theodosian Code and, according to Judith Evans-Grubb, demanded the punishments of all persons involved in such cases, including the young woman and her parents, if they later agreed to the marriage of their daughter with her abductor (59).⁷³ Eventually an amendment to Constantine's law lessened the prescribed severity. What had been an extremely strict and cruel law allowed a certain tolerance especially for the parents.

Similarly, the Byzantino-Cretans and the Venetians issued a law in 1299 permitting intermarriages “ελευθερογαμια” (Psilakis 300).⁷⁴ Kallergis was well aware of the

⁷³ Evans-Grubbs, Judith. “*Abduction Marriage in Antiquity: Law of Constantine (cThIX.24.1) and its Social Context.*” *The Journal of Roman Studies*, 1989, 59-83.

⁷⁴ According to Psilakis, the law permitting intermarriages facilitated the assimilation process and, that in due time as the fear of ethnic pollution subsided and more intermarriages took place, so did the enmity

existence of such a law since members of his own family married Venetians. He also was well aware of the fact that intermarriage, regardless of the arrangements, “connects [citizens] in a permanent manner (Rubin 173). For example, in 1331, Agnē Kornaros, wife of Iakovos Kornaros, the legitimate daughter of Alexis Kallergis (he had two other illegitimate daughters), when she was extremely ill, drew up a will, leaving the largest portion of her dowry to her husband, (Vlahaki, Rena 56) clearly indicating the practice of intermarriage. If the record is correct, why should Kallergis have persecuted those who only emulated what the *archontes* were doing? Even though the law existed, Kallergis felt inclined to ignore the law. The survival and practice of such a tradition created a terrifying environment for young girls and unmarried women.

The rebelliousness that Kallergis exhibits by orchestrating the abduction of Aēdonitza suggests that in the transition from Byzantine customs to newly-found customs involving Venetians and Cretans intermarrying, the cultural residue of ancient customs retained its hold on social practices. The episode also reveals the implicit consent of members of the community for such actions; in other words, it was an accepted practice, a kind of local institution that simply disregarded the law. The indignation of the *archonta* may well be his moral outrage at the lack of patriotism and religious heresy, but another more palpable suggestion is that he simply exercises his traditional power over less influential members of society. One would consider a priest and members of his family opposed to such a violent act but an episode such as this reveals the ways privileged or highly regarded people use violence to justify their actions and “to

between the Byzantine-Cretans and the Venetians. More than likely the children would be christened in the Greek Orthodox tradition and brought up as Orthodox Christians. Another result was the eventual return of lands that were confiscated by Venetians during their arrival on Crete to the Cretans because of the intermarriages.

challenge the state authority” and whereby “the social capital is a more potent determinant than economic capital” (Herzfeld 162). But if the abduction of Aēdonitza alludes to the abduction of Persephone, it also alludes to the more distant mythological contest between the Titans and the Olympian gods. It becomes a subtle reminder of the eventual replacement of one power with another, hinting once more to the constant strife between the Byzanto-Cretans and the Venetians and the tenuous position the Byzantine aristocrats and their inevitable replacement by a new order, a looming future reality.

Regardless of the motivation for Kallergis’ actions,⁷⁵ the young woman is placed in the center of a contest of wills. What is inescapable is that the incident is staged for all to observe and that the young woman is physically captured and her cries muffled. Like the mythical Persephone, she is rendered powerless and defenseless by the terror of her situation, unable to utter a word to denounce the offensive and aggressive act.⁷⁶ Similarly the abducted Cretan Aēdonitza, with the world-at-large witnessing the event, is caught in a situation that renders her vulnerable and helpless. The voice of the woman on whom this violence was performed is entirely absent but her physical response expresses her female vulnerability.

It is not by coincidence the young woman is named Aēdonitza⁷⁷ which translates into “small nightingale.” In ancient Greece, the myth associated with the philomela, or nightingale⁷⁸ is linked with “grief and mourning, as well as with the burgeoning of spring” (Iverson 35). The nightingale is also the messenger of Zeus, an abductor and

⁷⁵ While Kallergis’ persecution of the priest seems to be based on religious grounds, it is probably more political than it is religious.

⁷⁶ Mary Lefkowitz suggests that the message of the influential myth of Persephone’s abduction is that “however unwilling Persephone has been to be led off by Hades, through her marriage she gains a new importance and kingdom of her own” (33).

⁷⁷ More significantly, the nightingale is associated with Philomela and Procne who were transformed into a swallow and a nightingale, respectively –Ovid *Metamorphoses* Book VI.

⁷⁸ See “Hesiod’s Fable” from *Work and Days*. The interpretation of the “Nightingale and the Hawk” is very applicable to the situation depicted in the Aedonitza abduction.

raper himself, the bird distraught with grief, as both the young women are. Persephone manages a reprieve through her mother's pleas but it is a compromise: Persephone leaves the underworld kingdom for short periods to walk on the earth. Aēdonitza, is denied her voice and is but a broken-winged bird caught in the nets of exploitation championed by *archontas* Kallergis while her ineffective defenders, her parents and the onlookers, stand by helplessly. The only articulation of her grief is expressed through her whimpers and tears, corresponding to the mourning her own living death. The closing of the story consists of one sentence, summing up the event and the young woman's lifelong sentence. However, just as the associations with the nightingale are both death and life, the implication is the young woman will eventually accept her situation and bear life despite the violent act that led to her marriage. The situation re-enacts the Persephone scenario whose violent abduction to the underworld promises the return of spring and the continuity of the life cycle.

The narration of the incident leaves many details out. We do not know enough to specify the context of the episode with confidence, but one speculation may be that the young woman knew her abductor and was in collusion with Kallergis. That would be a welcome turn of events since that would allow the young woman the power to define her own fate and contradict the image of victim. However, the name Aēdonitza with the connotations of the nightingale implies another story. If the metamorphosis associated with the bird is applicable, it makes sense to assume that Aēdonitza was not aware of the abduction conspiracy but was well aware of her fate once the abduction was secured.

The characters of this incident are presented according to their social status and the importance associated with the extent or lack of wealth. In addition to revealing the scenario of the conflicts involved in the progress of integration, the incident sustains

Kallergis' position as an angry and terrible figure and, at the same time, describes the violent times and the conflicts between Byzantine-Cretans and the newly-formed neo-ethnic Veneto-Cretans. Despite the outcome, the event of the abduction organizes the characters in order of gender and social class and reveals the way these factors affect and reinforce a system which is basically the same one found in the classical, Byzantine and feudal traditions.

This abduction also emphasizes the position Kallergis refuses to abandon regardless of the changes that have taken place: he is an *archontas*, a member of the privileged Byzantines, and he reminds all of his social position and will not abdicate such a position even if he must perform outrageous acts to reassure himself and others. By way of reprisal, he arranges the henchmen who abduct the young woman. The denunciation of the *ανοσιον μνηστειον*,⁷⁹ the intermarriage, probably has very little to do with piety or propriety but it is a vile, visible sign of the tensions found between the public and private domains. As his accusations reveal, the imminent threat of the loss of his ancient aristocratic status through the breakdown of ethnic and religious boundaries, is well justified in the barbaric act Aēdonitza and her family must endure. Intermarriages, in general, were not encouraged either by the Byzantines or the Latins in order to maintain distinct identities but to also avoid the conflict of divided loyalties that could easily arise. The 1299 agreement permitting intermarriages was not accepted unanimously. But on a more basic and pragmatic level, the number of upper class Greek women and upper class Latin men was limited and thus the possibilities of such unions were also limited. Besides, it was preferable from a Venetian point of view, as Sally

⁷⁹ While *ανοσιον μνηστειον* (anosion mnesteia), intermarriage, was denounced, forced or arranged marriage, *στανιο στεφανι* (stanio stefani), was quite acceptable, if not the norm, for women whose male relatives arranged for marriages without the woman's consent.

McKee points out, for a “Greek woman to marry a Venetian man than a Latin woman to marry a Greek man” (233). This arrangement was preferable because through the marriage valuable property would be transferred out of the hands of the Greeks or Venetians.

The marriage of Aēdonitza with the informant is a necessary sacrifice to prevent further conflicts between the Orthodox Christians and Latins. By placing the issue of intermarriage at the center, only politicizes the matter further and serves as a warning to the young women and their families about the future choices they may consider. The clash places the woman in a position where she is violated and shamed and, as Sally McKee asserts, the two main factors working against women in Venetian Crete “is that they were Greek and they were women” (37). To further clarify the issue, what the good *archontas* is doing is simply conducting a transaction. And, if, as Gayle Rubin extrapolates, “it is women who are being transacted ... then the women “are in no position to realize the benefits of their circulation”(174) or “...to give themselves away” (175). This is the transaction Kallergis completes successfully through his machinations and is able to restate his power and exercise his influence in the everyday practices. Additionally, he restates his political power and is portrayed as one whose identity is based on his virility, lineage and in his adamant refusal to resign his aristocratic status as *archontas*. More importantly, his stance may conceal his fear of the waning influence of Byzantine culture of which he is a part and the rise of a new ideology especially among the younger generation.

Another conspicuous omission is the absence of the nameless fiancé and his family. No objections are voiced by the future husband and the future relatives. The silencing of the man is just as significant as the silencing of the young woman and raises

questions that are as applicable to the man as they are to the woman. Why was there no resistance to this affront? Is the fiancé powerless or of no social significance even though he supposedly comes from a noble house? Thus, the young woman carted off, as a package, a gift, to the man who profited by providing the kind of information that fed the hatred and led to the abduction of the young woman, the solution of Kallergis' campaign against any kind of intermarriage between the Cretans and Venetians. What is left unsaid here, of course, is that more than likely she was physically violated. Her chastity was jeopardized whether she was raped or not, and she would be considered as ruined, her reputation in shambles, and her fiancé could not marry her because his manhood would be at stake. Based on a case judged by the famous jurist Eustathios Romaios, according to Angeliki Laiou, under such circumstances, a certain protocol would have been followed. After the abduction, discussions between the girl's family and the abductors followed,⁸⁰ the girl returned to her family, examination of the girl by "certain reputable women to examine the girl for physical evidence of deflowering," (158) and, possibly or more than likely, the woman would end as the wife of her abductor.

The abduction⁸¹ or assault of women was not just a subject to generate stories but tell-tales of regularly enacted and still practiced in the Mediterranean area during the Middle Ages and beyond. The abduction theme, considered one of the most unsavory plot elements yet a basic component of ancient novels, is found in historical accounts, myths and romances. For instance, the twelfth century poem *Digenis Akritas*⁸² is based on

⁸⁰ "[t]his is my assumption: the text does not mention it," Laiou confesses. In the case she cites, the prospective bridegroom wanted to marry the young woman despite the objections of those wanted to dissolve the marriage.

⁸¹ Abduction is still practiced today in parts of the world. Not long ago, in Greece, if the woman's family could not offer a dowry, the woman may have colluded in the abduction and it was a way of legitimizing a marriage without the burden of providing a dowry, thus easing the liability associated with a daughter.

⁸² *Digenis Akritas: The Grottaferrata and Escorial Versions*. Jeffreys, Elizabeth, ed. and trans. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

exactly this theme. An Arab Emir while on a raid in Byzantine Cappadocia, seizes the daughter of the regional ruler and because of his love for her, he converts to Christianity and moves to Byzantium. Out of this union, Digenis is born and he, replicating the tradition, steals a bride from another Byzantine family.⁸³ While the abductions found in the ancient Greek novels⁸⁴ allow the readers to experience vicariously the adventure of the protagonists, they are also reminded that the gods spare no one, not even those who seem perfect, and the characters suffer all sorts of misfortunes, until, through astonishing and bizarre coincidences and recognitions, the lovers and families are brought together and order is restored.

But in this episode, the only apparent order is the order the machinations Kallergis' devises to dissolve the arranged marriage between the priest and the Chaniot noble. His imposed choice leaves no room for individual action and only reinforces his own rigid concepts as well as his influence and power as judge and executor of earlier traditions. In essence, through his actions he reenacts the role of king or lord who hands out gifts to his vassals in exchange for their allegiance through the unspoken rule of reciprocity. Kallergis' actions transform him into a metonymic deity while the priest-father is humiliated, if not feminized, by his daughter's abduction. What this episode makes obvious is that regardless of the actual acts of violence directed toward women, the violence served as a "recognized code for other offenses" but at the same time "it was both a political and sexual assault on women" (Bitel 227).

Ultimately, the story is not only about a young woman who was wronged. In fact, it reads very much like *Vasileus O Rodolinos*, the tragedy in this study. It is a story about

⁸³ Digenis, however, is hardly the exemplum of fidelity; a philanderer may be a better term for him.

⁸⁴ Reardon, Broderick P. ed. *Collected Ancient Greek Novels*. Reardon, Broderick P., ed. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989.

power and the exercise of power by people who think they can make an accommodation with power and the social and political atmosphere where such activity can flourish. The barbarism inherent in this episode is found in history too often and the telling of the tale is one part of the cycle of violence and brutality that the people of that place and time confronted daily. The acceptance of violence against women through abduction or forced marriage expressed the strength of political tensions and conflicts among men of different ethnic and religious interests.

Considering the conflict-ridden society how did the women, whether upper class women or commoners, endure? First, the issue that becomes most striking is the position of women caught in the circle of violence that is not of their own making. Given these conditions, the anecdote exemplifies the context in which the women of the texts existed. The historical account of Aēdonitza and the texts under consideration suggest that violence against women was not only common but that it was widespread. It does not mean that everyone used violence to resolve public or personal conflicts. But as the outcome of the Aēdonitza episode shows, there were no consequences for the perpetrators. It shows men taking on the role of arranging and breaking marriages of daughters and exerting social pressure on each other to uphold inherited or collective authority. In this case, the presence of a man to protect the female member of his family is of no consequence. But the legal action does not take place in court but rather in the context of personal relationships based on duty and love (Laiou 89). The conclusion of this episode legitimizes violence as an acceptable solution for what was considered a civil violation. It is also probably a reliable indication of the frequent practice of intermarriages between the Cretans and Venetians which would only intensify anxiety among the upper classes and also contribute to the dilution of the Eastern Orthodox

Church which would constitute a major threat.

Women more often than not are blamed for the cause of a battle or feud.⁸⁵ Often they are certainly victims of conflicts in the public domain and, even more frequently, victims of private wars. Even if men did not specifically go to war against women, unless we consider the mythical Amazons and the rape of the Sabine women as examples, violence directed expressly at women had other forms, such as rape, assault, and abduction. The violence Aēdonitza endured was not directly aimed at the young woman; she was but a tool for other conflicts and larger events. Often this type of aggression was a way for men to insult other men; or, sometimes, it confirmed a man's virility and strength. People clearly thought it was wrong; yet, there was no action taken other than to stand around and hiss at Kallergis. This story illustrates the ways and means to facilitate and confirm the social hierarchy and the necessarily subordinate role of women. It is against this social background that the women characters of the texts I discuss in the following chapters are so remarkable in their assertiveness against the conventional marriage plot.

CHAPTER 2

OF ROMANCE AND CHIVALRY: THE MARRIAGE PLOT IN THE

⁸⁵ Ironically, women participate in the production of the males who will generate the feuds and participate in the battles.

EROTOKRITOS

The *Erotokritos* by Vintzentos Kornaros,⁸⁶ long recognized as the finest creation of the Cretan Renaissance, holds a privileged place among the few remaining literary texts from that time. It contains elements of folktales, ancient and Byzantine novels, epics, chivalric romances, morality plays, and philosophical treatises. It deals with both ancient and medieval material and, as several scholars state with much conviction, it is based on the chivalric romance of *Paris et Vienne* by Pierre de la Cypèdè.⁸⁷ Whether the *Erotokritos* is “[a]n erotic poem” (ἸΙ]ο ἱμνα Ἐρωτικόν),⁸⁸ as its first editor labeled it, or “a simple love story, nothing more,” as George Seferis claims,⁸⁹ or a dialogue about love as the etymology of its title suggests,⁹⁰ or a story with a happy folktale ending, it is a story told with simplicity and much linguistic agility and has been “adapted to the thought-world of the Renaissance, enabling characters to function credibly and dynamically” (Holton 212). Besides, since the tale is imbued with “elements of humanistic inquiry, a scientific interest in natural phenomena and a penetrating analysis of the states of mind of the protagonists” (Holton 212-213), it cannot be oversimplified or consigned to the realm of conventional romance or simple folktale. This chapter explores

⁸⁶ The *Erotokritos* was published in Venice in 1713. The sole manuscript is found in the Harleian Collection 5644. Plut.LXVI.L of the British Museum (Xanthoudidis, *Erotokritos*, Vol 1, XII). Since there are no archival records attributing authorship or information explaining the circumstances of the creation of the story, the speculation is based solely on the author about whom nothing more is known than what he includes in the closing lines of the poem. For the most part, the works from the Cretan Renaissance are attributed to certain authors reluctantly. Moreover, despite the dates of printing, it is difficult to ascertain the actual date they were composed or written. It has been argued that *Erotokritos* was transmitted orally before it was actually put into writing.

⁸⁷ *Paris et Vienne* is considered the model text of the *Erotokritos*; a text that is translated from a Provençal romance from a Catalan (See Holton 1991; Xanthoudidis 1905). The accepted view is that N. Cartoijan made the connection with the *Paris et Vienne* romance but George Seferis credits another scholar, Christoforos Filètas, of recognizing the similarities between the two romances (*Dokimes*, Volume II, 501).

⁸⁸ The Venetian publication of 1713 identifies the work as such.

⁸⁹ George Seferis, *Dokimes*, Volume II, Athens: Ikaros, 1981.

⁹⁰ The *Oneirokritika (Dream Analysis)* by Artemidoros, an ancient text used to interpret dreams and to predict the future. The title echoes interpretative features that may be found in the *Erotokritos* but related more to the erotic ideals and love, a type of vernacular *Symposium*.

the marriage plot and the use of the chivalric romance in representing widely-accepted ideas about women and their roles in the evolving Veneto-Cretan society during the Renaissance.

Read in the context of Kornaros' *Erotokritos*, the convention of the chivalric romance becomes what Victoria Kahn terms an “analytical tool” identifying the disturbance that shatters domestic harmony and the crisis caused by the daughter’s resistance to honor her social and familial obligations and, in effect, disrupt the continuation of the persistent marriage traditions. The world depicted in the *Erotokritos* is one where “passions and self-interests” (Kahn 627) propel actions. During the Venetian presence on Crete, the aristocracy, the Byzantine archontic class, suffered loss of economic and political power. In a social environment where power had to be guarded, restored and expanded, the preservation of appearances was crucial. The *Erotokritos* uses the marriage plot to examine traditional practices that trap individuals in particular identities and roles because of their class and gender.

“Κι αν σου μιλω με παραμυθια και παραβολες / ειναι γιατι τ’ ακους γλυκοτερα,

And, if I talk to you in fables and parables / it’s because it is more gentle for you that way,” George Seferis writes in “*Last Stop*”⁹¹ which deals with the trauma of war. Kornaros likewise tells his story as a chivalric romance which is “more gentle” and functions as an effective interpretative tool for dealing with traumatic events in contemporary Venetian Crete. The story is based on the two timeless and favorite themes of love and war and recounts the trials and travails of its protagonists who eventually reach a happy ending. The narrative unfolds like a fairy tale but there is a disturbing undercurrent which emerges through various images, similes and metaphors; an

⁹¹ Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard, trans. and eds. *Voices of Modern Greece*. Princeton: Princeton University Press: (1981):118.

undercurrent that signals change. Despite its male-named title, the *Erotokritos*⁹² is preoccupied with the female experience, especially with the restraint of female sexuality and the role of women in arranged marriages. Aretousa, the adolescent daughter of Iraklis and Artemis, the rulers of Athens, essentially becomes the arena on which the politics and traditions her royal father and the honorable citizens practice and uphold are played out. The configuration of Aretousa in relation to the other characters of the narrative shows how a daughter's desire and will become a force that challenges, complicates, and threatens what appears to be the well-ordered familial and political unit. Aretousa is not only the center of rebellious passions challenging paternal authority but she is also the major arena on which they come together.

The structure of the *Erotokritos* is similar to commonly imitated patterns of the chivalric romance, although it still maintains its distinct Cretan character. It is a tale-poem the length of an epic, divided into five parts, 10,052 verses in length, and composed in the native Greek fifteen-syllable also known as political verse, *πολιτικός στοιχος*,⁹³ which, according to Michael M. Jeffreys, members of the Komnenian court evidently found attractive. The language is based on the spoken Cretan Greek and serves as an artful and effective “vehicle of dramatic and poetic works of quality which has led to the term 'Cretan Renaissance'” (Holton 15).

The *Erotokritos* is similar to Byzantine and chivalric romances in which love serves as the motivation for a marriage plot that creates upheaval and confusion. The Aretousa and Rotokritos characters are depicted in terms of the chivalric code of love and

⁹² The title of the text, *Erotokritos*, is synonymous with the male protagonist even if often he is referred to as Rotokritos. While the title or the namesake remains obscure, it suggests several meanings including a debate on the topic of love, associated with the verb *erotan*, to ask questions, and the word *critic*, to discern, or to make a judgment.

⁹³ According to Mavrogordato, political verse (meaning common or bourgeois) was adopted by the learned writers and court poets (76). Also see, Michael M. Jeffreys, “*The Nature and Origins of the Political Verse*.” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 28 (1974): 141-195, for an extensive study.

honor (Kahn 647) through which Kornaros defends the motivation and actions of the young lovers. While the narrative presents the lovers in conflict with parental authority, in broader terms, the potential unsanctioned marriage unsettles the “instrumental function” (Rasmussen 25) of women in the repetition of traditional marriage practices. The conflict initiated by the mutual erotic passion of Aretousa and Rotokritos critically exposes the boundaries of class and signals changes in marriage practices. Unlike the dominant practices of arranged marriages where the partners had no say in the matter, the impending change considers the role of erotic ideals of the prospective partners as a valid and necessary element on which a man and woman can build a life together.

Thus, when Aretousa as the required player in the marriage plot, resists her father's authority, undaunted by the loss of entitlement and power as a royal daughter, she is transformed into the axis around which the other characters revolve and direct their actions as the narrative unfolds. The image of the circle, κύκλος, or of a wheel, in the first two lines structures the tale and captures the movement of the narrative.

Του κυκλου τα γυρισματα που ανεβοκατεβαινου
και του τροχου που ωρες ψηλα κι ωρες στα βαθη πηαινου,

The turns of the wheel rise and fall
And the wheel circles sometimes high sometimes low...

(I.1-2)

The concept of circularity (κύκλος) in human affairs was familiar to the Greeks and the image of the cyclical motion of the wheel “brings together and makes sense of all the imagery of vacillation, of extremes, fortune and fate, life and death, loss and ruin – imagery which culminates in the whims of fortune in human lives” (Robinson 208).⁹⁴

⁹⁴ See David M. Robinson. “The Wheel of Fortune.” *Classical Philology*, Vol. 41, No. 4 (Oct., 1946: 207-216), who maintains that Pindar was the first to use the wheel as a metaphor for the “alternations of joy and sorrow.” In the *Erotokritos*, the wheel suggests the psychic upheaval which will lead to maturation and affirmation of “pure love” (φιλία αμάλαγη, I.9).

The continuous flow implies a revolution, the movement, the turn of time, as well as the change each revolution of the circle brings to the formation of each new generation. The image of the circle also looks “backward to the idea of the Greek vision of the wheel; and somewhat forward to the Renaissance but it is mostly cusped in the medieval notion” (Robinson 208). The image of the revolving wheel would have invited the original listeners or readers to relate to the broad historical context, consider their own contemporary situations, and expect that the cyclical nature of time would recover a sense of balance and a much needed reprieve. Thus, the poet’s introductory remarks leap forward and anticipate a happy ending.

The setting of the story is mythical Athens in an indeterminate time, a land rooted in antiquity with a glorious past. As it applies to the history of Crete, the revival of Athens and the associations with a heroic and awe-inspiring age provides the people with an alternative to their unstable contemporary circumstances. Athens embodies the times when the Greeks ruled (περαζομενους καιρους, που οι Ελληνες ωριζα, I.20) and suggests a return to glorious days. The Venetian occupation of Crete following the Fourth Crusade in 1204 posed a tremendous loss for the Byzantine Empire and the inhabitants of the island. Resistance to Venetian rule by nationalist factions stimulated continuous rebellions but, through the inevitable interaction of the opposing cultures, the Byzantino-Greeks and Venetians “gradually progressed towards peaceful co-existence and cultural cross-fertilisation. The lengthy symbiosis of the two peoples produced a common Veneto-Cretan culture” (Maltezou 32).⁹⁵

The king’s daughter, Aretousa, becomes enamored with the son of the king’s favorite councilor, Rotokritos. This love interest is naturally unacceptable, if not

⁹⁵ Chryssa Maltezou. “The historical and social context,” in Holton, David ed. *Literature and Society in Renaissance Crete*. New York: Cambridge University Press (1991): 17-47.

scandalous, because of their incompatible social status. Regardless of the friction this situation causes, Aretousa becomes obsessed with her passion and pines away. The king,⁹⁶ under the pretense of raising her spirits organizes a joust. The real motive is to find an appropriate husband for Aretousa.

Young men come from near and far to participate in the tournament. Rotokritos, disguised, wins the joust and the crown made by Aretousa's own hands, but his identity remains unknown. Aretousa's parents decide on the Prince of Byzantium as her future husband. However, the young people are struck by Eros and cannot renounce their passion. When they acknowledge their mutual love, they meet at night under the protection of darkness. Rotokritos is convinced by Aretousa to have his father ask for her hand in marriage. The king, incensed by such boldness, banishes Rotokritos from Athens, his parents from the palace, and confiscates their property as well.⁹⁷ Before he embarks on his forced exile, the lovers meet and Aretousa gives Rotokritos a sapphire ring which constitutes the commitment of marriage, witnessed by Frosyni, Aretousa's nurse. In the meantime, the king pressures Aretousa to marry the prince of Byzantium. She refuses. The father exhibits a most uncivil, violent, and unexpected rage whereby he grabs Aretousa, chops off her blonde braided hair⁹⁸ with a knife and kicks and drags her to the built-in prison within the palace. The mother offers full support to the father and assists in this savage act.

Almost five years pass. Aretousa is still imprisoned in the sunless cell and

⁹⁶ King Iraklis is designated as *rigas*, a Hellenized form of the Latin word *rex*. The Byzantines reserved the term *vasileus* among Christian rulers exclusively for the emperor in Constantinople, and referred to Western European kings as *rigas*. Interestingly, Artemis is referred to as *vasilissa*, the feminine form of *vasileus*, used for an empress.

⁹⁷ See Susannah Foster Baxendale. "Exile in Practice: The Alberti Family In and Out of Florence 1401-1428." *Renaissance Quarterly*, Vol. 44, No.4 (Winter 1991): 720-756, for an interesting explication on the use of exile as a political measure in the control of power.

⁹⁸ Her blonde hair is not only symbolic of her female beauty but becomes a symbol of chastity and the forceful tonsure is reminiscent of women who were forced to enter convents for political purposes.

Rotokritos remains exiled. War breaks out between the Athenians and the Vlachs.

Rotokritos returns disguised – his skin color is as dark as ink (μελανομουρος)⁹⁹ because of a solution he applies to his face a sorceress prepared for him. After much fighting, he single-handedly saves the country. The king, ever-grateful, offers him the kingship. He refuses the kingship but wants to marry Aretousa. The princess who has consistently refused to marry, rejects the disguised Rotokritos as well. He uses the sapphire ring as the intermediary to speak with her and puts her through a cruel test to reassure himself of her love. Finally, after Aretousa proves her love and fidelity beyond doubt and the recognition takes place, she agrees to marry. The king rejoices and welcomes Aretousa, Rotokritos, and his parents back to his good graces. The parents disappear from the story. Rotokritos becomes king. Aretousa becomes queen and fades into the background. They have many children and they all live happily ever after.

The plot may seem ordinary, simplistic or even preposterous at times, or, as J. B. Bury declared a “long and tedious romance saturated with Italian influence” (22).¹⁰⁰ But if the “long and tedious romance” can be used to examine society, then as Annabel Patterson proposes, “romance itself came to be redefined as serious, as a way of perceiving history and even a means of influencing it” (160).¹⁰¹ It is through the adaptation of the chivalric romance that the *Erotokritos* discloses the nature of the politics and practices of the traditional family and the position of women during the Renaissance in Venetian Crete. Women were subject to the mechanisms put in place by the men who competed for control and domination of influential political and social positions.

⁹⁹ He is probably a Moor or Saracen or perhaps a Turk. Moors were established in Crete and the skin color does not seem to be crucial in the exchanges between the king and Rotokritos. The dark-skinned Rotokritos may have been a mercenary who comes to the aid of the king for compensation.

¹⁰⁰ J. B. Bury. *Romances of Chivalry on Greek Soil*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1911.

¹⁰¹ Annabel Patterson. *Censorship and Interpretation The Conditions of Writing and Reading in Early Modern England*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984.

It is not surprising then that the chivalric elements found in *Erotokritos* represent the courageous defense of the Byzantino-Cretan identity and the customary way of life which became threatened by the Venetian takeover of Crete. While it is true that the Venetian occupation of Crete had a profound impact on the aristocratic class of Byzantino-Cretan society,¹⁰² it must also be remembered that Crete was part of the Byzantine Empire and the traditions of the Byzantine culture were practiced in Crete long after the fall of Constantinople to the Turks in 1453. Crete as part of a complex cultural configuration and, by extension, its literature and art, reflect that far-reaching pattern. The historical connections with the Byzantine traditions were not dissolved entirely¹⁰³ until much later. The first significant indications of a break with Byzantine culture were noted during the St. Titos revolt in 1363 when Veneto-Cretans and Byzantino-Cretans united against mainland Venice. Additionally, those who migrated to Venice, Padua, Florence and other Italian city states still practiced the language and long established traditions through which they eased the the sense of isolation and maintained the sense of belonging with their homeland. Even more significantly, the Greeks and the Latins, as Venetians were recognized, “were side by side” following the Crusades and it was only a matter of time before the “fully developed institutions of Western chivalry” (Bury 4) would be integrated or adopted into the existing social and political systems.

However, cultural traditions have a tendency to persist over long periods of time regardless of social innovations and the *Erotokritos* describes times and places where women faced “arranged marriages, enforced submission, rape, domestic violence and

¹⁰² While the economic and political status of the Byzantine aristocratic class was affected, the lower classes continued to serve in the same capacity under the domination of both the Byzantines and the Venetians.

¹⁰³ Significant traces of some of the traditions are still found especially in the language and the religious practices.

institutional forms of political and economic oppression” (Rehm 51).¹⁰⁴ The combined resistance the protagonists of the *Erotokritos* undertake forms a counter plot that challenges the rigid constraints of traditional marriage practices. Kornaros turns to literary works found in the Greek speaking world as well as to the literature the Frankish invaders brought with them when they settled among the Byzantine Greeks following the Crusades. According to Aleksandr Vasiliev, “The medieval French romance had proved its cosmopolitan character by the fact that it was adopted in Germany, Italy, and England, [and] could certainly take root also in Greek, where the conditions at the beginning of the thirteenth century seemed to be particularly favorable for it” (556).¹⁰⁵ Thus the *Erotokritos* reflects the “literature of the twelfth century which was so intimately associated with chivalry” (Bury 4) and reconstitutes the themes of love and honor as it is reflected in the emerging Veneto-Cretan society.

Critical discussion of the tale-poem takes its cues from the introductory eighteen lines where the poet informs his readers what compelled him to tell the story of “φιλια αμολλαγη / pure love”¹⁰⁶ (I.9). The narrator’s voice acts essentially as a guide to various meaning-making elements found throughout the sequence of events but, as David Holton accurately asserts readers confront a number of difficulties with “any text written in a bygone age or within a cultural tradition different from our own” (1). The difficulty, as Holton proposes, is “to know how, and how far, to make allowance for the cultural gap that separates us from Kornaros’ age” (1).¹⁰⁷ If the *Erotokritos* originates from the chivalric romance of *Paris et Vienne*, “one of those itinerant tales that criss-crossed all of

¹⁰⁴ Rush Rehm. *Radical Theatre: Greek Tragedy and the Modern World*. London: Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd., 2003.

¹⁰⁵ See A. A. Vasiliev. *History of the Byzantine Empire, 324-1453*, Vol. 2. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1971.

¹⁰⁶ The word “philia” is ambiguous in the context it is used; it has connotations of love between friends; perhaps a higher form of love or even a Christian kind of love.

¹⁰⁷ Holton, David. *Erotokritos*. New York: Aristide D. Caratzas, 1991.

Europe,” as Jean Baumgarten speculates, it was “adapted into a number of variant forms according to the linguistic context and transformed by the imaginative powers of reciters and copyists” (190). Even if *Paris et Vienne* is the model of the *Erotokritos*, “an analogous but perfectly independent chivalrous ideal” in the Greek speaking world (Bury 17) is found in the epic of *Digenis Akritas*.¹⁰⁸ Thus the *Erotokritos*, like *Digenis Akritas*, situated between cultures provides the context to critically question the historically-based attitudes and varied conflicts that surface.

The Conception of Aretousa

Of all the figures in the *Erotokritos*, Aretousa clearly stands out as a representation of the feminine version of the heroic ideal. “In breadth, in soul,” George Seferis observes, Aretousa is much more courageous than Rotokritos. He is rather conventional” (502, n.1). The observation Seferis makes about Aretousa is corroborated by Philip Sherrard who claims that, “It is difficult to think of another figure in literature with whom one may compare Aretousa” (119).¹⁰⁹ Indeed, Aretousa’s character is still recognized by those who live in Crete¹¹⁰ or by those who are familiar with the *Erotokritos*. Her name evokes the Odyssean Arete, wife of Alcinous, mother of Nausica, queen of the Phaikians, or, the quality of *arete*, a common noun embodying a kind of moral heroism or innate nobility that confers her name with symbolic power. This concept of arete represents a moral and philosophical perspective that may be interpreted as the female version of *virtù*, usually associated with males.¹¹¹ It is this ethical and

¹⁰⁸ *Digenis Akritas: The Grottaferrata and Escorial Versions*. Elizabeth Jeffreys, ed. and trans. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

¹⁰⁹ Philip Sherrard, “The Figure of Aretousa” in the *Wound of Greece: Studies in Neo-Hellenism*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979.

¹¹⁰ Aretousa is the diminutive form of Arete and the name is still used for girls.

¹¹¹ *Virtù* as a concept is considered especially Machiavellian. According to George Bull (XXI), much has been written on the concept of *virtù*, but Machiavelli, along with his contemporaries, seemed to use it freely and loosely, sometimes with the sense of will power, sometimes efficiency, sometimes even with

idealistic stance, “the outward show, or personal honor, acting according to one's conscience and position” (Ferrante 72)¹¹² that defines Aretousa's character and creates the image of the exceptional woman.

But her *virtù* does not entail physical prowess as in physically bearing arms. Rather, it involves a worldly conflict with her parents and an otherworldly conflict with divine Eros. It is through this staging that the domestic violence within the palace is romanticized. Thus the image of Aretousa as “the transfiguration of a personal drama” (Sherrard 120) provides a view of traditions and expectations for women of the changing conditions in Venetian Crete. Yet the assertions both Seferis and Sherrard make about Aretousa's singularity begs qualification since the literary pantheon abounds with female characters who exhibit similar traits. If Sherrard's claim that Aretousa is the “transfiguration of a personal drama, an image of the human soul” is accurate, then Kornaros reveals admiration and respect for women by creating a crucial female voice in early modern Greek literature.

The author describes Aretousa with the qualities romance heroines possess:

Χαριτωμενο θηλυκο τως το καμεν η φυση
 κ' ισα τση δεν ευρισκετο σ' Ανατολη και Δυση.
 Ολες τσι χαρες κι αρετες ητονε στολισμενη,
 ευγενικη και τακτικη,¹¹³ πολλα χαριτωμενη.¹¹⁴

A graceful girl-child nature made for them
 And her equal was not found in the East or West.
 With all the graces and virtues she was endowed

the sense of virtue.

¹¹²Joan M. Ferrante. *The Conflict of Love and Honor: The Medieval Tristan Legend in France, Germany and Italy*. The Hague: Mouton, 1973.

¹¹³ The word τακτικη, tactical, suggests the ability to act or maneuver tactfully yet discreetly, and such a characteristic endows her with the cunning Penelope affects in the *Odyssey*.

¹¹⁴ Χαριτωμένο is fraught with ambiguities. In the first instance, χαριτωμένο translates into adorable, delightful, but since the word includes *charis*, a very significant concept in Greek thought, is closely related to grace. And can be translated as graceful. The second variation of the word in the stanza, χαριτωμενη, does not refer to her physical beauty but rather to her good judgment, common sense.

Noble and discreet, extremely fair.
I.63–66

Aretousa's physical beauty is enhanced by her noble nature. Together with such an array of traits, Aretousa provides the definitive conception of idealized womanhood. In the absence of recorded historical women of Venetian Crete, Aretousa's character exemplifies the contemporary notion of ideal womanhood which is not based only on physical beauty but includes charismatic attributes, including good judgment. She possesses the same physical features of the female characters created by Chortatzis and Troilos¹¹⁵ and defines beauty. It seems, therefore, that Aretousa's characterization inscribes the model of ideal womanhood as prescribed by Castiglione who endorses the notion that

...a woman should in no way resemble a man as regards her ways, manners, words, gestures and being. Thus just as it is very fitting that a man should display a certain robust and sturdy manliness, so it is well for a woman to have a certain soft and delicate tenderness, with an air of feminine sweetness in her every movement, which, in her going and staying and whatsoever she does, always make her appear a woman, without any resemblance to a man

(211).¹¹⁶

The standard measures of "feminine sweetness" are enhanced by her intelligence which is not dulled by the comforts and luxuries associated with her aristocratic status. Through her intelligence she has a clear vision concerning the pursuit of her passions which remain unspoken. However, "as the queen's child and the king's daughter / she spent enormous passion on learning night and day"

¹¹⁵ See *Panoria* and *Vasileus Rodolinos* and the way the female characters represent this idea by their respective authors.

¹¹⁶ Castiglione, Baldessar. *The Book of the Courtier*. trans. George Bull. New York: Penguin Classics, 1976.

(κι ωσα βασιλισσας παιδι και ρηγα θυγατερα, ποθο¹¹⁷ μεγαλον ηβανε στο γραμμα νυκτα μερα, I.67-68). As a voracious reader and eager learner, she is being exposed to ideas beyond the palace walls. The study of letters is one of her passions and reading is mentioned numerous times, especially by her nurse, who reminds her, or rather scolds her, about her obsession with her studies. This aspect of her characterization is crucial in that the emphasis on her intellectual superiority complements her physical beauty and that her physical beauty is secondary to the beauty that emanates from within. Her power is therefore not limited to her external appearance.

As an aristocratic woman, Aretousa is expected to be educated. The fact that she is able to study with the encouragement of her parents did not present, as Jane Stevenson sees it, a “revolutionary menace whatsoever.” However, it does show “at a wide variety of places and times,” including Venetian Crete, “men of the ruling elite have been sufficiently relaxed about the class allegiance of their daughters that they have permitted them to acquire one of the essential tools of 'manhood,'” (411)¹¹⁸ in preparation of their role in a world dominated by men. The emphasis on the passion she exerts on her studies, nonetheless, hints at a character where compromise is not possible.

Aretousa's character is best understood when compared with the other female characters in the text.¹¹⁹ Artemis, Aretousa's mother, and Rotokritos' nameless mother, are presented perfunctorily as women who are totally subsumed by the traditional roles assigned to women. Frosyni, her nurse and confidant, represents the voice of reason and, even though she questions Aretousa's wisdom, she remains loyal and sympathetic to her

¹¹⁷ The word ποθοϛ, in this case, translates into desire, the desire to learn but, at the same time, since her parents are mentioned, the learning is presented as a privilege that she cannot squander.

¹¹⁸ See Jane Stevenson. *Women Latin Poets: Language, Gender, and Authority, from Antiquity to the Eighteenth Century*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

¹¹⁹ A fourth female figure that is merely mentioned but whose skills are vital to Rotokritos is a nameless woman, a sorceress.

young mistress through all her ordeals. Unlike the other women, Aretousa dominates the text. She is thirteen years old, on the verge of womanhood, and exhibits attitudes reminiscent of the Sophoclean Antigone who sacrifices her life in order to defend her principles. She also recalls Penelope whose love, constancy, shrewdness, and aristocratic status qualified her as an idealized woman. The traits bestowed on Aretousa intimate a similar idealization for her.

Aretousa's passion for learning, especially reading, articulates the ambivalent attitudes towards the education of women during the Renaissance. The danger books represent for both men and women appears earlier in Dante's *Inferno* where Francesca da Rimini tells the poet her story. She and Paolo "... read for pastime how in thrall / Lord Lancelot lay to love, who loved the Queen (V.127-128). Furthermore, she recognizes the book as "Galleot" (137),¹²⁰ that served as the intermediary for her adulterous affair with Paolo. This reasoning amplifies the fear of women's exposure "to other people's loves" and may fall prey to what Juan Luis Vives terms the "venomous allurements and enticements" (74).¹²¹ A similar danger is expressed by Erasmus in the *Education of a Christian Prince* where he refers to many people who enjoy the "stories of Arthur and Lancelot and other legends of that sort" and classifies these stories as "... utterly illiterate, foolish, and on the level of old wives' tales" (61), reading matter unsuitable for future princes.

The "allurements and enticements" are what Frosyni fears and the ways such reading may influence Aretousa's character and actions unfavorably. The critical issue is

¹²⁰ Dante Alighieri. *The Divine Comedy 1: Hell*. Dorothy L. Sayers, trans. New York: Penguin Classics, 1949. The story of Francesca and Paolo fits well with the marriage plot in this study. Apparently, Francesca, for political reasons, was betrayed into marrying the deformed Gianciotto, Paolo's brother. Paolo and Francesca had an affair and when the brother found them together, he killed them.

¹²¹ Vives, Juan Luis. *The Education of a Christian Woman A Sixteenth-Century Manual*. Edited and translated by Charles Fantazzi. Chicago: University of Chicago press, 2000. The original text was written in Latin in 1523 and provided a course of conduct for bringing up and educating women.

reading, reflecting on and being transformed in some way. The romances, especially chivalric romances, could potentially distract young idealistic men and young impressionable women could be led astray with the inappropriate pleasures, as the Francesca and Paolo episode confirms. Frosyni's constant criticism and hostility of Aretousa's intellectual pursuits underscores the fear that books may provide models that will inspire her to step out of line of her daughterly duties. Her admonitions can be understood in light of the widespread Renaissance attitudes that women should be educated because it was important to the husband's well-being. For the Italian humanist culture, what constituted a proper education for women involved the study of religious matters and the literature of the church fathers, as well as the study of ancient historians and orators – not as models of actions but as models of style and sources of moral guidelines. Additionally, a thorough familiarity with the poets with, naturally, the exception of the “scandalous comic and satiric poets” (Soward 79) was necessary for a woman's education.

Aretousa, then, as a young woman of noble birth, the daughter of a king, needed to be educated in order to perform her ultimate role as the wife of a ruler or a powerful man. However, learning is potentially threatening, and, according to her nurse's objections, may encourage inappropriate independence and excessive confidence. Yet, Aretousa's future role as queen justifies the apparent need for literacy in order to enhance her understanding in her other members of the elite with whom she will interact. She was becoming the educated woman Erasmus considered not only advantageous for herself but for her husband and family as well. Likewise, the emerging culture during the Renaissance in Crete, women's education and the introduction of Western ideas as well as the revival of ancient knowledge, increased the awareness and the desire to practice a

distinctive way of life and recognized the need for reforms. The education of women was a first step in preparing women to raise the children better and to mold the character of future princes.

The fact that Kornaros chose a young educated woman with her own will and placed her alongside a male protagonist with personal ambition indicates an emerging new order of individuality and upward mobility. Aretousa has a more complicated role than Rotokritos, yet, in some ways, they bolster each other as a couple. The crisis that may have precipitated the need for a creation like Aretousa was the Fall of Constantinople, “the largest, finest and wealthiest metropolis of the known world” (Herrin 9) and the bastion of Christianity in 1453. The loss of Constantinople to the Ottoman Turks threatened Byzantine society from within and without. The situation caused the mass exodus of scholars, artists and people from all levels of society to other parts of the former Byzantine Empire. It follows then that there was a nostalgic impulse to recuperate and salvage the sensibilities that reflected earlier familiar and more stable times. The *Erotokritos*, and in particular Aretousa and Rotokritos,¹²² became such a medium to recall the earlier glorious past especially through the spoken language that was found in the Byzantine romances which captured the vitality and the spirit of the past and created a link for the future.¹²³

In the idealized representation of Aretousa, the praise Kornaros offers is generally more concerned with storytelling than historical evidence and follows Tasso’s formula to invent or imitate, otherwise he would be a historian rather than a poet (Patterson 161).¹²⁴

¹²² The first syllable of Rotokritos (the E), is not pronounced almost entirely throughout the narrative.

¹²³ George Seferis who was a refugee from Asia Minor, while attending gymnasium in Athens, found that he spoke the language of *Erotokritos* and his classmates considered him odd for **such speech (*Dokimes* _____)**. What it actually meant was that he was viewed as backward.

¹²⁴ Annabel Patterson. *Censorship and Interpretation The Conditions of Writing and Reading in Early Modern England*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984.

Whether the figure of Aretousa simulates the actions and sensibility of a contemporary woman cannot be determined but her fictional depiction exemplifies a social crisis specific to the Cretan situation. Aretousa and Rotokritos are two literary icons involved in a historically momentous purpose. They were created during tumultuous times and they complemented each other in their strength of purpose and their potential sacrifice for their beliefs. Their union mediates dominant political and romantic tensions as the lives of the aristocratic children are laid low and the long-awaited restoration and reintegration in the community recall the circular imagery of the opening lines.

Divine Confrontations or Effective Posturing?

The *Erotokritos* presents erotic passion as a complex, life-altering experience for its protagonists, the family, and the society in which they exist. The main concern is the impact love has on the protagonists and the conflicts arising between the world and the lovers instigated by their reciprocal passion. The concern of the poet is with the emotional state of his heroes. Both, Aretousa and Rotokritos, are awakened to love by Eros, the uninvited pedagogue who takes over their heart, mind and life. Seized by eros she is able to resist the domineering familial and social obligations. As the poet explains, “Eros is her teacher and he is tutoring her”

(τον ερωτα εχει δασκαλο κ' εκεινος τσ' αρμηνευγει,” III, 1123). Eros is, therefore, given full range to enforce his teachings and for Aretousa to justify her actions.

The onset of love between Aretousa and Rotokritos sets the starting point to rewrite the marriage plot by describing rebellion against patriarchal authority. By using the disruptive force of Eros and the romance idiom, the marriage plot is scrutinized and restructured to reflect the changes the evolving culture demanded. When the tale begins with the ups-and-downs of the circle and that poem is about “a genuine

love”(φιλικα αμαλλαγη, I.9), the suggestion is that critical events will follow. Falling in love, a common human experience, is often compared to an illness, especially when the desire is for a person who does not meet parental approval. The situation becomes desperate and the anxiety is often expressed through the appearance of illness. It is this situation that develops in the case of Aretousa and Rotokritos. In such circumstances, Eros is symbolic of the “sort of constraint or external pressure that may make life simply unlivable” (Winkler 83).¹²⁵

The erotic love that Eros causes is described in the text as an illness, a powerful involuntary attraction, an invasion manifested in a variety of psychic and physical aches. The erotic love¹²⁶ Aretousa is possessed may be “an ancient terror” (Sherrard 121) that creates a spiritual battleground and as such represents an inner reality. Under the tutelage of the *daimon* as Eros is known in the “older Attic dialect” (*Cratylus* 398C), she is guided by the “knowing and wise.” The “erotic madness inspired by Aphrodite and Eros” (64),¹²⁷ a form of ατη / atē which Eric Dodds traces in classical works, applies to Aretousa’s possession. The irrational impulses that seem to direct Aretousa’s actions reveal the underlying dynamics that define women and their roles in the social hierarchy. The belief that Eros is a disease that affects the soul and body, an illness that “unnerves the limbs and overcomes the mind and wise counsels of all gods and all men within them” (Hesiod *Theogony* 120-2),¹²⁸ provides the excuse for Aretousa’s resistance to the arranged marriage her parents plan.

If, as the ancients claimed, “love is a sort of madness” resulting either from

¹²⁵ John Winkler. *The Constraints of Desire: The anthropology of sex and gender in ancient Greece*. New York: Routledge, 1990.

¹²⁶ The concept of love is founded “not only in philosophical but antiquarian considerations. Eros in the *Erotokritos* is associated with the neo-platonic theories of love”(Panofski 125, 123).

¹²⁷ Eric R. Dodds. *The Greeks and the Irrational*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963.

¹²⁸ Hesiod. *Theogony*; and *Works and Days*. M. L. West, trans. with introduction. Oxford University Press, 1988.

human ailments or “from a divine disturbance of our conventions of conduct,” (*Phaedrus* 265a), the figure of Eros provides the cause of Aretousa’s mental and physical state. The condition manifested through this divine madness brings together the physiological impulses of sex and, “supplies the dynamic impulse that drives the soul forward in its quest of a satisfaction transcending human experience” (Dodds 218).¹²⁹ Consequently, the figure of Eros becomes a medium to bridge what a person is and what the person might become. In effect, the supernatural involvement of Eros mythifies and mystifies the social and psychological relationships described in the narrative.

The woman as the victim of Eros becomes the disruptive agent of family and social relations. Eros disturbs the balance of the household and the disruption extends to the larger community. Yet, Eros cannot be simply dismissed. The victim of Eros is trapped in a state of irrational passion and the terms used to express the violence are conveyed in physical terms. The practical householder must regulate the impact of its presence on both male and female. Even though both Aretousa and Rotokritos are assaulted by Eros, the impact on the female character is expounded on more fully.

When Kornaros claims “she has Eros as her teacher and he instructs her,” (τον ερωτα εχει δασκαλο κι’ εκεινος τσ’ αρμηνευει , III.1124), he returns to a more ancient time, to “the old Homeric feeling that these things are not truly a part of the self, since they are not part of the conscious control” (Dodds 41). But in so doing, she is plunged into the wild, engaging in irrational behavior that is used to interpret the passions that directly challenge the dominant traditions. As in the *Iliad* where Agamemnon blames *atē* for his unreasonable behavior, Eros is the agent that causes Aretousa to act in a way that is alien to her. The passion that overwhelms her to the extent that she loses control is

¹²⁹ The erroneous contemporary use of “Platonic love” masks the physiological impulses of sex which humans share with animals (Dodds 218).

not new or unusual. “Nurse,” she tells Frosyni, “I see it, I know it myself that I became easily enslaved, I am not the way I used to be”

Νενα, βλεπω το, γνωριζω το απατη μου
 πως ευκολα εσκλαβωθηκα, δεν ειμαι πλιο σαν ημου
 (I.1613–1614)

This type of madness or insanity is found in the classical texts and later in the Renaissance. In Ariosto’s *Orlando Furioso*, for example, love is defined as madness: “*che non è in soma amor, sé no insania* / love is nothing but madness.” And it is a sickness: “... *‘l male è penetrate infin all’osso* / the disease has eaten me to the bone” (24.3.8). Above all, it threatens the structures of established power, emblemized by arranged marriage.

Rotokritos also finds himself as “a slave and servant to passion”(σκλαβος και δουλος εις το ποθο, I.264), as he tells his friend, Polydoros. He will be tutored by Eros with equal cruelty as Aretousa in the lessons of love and suffer his own trials. For all his sophistication and his charismatic nature, Rotokritos is called “*agouros*” (αγουρος, III.1562) literally translating “unripe.” Usually, *agouros* refers to a young man who does not have facial hair or a beard. Rotokritos, however, is eighteen years old (δεκοκτω χρονων , I.79) and also is considered very wise for his age (μ' αχε γεροντου γνωση, I.79) which suggests that he is unschooled or untutored in matters of love. He suffers from the same ailment as Aretousa but his enforced exile distances the reader from his emotional vulnerability and his suffering becomes less central in the narrative. The physical distance or the absence the exile creates for the lovers provides an effective way to make Aretousa physically inaccessible and more desirable, while at the same time, it makes Rotokritos into an errant knight and assists in his quest for fame and the acquisition of a kingdom.

Once struck by Eros, a transformation is inevitable. Getting to know Eros means determining and coming to terms with the demands the taskmaster sets for his apprentice. What seems to take place is the breakdown of acceptable behavior, as in Aretousa's case. Yet, the idea that she is not responsible for her behavior is liberating and the assault by Eros offers an excuse from guilt, disgrace and self-doubt which is perceived and justified as a temporary condition. It is a reminder of the toll the constant struggle has on the physical, mental, and emotional stamina of the young woman. Eros, viewed from this position, unleashes Aretousa's potential power of her sexuality and the necessity to keep her under control in order to preserve her chastity.

Love grows gradually the way a seed becomes a plant, its spreading roots sprouting branches with buds, leaves and flowers (I.302), the kind of love that cannot be arranged by force. Initially Rotokritos is struck with the awareness of his feelings for Aretousa whom he watched as she developed into a young woman. As the son of the king's favored counselor, the king treated him as his own child. When Rotokritos can no longer contain his feelings, he resorts to singing at night, disguised with a beard. Like the nightingale, he sings at night and leaves with the arrival of the dawn. He uses his *lagouto*, a musical instrument still used in Crete, to serenade Aretousa. Through his words he expresses his longing and desire. He is well aware that his feelings are not permissible and his aspiration forbidden, but, as he tells his friend, Polydoros, his desire is beyond his control. His friend discourages him and chastises him for even thinking about her as the beloved. This same friend, however, joins him on his nightly excursions. Since he cannot confess his love to her directly, he uses his music and his songs to capture her. He captivates her through his voice and the unsaid messages the sound of his voice tell. As Desdemona falls in love with Othello by listening and hearing the stories

he tells her, Aretousa likewise hears the message Rotokritos communicates through his songs.

She not only hears the words of the songs but interprets and records them. When her singer of the night comes to her window, she records “whichever song she liked, she wrote it” (οποιο τραγουδι τσ’ αρεσεν, ηπιανε κ’ εγραφε το, I. 445).¹³⁰ By writing and then reading the words of love he sings, Aretousa knows that they are meant for her, as she tells Frosyni. But more importantly, the songs acquire the right to be spoken, heard, and written. Although there are no examples of the words, from the poet’s telling, the words are evidently quite animated and convey his love unambiguously. The fact that Aretousa writes down the songs she hears each night indicates that she is literate and that she does not need the assistance of a scribe as many aristocratic women often did. Also, the fact that she is able to interpret the words and recognize their full intentions reveals an imaginative and passionate mind. Frosyni not only echoes the humanists concerns but anticipates the romantic poets who feared too much imagination may be dangerous to anyone, male or female, but “for women in particular patriarchal culture has always assumed mental exercises would have dire consequences” (Gilbert and Gubar 55).

The power embodied by Eros is associated with disruptive sexual desire. However, in the context of Eros as teacher/pedagogue, the vitality of the god takes on a different aspect. The influence Eros renders is both “stinging and sweet, for it is both a torment and a delight,” (Calame 16) or “bittersweet” as Sappho names him. Eros is also instrumental in Aretousa’s transition to adulthood which begins with her love infatuation and is transformed from a maiden, a *parthenos*, to full-fledged woman, *gynaika*,¹³¹

¹³⁰ As a scribe might although it is understood that she knows the meaning of the words; often scribes knew the technical aspects of copying texts but not necessarily comprehend the meaning; (perhaps the author of this text, wrote the story but did not create it.)

¹³¹ The word γυναικα, woman, doubles as wife just as the word for man, ανδρας, doubles for husband.

through marriage reaching full adulthood when she bears children and secures the continuation of the male line. Thus, what Eros¹³² teaches (αρμηνευει, III.1124) is that passion must be contained and overcome by reason before it is transformed to the readiness necessary for a secure and happy marriage and respectable life.

The love that has been growing gradually between the two young people is revealed in the scene that is described through the simile of the earthen jug, λαηνι,¹³³ a very basic, necessary and useful household object and recognizable by most people, whose functional use is to hold water. The jug provides a wonderful way to grasp the constraints and the mutually charged erotic passion that had developed between the two. In this scene in which Aretousa and Rotokritos come face-to-face unexpectedly, the earthen jug with its narrow neck mediates their restrained and concealed passions:

Ωσα λαηνι που γεννη πολλα πλατυ στον πατο
 και εις το λαιμο πολλα στενο κ' ειναι νερο γεματο,
 κι οποιος θεληση και βαλθη οξω νερο να χυση
 και το λαηνι με τη βια προς χαμαι να γυριση,
 μεσα κρατιζει το νερο κι απ οξω δεν το βγανει
 κι οσο το γερνει τοσο πλια μονο τον κοπο χανει,
 ειδεται εμοιωσασι κι αυτοι κ' ησα γεματοι παθη,
 και θελοντας να πουν πολλα, το λιγα δε μπορουσι;
 το στομα τωσ εσωπαينه, με την καρδια μιλουσι.

Like a jug with a wide bottom and a very narrow neck
 full of water; he who craves to and tries to pour the water
 finds as he turns the jug toward the ground, the water
 refuses to pour out/flow;
 the more he tries, the more effort he wastes.
 It was the same for the lovers,
 Full of desire, they wanted to tell each other all
 But could not utter a word
 Instead they spoke with their hearts.¹³⁴

¹³² Unlike Chortatzis or Tasso who have Eros appear in human form penetrating his victims with arrows, Kornaros presents the influence of Eros as a force beyond human comprehension.

¹³³ The earthen jars, λαηνια, were found in the homes of peasants and farmers in recent times and utilized for carrying water or for storing drinking water. The composition of the jug kept the water constantly cool. In more affluent homes, λαηνια would be used more for decoration.

¹³⁴ Translating the fifteen-syllable verse into English is difficult because it loses its rhythm and the words that typify the Cretan language have no parallels in English.

(III.591–600)

Just as the water remains contained and cannot be released from the jug, their words are constrained but their bodily expressions offer the necessary language. In effect, the poet uses the earthen jug to identify the emotional situation on the basis of visible signs on the face and bearing of the young people. But the earthen jug and the water contained within also make a connection related to the generative ability of the combination of earth (jug) and water, the growth, and the renewal of life and once their mutual love is confirmed, their intentions and plans for the future will pour forth, as it were.

The image of the earthen jug that Froma Zeitlin ascribes to Hesiod's Pandora is similar to the image of the earthen jug as presented in the *Erotokritos*. The jug represents the generative possibilities the union of the two embody and the hope of the children that may be borne of this union. "A more precise indication is the fact that later medical and philosophical texts associate and even correlate the womb with a container or jar. Throughout the Hippocratic corpus and the works of the later, more-sophisticated anatomists, the woman's uterus is likened to an upside-down furnished with two ears and handles. The jar /uterus is modeled on features of human anatomy" ((Zeitlin 64-65).¹³⁵ The analogy continues in the notion of the very narrow neck that prevents the spilling of the water contained within and, in the same way, of controlling their erotic passion for the future.

After the chance meeting, they arrange to meet at night to speak of their love. They often weep and the iron bars that safeguard and keep their separation test their control over their passion. Aretousa tells him to not even consider touching her hand without her father's blessing and approval as a husband. Even though marriage is the

¹³⁵ Zeitlin, Froma I. *Playing the Other. Gender and society in classical Greek literature*. Chicago: University of Chicago University Press, 1996.

purpose from the start, she behaves the way a woman who upholds the responsibility of her status, mainly that the honor of her father rests with her chastity. However, she does not seem concerned by Rotokritos lesser status nor does she heed Frosyni's constant reminders of her familial and social obligations.

In particular, Aretousa's refusal to cooperate with her parents' wishes to marry the prince of Byzantium places constraints on her. The imprisonment is the most obvious physical constraint, a first-step solution to the violation of prescribed behavior. That she opposes and rejects her parents' requests and demands on account of her love for Rotokritos and her voluntary promise to remain faithful to him seem obvious. Aretousa can easily follow custom and marry the man her parents choose for her, fulfill the obligations of her lineage and daughterly role, and leave the social order undisturbed. Instead she chooses to refuse, enact madness, as it were, conveniently justified by the Eros' attack, and thus willingly accept imprisonment and the threat of death. Her disobedience seems as a youthful reaction and that after living in a grimy, mud-covered cell, isolated from worldly luxuries of the palace, she will reconsider her actions.

But if we recall the traits Kornaros attributes to her in his introduction, besides the formulaic description of her physical attraction, the attributes of *τακτική* and *χαριτωμένη* (I.66) embody qualities that reveal Aretousa's complex nature. Her imprisonment assists her in her heroic effort to remain loyal to Rotokritos and reveals her courage and moral strength while her "madness" provides the explanation for her constancy and obstinacy. As Joan Ferrante observes, "[w]ith limited opportunities to exercise real power over their own or others' lives, women in medieval literature and sometimes in real life find subtle or hidden ways to exercise such power, to manipulate people and situations, and to spin out fictions which suit them better than their reality,

fictions by which they can, or hope to, control reality"(213).¹³⁶ Thus, while the cell is confining and movement is restricted, it is not the same as idleness or apathy, or lack of agency. Aretousa controls that part of her contained world while keeping her intentions intact. Essentially what Aretousa does is to use the alleged madness caused by Eros to maneuver and subvert her father's plans more effectively.

Kornaros places his female protagonist in a situation where her actions are prompted by fidelity and the love for one man. The strong implication is that these values continue to exist and the example that Aretousa sets is a type of renaissance of those values. What Kornaros does by invoking a glorious Athens is not so much an exaggeration but a deliberate and purposeful strategy to awaken cultural memory and to generate a bridge with the past and the future. Through the creation of Aretousa and Rotokritos Kornaros show that they are able to transcend the most chaotic circumstances arising from the conflict between their families, the war with outsiders, and, most importantly, the war within themselves. Through their actions and fidelity, they are considered heroic and thus exemplify the impact of love when sustained through principled acts and hope against all adversities that a resolution becomes possible. Thus, by using the chivalric romance, the pursuit and acquisition of personal interests become imaginable.

The narrative also offers a way to reconcile traditional power with the energies of the new man of the Renaissance. This is the position Rotokritos represents. The character of Rotokritos is practical and ambitious. He fits the image Machiavelli and Guiccardini held for the ideal prince or courtier as soldier by exhibiting his superior

¹³⁶ Joan Ferrante. "Public Postures and Private Maneuvers: Roles Medieval Women Play" in Erler, Mary and Maryanne Kowaleski, eds., *Women and Power in the Middle Ages*. Athens: University of Georgia Press (1988):213-229.

martial prowess in battle and his sophisticated intellectual ability and social skills through his education simultaneously. Since the Venetian takeover of Crete, political power and social status held by the Byzantine *archontes* were challenged. Their inherited status as members of the Byzantine aristocracy persisted but with the rediscovery of antiquity during the Renaissance, learning offered opportunities for upward mobility especially for a Byzantine nobleman.

For Rotokritos, love, politics and war offers the opportunity to display his worldly *virtù*, which he does in two instances. The first is when he participates in the joust Aretousa's father organized to find an appropriate husband for his daughter. Rotokritos enters as a knight on horseback (στ' αλογο καβαλαρης, II.24), disguised yet dressed in luxurious white garments, suggests aspects of theatricality and points to the unsavory aspects of war.¹³⁷ The second instance is when Athens is attacked by the Vlachs¹³⁸ as he displays the chivalrous attitude of an errant knight as he protects his beloved and his country. The war with the Vlachs, even if it proves almost fatal, solidifies Rotokritos' pursuit of his heroic, political, and romantic ambitions. In both the joust and the war, Rotokritos enters in disguise. In the joust he does not reveal his identity and is dressed in luxurious white garments. Historically, jousts, the “quintessential chivalric event” (Goodman 20), the colorful military games for knights were organized in Crete in the main towns especially during “Carnival time to honour of the *Provveditori Generali*.” “A grand joust (γκιόστρα),” for example, “was held in Candia in 1588 for the departing

¹³⁷ The second book of the *Erotokritos* is devoted to the joust and a separate study is required for a full appreciation of the featured spectacle. Also, see Richard Barber and Juliet Barker, *Tournaments, Jousts, Chivalry and Pageants in the Middle Ages*. Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1989.

¹³⁸ The Vlachs, according to David Binder, are “unique people of the Balkans have also demonstrated over many centuries how to hold on to their identity and contribute to national cultures in a region repeatedly swept by savage conflicts through the ages.” (114). That they are named as the enemies of the mythical Athens is probably an anachronism which was commonly practiced. See Harry J. Magoulias, *O City of Byzantium Annals of Niketas Choniates*, Detroit, MI: Wayne University Press, 1984 (XXIX).

Provveditor General Zuanne Mocenigo, and another took place in Chania in 1594,” according to Chryssa Maltezou. (44).¹³⁹

As the narrative unfolds, Aretousa's calls attention to multiple concerns. For one thing she exists in a society where male social control supports dominant social hierarchies. She appears at once as a young woman trapped in a traditional society that places her under her father's authority and as heroic in her individual crusade against the traditionally-imposed expectations on a woman who, as far as her father is concerned, betrays and undermines his power.

The relationship between Aretousa and Frosyni attests to the complications that women experience even in seeming ideal situations. Unlike Aretousa who as a princess holds a more privileged social position, Frosyni, her nurse, is in a precarious position: she is in charge of the upbringing of the princess yet, she is, as she reminds the king, a slave in his house”. The depiction of this relationship reveals the anxieties that may surface among two people who, despite their different social positions, as women, are no different than a slave in the king's or another master's house. This position remains obscured as the focus of the erotic elements are redirected and viewed as the cause of the complications in the narrative. But Frosyni¹⁴⁰ as her name implies, is very pragmatic and the voice of reason. She is not impetuous nor does she reveal much about her life. Her character, always in the background, is made viable as an individual through Aretousa. Through her presence she offers Aretousa comfort, sanity, and loyalty. She listens courteously and is quite outspoken when necessary. She does not hesitate to express her

¹³⁹ Chryssa Maltezou. “The Historical and Social Context” in *Literature and Society in Renaissance Crete*. New York: Cambridge University Press , 1991.

¹⁴⁰ Sophrosyne involves a middle-of-the road attitude; Xanthoudidis states that her name does not hold the connotations of the classic sense of the word and that it is a common proper noun used as a name in many parts of Crete and Greece.

views regardless of the difference in their social positions. She is Aretousa's confidante and surrogate mother. But what distinguishes Frosyni is her loyalty to Aretousa who, despite her opposition to Rotokritos, stands by Aretousa when her father imprisons her and remains imprisoned along with her. She maintains a stoic attitude as she vicariously endures Aretousa's agonies and hopes that her mistress may come to her senses. Perhaps Frosyni perceives Aretousa's obsession as temporary and that love will lose its sway on Aretousa.

Particularly striking is the exchange between the two women when Aretousa speaks to her nurse about her father's abominable physical treatment of her and concludes, "I prefer death rather than forced marriage" (ἴω καλλία ἴχω θάνατο παρὰ στάνιο¹⁴¹ στεφάνι, III.1139-1142). Aretousa thus implores Frosyni to assist her as the woman who nursed her as a baby and the woman who has taken the place of her mother. The words *στάνιο στεφάνι* evoke the image of a wreath or crown, a circular object, that squeezes the temples of the wearer. In its metaphorical representation, *στάνιο στεφάνι* expresses the constraints and the reality of an unwanted or forced marriage. The constraining image makes a strong impression on the nurse as well as the listener/reader who can easily identify with Aretousa's objection to forced marriage. The idea of a forced marriage also illustrates the limited power the young princess to avoid her intended role that was determined from the moment of her birth: to serve as a means to broaden her father's economic and political interests. The only power then available to Aretousa is the refusal to accommodate her father's wishes and expectations. She therefore relies on her battle with Eros to strengthen and continue her purposeful refusal to obey the demands of her parents. Since Aretousa refuses her

¹⁴¹ The word *stano* also echoes the word *stani* which is where sheep are corralled.

“functional use” (Rasmussen 23) as the medium for her father’s plan to expand his kingdom, her social power is reduced. Yet, paradoxically, her refusal is empowering as she summons a position of self-determination that challenges the centuries-old practice of arranged marriages.

The conflict between Aretousa and her parents is made obvious during the confrontation scene in Book IV when she is informed of her impending marriage to the prince of Byzantium. Surprisingly, Aretousa appears as a submissive daughter. Kneeling, she begs her father not to banish her from the household by marrying her off to a stranger. The spectacle of Aretousa prostrating herself on her knees before her father may seem hypocritical considering her conviction and defiant attitude, but there is certain truth in her wish to stay within the familiarity of her parents’ home. Becoming a member of a new family under ideal circumstances must have been especially traumatic to a woman. The women who intermarried, that is, the Greek women who married Venetian men, were torn in their loyalties; yet marriages of that sort cemented relationships that benefited quite often the bride’s family. In an environment where there were restrictions on Byzantino-Cretans intermarrying Latins, the marriage had to be condoned socially. Apparently, it was not acceptable to marry a Greek woman with a Venetian and it was virtually impossible to have a Venetian man marry a Greek woman. There were legal restrictions placed on such arrangements, as Sally McKee writes.¹⁴²

Aretousa’s plea to her parents was the kind of plea the audience was familiar with and they could easily identify with the predicament of both the parents and the young woman. The father is understandably distressed by his daughter’s rejection of his plans and especially by her refusal to accept her “functional use” in the exchange. The words

¹⁴² See Chapter One of this dissertation for more details on the topic.

the father hurls at his daughter and even the physical violence he inflicts on her would have been recognized and perhaps justified in the minds of the audience. As she kneels and tries to convince her father and mother of her need to be near them, he reduces her to a mere “τεκνο κακο/wicked child” (IV. 429). He accuses her of causing difficulties by refusing such a choice match (δυσκολιες μου βανεις σ’ ετοιο γαμο, IV. 430). The self interests of the king contradict the wise and just image with which Iraklis was introduced at the start of the narrative. Instead he is reduced to the stereotypical tyrannical father who “traffics” in women. Aretousa's disobedience of his wishes take away all the she had, all the blood ties become meaningless and a contest of wills ensues. The father's need to impose his will on his daughter demonstrates that women of the aristocracy, and probably most wealthy women, “were regularly forced to comply with a future determined by others” (Herrin 260).

Traditionally in Cretan and Greek society, a woman's fate was controlled by the males of the household and a woman's fate was controlled by the males of the household and the woman had very little to say about the decisions made on her behalf. Arranged marriages were performed on a regular basis in order to establish alliances between families. As in all such traditional arrangements, the mother supports the father's plans and participates in the treatment and punishments the king decrees on their daughter. One can argue that Artemis is obliged to play the role of dutiful wife to ensure her daughter's compliance. At the beginning of the tale, we are told of the queen's desire to have a child; the anticipation of giving birth was of great importance. The burden of infertility is usually placed on the woman. Her inability to produce an heir would have labeled her as barren, a stigma that would have deprived or limited her political power as queen. To this day, in Greek culture, the inability to birth a child places the non-mother in a lesser

category. In this case, Iraklis could have easily ended the marriage or take a concubine. The fact that she shared her husband with her daughter only recreates the same difficulties mothers and daughters have dealt with for thousands of years. Another reason for Artemis' response is the negative reflection of her mothering skills revealed through Aretousa's resistance. The narrator comments that the queen's reaction was most unnatural "for a mother to show such cruelty toward her child" (να δειξη η μανα στο παιδι ετοια ασπλαχνια μεγαλη," V. 574). That only complicates matters but it verifies the abuse of power even when exercised by women.

That Aretousa defies the prescribed behavior of daughter, that is, to be submissive and obedient, poses a threat and a challenge to her father, to his masculinity, his pride, and his kingly role. If he cannot convince her to relent, his very existence is at stake. Her refusal poses a challenge and a threat to other women obediently and dutifully accepted their roles within the prescribed tradition. In effect, she creates the possibility of a new arrangement and provides a model of the different roles women can assume instead of simply accepting the preconceived male and female roles. It upsets past practices where the father decided on his daughter's future husband. In the larger scheme, she poses a greater challenge to the social and political structure of the kingdom. If she succeeds in her bid to marry the man of her heart, her triumph symbolizes a sort of conquest. The fact that she is able to choose her mate rather than accept the parental choice breaches tradition and, the elevation of a man of lesser social status to a more powerful position contests established class structures. But before that can take place, Rotokritos must demonstrate that he is an extraordinary agent for the state and Aretousa must also prove her virtue and her worth. The couple's challenge and the outcome of their challenge to the existing order will constitute a precedent and encourage similar changes

of this type.

When Aretousa decides to marry Rotokritos, Frosyni is very reluctant to assist her with her plans. However, ultimately she does and they are both bound by the secret. Rotokritos is pitiful when he arrives by the window to let her know of his banishment. “Did you hear the distressing news?” (Ηκουσεσ τὰ μαντατα, που ο κυρησ σου μ' εξορισε στησ ξενητιασ τη στρατα; III,1355) he asks, as he informs her of his banishment from Athens by her father's command. Considering the animosity between Venetians and Byzantino-Cretans, and the strict class divisions, banishment or imprisonment would not have been the most effective solution to such a transgression. Rotokritos is distraught but as Aretousa's response to the crisis reveals, she remains more self-possessed and resolves to marry him. She has no reservations about her actions and she basically tells him to get a hold of himself. She helps him overcome his fears and reassures him about their the future as a couple.

But the one issue that Frosyni as well as the parents are concerned with is Aretousa's chastity. It is the one virtue that is especially required of women. Lucrezia Marinella uses lines from the *Orlando Furioso* (Canto 37:6) to defend the nobility and excellence of women:

Faithful, chaste, wise and strong women have existed, not only in Greece and Rome, but in every region where between the Indies and the Garden of Hesperides the sun spreads its rays: their virtues lost to fame so that from among a thousand hardly one is name, and this because in their day they had writers who were deceitful, envious and mean.

(Cited in *The Nobility and Excellence of Women*, 81)¹⁴³

¹⁴³“E de fedeli, e caste, e sagge, e forti, / Stato ne son, non pur in Grecia e in Roma, / Ma in ogni parte, ove fra gl'Indi, e gli Orti / De l'Esperide il Sol spiega la chioma: / De le quai sono I pregi, agli onor morti, / Si ch'a pena di mille / una si noma, / E questo; Perche avuto hanno ai lor tempi / Gli scrittori bugiardi, invidi ed empi.” Marinella, Lucrezia. *The nobility and excellence of women and the defects and vices of men*. Ann Dunhill, trans. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1999.

Indeed “faithful, chaste, wise and strong women” have not ceased to exist and Aretousa, although she does not have the fame of a Sophronia, Lucretia, or Penelope (95-96), or even the nymph Arethusa (100), is one who upholds her chastity and uses her inner strength. When the lovers first begin to meet by the barred window, she warns Rotokritos that he should not expect to touch her until her father approves of their marriage. One night, according to the poet, the emboldened Rotokritos asked to touch her hand

Μια νυχταν ο Ρωτοκριτος θελει να ξεδειλιαση,
κι' εζητηξε της Αρετης το χερι της να πιαση
(I.679-680)

to which, she replied without hesitation, it could only happen with her father's approval (ο κυρης μου να τ' οριση, III, 685). Or, more explicitly, she assures him that if her father does not consent to their marriage, he can wait “till the world ends” (ο κοσμος κι' βουληση, I.686). Similarly, during the recognition scene where one would expect an embrace if only for comfort and reassurance, she tells him that he must not be bold and hold himself back until they get her father’s blessing to their marriage

Μα να μου γλιξης, κατεχε, ακομη δε σ' αφηνω,
ωστε να δωση ο κυρης μου το θελημα εκεινο.
(V.1139-1140)

It becomes clear that despite her desire for Rotokritos, she is able to restrain and control her passion – she has learned her lesson too well and Frosyni’s fears are unfounded. Both these instances show how the young couple struggles to remain chaste by restraining their decidedly strong passion for each other. The concept of chastity is much more complicated than it seems because it reflects as much, if not more, on the men who are associated with the woman. The belief that women’s nature is unsettled and uncontrollable supports the notion that women are inferior to men since they do not possess the enlightened reason or self-control men have.

The *Erotokritos* exhibits affinities with medieval romances in which the female protagonist must undergo various ordeals in order to prove her noble and excellent character. Likewise, Aretousa suffers great distress and is almost put to death although her father is reluctant to have his kin's blood spilled. The imprisonment, as Harriet E. Hudson suggests, forces "the protagonists [to] remain chaste and no children result from their clandestine marriage" (77). Lee Ramsey suggests that the imprisonment possibly "represent[s] the life to which the medieval woman saw herself condemned: emotional but inactive, accepting what happened because there was no other choice (177). If inactive is synonymous with sedentary, most upper class women were limited in their physical activities but were active participants in keeping a successfully-run household.

Aretousa may have been instructed well and learned well, but she did not expect the assault by Eros. A direct consequence of the assault of Eros causes her great suffering. If, as Lee Ramsey claims, all romance heroines suffer, then the introduction of Eros elicits thoughts of male domination and female submission as the spirited heroine learns to control her exuberant eroticism in order for the restoration of social order to take place. This pattern of widespread female suffering may have been inspired by another form of popular literature, the saint's life, which contains "the same kind of vibrant, passionate distress" (Ramsey 177). The seriousness of her erotic passion and the extent to which her sexuality must be controlled requires the need for her imprisonment.

In retrospect, will it turn out to have been a typical father-daughter conflict and challenge to the established order or will the daughter's rebellion expand to the rest of the community? Other social concerns aside, especially in this case since the father's authority is contested, his meddling will not be nominal. In fact, the daughter's power will be constrained and only because of perseverance and Rotokritos' actions on behalf of

the state, will the result be favorable. Thus, the stakes are high for women and men whose aspirations resemble those of Aretousa and Rotokritos. However, in order for Aretousa to become the “ideal accomplished woman,” she must yield “to marriage, its hierarchy, and its limited field of activity,” (123) as Pamela Benson¹⁴⁴ pronounces solemnly.

The only options of Byzantino-Cretan aristocratic women was is marriage or taking vows in a religious order. Aretousa becomes the focus of the poem and the ordeals she endures in order to be transformed into the exceptional woman the poet insinuates in his initial introduction. But the burden to reach the goal rests mutually on the shoulders of the young couple and the narrator’s remarks highlight their interdependence rather than their independence. The chaste heroine Aretousa exemplifies is found in ancient novels such as Heliodorus’ *The Ethiopian Story*, or the more modernized version of Cervantes’ *The Trials of Persiles and Sigismunda*¹⁴⁵ or the alleged prototype of the Erotokritos *Paris et Vienne*.¹⁴⁶ The significant difference between the ancient romances and even *Paris et Vienne* is that the heroine is not roaming through unknown landscapes but is confined within the cell located in the palace. She knows that Rotokritos is elsewhere beyond the realm of the kingdom, and even though they are physically separated, the vows they made to each other and their shared grief keep them united. She accepts that men were expected to leave their familiar homes in order to pursue, confront,

¹⁴⁴ Pamela Joseph .Benson *The Invention of the Renaissance Woman The Challenge of Female Independence in the Literature and Thought of Italy and England*. University Park, Pa: Pennsylvania University Press, 1992.

¹⁴⁵ The Cervantes novel has his protagonists face numerous encounters with characters who, in effect, test their faith to each other and ultimately to the Church. The quest is to return to Rome, the center of the Church, but their journey is blocked again and again but their determination does not waver.

¹⁴⁶ The differences between *Paris et Vienne* and *Erotokritos* are numerous and significant. For example, the protagonists marry and then run away from the Dupin. In the *Erotokritos*, the couple exchange vows with only the nurse present to witness their clandestine marriage. The exchange of vows between the two constitutes marriage. Another major difference is that Aretousa never leaves the grounds of her father’s palace but she resolves to deter her suitors by looking quite unkempt and unhealthy which would be reasonable considering the conditions of her imprisonment.

and endure the obstacles that would educate them in the trials of life and prepare them in their roles of kingship. Well aware of her necessity in the continuity of her father's dynastic line, yet, at the same time, torn by her desire to marry Rotokritos, places Aretousa in a debilitating and demoralizing position for any woman. She represents the woman in a society where women envision themselves through “the real as well as metaphoric looking glasses that surround her” (Gilbert and Gubar 54).¹⁴⁷ Aretousa, especially because of her social position, is expected to be a model child, a model daughter, a model young woman and, finally, a model wife and mother. The instilled desire to please and honor her mother and father necessarily leads to the harmful effects associated with the socialization of women’s rational and physical being. Thus Gilbert and Gubar draw attention to the “renunciation [which] is almost necessarily to be trained in ill health, since the human animal’s first and strongest urge is to his/ her *own* survival, pleasure, assertion” (54). If any of the daughters passively execute the demands of their parents, they will be considered a good and virtuous daughters, whereas if they refuse to comply, they become reflections on the mothers who have not instructed them properly. Thus, Aretousa “feels herself to be literally or figuratively crippled by the debilitating alternatives her culture offers her.” By accepting parental demands, Aretousa relinquishes “her power of refusal” (Gilbert and Gubar 57, 58) and accepts the poisoned traditions that have been passed on from generation to generation of women.

Kornaros’ major challenge through his creation of Aretousa is “to analyze the social and personal implications” (Benson 126) of her resistance and pursuit of self determination. The individual choice above familial and social concerns illustrates the limitations of women. If we look at Aretousa only through the “sexually determined

¹⁴⁷ Gilbert, Sandra M. and Susan Gubar. *The Madwoman in the Attic the Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-century Literary Imagination*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979.

roles” (Benson 126) posited by countless predecessors, we will look at her with an offhanded glance that will underestimate the importance of her character. The conscious choice Aretousa makes to marry a particular man, even if that man is socially inferior but a man endowed with superior physical and ethical traits, offers her the opportunity to play a significant role in the formulation of her own life. More significantly, her gesture is absorbed within a new version of the marriage plot in which she appears more than the compliant daughter of a powerful ruler. Instead, she becomes the wife of a newly-minted king, the mother and grandmother of a dynasty as the affairs of the country are restored safely back into the hands of the men. This is often the author’s way of integrating the “new woman” into the complex political circumstances that were threatened by the daughter’s refusal to accommodate parental dominance.

What torments her most is not-knowing the whereabouts of Rotokritos or if he is alive. Aretousa may seem to be either a perfect madwoman, since the loss of material comforts is of no importance—she lives on bread and water in a dank prison in the basement of the palace.¹⁴⁸ Or, she may seem reckless because she is adamant about her choices. Her stance exhibits a lack of concern about the consequences to her life, a contempt for the proposals of marriage her parents send to her cell on occasion. But like a very old tree, rooted deep in the soil, her convictions, desires, and determination remain steadfast throughout the ordeal.

She seems unconcerned about her reputation in the world yet she conceals her passion for Rotokritos from her parents. If her parents know that Rotokritos is at the heart of their domestic disturbance, they do not admit it. They know she is not opposed to marriage; she is opposed to the men her father chooses. Aretousa’s cause of grief is

¹⁴⁸ Judith Herrin mentions the existence of “cells where rebels were regularly incarcerated” within the walls of palace (*Women in Purple* 142).

not only the banishment of Rotokritos but her loyalty between her family and Rotokritos. The prison cell where she is kept is intended partly to break her willfulness and partly to keep the disobedience hidden from public knowledge. She does not declare devotion to Artemis¹⁴⁹ a vow other maidens make, but she refuses to marry the man chosen by her parents. The banishment of Rotokritos is similar to a death for Aretousa and her own banishment into the darkness of the cell create the kind of living death echoes Antigone's despair, "wretched that I am..."¹⁵⁰ across time and place.

Aretousa's behavior portends the image of a new woman. She knows intuitively what she wants and will not be diverted from her path. In the end, the accepted view and her own view are rearranged to fit a new pattern. First of all, that she loves Rotokritos and decides to marry him derives from their reciprocal sentiment and not from a family decision. Then when the parents try to determine what has transpired and when they discover that their demands will not be met, in an effort to convince her to accept, she is punished severely.

In any event, Aretousa's self-determination is confined to a woman's traditional contest: love for a man. Aretousa is entirely consumed by her love for Rotokritos for whose sake she will withstand various hardships refuses to retract her words or to comply with the demands her parents heap on her. Although this may seem reckless, it makes up the passionate side of Aretousa that, in essence, helps her retain a clear vision of her destination. Her imprisonment propels her to exert a heroic effort in order to maintain her loyalty to her lover-husband. Imagined from this position, she becomes her own center and her power is revealed mostly through her words and her devotion to

¹⁴⁹ Confronted with an arranged marriage, Rododaphne, the sister of Rodolinos does, opposes marriage and declares her devotion to Artemis. Similarly, Panoria in the eponymous pastoral play; attempts to avoid marriage for a life as a single woman.

¹⁵⁰ Sophocles. *Antigone*.

Rotokritos. Her choice to remain faithful to Rotokritos fortifies her courage and moral strength while her “madness” vindicates her actions. In the confinement in her cell she has time to contemplate, to examine the events, and to even reconsider her position. Yet she does not stray nor express regret for her actions. And because she has no regrets, she is fearless, patient and confident within the bounds of the cell where she waits for the future to arrive.

The Scene in the Cell

While the war between the Athenians and Vlachs raged on, Aretousa remained her father’s prisoner holding on to faith, gambling that Rotokritos was still alive and that he would deliver her from this situation. During the time she spent in prison, her devotion to Rotokritos seems like her Achilles heel while her reputation grows as a symbol of constancy with each marriage proposal she rejects. Aretousa’s imprisonment re-examines the constraints the superficial image of the family as a unit of stability and harmony and the upkeep of appearances that remain concealed to non-members of the family. The cell contains her distress and the love that makes the terrifying constraint of the cell bearable.

Central to the unfolding of the *Erotokritos* narrative is what Tasso Torquato in his *Discorsi del poema eorico* (1594) dictates:

This example Homer gave, teaching us with both history
and fable ... that poets intermingle fictions among true things
and fable among true thoughts, like the man who fuses gold
with silver...history aims at truth, arrangement at expression,
fable at delight. (Cited in Patterson, 160)¹⁵¹

Similar to the reunion of Penelope and Odysseus in Homer’s *Odyssey*, Kornaros creates a scene in the fifth and final section of the *Erotokritos* “intermingl[ing] fictions” and marvelous occurrences to bring about the homecoming and a close to the pretense and

¹⁵¹ Annabel M. Patterson. *Censorship and Interpretation The Conditions of Writing and Reading in Early Modern England*. Madison: Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984.

deception the disguise prolonged. The scene in the “dark prison” (σκοτεινή φυλακή, V.791) stages the moment of *anagnorisis* / recognition that leads to an acceptable reconciliation of both young people after their five-year period of exposure to hardship, danger, exile and emotional anguish back into the family fold and society.

One of the marvelous occurrences is that Rotokritos returns as a black man (μελανόμαυρος)¹⁵² and wins glory by killing countless Vlachs and wins the war after which he is offered the kingship and the princess as his wife. He darkens his face by smearing it with a solution a sorceress prepared for him. The darkened complexion changes his physical appearance and the stuttering with which he speaks, alters his speech. According to the poet, his appearance is totally unappealing but his martial prowess (ανδρεία), and his courtesy make him intriguing and likeable. His black countenance does not seem to be significant in his relations with the king, other members of the court, and even Aretousa, suggesting that the stranger’s appearance was not unusual. As a black man, he could have been a Moor, a Saracen,¹⁵³ an Ethiopian or even a Turk. Although the suggestion that the stranger was a Turk seems blasphemous, considering the history of the Greeks and the Ottoman Turks, it is plausible that the dark stranger was a Turk. As Molly Greene indicates in her *Shared World*, the Cretans welcomed the Turks when the Venetians were forced out from Crete and many converted to Islam for various reasons other than religion. The stranger recalls Othello who commands the position of general of the Venetian army. The deliberate darkening of his skin and change of his speech conceals his true identity to such an extent that not even his mother would have recognized him. The disguise also protects him from his violation of

¹⁵² Μελανόμαυρος suggests that he is extremely dark, as dark as ink.

¹⁵³ According to Lee Ramsey, Saracens were the carry-over from the *chansons de geste*, strengthened by the Crusades. Saracen was a term used for non-Christian enemies in English and French romances (32). In the *Errotokritos*, however, if he is a Saracen, he is welcomed as a savior.

his exile sentence and, finally, the disguise allows him to penetrate the palace when he is wounded and he is brought into Aretousa's chamber where the physicians tend to him.

Aretousa complements his disguise even if it is not apparent at first. Aretousa in her wretchedness resembles nothing of the poet's description of the enchanting and charming younger woman who after her lengthy imprisonment seems unattractive to the extent that "even the flies are disgusted with her" (σιχαινονται τη οι μυγες, V. 238), as the king inform Rotokritos. Aretousa's appearance is as deceptive as the blackened Rotokritos but it allows her a degree of control. Well aware that her external appearance does not reflect her inner self, she manipulates the situation. Essentially her scheme convinces the king that she has no intention of accepting any suitor regardless of appearance, reputation or political influence. She holds fast to her principles and it is her love for Rotokritos that make it possible. Kornaros uses in this scene to reaffirm the purpose of the ordeal, the aristocratic nature of the protagonists, and to stimulate pity and forgiveness and reconciliation within the patriarchal order (Kahn 644).

Aretousa's first encounter with the disguised Rotokritos affirms her constancy and single-mindedness. When she refuses to speak to the man who comes to the window because he may be a potential suitor, she acts the way she has been acting since her initial imprisonment. In addition, her father sends new and luxurious clothes to make her appear more attractive, but she simply throws them on the grimy floor and stomps all over them. Rotokritos is delighted at this response and prepares to leave. But before he leaves, he gives Frosyni the ring that Aretousa had given him on the night his exile began. The ring holds all the memories and promises to each other. On the ring hinges the future. When Aretousa sees the ring, she is convinced that Rotokritos is dead. Frosyni, however, observes "two beautiful birds came into the prison and chirped sweetly / and

flew around Aretousa's head" (δυο ομορὰ πούλια κι εγλυκοκαϊλαδουσα, V.792-793).¹⁵⁴ But Aretousa remains cautious and skeptical. She is aware of the fierce role fate (μοιρα) on human lives. The lingering fear that her beloved Rotokritos is dead and the impact his death will have on her future assume a new intensity. She laments the loss of Rotokritos and accepts the possibility that he will not return and goes on to compare her prison as the wedding chamber and Hades as her bridegroom. However, despite her fears she agrees to meet with the stranger.

The encounter with the stranger on the following morning brings about the recognition of the two lovers and parallels the scene of their separation five years earlier. The encounter cements the impression for the audience that they are complementary and worthy of each other and "establishes a kind of emotional alliance" (Winkler 151). The scene reminds the reader/listener of the poet's earlier injunction that if "at the beginning there is hardship and pain, the end is happy" and the image of the circle and the cyclical nature of life returns. The scene is filled with agony, regret, and finally joy.

Aretousa approaches the stranger with controlled anticipation and, appearing casual, she asks how he came into the possession of the ring. The ring in his hands takes on a different meaning. It acts as emissary, as the messenger/ μαντατοφόρος (V. 539), the intermediary, the symbol of the bond between them. Objects, like words, in different contexts acquire different meanings. When Aretousa gave him the ring as a token of their betrothal, it was a token of her love and her promise to remain devoted to him. Her constancy is not in question and it is therefore an enormous surprise when Rotokritos begins his tale. As he begins to tell her the way the ring came into his possession, similar to the disguised Odysseus, he conjures up images that are possible and convincing. He

¹⁵⁴ The birds were probably swallows which are associated with the arrival of spring and messengers of auspicious beginnings.

senses her distress yet continues with the deception, and as the poet claims, he weeps within himself but refrains from exhibiting any emotions. She, in contrast, weeps and even falls unconscious when she hears that Rotokritos is dead.

The unwarranted cruelty Rotokritos exhibits as he tests Aretousa borders on sadism. His cruel test seems to heighten the anguish and loss that the trauma of war produces as it is reflected in Aretousa's demeanor and reaction. Whether he is aware of it or not, the test he puts her through brings her to a point where he can verify the level of agony she can withstand and verifies and ascertains her fidelity beyond doubt. Ultimately, despite his exceptional character and the love her professes to have for Aretousa, he cannot “distance himself from a specifically masculine attitude toward feminine virtue” (Tuttle Hansen 242).¹⁵⁵

Rotokritos finally sheds his disguise by washing his face clean and resume his own speaking mode. That is, when he becomes recognizable and as his appearance is restored, their beginnings are also recovered. When the revelation takes place, she cries with joy and she forgets, even forgives, his duplicity. Yet, she will not allow for any physical demonstration of affection, not even to hold her hand, without her father's blessing. Aretousa's response is telling in that she still intends to remain dutiful to the traditional obligations women have but, in the end, actually serve her father's political designs. This is a revealing image of the contradictions of power and the reality of their future relationship. Still, they decide together that Rotokritos will retain his blackened appearance until negotiations reach the desired ends. The mutual decision of the necessity to maintain their outward appearances leads Rotokritos to finally grasp, that she

¹⁵⁵ Elaine Tuttle Hansen. “The Powers of Silence: The Case of the Clerk's Griselda” in Erler, Mary and Maryanne Kowaleski, eds. *Women and Power in the Middle Ages*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press (1988): 230-249.

is his equal, that she is as astute, judicious and remarkable as he is – if not more. The meeting of the two lovers verifies Aretousa's virtù by being able to contain her passions and transforms her into his equal and thus confirms her readiness to take on her role by his side as his queen. The disguises of both Aretousa and Rotokritos provide an invaluable lesson about the truth behind outward appearances and attest to the convincing performances they employed in order to reach their desired interests.

Rotokritos in his homecoming establishes a line of communication between the past and the present, between himself and Aretousa, the individual and community, and continuity and change. *Nostos* involves more than the physical homecoming. The hero must return in many other ways as well – emotionally, politically, socially. Aretousa also experiences a homecoming as she is restored to her family and takes her rightful place in the order of things. As if the reader/listener knows what it means to be home instantly, Kornaros instead of expounding on all they lost and the hardships they endured, he collapses the five years into a few lines.

Yet, upon looking closer, at the most literal level, Aretousa seems to have lost her resistance, especially after she endures the news of Rotokritos' death. In imagining Rotokritos' death, she comes close to dying, but that response causes a transformation and a recovery. No mention of the madness Eros caused is made or the challenge her rebelliousness used. In a sense, she is no longer considered “a contradiction, an aberrancy, and a threat to nature itself and the stability of the gender system” (Tuttle Hansen 233).¹⁵⁶ It is as if leaving her cell and removing her soiled and worn-out clothes, she is regenerated. A part of her has certainly died in the five-year long imprisonment as

¹⁵⁶ Elaine Tuttle Hansen. “The Powers of Silence: The Case of the Clerk's Griselda” in Erler, Mary and Maryanne Kowaleski, eds. *Women and Power in the Middle Ages*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press (1988): 230-249.

she sheds her childhood and prepares to assume the role that was inscribed for her at birth. She is the paradigmatic woman who exemplifies what it means to be a good woman as she takes her place besides Rotokritos. The two effectively appear as idealized models of conjugal love and affirm the political purpose of the marriage plot.

The Felicitous Ending

The *Erotokritos* ends with the most conventional happy resolution. Similar to chivalric romances such as Chrétien de Troyes's *Erec et Enide* and *Cligés*, the marriage that results in the *Erotokritos* is the appropriate reward for the kind of "trustful love" (αγαπη μπιστικη, I.21) and pure love (αμαλλαγη φιλια, I.10) Aretousa and Rotokritos have. The reconciliation that follows is as genuine as the distress that preceded it. The "simple love story, nothing more" explanation Seferis offers about the *Erotokritos*, however, overlooks the built-in complexities found in the narrative that address the challenge the emergence of individualism and the necessary reworking of the marriage plot constitutes. The narrative also hints of a shift in the aristocratic class "accompanying the slow shift from medieval to recognizably modern systems of class and family" (Hudson 77).¹⁵⁷

Significantly, one of the major successes of this romance is the fact that the individual holds a more central role in the negotiation of a marriage partner, a liberal attitude reflecting a movement away of the ironclad arranged marriages. One can also infer that the institution of marriage is starting to change and that the feelings of the two people involved in a marriage are considered a valid and necessary basis on which a man and a woman may build a future life together. The successful culmination of the

¹⁵⁷ Harriet E. Hudson. "Class, Family, and Gender in Popular Romances" in *Class and gender in Early English Literature: intersections*. Harwood, Britton J. and Gillian R. Overing, eds. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, (1994): 76-94.

marriage plot leads to the harnessing of unrestrained passions and the successful achievement of self interests is demonstrated effectively although Aretousa, conspicuously, does not go beyond a woman's projected expectations. Even as the model of a new woman, the role she assumes relegates her to the prescribed domestic space where she can practice the skills associated with women.

Despite her disappearance in the background, however, there is an implicit appeal for greater recognition for women's moral worth and achievements. It is therefore quite noticeable through the attention Kornaros gives his heroine. There is an implicit plea for greater recognition for women's moral character and achievements. It is therefore quite noticeable that certain male authors have paid attention to the moral character of women and expound on their inborn characteristics through the creation of what Victoria Kahn terms "compensatory fiction." Through her characterization, she becomes the union of principles and her actions confirm her words, especially when she put her life in danger. Similarly, Rotokritos had to prove himself equal to Iraklis before he could actually assume the throne.

However traumatic the personal violence Aretousa experiences through the assault of Eros, the domestic cruelty she endures while coming to terms with the love that drives her mind and actions, the overall violence of war and the way it affects the man she loves and the country in which she lives, in essence, all contribute to her maturation. The forced isolation of her imprisonment and the deprivation of simple creature comforts, in some ways, protect her. She is reminded by one of her father's men that she is fortunate she was not taken prisoner when the country was under siege – a very real possibility under the circumstances. The thought of being a war prisoner would resonate not only with Aretousa but extend the bounds of time to include women, including royal

women, who as captives were reduced to the status of slaves, a fate considered worse than death.¹⁵⁸

In the presentation of a character like Aretousa, the practices of male violence are criticized as much as they are condoned. In the world of Venetian Crete, war between different factions was a daily occurrence. But, as Aretousa does in her personal battle, one cannot remain neutral. Aretousa as a daughter is, as Rush Rehm sees it, a source of routine “political expediency” (92)¹⁵⁹ for her father’s ambitions. She presents the situation of women and the heroic acts the individual must perform in order to achieve any sense of control in the pursuit of personal determination. It becomes clear that one must take action and usually action involves risk and making choices. Thus, in trying to understand the way Aretousa constructs herself within the realities of daily life, it becomes necessary to keep in mind the dynamic factors affecting the shifts of the Byzantine-Cretan historical and cultural atmosphere. She may not be Sherrard’s vision as the “transfiguration of the human soul” but her presence and ethos reveal the “competition for power among the males themselves” and, ultimately, the influence women may exert in the actions men take. Rotokritos as the man who marries a woman of Aretousa’s caliber reflects his own moral strength and worth, thus justifying the upward social mobility he achieves.

The happy ending of victorious love, a like-minded marriage, and a politically advantageous alliance replaces the havoc and despair caused by the civil war within the household and recovers the ideal moral behavior that has been celebrated by poets,

¹⁵⁸ “*Better an hour of living free than forty years of slavery and imprisonment; καλύτερα μιας ώρας ελευθερη ζων παρα σαράντα χρονια σκλαβια και φυλακη*” is an unambiguous expression of the attitude toward the loss of freedom and Greek children learned to chant it very early on in their lives.

¹⁵⁹ Rush Rehm. *Radical Theatre: Greek Tragedy and the Modern World*. London: Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd., 2003.

tragedians, and historians. More ingeniously, however, a young girl's painful progression of the formative years on the way to womanhood is presented through the chivalric romance what Victoria Kahn calls "compensatory fiction." While an acceptable resolution is reached, the often harsh realities of women's lives are not eliminated. In the end, the outcome is told in a few verses as Aretousa will continue to exist in the shadow of her king-husband, summarizing Joan Kelly's assertion of women's place in the world of the Renaissance:

Renaissance ideas on love and manners, more classical than medieval, and almost exclusively a male product, expressed [a] new subordination of women to the interests of husband and male-dominated kin groups and served to justify the removal of women from an "unladylike" position of power and erotic independence. All the advances of Renaissance Italy, its protocapitalist economy, its states, and its humanistic culture, worked to mold the noblewoman into an aesthetic object: decorous, chaste, and doubly dependent – on her husband as well as the prince.¹⁶⁰

Aretousa's career may seem that it ends as it began. Her new role seems to resolve the conflicts her erotic infliction caused as Aretousa is reintegrated in the tradition in which her mother exists as a devoted partner to the men who rule over the land and over them.

In the context of the *Erotokritos* it becomes obvious that a movement towards reform is in progress especially with the exposure to the Renaissance through the Venetian contact and its influence. The marriage of the young couple helps to modify the traditional practice of marriage while at the same time upholds pre-existing values attached to the social importance of the marital institution. The happy ending records the major shift in thought and practice and revitalizes the individual but Veneto-Cretan society as represented in this narrative. The use of the chivalric romance addresses the concerns and constraints women confront and romanticizes the marriage plot.

¹⁶⁰ Joan Kelly. *Women, History, and Theory The Essays of Joan Kelly*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press (1984): 47.

CHAPTER 3

PANORIA: TAMING THE VIRGIN HUNTRESS

Georgios Chortatzis defines *Panoria*¹⁶¹ as an eclogue, fitting it neatly within the

¹⁶¹ The publication date of *Panoria* is approximated between 1585-1590. The text used in this project is *Panoria* by Georgios Chortatzis, Critical Edition with introduction, comments, and glossary by Emmanouel Kriaras. Thessalonike: Vyzantine kai Neoellenike Vivliotheke, 1975. A translation of

pastoral tradition. However, whereas in the typical version of the Renaissance pastoral, the life of shepherds represents an ideal escape from the pressures of the court or the complications of civilized life, *Panoria*'s eponymous protagonist flees the pastoral life of Mount Ida for the woods and the life of a virgin huntress. The play dramatizes the taming of Panoria and her return to her predestined role as wife and mother in the traditional marriage plot.

Panoria, as presented, is set on Mount Ida. Mount Ida is centered between the White Mountains in the west and Mt. Dicte in the east. The mountains appear almost as a backbone coursing across Crete and they provide natural fortresses to its inhabitants who, throughout history have maintained their independent spirit. At the same time, Mt. Ida has retained a mythological dimension and still holds a spiritual association for Cretans. According to travelers at the time of *Panoria*, the forests and deer population of Mt. Ida were flourishing and allusions to them are not just a literary commonplace (Bancroft-Marcus 81). When Venice was in the process of establishing its domination in Crete, the embedded caves in the mountains provided shelter and places of safety to revolutionaries who were formidable archers. According to Victor Bérard who traveled in Crete in 1898 (74-75),¹⁶² it took Venice one hundred and fifty years to establish the *Regno di Candia* and, in the end, it did not succeed in the takeover; after one and a half centuries, the Venetians on the island sided with the Cretans.

Earlier than Bérard, Robert Pashley,¹⁶³ the English traveler, armed with the ancient

Panoria by F. H. Marshall was published in 1929. The translation is based on the text published by K. N. Sathas in the *Cretan Theater* (Venice, 1879).

¹⁶² Victor Bérard was French, a philologist, historian, ethnologist, archaeologist, journalist, and political figure. His work, *Les Affaires de Crète*, was published when he was thirty four years old and as the editor of the work in the Greek translation points out, Bérard exhibits strong French sympathies in the narrative.

¹⁶³ Pashley, Robert Esq. *Travels in Crete*. Volume I, Reprint of 1837 ed. Amsterdam: A. M. Hakkert, (1970).

texts, traveled to Crete in 1837 in search of the places mentioned by Strabo, Herodotus, Pausanias and others. He also mentions Mount Ida and writes of “the courageous Sfakians who had preserved amid their mountains a wild independence; they became the nucleus around which the revolt in Crete formed itself; ... such was the superior activity, courage, and address of the Christians, that ... their foes were almost driven into the fortified towns” (xxii). He also refers to temples dedicated to mythological deities such as Artemis Rhokkaea (40) and suggests that on the remains of the ancient sites, Christian chapels were eventually erected.¹⁶⁴ Furthermore, Mount Ida, as Rosemarie Marcus-Bancroft remarks,¹⁶⁵ was a sanctuary for the Kallergis family who practiced Byzantine traditions long after the Venetians established themselves on Crete.

As the Byzantine Empire was disintegrating under Western influences, Mt. Ida elicited the spirit and identity associated with Byzantino-Cretans which suggests that deeply inscribed traditions were still practiced. It is not surprising then that *Panoria* is set on Mt. Ida, and neither is it surprising that the characters inhabiting the slopes of the mountainside are shepherds. But it is surprising that as the plot unfolds, it diverges from the typical pastoral.¹⁶⁶ The characters of *Panoria* differ, for example, from the aristocratic characters found in the woods of Arden in Shakespeare’s *All’s Well That Ends Well*¹⁶⁷ who assume the roles of shepherds and when their conflicts are resolved, they

¹⁶⁴ When Robert Pashley visited Crete, the island was under the domination of the Turks and his impressions of the Cretans are quite remarkable. His observations and artwork capture places that probably no longer exist because, to borrow, Heninger’s phrase, of the “wretchedness of man.”

¹⁶⁵ See Rosemary Bancroft-Marcus, “The Pastoral Mode” in *Literature and Society in Renaissance Crete*, David Holton, ed. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

¹⁶⁶ Chortatzis characterizes *Panoria* as *εγλογη*/eclogue (V.5. 421) which complicates matters since it does not exactly conform to the conventions of classic eclogues which involve singing contests between shepherds. However, I have reservations about the intention of the term; that is, I believe Chortatzis is using it in the sense of making a choice. Even in contemporary Greek, the term is used to denote selection; in fact, in contemporary Greek, elections are referred to as *εκλογες*.

¹⁶⁷ Shakespeare, William. *All’s Well That Ends Well*. All citations are taken from the *William Shakespeare The Complete Works*. Wells, Stanley and Gary Taylor, et al, eds. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988.

leave the refuge of the forest and resume their place in court. They differ from the pastoral characters of Tasso's *Aminta*¹⁶⁸ who although engaged in similar pursuits centering on love "are really courtiers in the attire of country characters" (XIII) and contemporary critics focus on the relation of the play to the "d'Este Court, both to its personages and to its setting" (Jernigan and Marchegiani Jones XV). For Chortatzis, the shepherds do not live a life of leisure and ease but must contend with the chores and problems of shepherding their flocks. This emphasis on the hardships and responsibilities necessary to the care of the flock merges the personal and the social aspects in the figures of the shepherds and the characters that make up the cast of *Panoria*. In addition, unlike Tasso who addresses the role of the courtier-poet and his role within the structure of the court, Chortatzis structures *Panoria* into a debate centered on woman's primary function within the institution of marriage while the issue of love distracts from the more serious matters. On the whole then, Chortatzis maintains a moderate yet highly purposeful position, and like Tasso who uses satyrs to represent violence, Chortatzis summons Aphrodite and Eros whose muted violence bring about the happy ending.

The principal argument in *Panoria* is between the idealistic eponymous protagonist and the traditionalist characters who insist she must marry. The scheming of the community to attain their objective and the way Panoria steers from the manipulative words and actions chronicles the tale and provides the means through which to scrutinize the community and to assess the impact of marriage on the heroine and her friend, Athousa.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁸ Tasso, Torquato. *Aminta*. Edited and translated by Charles Jernigan and Irene Marchegiani Jones. Italica Press: New York, 2000.

¹⁶⁹ As a matter of convenience, Athousa who is cast in a supporting role will not be studied thoroughly. Athousa's role is not only secondary but seems problematic especially when she persuades Yiparis from

The shepherd world of *Panoria* and the impact the institution of marriage represents useful devices for its author to tackle existing concerns without having to speak openly. Chortatzis therefore uses the pastoral mode as the suitable medium to address serious subjects, to “sing of higher things,” as Virgil’s opening invocation of the fourth eclogue suggests, or to address matters at the heart of a transitional society. As Wendell Clausen in his study of the pastoral genre claims, the pastoral is “never simple, though it affects to be; and in this affectation of simplicity, the disparity between the meanness of his subject and the refinement of the poet’s art, lies the essence of pastoral” (xv).¹⁷⁰ Accordingly, the plot seems relatively simple and imitative of other pastoral works such as Tasso’s *Aminta* or Guarini’s *Pastor Fido*,¹⁷¹ whose plots delve into the complexities stemming from the sorrows of love.

The goddess of Joy in the Prologue describes Mt. Ida as blessed with good weather and inhabited by hard-working people who rely on the land and the help of the animals to supply all their needs.

αλλα οι ανθρωποι τσι αρετες τσι παλαιες κρατουσι,
 και διχως πρικες κι οχθριτες, διχως ζηλειες και φονους ,
 περνουσι τσ’ εβδομαδες τως, τσι μηνες και τσι χρονους ,
 κι αναπαημενοι στεκουνται σ’ αγαπη παντα ομαδι
 σ’εκεινο απου χαριζει η γης και διδει το κουραδι.

but here folks have preserved the traditional values,
 and without woes and enmities, without envy and killings,
 they pass their weeks, their months and their years
 and they stand unified by each other
 living by what the earth grants and the creatures produce.

(Prologue, lines 58-62)¹⁷²

taking his life in response to Panoria's rejection of his love and his marriage proposal. She promises to speak to Panoria on his behalf (Act II.6.587-590) which suggests that her alleged declaration in support of the single life is questionable.

¹⁷⁰ Wendell Clausen (ed.), *A Commentary on Virgil Eclogues*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.

¹⁷¹ Giovanbattista Guarini, *Il Pastor Fido/ The Faithfull Shepherd* first published in 1590 in Ferrara, Italy.

¹⁷² Unless otherwise specified, all translations are mine. The text used is the critical edition by Emmanuel Kriaras. Thessaloniki: Byzantini kai Neolliniki Vivliotheki, 1975.

The description the goddess of Joy provides for this utopian community is one where life is simple with few of the complexities that plagued the world of contemporary Venetian Crete. However, the harsh realities of the shepherd's life and the need to address issues of survival limit the pursuit of lofty matters. Therefore, this haven is also a community where the individual is lost among the many and to step out of line of tradition would prompt the disapproval and scorn of the other members. Love, then, despite its amorous associations serves a very practical purpose similar to the virtues that kept the Mt. Ida community stable. That same sentiment is repeated by Yiparis although the misery he experiences because of his unrequited love causes him to doubt the possibilities of a continued blissful atmosphere as he sees no end to his misery and considers killing himself. The disappointment Yiparis articulates not only contradicts the idealized pastoral world¹⁷³ but rearranges the readers' mistaken impressions that present the pastoral world as exempt from the shortcomings of the contemporary world "in the process of living" (Poggioli 154).

Similarly, the introduction of the lovesick Yiparis lamenting his fate shatters the myth of uninterrupted harmony and goodwill in the bucolic setting of Mt. Ida. The cause of his suffering and wretchedness turns out to be the young, beautiful, cold-hearted Panoria who despises and rejects his overtures of love and his proposal of marriage. "We

¹⁷³ Consider the sentiments of another critic of the pastoral world, Touchstone of *As You Like It*, who offers a biting and more realistic picture of the idyllic landscape and its effects on the shepherd's life:

Truly, shepherd, in respect to itself, it is a good life; but in respect to that it is a shepherd's life, it is naught. In respect that it is solitary, I like it very well. But in respect that it is private, it is a very vile life. Now in respect that it is in the fields, it pleaseth me well; but in respect that it is not in the court, it is tedious. As it is a spare life, look you, it fits my humour well; but as there is no more plenty in it, it goes much against my stomach.

(III.ii.13-21)

share the same malady,” Alexis, confides to Yiparis, who finds himself in a similar predicament, well-trained “in the school of sorrow” and, as he elaborates, “you would have thought it a miracle that I am living still” (l.l. 67, 70).¹⁷⁴ These lines clarify the alleged reason of the grief the two young shepherds experience and reveal their lamentable emotional state. The exchange between the two shepherds, Yiparis and Alexis, projects “a certain apprehension about women in general” (Marquardt 285)¹⁷⁵ and possibly captures the inexplicable anxiety found in the real world of Mount Ida.

Panoria’s rejection of love and marriage in her aspiration to live single by choice draws attention to the fears such a campaign instigated by a woman generates. After all, Panoria’s mythological foremothers caused much distress to men described by Hesiod. Panoria is a strong reminder of the mythological power women possess and the need to contain that power. Like Pandora on whom according to Hesiod¹⁷⁶ Zeus heaped “deceptive beauty” and Hermes endowed with “another weapon of deception, the power of speech with which to fashion lies and flattering words” (Marquardt 289) in order to punish men, Panoria has power over men through her appearance and the power of her speech. But as she explains, she is not interested in tormenting men, although Yiparis would disagree. Her pronouncements are not “lies or flattering words;” instead, when she speaks she is blunt and up-front although she is disbelieved. Those who hear her conveniently interpret her words to suit their ideas and proceed to reinterpret her thoughts

¹⁷⁴ Although the supporting character, Athousa, shares the protagonist’s ideals, she agrees to speak to Panoria on Yiparis’ behalf and try to convince her to reconsider her attitude towards him. Athousa has no one to care for her and it is made very obvious that she relies on Yiannouli for the father figure she does not have.

¹⁷⁵ Patricia M. Marquardt, “Hesiod’s Ambiguous View of Woman.” *Classical Philology* 77, No. 4 (1982); also, Froma I. Zeitlin, “Signifying Difference: The Case of Hesiod’s Pandora” in *Playing the Other: gender and society in classical Greek literature*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, (1996): 53-86.

¹⁷⁶ Hesiod in *Works and Days* is more concerned with farmers rather than shepherds. Still they both make use of the earth for their living and it would seem appropriate that beautiful women would be distractions in a landscape where the business of survival is of utmost importance. It is also appropriate that the men would complain and blame women for all their miseries.

and actions.

She despises the idea of marriage and uses her power of her language to defend her position. Language becomes her ally and her weapon. Panoria's desire to remain single and to live alone causes the conflict. Must she marry even if she has no desire to marry but remain chaste and roam the woods freely? And, must she comply with the shepherd's wishes because he loves and desires her? The way she responds to Yiparis, her father, and the matchmaker strains the bonds of understanding and patience for all concerned. The primary conflict between Panoria, Athousa¹⁷⁷ and the others may be condensed in the conflicting views of woman's place within the hallowed bonds of matrimony and the bounds of the domestic life. Panoria gains her principal distinction from the rejection of such a life and the aspiration of the single-self existence. The rejection of love and her refusal to marry intrude on the larger cultural understanding of a woman's place in the communal configuration. If she manages to circumvent marriage, she defies social expectations and defies what is considered her natural role as a woman. Panoria refuses to marry because she prefers to live the life her brothers lead as they roam Mt. Ida rather than be subjected to the authority of a husband.

Panoria's rejection of love and marriage is a challenge to the institution of marriage as the ethical foundation of society. Her resistance is viewed as a law-breaking act, a disregard of duty to the family and the community. What is astonishing is the way the other characters, Yiannoulis, Panoria's father, Frosyni, the matchmaker, Alexis, Yiparis' friend, and Yiparis, the prospective bridegroom, propose to confront Panoria in order to convince her to change her evil ways and to destroy her confidence in order to

¹⁷⁷ Athousa is also placed in the same category for not cooperating with the social expectations. The emphasis on her person is placed on her orphan status whereby she has no legal guardian and no financial resources to compete in the marriage market. Yiannoulis takes on the responsibility to act as a guardian although he offers no financial aid when Alexis is finally able to ask for her hand in marriage.

conform to their demands and expectations. The successful finale of this marriage plot involves more than overpowering the “cruellest of maids,” as she is frequently called. Marriage was not a matter of personal choice but a means to preserve the family line, ensure the continuity of the community, and to secure social and economic connections. In other words, marriages, whether consensual or coerced, may be understood in terms of what Gayle Rubin calls a “political rearrangement” (209).

Marriages occurred early and frequent childbirths threatened the survival of mothers while child mortality was high because of illnesses and wars. In addition, Panoria’s eventual marriage with Yiparis benefits her father who is socially invested and secures as well as privileges his position within the social system. It is therefore crucial that Panoria not circumvent Yiannoulis and Frosyni’s manipulations in order to avoid the celebrated wedded bliss they profess. The impact such evasion would cause to the stability the institution of marriage provides to the familial and social structures become quite evident. Thus, it becomes urgent to persuade Panoria to marry and the concerted efforts of the cast of characters to change her mind constitute the main part of the story.

Chortatzis submits Panoria to the overall condemnation and criticism of her youthful tendencies and aspirations and, in the process, establishes the appropriate place for women, provides a model of proper and desirable female behavior and, ultimately, invites a reading where women are exposed to undue violence and an established “sexual order that inexorably transforms females into victims” (Winkler 104). Naturally, she is not viewed as a victim by her opponents and the measures used to guide her through the elaborate process that leads to the inevitable closing of the play are presented as concern for her interests, especially the comfortable future marriage may secure for herself.

In Praise of Marriage

As a traditional practice, marriage occupies a very influential place in dealings in the world of Mt. Ida. Chortatzis' initial presentation of Panoria's desire to remain single invites or rather demands an examination of the marriage plot but obscures more serious issues one of which is that marriage "placed women in an inferior role" and the primary function of the woman as the reproducer of life, "made women subordinate" (Clark 17).¹⁷⁸ Panoria's decision not to participate in the tradition of marriage and to outright reject a superior husband encourages women to "espouse perpetual virginity" and to avoid "the vileness of marriage." Panoria's attitude toward marriage echoes the advocacy of the Church Fathers in their "championing of asceticism" which meant women renouncing their sexual function (Clark 17, 18).

Rejection of marriage not only means the the renunciation of her sexual function but her social and domestic definition. Thus, Panoria's father, Yiannoulis, and Frosyni, the matchmaker, as the two more mature and experienced characters, defend marriage by celebrating female domestic skills and economic cooperation. They promote the utilitarian and beneficial purpose of women in the profitable and proper functioning of the household. Drawing upon personal experience, Yiannoulis eulogizes his wife¹⁷⁹ as he catalogs her domestic skills and her absolute devotion to the familial enterprise. As he tells Panoria of the endless chores her mother performed, he focuses on the stakes and value ascribed to a constant, obedient wife which qualifies for virtue:

If only you had your poor mother's flair for housework; she who left no chore undone. All day long she gathered herbs and greens in the meadows and at night she either sifted flour or kneaded bread or weaved; or winnowing grains, carding or spinning wool always busy with her distaff in

¹⁷⁸ Elizabeth Ann Clark. *Women in the Early Church*. Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1983.

¹⁷⁹ Interestingly, before Panoria enters the scene, Yiannoulis, speaking alone, confesses of the relief the absence of his wife offers. Prior to that, he condemns women with the usual terms and gusto found in misogynistic texts.

hand; she milked the goats better than anyone before I could milk one, she had finished milking two. The cheese she made could not be compared. And when I came home exhausted from a day's work, she'd tell me, "Lay down here, Yiannouli, for a little bit. ..."

(II.2.91-109)

In contrast to her industrious mother, Panoria represents an undesirable example who not only refuses to perform the domestic tasks that would maintain the efficient operation of the household but squanders her time pursuing masculine activities. Contrasting Panoria's pursuit of the hunt to her mother's domestic labors, she is perceived Amazonian-like and her behavior seems

symbolically to embody and to control a collective (masculine) anxiety about the power of the female not only to dominate or to repudiate the men but also to create and destroy them. It is an ironic acknowledgment by an androcentric culture of the degree to which men are in fact dependent upon women: upon mothers and nurses, for their own birth and nurture; upon chaste mistresses and wives, both for their validation of their manhood and the birth and legitimacy of their offspring.

(Louis Adrian Montrose, 125).¹⁸⁰

The list of the various tasks emphasizes the heavy labor his wife performed daily but ignores the physical or emotional exhaustion she suffered. He holds the woman completely accountable for the success or failure of a family's fortunes: Yiannoulis's words reinforce the community's logic of associating women's domestic work and the ability to perform tasks efficiently with abundance of property and morality. It is important to remember that Panoria's mother is dead and she has grown up in a household led by her father and her six brothers. What she hears about the proper behavior of women is what her father has to say about her dead mother but the story of her unnamed¹⁸¹ mother explains the necessity of suffering and hard work in order to make

¹⁸⁰ See Louis Adrian Montrose. *The purpose of playing: Shakespeare and the cultural politics of the Elizabethan theatre*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1996.

¹⁸¹ If the mother were named, she might have been addressed by her given name preceded by *Kyria*, an

a miserable living.

But Yiannoulis' litany of his wife's tremendous domestic proficiency raises several questions: is the praise a measure of social approval besides the practical economic contributions she makes to the family or does the praise offer justification of the exploitation and abuse of a woman's labor which, according to her husband, she seemingly enjoys. Drawing attention to the endless chores she performs day and night, topped with understanding and compassion she shows toward him, he omits to mention the cause of her death which, as was most often the case, may have been attributed her non-stop work and continuous birthing of children. It also reinforces the idea that women are the experts of the household chores while the men work outdoors and contend with the natural elements and they shepherd the flock. Thus, neither the shepherd nor his wife lead an easy life.

According to the description of her labor, Panoria's mother stayed within the confines of the home or within the vicinity of the home. Judging from the chores she performed, there was no time for socializing or any activity that expanded her mind. Her chores seem quite routine and yet, she had to exert speed and discipline in order to complete her tasks. Moreover, in addition to being praised for her expertise and durability, she was prized for bearing six sons who would provide more hands for outdoor labor and possibly serve as protection in conflicts because of the constant warfare.¹⁸² Thus men and women occupied distinctively separate spaces; they were separate from yet complementary to one another, playing their designated roles in maintaining economic stability in the family. At the same time, the outward success of

honorific for married women, essentially meaning "Mrs.;" or, simply, she would have been addressed as Yiannoulis' wife, again an indication of a woman's role as part of his assets.

¹⁸² The sons would also provide the manpower needed for the insurrections that were common in the region.

the household determines social respectability for the man and for the good woman who worked without protest but stoically and happily.

While his wife ensures the domestic economy, Yiannoulis can claim success as the benevolent and industrious ruler of his household. The attitude Yiannoulis displays calls to mind Xenophon's Ischomachus and his astute plan for rural women. In his scheme the wife works "at the things that must be done under cover" – weave, knit, store and prepare food, nurse infants and raise the children, while the husband whose "body and mind [is] more capable of enduring cold and heat, and journeys and campaigns" was designated the outdoor work. But more significantly, because since both have different aptitudes, they need and complement each other thereby making a well-balanced team (*Oeconomicus* VII.25-7.28).¹⁸³ This model allows for the man to be on the mountain herding his sheep and goats while the woman labors at home, where, as Yiannoulis tells us, the numerous tasks she performed required great stamina and dedication to the familial enterprise.

What ultimately surfaces is that regardless of their social position, diligence, productivity, and silence defined a good woman. If Panoria follows her own calling, she will not emulate her mother or the women who have solidified the community. Even though Panoria does not explicitly state that she does not want to replicate her mother's life, the emphasis of her preference for the hunt and outdoor life imitating the life her brothers lead, confirms her choice to remain unmarried. She is well aware of the kind of life that awaits her, should she decide to marry. It follows then that she would reject the kind of life her mother led confined at home working from dawn to dusk. But one can also surmise that her mother, even if she were alive, would not have had the time to nurture Panoria properly; if anything, Panoria would have been given numerous domestic

¹⁸³ Xenophon. *Memorabilia Oeconomicus Symposium Apology*. Trans. E. C. Marchant, O. J. Todd. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, repr. 1992.

tasks to help her mother with the household chores and to prepare for her expected future role as wife and mother. It is no accident that Panoria is disinterested in surrendering her freedom to the limitations of a lifelong commitment to another human being.¹⁸⁴ And because of the absent mother, she has learned to live as a “wild thing”¹⁸⁵ who finds it difficult to imagine marriage, yoked with a husband, as a lifelong solution. Viewed from this perspective, she has nothing to lose.

The Discarded Woman and the Unwilling Bride

Panoria is viewed as a liability since her birth,¹⁸⁶ a misfortune Yiannoulis admits would have been avoided if she had not been born. Since Panoria has no dowry and the family’s goods were distributed among the sons,¹⁸⁷ an auspicious marriage would solve the financial difficulties confronting Yiannoulis. Likewise, Yiparis finds himself in an unpleasant predicament because Panoria rejects his marriage proposal. Faced with the crises Panoria poses for the two men, they both enlist the services of Frosyni, the local matchmaker / *proxenitra*¹⁸⁸ who, as the go-between the two parties, promises to produce the desired outcome. It was customary for marriages to be arranged with matchmakers handling all the negotiations between families.¹⁸⁹ Women tended to marry young, often before the age of fifteen and usually the arrangement required a dowry. Dowries consisted of movable goods, although there are some mentions of property changing

¹⁸⁴ Athousa, like Panoria, is motherless but she also has no other living relatives and Yiannoulis acts as a surrogate father.

¹⁸⁵ Christiane Sourvinou, “A Series of Erotic Pursuits: Images and Meanings.” *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, Vol. 107 (1987): 131-153.

¹⁸⁶ That female children are viewed as economic liabilities is not unique to Cretan society. Dowries could cause a family to lose most of their assets in order to pay for the required dowry. The birth of a female child was not seen as fortunate but rather as the source of impending economic risk.

¹⁸⁷ It is curious that the family property was distributed to the sons. It is possible, and this only a conjecture, that the mother was able to assign the dowry she brought into the marriage to her sons which would question the means through which Yiannoulis was invested in the marriage.

¹⁸⁸ The word *proxenitra* is associated with *xenos*, outsider, foreigner, or non-kin. Incidentally, in modern Greek, embassies are referred to as *proxeneia*.

¹⁸⁹ There is no reason to believe that only women acted as marriage brokers, especially when marriages involved aristocratic families.

hands as part of a dowry contract (Maltezou 38).¹⁹⁰ Considering Panoria's role in the marriage plot, she provides the means that serves to elevate her father's social position (especially since it appears as if he had no property of his own) and the means through which Yiparis will enhance his male prowess as she becomes his possession.

Although the profession of the matchmaker was socially motivated and well recognized, Frosyni's function places her in a precarious position. She is viewed as disreputable yet indispensable, an indication of the ambivalence of her social role. Yet, despite the ambivalence she elicits, she exudes an aura of mystery and power as she maneuvers the arrangement of marriages. The social importance of a figure like Frosyni is confirmed by the men who procure her skills and place the future of their daughters in her hands. Motivated by the fear that his defiant daughter will remain unmarried, Yiannoulis retains Frosyni's services. Despite his contempt for the pandering¹⁹¹ in which Frosyni engages, he resigns himself to employ her skillful service. If Frosyni manages to bring about a favorable match for his daughter, the transaction will secure Panoria's future as well as his own economic and social success.

Yiannoulis's condescending attitude of Frosyni is transposed into her characterization. She is cast as a pathetic, vulnerable, poor woman, the object of contempt and derision but with a kind of shrewdness that contradicts the outward self-presentation. Her actions seem to be motivated by raw and practical human needs which she discusses at length. As an older woman of "forty" and because of her unmarried status and her physical decline, she suffers much anguish about her future. She wants desperately to revert to her youth and, as she reveals in her monologue, she consulted an

¹⁹⁰ Maltezou, Chryssa. *Literature and Society in Renaissance Crete*. 1991.

¹⁹¹ In common parlance, Frosyni would have been called a *rouffiana* which suggests a kind of pimping or one who facilitates sexual liaisons; someone like Pandarus of *Troilus and Cressida* except that Frosyni expects and asks for compensation for her services.

old shepherd who has practiced magic since he was very young,¹⁹² to give her a salve (αλοιφη) to “lighten her skin and to restore her former beauty (να με ξασπριση / και τη χαμενη μου ομορφια παλι να μου γυριση, I.3.289-90). She may have lost her youth, but, as she confesses, she is still tormented by desire

I suffer still in my old age
because Eros aims his arrows often at my heart
κι ακομη βασανιζομαι, γιατει στα γερατεια μου
ο Ερωτας πολλες βολεσ δοξευει στην καρδια μου
(I.3.252-252).

Furthermore, she elaborates,

And I as a woman, I feel like a woman
and think like a woman and have the desires of a woman”
Κ' εγω γυναικα βρισκομαι κι ωσα γυναικα γνωθω
σε μιας γυναικασ λογισμο ποσα μπορει τον ποθο.
I.4.451-452.

Frosyni’s comments reveal an unexpected awareness of female desire that her matchmaker role conceals. At the same time, her confession is agonizing. To suffer from erotic passion as William Leigh Godshalk notes, according to “Renaissance ideas of natural hierarchy,” Frosyni experiences an “unnatural passion” (12)¹⁹³ which reveals a misunderstanding of female sexuality. Her confession rejects the idea that only the young feel desire and that the “unnatural passion” is not necessarily inappropriate for older women. Her remarks are overheard by Yiparis who dismisses them as the ravings of a crazy old woman but confirms his understanding of the “unnatural passion” she experiences as unfitting for her age. From her confession, it becomes clear that she is not an asexual being but the absence of sexually arousing traits, her age, and her social

¹⁹² According to Richard Kieckhefer in *Magic in the Middle Ages*, various types of people were involved in the practice of magic—monks, parish-priests, physicians, bankers, midwives ... ordinary women and men who, without claiming special knowledge or competence used whatever magic they happened to know (56).

¹⁹³ William Leigh Godshalk, “Marlowe’s Dido, Queen of Carthage.” *ELH* Vol. 38, No. 1 (Mar. 1971): 1-18.

standing, make her undesirable and thus force her to maintain a chaste posture, even though she experiences carnal desires. The social constraints imposed on Frosyni are, therefore, not surprising especially since after a certain age, widowed women or those who were past their child bearing years were expected to observe a life of chastity. This notion made widows as virginal as the young women. Oddly though, the discarded woman through her confession arouses a certain amount of sympathy despite the overall contempt and ridicule she provokes.

Yiparis, of course, is only concerned with his emotional distress and the torments he suffers and awaits news about “the one who torments him (εκεινης απου τονε παιδευγει, I.3.296). But even though Frosyni has no news, she reassures Yiparis that Panoria will consent and predicts a reversal to his erotic suffering. If she does not comply to her cajoling words, she will use magic (μαγικα, I.3.372) to change Panoria's mind. The suggestion of the use of erotic spells or a potion to achieve the desired results adds another dimension to her character associated with sorcery and witchcraft.¹⁹⁴ As she reveals in her earlier monologue, there are men who practice magic and even though both pagan and Christian writers ascribed magic primarily to women (39), there is no reason to believe “that women had a monopoly” on it (Kieckhefer 198).

As in other business transactions, compensation for Frosyni’s expertise in the negotiations is discussed and it is agreed that Yiparis will provide her with “milk, cheese and sausages” (I.3.299) for the rest of her life. When Frosyni is left alone and resumes her monologue, she generalizes about the relations between men and women and, finally, declares that “there is not one woman in the whole world who does not want to be

¹⁹⁴ Even though Frosyni professes to use magic (μαγικα), she is not referred to as a witch but rather a foolish, old woman which coincides with Henry McGuire's question in *Byzantine Magic*, “Why were there virtually no witches in the East, but foolish old women?” (7).

coupled with a man or who does not want to be sought after, adored and loved (I.4.409-412). Frosyni's remarks anticipate Panoria's literal change of mind about marriage and suggest that women do not have the resources or the agency for self-determination. She also strongly implicates women's choices and desires as driven by necessity whereby the life as a single woman is reduced to the fear of growing old, alone, and destitute.

Speaking from personal experience, Frosyni admits to Panoria that she willed her miserable condition and she has discovered, of course, too late, her wrongful attitude about marriage and she wants to prevent Panoria from making a similar mistake. Panoria must recognize marriage as the highest form of honor and accomplishment for women and successful management of the household as proof of her womanhood. She must therefore change her evil and foolish ways before she finds herself destitute, vulnerable and dependent on the charity of others, as Frosyni's social position affirms.

Filled with regret for having squandered the opportunities of her youth to marry any of the many shepherds who desired her, she has learned that she is still basically the same person, as she recounts her present and her past. The present situation does not diminish her desire to have an erotic experience but, there is a scarcity of men to fulfill such a desire. By depicting Frosyni as still having erotic desires, allows Yiannoulis to make crude remarks. The exchange between the two parodies the relations between men and women but also shows Frosyni as discriminating in the choice of lover she wants and, it is certainly, not Yiannoulis. In fact she tells him that he is not up to performing the "job /δουλειά," a euphemism for sexual intercourse. Similarly, Yiannoulis in his attempts to seduce Frosyni, even if it is in jest, points to his need to exert his personal power and to reassure him of his male potency. Frosyni's rebuke, however, reveals her awareness of the reality of her status as an older single woman in the community and maintains her

chaste pose.

She laments the loss of her youth and the fact that she is now destitute because of her arrogant attitude when she was in the bloom of youth. She is not ashamed for her feelings nor is she willing to apologetic about it; but she regrets that she did not use her charms when she was younger to secure a husband for her old age and, since she has no children because she avoided marriage, she lacks the companionship and the comforts her offspring would provide. She admits to having willed her miserable state and now recognizes the error of her ways and wants to supposedly save Panoria and Athousa from a similar fate. The bloom of youth will vanish, Frosyni reminds Panoria, and you will become a lonely woman like me.

In order to prove her point, she summons the examples nature provides to catalog paired examples of animals and plants (III.1.91-120)¹⁹⁵ She begins with birds, goes on to animals, reptiles, trees, plants and suggests that each coupling calls out to casual observers to “look at their *philia*,” a euphemism for copulation. The language she uses to describe these couplings is base and evidently condones lust and physical desire. Listing the pairings of the animals as she does point to the blatant banality of the necessity of coupling the institution of marriage represents and sanctions. If indeed marriage civilizes, the examples or the necessity to use nature’s examples for humans to imitate reinforces the bestiality that is cultivated and accepted in the conjugal domain.

The way Frosyni stereotypes simplistically by pairing animals and thus placing humans in the same category, place the individual at risk. The categories she has created are simply stereotypes which, according to Elaine Hoffman Baruch and Lucienne Serrano,

... [are] an emotional not a rational response to a problem that endangers the

¹⁹⁵ In Tasso’s *Aminta* a similar listing of the natural pairings of animals is presented in Act I, Scene 1, 122-166.

individual. For example, the stereotype that women are passive is less a logical analysis than a wish fulfillment, which installs men in the dominant position. Stereotypes are hard to change because they support emotional needs. We may ask whether women have supported these stereotypes. And the answer is surprisingly yes, not simply because the culture conditions them to do so, but because we are all, ... afraid of eliminating the boundaries between self and other (however much we may desire fusion at some moments).¹⁹⁶

If Frosyni's character and her rhetoric seem relatively simple and straightforward, close attention to her words reveals a more complicated, if not darker, script that, as noted above, "installs men in the dominant position." Perceived as too pathetic, too vulgar to face censure, Frosyni makes her case for the purpose and necessity of marriage. The emphasis may be on the many benefits, social and psychological, marriage grants for a woman's fulfillment disguising the real purpose of her role in arranging the marriage. What remains implicit is the emphasis of woman's vulnerability and dependence on a man. Frosyni manipulates the words to render Panoria unwomanly because of her choice to remain single and it is from this flawed state of mind that she is to be rescued. Marriage is therefore the prescribed corrective for such a lamentable condition. Frosyni, for example, insists on the benefits of marriage by recalling her opportunities to have had a husband and thus would not be in the destitute position she finds herself. In this way the dreariness and dullness of marriage is re-inscribed not only as the ultimate accomplishment for a woman's life but a necessary source for security. And since women were considered incompetent in making meaningful decisions about their own lives, the need for her counsel appears urgent. In addition to the tutorial she offers Panoria on the benefits of marriage, she emphasizes the economic ease a marriage with Yiparis will provide for her.

The matchmaking currency in the negotiations of a marriage alliance involved

¹⁹⁶Elaine Baruch Hoffman and Lucianne J. Serrano. *Women Analyze Women: In France, England, and the United States*. New York: New York University Press, 1988.

dowries, and it becomes very apparent that the lack of a dowry makes a woman unmarketable. It is this anxiety that surfaces and the fact that Yiparis does not require one in order to marry Panoria, makes him a most desirable prospect. If Yiannoulis had to provide a dowry, he would be outstripped from his movable goods. Athousa is in a similar predicament as Panoria and her position is even more precarious since she has no family and no economic resources. Yet, despite the limitations, Athousa joins Panoria in her non-marriage stance. Panoria lacks a dowry but since Yiparis is willing to marry her without one and his inheritance consists of a flock of “two to three thousand sheep,” he is ideally suited as the potential husband. In addition, he seems to be a local shepherd which would allow Panoria to remain in her birthplace, even if she left her father’s house. The marriage, therefore, would offer a minimal transitional trauma from her birth family to her husband’s family.

If Panoria were a willing bride, the situation seems ideal. In historical accounts, however, as Sally McKee attests the “absence of married daughters in wills, and other remnants of individual family histories, has been interpreted to mean that the tie between a woman and her parents and siblings became attenuated when she was enlisted in the lineage concerns of her husband’s family.” The perception is that once married, daughters became distanced or “ceased to exist for their families of birth” ((McKee 62-63). As the example in *Panoria* illustrates, the property was inherited by her six brothers, and for whatever reason, her father did not have the means to provide a dowry. She could not legally expect to receive a dowry if her father had none to give and, if, as Athousa’s example illustrates, she had no family and no inheritance, her position was even more problematic. Using the offer Yiparis makes provides a model that regards “women as bridges between and among a number of families provides a better basis for

understanding both the affective and economic consequences of kinship” (McKee 63).

The potential marriage between Panoria and Yiparis would provide the means for Yiannoulis to avoid having to provide a dowry and to increase his economic resources. It is Yiparis who will provide the bridewealth¹⁹⁷ if the marriage is arranged. Thus the persuasion of Panoria to accept to marry is crucial for her father.

However, her worth in economic terms is translated in the value of her contributions as the one who will establish and maintain a successful household. But a good wife affects the actions of a man thus transforming him into a good husband and upstanding member of the community as Panoria’s mother did. Therefore, Panoria’s anticipated life is based on the behavior and attitude of her unnamed mother, whose life was consumed with the overwhelming number of chores involved in the maintenance of the household, as her father’s enumerated earlier. Thus the successful settlement of the marriage would not only increase the economic status of the family but, the connection with a wealthy member of society would enhance the family’s social standing. This transaction reveals the crucial role Panoria plays in the marriage plot and, because she is viewed as an object of exchange, she is crucial in maintaining acceptable economic order within a social system. However, Panoria’s remains uninterested and unconvinced and her willingness to forego a most substantial change in her economic and social status is an exceptional act. That she ignores the cautions Frosyni specifies and the stakes involved in her adamant stance differentiate her from the traditional, silenced, dutiful virgins who fill the pages of historical and literary accounts.

The exchange between the two women ends as Panoria impatiently tells Frosyni, “I

¹⁹⁷ In contrast to the dowry, bridewealth is a form of dowry where the giver of the dowry is the prospective husband or his kin to the bride's family. In essence, the two to three thousand sheep that Yiparis brings to the marriage negotiations make him a most sought-after candidate.

can't listen to your babbling any longer. Forgive me. Long life to you," (III.1.249-251) and exits. Frosyni however, resumes her plans and predicts that "on my life, I'll have you follow Yiparis like a ewe follows a ram" (III.2.255-256). What sounds like a preposterous claim reveals Frosyni's confidence to culminate the marriage plot satisfactorily and recalls her earlier promise to Yiparis to use her skills to create a potion or cast a magic spell. Members of the audience would not have dismissed such a practice as naïve or foolish. In fact, historically, the use of magic spells and potions have had a wide currency in Greek culture since ancient times to contemporary times. Magic practices have also been alluded to in the literature beginning with Homer to hagiographies to the Byzantine chivalric romances of *Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe* and *Lyvistros and Rodamne* during the Paleologan period where fascinating references to witches and sorceresses and their activities are made (Richard P. H. Greenfield, 125).¹⁹⁸ Her cryptic yet crude comment predicts that Panoria will compromise despite her protests, reinforcing the notion that women act based on what necessity dictates and that she, like most women, will come to desire Yiparis especially when she begins to fathom what she really needs.

A Glimpse of the Cruel Maid

In the introductory phases, the other characters who comprise Panoria's adversaries establish the portrayal of the young woman. In hearing about Panoria, it becomes clear that she belongs to a different sort of woman. As a shepherdess on Mt. Ida, Panoria is as wild and rare as the mountain goats, *agrimia*,¹⁹⁹ that roam the

¹⁹⁸ See John Winkler, *Constraints of Desire*; Richard P. H. Greenfield, "Contribution to the study of Paleologan Magic" in Henry McGuire, *Byzantine Magic* complicating the matter between Church and popular practices; Richard Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, for a variety of potions used as well as the "serious business" sorcery represented (84).

¹⁹⁹ Agrimi is a kind of wild goat that is found especially in Crete.

mountainside. She seems more like an Artemis figure as she prefers to spend most of her time roaming the woods hunting while ignoring the household chores. Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood²⁰⁰ succinctly sums up the impression of Panoria's character founded on the idea that "unmarried girls were thought to be partly wild and partaking of animality (138). This quality of "partaking of animality" reduces Panoria to a mindless creature who lacks the intelligence to make appropriate choices and must be brought under control in order to become fit to assume her place in the changing world of Mt. Ida.

She projects an aura of independence which causes uneasiness for the other characters. In a society where conventional and restrictive attitudes reign, it is a remarkable act for a woman to dare to initiate or to question a practice let alone take the radical stance as Panoria does. After all, she is expected to accept, adapt, and cope with the decisions her father and brothers regarding her future. Panoria, besieged by the unsympathetic attitudes the others champion, retains the reading of her self-worth and rather than accept their evaluations, challenges their hard and absolute formulations of a woman's role. In order to overcome her challenge, it becomes absolutely necessary that Panoria assumes her prescribed role. The main objective of the other characters becomes the subjection of the free-spirited Panoria.

Although the storyteller seems to sympathize with the young woman's attempt to remain independent and free of the bonds of matrimony, a less-than-progressive attitude is revealed through the words and actions of the other characters who invoke nature to justify the social function and the responsibilities of women. The friction the situation provokes is what John Winkler calls "social cramps" that extend to the threat of violence that she learns "are organized around the *idea* of female vulnerability" (Winkler 104, his

²⁰⁰ Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood, "A Series of Erotic Pursuits: Images and Meanings." *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 107 (1987): 131-153.

italics).²⁰¹ The fact that she makes herself unavailable and her insistence to uphold her choice to live the single life frames Panoria in a position that must be persistently defended. Consequently, Panoria must undergo a series of ordeals before reaching the moment deemed proper to shed her *parthenos* / virgin status and to assume her anticipated role as wife and mother.

A closer look at the characters shows that Chortatzis defines all of them – Panoria, Yiparis, Yiannoulis, Frosyni, Alexis, and Athousa – in terms of the conflict the marriage plot introduces into their lives and elaborates about the complexities and anxieties fundamental to his audience. The plot of *Panoria* seems relatively simple since the main topic of conversation among the characters – the shepherds, young women, father and the matchmaker -- is about marriage. Marriage is praised and considered as the purpose of a woman's existence. Despite all the praise accorded to the marital bond, Panoria defies the consensus and refuses to marry not only Yiparis, the very eligible young shepherd, but anyone, regardless of wealth, appearance, or social status. While the rejection of lovers is a pastoral convention, *Panoria* opens up and draws attention to another dimension that involves more than the problem faced by the young shepherds. The connections between Panoria's refusal to marry and the rupture such a refusal causes to the marriage plot make the manipulations that direct or force the choices women make more apparent. Here woman's fate culminates in the unspoiled wilderness of the mountainside, where deeply rooted familial traditions are practiced and their imposition shape and limit the supposedly uninhibited individual who blossoms in the natural environment but where the harsh realities of life follow even those who abandoned city life. The fundamental conflict then is understood, dramatized, and rationalized through

²⁰¹ See John Winkler, "The Education of Chloe: Hidden Injuries of Sex" in *Constraints of Desire: The Anthropology of Sex and Gender in Ancient Greece*. New York: Routledge.(1990): 101-128.

the combined efforts of Yiannoulis, Frosyni, Alexis, and Yiparis in opposition to Panoria and Athousa before a solution is reached. Each account of Panoria's behavior presents a version of acceptable behavior for a woman and emphasizes the disturbance she causes to the social dynamics as she is placed in the center of the communal dispute.

She is first introduced through the words of Yiparis as he relates his pitiful emotional condition to his friend. He is infatuated with her and the shepherd's complaint articulates and sets the vision of the young woman's character. Yiparis confesses to his friend and fellow shepherd, Alexis, about the cause of his grief and object of his desire. "Imagine" (Λογιασε, I.1.91) he tells Alexis, "the wildest and cruelest of maids roaming here, on Mt. Ida"

(ποια 'γριότερη κι' απονη κορασιδα / που γυριζει επα στην Ιδα, II.1.92). "You know, Panoria, old man Yannoulis' daughter"

(Κατεχεις την Πανωρια αυτη, του γερο Γιαννουλη τη θυγατερα, I.1.95-96). By "Yannoulis' daughter," immediately the reader is alerted to the social position Panoria holds. What seems an innocent attribute, instantly diminishes Panoria to a personal possession of her father, and echoes Hesiod's prescription of woman or wife more like property. The description also elaborates the social position and economic dependence Panoria occupies emphasizing her subordinate place within the social hierarchy. Therefore, the very notion of seeking a life without a husband is interpreted as excessive arrogance.

Yiparis praises her beauty using conventional and familiar literary terms. She is described as having

a snow-white forehead and two eyes as clear sapphire bright,
two lips of vermillion red, two arms as lustrous marble white,
a flawless neck, bosom and breasts that shine

like purest silver, golden hair, Nereid's grace divine.... (I.1.79-82)

The description Yiparis provides makes Panoria extraordinarily beautiful, comparable to a goddess, “θεα στην ομορφια ταιριαζε” (II.v.380). However, her unparalleled beauty is as unparalleled as the cruelty she inflicts on Yiparis who suffers from tremendous heartache.

Yiparis is reduced to impotence through her adamant refusal to marry him and her outright contempt for him. He cannot fathom her attitude; after all he is wealthy, handsome, and does not require a dowry. Yet, despite his proclamations of love, he views Panoria in the contest of marriage in the same way as her Yiannoulis and Frosyni and, therefore, fails to recognize or allow any other definition to Panoria who perceives herself differently, and whose way of life recalls nymphs or Amazons of ancient times. The preference for spending time in the woods prevents her from tending to the household chores that are mainly identified with women. More striking than her beauty and idiosyncratic way of life is the air of self-assurance she projects, an air that borders hubris. These qualities give the impression that she is unattainable especially by the shepherds on the mountainside and her rejection of a marriage that will not require a dowry is shocking and manipulates the characterization of Panoria as self-indulgent, proud and impractical as one who spurns her good fortune.

In effect, Panoria's stance causes all the characters various levels of distress, especially her father, who, as the authority figure, is responsible for rounding up the insubordinate daughter the way he rounds up the sheep back to their rightful place. If he cannot control his daughter,²⁰² a mere girl, then his reputation in the eyes of the community suffers.

²⁰² Of interest may be Yiannoulis' search for his lost goat at the start of the play, in a way equating his daughter with that of the wayward goat and his concerns that a wolf may have eaten her.

The terms the other characters use to describe Panoria (cruel maid, haughty, cold, bitch, imbecile), express and reflect the fears that shape the sensibilities of the father and the other characters and reveals a “sign of community, of some common communicative ground” (Patterson 2) while the critique and observations of the woman in their conversation define the woman’s place in the pastoral world and justify their own interests in the way women's behavior is controlled. Despite her opposition to marriage and men and her pursuit of the hunt, she still remains attractive and appealing which suggests that either she is not aware of the alluring and seductive qualities the others find in her or, she is simply, as the others presume, arrogant and self-centered, qualities that contradict the required traits of modesty, obedience, and passivity in women. The implication is that her behavior signals to a flaw in her character, a flaw that must be remedied.

The fact that her preference not to include a man in her life and yet still remains desirable, presents an even more unsettling matter that remains unspoken. The way a woman controls and decides matters concerning her sexuality is one of the ways to measure her independence and define herself. The possibility that Panoria has another agenda in her rejection of love and marriage conveys ambiguity by what the characters say or refrain from saying. Following Gayle Rubin’s suggestion, what would happen if Panoria not only refused Yiparis’ marriage proposal but that she “asked for a woman instead?” As Rubin elaborates, the “single refusal [would be] disruptive, a double refusal would be insurrectionary” (183).

Chortatzis, however, dodges this issue and concentrates on the immediate crisis Panoria causes with her adamant refusal to marry Yiparis or any man. Two components pinpoint the crisis: to “tame” Panoria and to reestablish “obligatory heterosexuality”

(Rubin 183) in order to recover the traditional practices. In a world where society is arranged through familial bonds and communal-based connections, the individual's needs, especially a woman's, becomes secondary or simply irrelevant. The clash between Panoria whose attempts to emancipate herself from the usual fate of women and the persistent traditional attitudes represented by her father and the other characters, propel the action. She is viewed as disruptive to the community for presuming to assert her life of freedom and destabilizes the established practices. Her notion of the life of freedom is reminiscent of the mythical Amazons who perceived marriage as a threat to their independent lifestyle and self-determination

The fascination Yiparis finds in Panoria may be termed as "passion," "obsession," or "desire" but what becomes apparent is that he believes that Panoria should yield to his amorous advances. This attitude echoes Cervantes' pastoral episode and Marcela's response to Grisóstomo²⁰³ in *Don Quijote*. Marcella, "that mortal enemy of the human race," as Ambrosio identifies her, also rejects love and marriage for her own reasons. Grisóstomo dies of a broken heart and while his friends prepare his burial, Marcela appears "looking more beautiful than she had been described" (141) and, as she informs the men present, she has come to defend and absolve herself from their accusations as the cause of Grisóstomo's death. The crucial part of her defence rests on the fact that because she is beautiful and the men fall in love with her, they feel she should be obligated to reciprocate the love or to accept it passively as in this case Grisóstomo (142). It is this obligation to love a man who falls in love with her, unsolicited, that arouses the objections in Marcela and in Panoria as well. "I do not understand," she tells them, "merely because she arouses love a woman who is loved for her beauty is bound to love

²⁰³ The episode is in Cervantes' *Don Quijote*, Chapter XIII. New York: New American Library, A Signet Classic, (2001):129-145. Grisóstomo's name appears as Chrysostom in this translation of *Don Quijote*.

the man who loves her” (142). Implicit in the remarks Marcela makes about the excessive suffering Grisóstomo experienced draws attention to the dilemma she represents not only for Grisóstomo but for the others who anticipate a consensual response to his desires.

Panoria’s declarations parallel Marcella’s sentiments about the love Yiparis claims to have for her. In her defense against Yiparis’ unsolicited passion and his need to possess her surfaces the further misunderstanding of a woman’s desire to live unfettered by the bonds of marriage. Yiparis has been pursuing Panoria for four years, as he tells his friend, Alexis. But this constant erotic love is not necessarily one of devotion. Like Grisóstomo, Yiparis considers Panoria responsible for his emotional distress simply because he has fallen prey to her remarkable beauty and suffers because of her indifference toward him. He compares himself to a wounded deer with the arrow still lodged in his chest (II.4.147)²⁰⁴ and describes his unbearable pain. But beyond Panoria’s perceptions of the situation, Yiparis understands circumstances differently. Her “cruelty” and desire to remain chaste cause Yiparis to refrain and constrain his own desire and possible violent behavior. Her beauty and indifference to his pleas only intensify his desire and her persistent rejections of his love hint of the courtly love tradition in that he seems to worship her while at the same time condemns her cruel heart. He controls his sexual desire by not accepting offers from other eligible and desirable shepherdesses and thus proves his devotion – and remains chaste.

The unmistakable scorn Panoria feels for Yiparis is expressed in the second act. As it happens, Panoria following her hunt decides to sleep under the shade of a tree while waiting for Athousa to join her. Yiparis sees her and he decides to kiss her while she

²⁰⁴ Compare with Dido's description of the passion she feels towards Aeneas in Book ____ of the *Aeneid*.

sleeps. He approaches Panoria in a state of excruciating nervousness which is intensified by the vulnerable position as lies unguarded sleeping. “Χρυσομαλλουσα μου κερα/ My golden-haired lady,” he whispers, pressing himself onward despite the dread that overtakes him as he contemplates the wrath he will incur should she awaken (II.iv.219-240). He invites the reader to vicariously experience his anxiety and the compelling need to continue his erotic pursuit “encouraged by Eros” (240). As expected, she awakens just in time to prevent him from kissing her. Besides the horrible embarrassment his futile attempt produces, Panoria’s rage at his sexually driven action cannot be contained:

Ακομη δεν εγνωρησες πω σε μισα η καρδια μου;
 Φυγε απομπρος μου ογληγορα.
 Συρε ποθες, γκρεμισου. (II.v.20)

Don’t you recognize how much my heart hates you?
 Get out of sight immediately
 Go and jump off a cliff.

He tries to calm her but she warns him, “Pray that my brothers don’t here about this / το πραμα τουτο μην εμπη στ’ αφτια των αδερφω μου” ((II.5.250). She insists that he is only interested in taking her honor, her virginity (ποιος την τιμη μου ωσαν εσε να παρει μου χειρευει; II.5.324). Panoria’s response to his attempt to kiss her succeeds in changing the scene from one of seduction to one of attempted rape.²⁰⁵ Yiparis’ response to her charges head to a critical point in their exchange. He basically agrees that she is the most desirable shepherdess in the land but, that he is also considered highly among the shepherdesses as a potential spouse. The fact remains, he insists, that her treatment of him is loathsome and cruel and that despite her superiority, she should be kinder to him. Furthermore, the marriage he offers confirms his

²⁰⁵ In Tasso’s *Aminta* the shepherd is encouraged by Dafne, the experienced older female, to use violence, if necessary, to overcome the nymph Silvia. In this case, Yiparis may have such intentions but does not possess the ability to carry them out as his physical responses show.

honorable intentions. As he continues to speak, he explains that the marriage will only bring about what is natural for men and women. He wants to mate with her,

to become flesh with his flesh
as the two overjoyed souls merge in one body”
σάρκα να γενούμε
και δυο ψυχες πασιχαρες ενα κορμι να μπουμε
(II.4.312-314).

The words Yiparis utters are reminiscent of the biblical parallel, “This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh” found in *Genesis* 2:23-24 (King James Version) but the description of the coupling Yiparis desires with Panoria relies on conventional definitions of men and women.

Although this exchange is not meant to be understood as shattering, the response is a fundamental aspect of Panoria’s scorn toward marriage and Yiparis’s insistence on marrying her and no one else. One thing one can say about Panoria is that she is outspoken and does not allow for any self-pity. She makes it perfectly clear that she has no intention of getting married and that he is wasting his time chasing after her. In addition, she insists that his intentions are not based on what he calls love but rather on self-interest and lust. He insists however on his true love and honorable intentions which he hopes will wear down her resistance. She also reminds him that her six brothers are within reach and to not even think about repeating such an offense again. And, to his great disappointment, she declares once again, “Εγω δε θε να παντρευτω / I don’t want to marry,” and bluntly advises him, “...βρε αλλη κορασιδα ... find another girl” (II.5.331). As she ends the conversation abruptly, Yiparis is totally responsible for his actions and the response to his actions which leaves him thoroughly dejected and in such anguish that he resorts to kill himself.

Thus, when we see Panoria in action, she neutralizes the image that the other

characters formulated of her. As a most articulate and self-aware agent of her own actions and other women who may have the same aspirations, she defends herself, alone. Although Chortatzis situates Panoria at the center of a marriage plot which uses women to sustain the cohesion of the family and the community, Panoria's character as an aspirational figure opens up a cultural debate that criticizes the renunciation of the responsibilities she is expected to perform as a woman which include marriage and the breeding of children. Yet Panoria's persistent desire to evade the marriage yoke and her attempt to live as unattached to a man becomes a cause for criticism and reveals ambivalence on Chortatzis' part. While *Panoria* is a product of definite social and cultural forces, the character's desire to resist firmly established traditions and to recognize the value of human dignity and the almost impossible notion of independence is understandable.

But so unusual is Panoria's attitude that the other characters are unsure of how to react towards her. They show apprehension with her unconventional behavior and want to regain control by placing Panoria within the confines of their understanding, of their experience. As Cristianne Sourvinou-Inwood explains, there "are strong connections between hunting and Greek initiations; moreover, this is connected with the perception that women, especially virgins *parthenoi* (138), should be captured and tamed through marriage is embedded in the marriage plot."²⁰⁶ In fact, her father uses the term "tame" several times and the importance of taming her as soon as possible because of the dangers found in the forests where she hunts:

Φοβουμαι μηπως και κιανεις βοσκος την απαντηξη
 Και διχως ντιρηση καμμια χαμαι μου τηνεν ρηξη
 Κι' οιμε! Χαλαση μου τηνε και τη τιμη τζη παρη
 Και τοτες μηδε γαμοι μπλιο, γαμπροι μηδε κουμπαροι.

²⁰⁶ The taming is more clearly articulated at the end of the play with the assistance of Eros.

I'm afraid if a shepherd meets up with her
 And with no defense throw her on the ground
 And alas! Ruin her and strip her of her honor.
 Then there'll be no weddings, grooms or sponsors.²⁰⁷
 (II.1.53-56)

The fear Yiannoulis expresses reveals a rational and pragmatic quality to him but it also makes it clear that life is difficult in such a place, especially for a daughter. What he is most concerned about is that if she is “ruined” and by that he means raped and would not be marriageable any longer. Thus the paradox that “[t]he virgin's body is both inviolate and violable” (Carlson and Weisl, 12)²⁰⁸ holds true in this case and since “virginity was a highly prized commodity” (Laiou 154),²⁰⁹ if the daughter were violated, the disgrace brought to the family would necessitate action to restore the honor and social standing of the family.

Historical examples to corroborate this notion abound. One particular episode that became the cause of an insurrection in 1319 known as the Chrysomallousa Rebellion was allegedly caused by such an action. According to the Psilakis version of the attack in *The History of Crete*, Chrysomallousa, as she was known because of her blonde hair, the daughter of one of the archontic families, the Skordylis, was attacked by a Venetian man stationed at Fort Capelleto. He apparently tried to kiss her and because she slapped him, he cut off her hair with his sword. Naturally the offense was not nor could it be ignored. The fort was attacked and before long the whole area was involved in the reckoning of the honor of House of Skordylis (Psilakis 275). This response to what was considered a direct insult to the honor of the men of the Skordylis family was not unusual. Whether

²⁰⁷ The word equates to best man in a wedding ceremony; however, a *koumbaros* often presented social connections and was chosen with great care.

²⁰⁸ See Cindy L. Carlson and Angela Jane Weisl, eds. *Constructions of Virginity and Widowhood*.

²⁰⁹ Angeliki E. Laiou, ed.. “Sex, Consent, and Coercion in Byzantium” in *Consent and Coercion to Sex and Marriage in Ancient and Medieval Societies*. Dumbarton Oaks: Washington, D.C. (1993): 109-221.

the offense was actual or fabricated, women have been used to justify many forms of violence. That similar action would be taken is indicated as Panoria reassures her father, especially since her six brothers would come to her rescue as soon as she called for help. Her father, of course, recognizes the dire need to avoid such an episode altogether.

Through her resistance, Panoria upsets the familiar female expectation of compliant daughter and as long as she does not inspire others to follow her example, she is just an eccentric young woman. But if she has followers, then her radical stance becomes critically significant. It is, therefore, urgent that she is persuaded to step back in line. If the shepherdess does not acquiesce to her predetermined role, then she must be coerced into performing her familial and social obligations.

Panoria dominates the play before she appears, during, and at the end. Her character is the mainstay of the on-going discussions of the other characters and their schemes to convert her to accept their view of marriage. While the others presume that she only pretends to reject marriage, she is straightforward and succinct in her statements. The strongest and most overwhelming moments are when she denies their plans for her as she declares her views in open defiance. But neither Yiparis nor the other characters are willing to accept her declarations seriously. Through her bearing and her image as a female huntress make her seem unreal, almost otherworldly.

The Final Act: Ravishing the Maid

Unable to persuade Panoria to change her mind about remaining single and unmarried, the final act requires more than the cajoling and the threats heaped on her throughout the narrative. The assistance of Aphrodite and Eros are summoned. Eros becomes the intermediary that initiates Panoria and her friend to the discovery of erotic desire. Eros in his monologue expresses the intention of emotional and physical

manipulation.²¹⁰ Furthermore, as the young women describe the physiological and emotional reactions, the recognition of the deliberate and cruel assault is found at the core of Eros' intervention and the impression is that it is quite dangerous, if not futile, to disobey, or to attempt to avoid the mandates of the deity. The fact remains, as Claude Calame declares, "the seductions of love should not obscure the fact that the violence done to the future wife" (121)²¹¹ served as a prelude to marriage.

The figure of Eros, even if unfashionable at the time, suggests that Tasso and Chortatzis were aware that the symbolic meaning was still significant. Beside the high-spirited interest Eros may inject into the unfolding plot, the figure is used to bring about the desired outcome. In including the intervention of Eros in *Panoria*, Chortatzis draws on various incarnations of the figure.²¹² In his monologue (Act V, scene 1), Eros reveals the plans he has designed for Panoria and her friend which are not only meant for amusement or entertainment. These plans hold serious consequences for Panoria insofar as they reveal the perpetuation of the myth of love. Eros is there to instruct and to shift her consciousness, to lead her to a new vision of life. Eros directs a hostile eye toward the "cruel" Panoria as he abandons all tact and bluntly expresses his divine mission; all the reader or listener needs to know is "arrows do not cause death but gently wound" (V.1.33-34) which helps to reassert his powerful influence in a universe in which he claims to reign supreme.

Disguised in the familiar garb of a shepherd, he moves among the mortal shepherds as he prepares his assault. Eros' idea for the restoration of the threatened

²¹⁰ The parallel soliloquy is in Tasso's *Aminta* and the two figures are very similar in their words, intentions, and actions.

²¹¹ Calame, Claude. *The Poetics of Eros in Ancient Greece*. Trans. Janet Lloyd. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992.

²¹² Paul Magdolino writes about the rehabilitation of Eros during the Komnenian period;

institution of marriage should Panoria prevail, necessitates a reorientation of attitudes and he proceeds toward his objective with astounding efficiency. Despite the physical representation of Eros as a shepherd, it is necessary to remember that the figure is just a metaphor, a constructed presentation for the process of cultural influence.

What actually takes place during Eros' assault is a complete reorientation. Panoria and Athousa are transformed into obedient, remorseful, and passive young women. The love wound eros inflicts on Panoria's physical body is balanced by the earlier wound he inflicted on Yiparis. It also conducts the fulfillment of Frosyni's prophecy and assures the marriage Yiparis has sought. It is also important to point out that Yiparis has been instrumental in the taming of Panoria and his persistence and fidelity make him worthy of her although his consistent complaints made him a nuisance. Even Frosyni tells him at some point to stop "whining" because it does not change matters (III.1.129-130).

The description of the violence Eros inflicts on Panoria and Athousa as he shoots them with his arrows evokes the sexual act, a form of rape within the presence and with the approval of all. The animated cruelty and hostility with which Eros's arrows penetrate the young woman's flesh elicits a disturbing emotional response. But Eros justifies his gleeful response by explaining that he had wounded Yiparis years earlier and it was a matter of time before he would wound Panoria as well. Another point he makes is that Yiparis had no choice but to pursue Panoria and thereby his constancy was tried and he proved himself triumphant despite his attempt to kill himself. But the inherent violence in the act is not interpreted as violent but rather as a magical solution for having temporarily strayed and finally returned to the flock, as it were.

When Panoria is numbed or anesthetized by the penetration of the arrows into

her flesh, it seems as if the change in her demeanor is a sign of her ability to become civilized, to shed the “wild thing” behavior. The transformation Panoria experiences provides a way to dismiss her radical claim to remain unmarried and to exalt her new understanding. The numbness and disorientation that overcomes Panoria subdues her wildness and her earlier aspirations become a forsaken possibility. The objective of the marriage plot has, thus, been met although the means through which the remediation has been carried out seem to be acceptable and pleasantly perverse.

The representation of Eros's actions accentuate the organized, unswerving, brutal, merciless tactics while posing as a force of goodness. Thus, the intrusion of Eros eliminates any further resistance against marriage and limits the women to the domestic space and ensures their instrumental use to the traditional order. Shown in relation, the manipulative tactics of Eros transform women into a device to advance the reproduction of society through the birthing of children. The ability to bear children forces Panoria to participate in the continuity of the roles her mother and other countless women embody which is the dominant identification of the female experience.

Yet almost predictably, the old order exacts vengeance and repositions itself. Once the girls are wounded by the arrows of Eros, they begin to experience their bodies and minds differently. The transformation they undergo alienates them from their earlier selves. The ceremony that has just taken place ensures the outcome. Beyond the predictable use of the transformation of the girls to arrive at the “happy ending” that may serve as a reminder that success comes to those who remain unswerving in their interests and, if their intentions are justified; it may also be that the girls required more self-knowledge and their misunderstanding about love and marriage were corrected through the divine intervention.

The figure performs a vivid act of violence while a certain poignancy lingers from the realization of the loss of self, the loss of aspirations while marriage contributes to the social reproduction and continuation of social traditions. What is most alarming is the way women who question tradition or challenge the tradition, who resist common practices, are viewed not only as unconventional but as dangerous and must be shepherded back into the flock, as it were. One of the most widespread and unquestioned stereotypes of women is based on the notion of inferiority and lack of political awareness, therefore more liable to exploitation

Persuading Panoria to renounce her quest for living the single life confirms that marriage is the most important and possibly the final stage in a woman's life and that the impulse to subdue the female by the male as Sourvinou-Inwood explains, "an attitude important to Greeks in expressing the actual and ideal state between the sexes" (140). It may also be that the resistance and capture motif "presented legitimate marriage in terms of a wild erotic union" (Sourvinou 140).

Overpowering Panoria's resistance shows a heightened awareness of the obstacles and struggles that affect women's lives. If Chortatzis had made his heroine walk away as Cervantes' Marcella did, she would have stepped beyond the existing practices and the outcome would have been an unacceptable. Her crusade to remain unmarried by choice represented an antidote to the unchanging, insular world of Mt. Ida but the beliefs and practices of centuries-old traditions carried on through kin and other mediators coerced her into conforming. The fact that she is strong-minded and fights for her life, does not last as she collapses under the yoke of mediocrity.

The happy conclusion marks the end of Panoria's attempts to choose the course of her life. It also experiments with the possibility of a woman escaping the only pre-

destined life as wife and mother. What also surfaces through the telling of her mother's place within a space revolving around domestic chores and birthing children is that her mother's life is the starting point for the unraveling of her idealistic pursuit of life as an unmarried woman roaming the mountainside. Similarly, Frosyni's life provides the other possible outcome for a woman who accomplishes her choice. In other words, the two women, the mother and the matchmaker, represent the only two options a woman like Panoria has in the world of Mt. Ida. Indirectly, Chortatzis uses the female experience of the two women to outline the future biography of Panoria and any other shepherdesses who may imagine a different kind of life.

Alas, her transformation is not ushering anything new or unknown. The re-orientation of the newly-minted dutiful daughter is not as drastic as it appears: simply subordinates her to time-honored traditions. The transformation is explicitly instructive and reflects the ideal female development and the only appropriate place for young women who are allowed only one choice and that is to enter the domain of domesticity. As the embodiment of this process, the debates and viewpoints were a prelude to the enlightenment that transforms Panoria into the symbol of proper womanhood. Above all, the ending is a meeting of the sensibilities, a reunion of opposing minds.

The final act is an appropriate representation of Panoria's interpretation of marriage that confirms her views of the institution. In the final scene in which Panoria and Athousa are led to the altar, the emphasis is on the resolution of the conflict the two young women presented to the other characters. It is the high point of the restoration of social order and familial unity brought about through the plotting to consummate a marriage. Eros as master of the continuity of humankind adds his final touches and brings the whole production together.

The last act resolves the plot happily. The nature of Panoria has been adapted to fulfill a new purpose. She is brought under the sway of Eros and Aphrodite and her mind as well as her body is entirely altered. That Panoria has been remolded to accommodate the dominant system becomes transparent in the description of her physiological reaction and emotional state. After Eros performs his magic, Panoria experiences physiological reactions resembling death as she finds limbs loosening (one of the epithets attached to eros) swooning and enervated and feeling differently towards Yipari. Her father blesses the union for his daughter, ever-so-grateful that he will not have to dispense with his property in order to dower his daughter. He also blesses the marriage of Athousa and Alexis. Alexis is not wealthy but he is considered a good man with a future ahead of him and Athousa accepts him because of his character and since she will be by his side, they will become successful economically.

While it may appear that Panoria's final words indicate consent to realize the erotic endeavors Yiparis has been pursuing, the performance of the ritual muffles the violence the young woman has endured. Furthermore, it diminishes the dominant meaning of violence on the young woman who has been tamed. In other words, the seduction of the young woman justifies the violence she experiences and the violence is sanctioned and met with approval to the relief of all. The erotic initiation by Eros is a gentler version of violence in which the physical manipulation of the girl is not shown, but suggested strongly (Sourvinou 141). The divine intervention legitimizes the human intervention through the goddess' recognition of the human needs and requests.

Panoria's and Athousa's psychic and emotional reorientation accomplishes the set goals to transform the young women to proper wives. It is also a reminder of the ways cultural attitudes toward the institution of marriage and that women's essential roles

within the institution have not changed. Those who pressured Panoria to renounce her beliefs and to consent to the proposed marriage with Yiparis, a successful, handsome and loving shepherd, used their own experiences to support their positions and attitudes and to assert the need for the continuity of such a custom. By contemporary standards, Panoria's conversion to the notion of marriage would be considered as infringing on individual freedom, and the end may be viewed as tragic in the fact that Panoria for all her aspirations toward individual self-realization becomes a victim of society's values and that the proponents of the marriage view their participation in the accomplishment as a helpful and justifiable intrusion; in fact, it is not considered an intrusion but a charitable act, natural, good and inevitable. Ultimately, the narrative of Panoria serves to revitalize and reestablish the pastoral vision of pleasing the masses and falling in step with all the wishes of society. Restoring an old stereotype of woman was initiated through the ritual ceremony: that marriage is the reward for being compliant and respectful, and thus restricting women to what is deemed acceptable behavior.

The disturbing part of the happy ending is that Panoria's resistance was worn down and her willingness to accept and respond to Yiparis's desire, reinforces the idea that Panoria is like all women. Despite her earlier protestations, she finally wants to marry and the way she begs first Frosyni, followed by requesting her father's blessing, and, finally, forfeiting her non-marriage rhetoric, she consents to the traditional classification of women's need to have a man on whom to rely on for their existence.

What is ultimately disappointing is that Panoria holds the possibility of offering an alternative model but the outcome forecloses this. Panoria's conversion means that her rebellion was defined only as animality and wildness. It is therefore, not worthwhile to examine a woman's desire for independence or self-reliance. A strategy for controlling

and diminishing Panoria's indifference is shown even after her conversion. Frosyni tells the girls that it is too late for them; that the shepherds have begun seeking other mates; after all there are plenty who would love to marry either of the men. Although this is not true, Frosyni seems to enjoy the revenge she takes on the girls. But her teasing only points to another more basic fact: there is always another woman who can replace you and that men will continue to find mates. In effect, Frosyni's observations and manipulations reduce Panoria's rebellion into a temporary eccentricity as women take part in the dynamics of marriage.

What is ultimately accomplished through the machinations of the marriage plot is not surprising. What becomes evident is the violation of the idea that love is given unconditionally and willingly, not through coercion or physical violence as it is brought to a close by the violence used by eros. If the taming is, as Christiane Sourvinou-Norwood suggests, embedded in the marriage scenario, then the bestiality associated with the raw human needs become more apparent and necessary in order to continue the human species. The re-orientation of the women is endorsed by the power of the many (*το των πολλων παθος*, Symposium 216A-4-6) whereby one is not to imitate the pre-transformed Panoria but follow the example of the stupefied woman awaiting to be taken back to the *stani*, the enclosed space where the flock is kept, just like the sheep that have been shepherded and guarded by the shepherds. Thus Panoria's bold character is made to comply to the popular notions of a good wife as part of a profitable enterprise.

In the end, the community's efforts and Eros' intervention secure Panoria and Athousa's consent to the marriage which controls women's sexuality and the economic circumstances. More importantly, marriage is used to uphold "the classical view in which the virgin protects patriarchal society and patrilineal descent, by encoding her own

loss from chaste daughter to faithful wife” (Carlson and Weisl, 14).

CHAPTER 4

THE TRAGIC PLOT IN VASILEUS RODOLINOS

In the prologue of *King Rodolinos*²¹³ (*Βασιλεύς Ο Ρωδολίνος*)²¹⁴ by Ioannis Andreas Troilos, an apocalyptic figure, Melloumeno (Μελλουμενο),²¹⁵ prepares the audience for the tragedy that will follow. He ascribes lawlessness (ανομία, 22), treachery (προδοσεις, 33), murder (φονος, 22), avarice, literally the “hunger for gold that blinds” (πεινα χρυσου αφου σε τυφλαινει), vainglory (υπερηφανεια, 34), cruelty (σκληροτης, 34), brutality (απανθρωποτη, 38), injustices (αδικιες, 35), and ignorance (αγνωσια, 38)²¹⁶ as the primary causes for the pervasive decadence and deplorable moral state of humanity. He also predicts the ending, decreed and written in his book (στην βιβλο, 89),²¹⁷ which includes the end of all honor, glory (δοξα), the loss of all wealth. All that will remain will be pain, sorrow and misery” (40-45). And, by the end of the day, “four imperial bodies” (βασιλικα κορμια²¹⁸ τεσσερα, 89) will fall, without spirit, dead” (89). Thus, the play begins with a dreadful prediction that structures the drama about to unfold.

The plot of *Vasileus Rodolinos* involves two friends, Rodolinos who is the king of Egypt and Trosilos, the king of Persia who devise a plot to deceive King Aretas, the king of Carthage. Trosilos asks King Aretas for Aretousa's hand in marriage but Aretas refuses

²¹³ On the cover of the 1647 edition, the first “ο” of Rodolinos's name is an “ω” (omega as opposed to an *omikron*) which is not used in the current edition. Though it may seem a minor detail, it changes the etymology of the name Rodolinos and the significance of the name.

²¹⁴ The tragedy *Vasileus o Rodolinos* was printed (the editor specifically uses the word “printed,” ετυπωθη) for the first and last time in 1647. Apparently, the text was rescued by Ioannis Gennadios who bought a copy of it in Frankfurt and donated it to the Gennadios Library in Athens where the text is housed. All citations are from the critical edition by Martha Aposkiti, introduction by Stylianos Alexiou, Athens: Stigmi, 1987. All translations are mine and cited from this edition of the text.

²¹⁵ The prologue consists of 104 verses seeped in images reminiscent of the coming of judgment day, an anachronistic death macabre figure that will lead the characters to death regardless of social status.

²¹⁶ It is probable that the word does not refer to the lack of scholarly learning but rather to the lack of wisdom and understanding and living immoral lives.

²¹⁷ Βιβλος is used as a book but the word can mean both book and bible.

²¹⁸ “κορμια” translates into bodies, indicating the corpses of the four imperial children, the heirs, will lie lifeless evoking the ending of an age.

because Troilos Troilos, who was responsible for his son's death, is perceived as the enemy of his blood. Troilos asks Rodolinos to act as Aretousa's suitor and king Aretas agrees to the marriage arrangement provided Rodolinos avenges the death of his son. Rodolinos accepts the terms and Aretousa consents to her father's wishes. Rodolinos had arranged with Troilos to hand over Aretousa to him upon returning to Egypt. However, Rodolinos falls in love with Aretousa when they are marooned on their return journey. Rodolinos agonizes between his loyalty to his friend and his love for Aretousa. In the process of solving the dilemma, another marriage plot involving Rodolinos' sister, Rododaphne, who abhors the idea of marriage, is generated. When Aretousa finds out the true intentions of Rodolinos and Troilos, she poisons herself. Rodolinos declares his love for her as she lies dying, drafts a letter to Troilos, and then kills himself with his sword. When Rododaphne finds out of the death of her brother and his future wife, she dies of "a broken heart" and Troilos kills himself. The queen mother who has been preparing for a double wedding instead is confronted with the death of the four imperial offspring.

Troilos' *Vasileus Rodolinos* finds its literary kinship in Tasso's *Il Re Torrismondo*²¹⁹ and its plot "a bargain so unusual and unjust" (l. 2865), is conspicuously similar. Troilos and Tasso use this bargain among friends, which shatters the moral authority of kingship, to describe the failure of the marriage plot as the guarantee of social order. *Rodolinos* refers to other classical texts in which the failure of the marriage plot has brought about disaster.²²⁰ Arranged marriages are a form of "exchange of

²¹⁹ Tasso, Torquato. *King Torrismondo*, Dual Language edition. Trans. Maria Pastore Passaro. Fordham University Press: New York, 1997. *Rodolinos* follows Tasso's narrative closely with the major digression of omitting the incestuous element of the plot. Tasso's version moves along the Oedipus lines. There are other differences and similarities as well but not as obvious as the incestuous part of the story.

²²⁰ The plot of *Rodolinos* alludes to the marriage plots of Polyxena and Achilles, Iphigenia and Achilles, Dido and Aeneas, Tristan and Iseult, and Francesca and Paolo, among others. In all these comparable

women,” a system whereby “men have certain rights in their female kin, and that women do not have the same rights either to themselves or their male male kin” (Rubin, 177). Through the “exchange of women,” the system creates, enforces, and perpetuates social and political structures in which women do not have a right to themselves (177).²²¹ This system is particularly apparent in royal marriages and political dynasties. Thus King Aretas accepts Rodolinos' marriage proposal on behalf of his daughter who submits to her father's will.

The complications emerging from the literal marriage plot in *Rodolinos* initiates unanticipated consequences and change into what Paul Magdalino terms “an affair of the state” whereby the “status, composition and balance of the ruling group” (205)²²² is threatened and it becomes, therefore, necessary to control the situation by any means. Despite the fact that the title of the tragedy suggests the focus will be on moral flaw of the eponymous the eponymous male character, the consequences of the friends' plot are equally tragic for the women caught in an intricate web determined by vested interests conveniently concealed and justified by the well-established “powerful tradition of kin solidarity” (Magdalino, 186). The inherent conflict between allegiances makes clear the need to prevent disclosure of the plot, to control damaging consequences by whatever means, including the continued abuse of the female figures in the unfolding of the tragedy.

The plot of this tragedy devised by two impetuous, young kings whose actions unhinge the existent dynastic and domestic structures, alters the entire ethical and moral

narratives, the results are always tragic for one of the main characters or both.

²²¹ Rubin, Gayle. “The Traffic in Women: Notes on the “Political Economy” of Sex” in *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, Reiter, Rayna R., ed., New York: Monthly Review Press (1975): 157-210.

²²² See Paul Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143-1180*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

order, impacts on all the characters, especially the women, and creates social mayhem. As the sequence of events unfolds, the crisis created by their marriage plot reveals a larger concern: the conflict between an old patriarchal order of kingly authority and honor and the emergent new world of passion, desire, and erotic love struggling in what Joan Ferrante refers to as the “consequences that underlie romantic love” (15), drawing attention to the incompatibility of the two world orders. Although the location of the dilemma is in ancient Egypt, Carthage, and Persia, the political issues relate to contemporary Crete. Indeed, in Byzantium, the possession of a desirable, virtuous, aristocratic woman by deception would have been more accepted if aberrational normal. However, the introduction of love as part of the equation becomes a dividing force that challenges first of all patriarchal authority and friendship between men and honor. At the same time, the female protagonist, Aretousa, who becomes enmeshed in this plot, accepts her traditional role of dutiful daughter by her willingness to marry, leaves her family and home, and follows the prospective bridegroom to his kingdom, serving the perpetuation of political interests and stability.

As the plot unfolds, it becomes apparent that the woman, despite her social status and personal attributes, is caught between two men whose intentions remain hidden, unwittingly serving as a medium through which her father's honor and her own honor are betrayed. In effect, the plot the two friends devise and the emergent conflict between love and honor dramatizes the crumbling of the ancient patriarchal world order, in this case the Byzantine world, as Crete enters the emerging new world order of European and Mediterranean societies in which personal desire and expediency replace traditional loyalties and authority.

Unraveling the Marriage Plot

Rodolinos' confession to his tutor,²²³ Erminos, in the first act provides the circumstances and situates the source of the dilemma in which he finds himself. He prefaces his confession by declaring his part in a plot so heinous that “the waters of the Nile, Tigris, or Jordan Rivers cannot cleanse the lawlessness (ανομια)²²⁴ that has polluted his body and soul and the shame this act has brought on him (Του Νειλου, ..., ποια νερα, του Τιγρη, του Ιορδανου, ... την ανομια να πλυνουσι I.i.1-4, 30) summarizing the ethical, moral, and political force of his role in the plot. Erminos encourages him to elaborate on the error (σφαλμα I.1.49)²²⁵ he made, and, after several reassuring pronouncements from Erminos, Rodolinos begins to tell his story. By choosing to open the tragedy with Rodolinos' confession,²²⁶ “As you may recall,” he tells Erminos, “when I was very young, I decided to pursue fame and glory and I left my homeland, my noble father, and followed my fate wherever it would take me” (105-108) and fought in many battles.²²⁷ During this time, I formed a strong friendship with Trosilos, king of Persia, whose pursuit of fame and glory equaled mine” (114-116). The friendship that developed was genuine and loyal that the two endured the ordeals of their martial undertakings as if *μια ψυχη σε δυο κορμια* / “one soul in two bodies” (I.i.124).²²⁸ It is during one of their

²²³ Erminos is a stock figure that parallels the nurse accompanying female characters. Erminos' name would be associated with hermeneutic, one that teaches and interprets.

²²⁴ The literal translation of *ανομια/anomia* is lawlessness extending to the larger social structures but the nuanced meaning in this instance suggests a personal breakdown of ethical and moral standards.

²²⁵ The term *σφαλμα*/mistake suggests the Latin expression “*mea culpa*” through which he admits that making the mistake is because of his own fault and furthermore implies that he could have prevented it if he had been more ethical.

²²⁶ Interestingly, Tasso opens *Torrismondo* with Alvida confiding to her nurse unlike Troilos who introduces Aretousa in the second scene and who also confides in her nurse.

²²⁷ According to Shaun Taugher, “the training of sons of officials and soldiers by taking them on campaign, referring to these sons as ‘noble whelps’” (44) was advocated and, if indeed they served in battles from at the age of thirteen or fourteen, Rodolinos would have been rather young when he acceded on the throne. The life of the warrior would also shape his views of people very differently than if he remained in court. He learned to prefer the martial life and the values attached to the martial life from a very young age.

²²⁸ This phrase echoes the proverb “*δυο αδελφοι ενας κορμος* / two brothers, one trunk” expressing the mutual support of each other; informed by one mind (A. Negris, 28). It also recalls “... two seeming bodies but one heart” in *Midsummer Night's Dream*, III.ii.212. Furthermore, historical warriors more

adventures that Trosilos participated as a disguised knight in a joust organized by the king of Carthage, Aretas. As typically happens in such narratives, the disguised knight won the contest and his martial prowess was recognized near and far although he remained anonymous. It is also at this time that he sees Aretousa, the young and beautiful daughter of King Aretas. Consequently, Aretousa's beauty and virtue prompt Trosilos to ask to marry her. However, King Aretas refuses to accept his proposal because of his unremitting hatred and his obligation to exact revenge for the suffering and devastation (εζημιες ειχε τσι πλια μεγαλες, 179) the Persians caused his people. More importantly, Trosilos killed his son during a battle in Mauritania and "the unfortunate man lost all joy and hope" (χαρα κ' ελπιδα, 180) as well as the continuation of his bloodline. Hence, the death of the "valorous, gallant, Ares-like, handsome like Absalom son" (στην Μαυριτανιαν αποθανεν ο γιος του, γεις ανθρωμενος στατηγος, ωσαν τον ιδιον Αρη, μα πλια 'που το Αβεσαλωμ ειχε ομορφια και χαρη, 176-178) was considered an affront that demanded retribution. For this reason, Trosilos is the arch enemy of Aretas and his kin and it is also the reason, Aretas refuses to give him Aretousa as his wife. In the absence of a male heir, Aretousa is in line to succeed the throne (as happens later following her father's death) but remains unmarried until the right time comes for a suitable suitor. In fact, in order to expedite matters, King Aretas organized a joust to secure a husband for his daughter who would swear to avenge his son's death. In a similar frame of mind, Aretousa vowed to remain unmarried and chaste in agreement with her father's expectations.

than likely developed greater emotional attachment for each other than for women due to their continuous contact in the battlefield. This fact, however, does not necessarily mean that men did not love women.

Trosilos attempted to negotiate a legitimate exchange with Aretas and since his proposal was rejected, he considered physically abducting her (αρπαξει, 189), literally, to “steal her” ([v]α τηνε κλεψει, 189), which would mean a forceful seizure and act of sexual violence.²²⁹ He refrains from such action not because of the effect the virtuous Aretousa has on him, but for practical reasons. The abduction would constitute another offense to King Aretas which may provoke a war. He thus resorts to more cunning measures to accomplish his goal and enlists his friend Rodolinos to act as a stand-in suitor and ask King Aretas for Aretousa’s hand in marriage.²³⁰ The king welcomes Rodolinos as his prospective son-in-law and Aretousa actively consents to marry him after he swears to kill the man who killed her brother (την γδικια εταξε , I.2.597). Rodolinos is given the appropriately rich dowry and he takes Aretousa back to Egypt where he rules and where the wedding ceremony will be performed in the presence of his mother. During their return journey, a storm capsizes the ship and they wind up on an island. During the night, as Rodolinos explains, the two take shelter in a cave where

the passion of love ... won over my limbs,
and became a traitor to my friend

ο ποθος τα μελη μου στη σκοτεινη κλεψα ειχασειν νικησει,
και πιβουλος του φιλου μου την πιστη ειχαν τσακισει

(I.1.290, 294, 295).

The erotic love between Aretousa and Rodolinos shatters the arrangements between the friends to fall apart, and, not surprisingly, after their rescue, Rodolinos becomes distant and uncommunicative while she becomes baffled and anguished since she cannot decipher the change in his behavior. The realization that he wants Aretousa for himself

²²⁹ On this point, see “The Abduction of Aedonitza” in the earlier part of this study. Even though the pact between the men does not use physical force but cunning, the act is still coercive and false and must be considered as abduction.

²³⁰ According to protocol, emissaries would travel to the court of the bride's country to arrange for the marriage unlike Rodolinos who negotiates the marriage himself.

makes his part in the deception even more distressing, although the betrayal of his friend frustrates his conscience considerably more. The confession thus exposes Rodolinos' impossible moral dilemma.

The confession may explain the anxiety and conflicts between friendship, kinship, and love Rodolinos experiences but it also exposes unsavory aspects of his character, especially his rash acceptance of his friend's request. While listening to the confession, Erminos observes and tersely asserts that the request Trosilos made was not only extreme but it violated heavenly designs suggesting not only an inordinate arrogance on Trosilos' part but, at the same time, hinting that this woman was intended for Rodolinos, not for another man (I.1.297-300). Rodolinos admits that he was aware of the “great deception” (κομπωμα²³¹ τόσο πολλα μεγαλο, 199) in which he decided to play a part, but he only agreed because of his abiding loyalty to his friend (I.1.200). The admission of his part in the deception not only emphasizes his extreme devotion to his friend but also his brazen expectation of transferring the misled woman to his friend's bed without any consequences. In such an exchange among men, as Rubin writes, concept of “women do not have a right to themselves” (177). Even though he accepts his guilt (αναμυρδισμενη μου συνειδηση, II.3.171), he lacks the courage to confess to the two people who torment his consciousness, Aretousa and Trosilos. This lack of moral courage places the burden on Erminos, his tutor, who takes up his cause in an attempt to rearrange the marriage plot and find a desirable solution to remedy the situation.

²³¹ The translation the editors provide in the glossary for κομπωμα is *απατη*, that is, deceit or treachery. However, the word κομπωμα in the context of *Rodolinos* evokes the image of a knot and takes on a wide range of meanings including complicated issues that pose great difficulties to undo. The word as a metaphor acts as a kind of Gordian knot, as it were, and is used to tie all the complex psychological, social, and political difficulties the κομπωμα, κομπος (115) / knot or bond causes as each character tries to free himself or herself from constraints.

Arranged marriages served to secure alliances for political and territorial purposes and well-connected young women or those approaching marriageable age were important means of bringing about desired political alliances, whether native or foreign. In the Byzantine cases which often reflect practices and traditions in the Byzantine empire of which Crete was its most loyal region as historical records attest, the daughters, sisters or widows, as Paul Magdolino points out in his study of the Manuel Komnenos administration, served the males of the kin group to “secure supporters” and to also “conciliate opponents and the needs of foreign diplomacy” (204).²³² The marriage plot Trosilos and Rodolinos initiate invokes Manuel's practice of “controlling aristocratic marriages” and who, according to the canonist Balsamon, “dissolved matches of various noble women who were formed by ignoble men” (Magdolino 211), revealing a widespread system of trading and trafficking women. In fact, such marriage “bargains” were practiced continuously in Byzantium but “from the tenth century on they became almost an industry” (Connor 212). Through the exportation of princesses from Byzantium, political connections were established with foreign powers and the marriage served as a form of exchange of women for political expediency. Potentially a marriage alliance was a more binding and more effective form of diplomacy; after all, the future of both powers was invested in the offspring of the union.

Expansion and maintenance of power depended on these marriage alliances to consolidate the influence of ruling houses. Anna Komnene, the daughter of Alexios I, for example, was betrothed to Constantine Doukas who was expected to become emperor. However, following his unforeseen death, she married Nikeforos Bryennios, an alliance that connected the Komnenoi with a military aristocracy represented by the Bryennios

²³² Paul Magdalino. *The Empire of Manuel Komnenos, 1143-1180*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

family. Likewise, as Antony Eastmond notes, Michael VIII Palaiologos formed an alliance with the Mongols, culminating in the marriage of his daughter, Maria, the Lady of the Mongols, to the Ikhan Abaqa in 1265 (94).²³³ Furthermore, political power endorsed through marriage alliances was not exclusive to Byzantine women marrying into other aristocratic factions. The Komnenoi, according to Cecily J. Hillsdale, had established “imperial dominance through intermarriage with both Byzantine and foreign aristocratic families.”²³⁴ All these examples of women's role in shaping fortunes in the political and social world are familiar to students of history. In the process, however, the marriage alliance “effaces the individual to construct an impersonal unity,” (Montiglio, 80). This well-established system, as Nancy Rabinowitz writing about the *Alcestis* succinctly explains, “fulfills the triple exogamous goals” which includes “the extension of the life of lineage by producing heirs, control of female sexuality placing her under the aegis of heterosexual reproduction,” and to establish acceptable ties between men (68).²³⁵ This practice was adapted to serve political needs and circumstances for generations after the Fall of the Byzantine Empire, and the practice continued vigorously during the Venetian period in Crete between Byzantino-Cretans and Latins.²³⁶

Rodolinos and Trosilos, the young warrior kings, are privileged aristocratic men lusting for power. The marriage the two men arrange is to deceive king Aretas, Aretousa's father. Whether Rodolinos's claim that his friendship for Trosilos caused him to participate in the deception or his love for Aretousa caused him to betray his friend, the

²³³ Antony Eastmond. *Art and Identity in Thirteenth-Century Byzantium: Hagia Sophia and the Empire of Trebizond*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2004.

²³⁴ Cecily J. Hillsdale. “Constructing a Byzantine *augusta*: a Greek book for a French bride.” *The Art Bulletin* (September 2005): 1-33.

²³⁵ Nancy Rabinowitz. *Anxiety Veiled: Trafficking Women in Euripides*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993.

²³⁶ Latins includes not only Venetians but all those who practiced the Catholic faith.

fact remains that in this instance, love becomes disruptive, or to borrow the term Joan Ferrante uses in her discussion of Tristan and Iseult, it becomes an “anti-social force” (12)²³⁷ that determines the tragic finale. The way love courts “magnificent and desirable disaster” (Rougemont 24)²³⁸ complicates not only Rodolinos' internal universe but the internal political arrangements and uncovers multiple and differing interests geared towards maintaining generally accepted social realities in the efforts to salvage Rodolinos and Aretousa's reputations. The unfolding events, however absurd they may seem at times, clarify and define social expectations of men and women and all the measures utilized in order to keep the existing system intact.

The treacherous actions in the intention and execution of the *Rodolinos* marriage plot correspond to the extremes used by aristocratic houses in order to acquire and maintain power. And since this marriage plot suggests more than mere similarities to the kind of intrigues mentioned in Byzantine chronicles, a familiarity with such dastardly deeds and the way writers used historical events to expand on the moral and social implications of such acts parallel the social, political, and economic tensions found in Venetian Crete. The dark secret Rodolinos discloses to his tutor conjures the ghost of Empress Zoë of whom Michael Psellos writes about in his *Fourteen Byzantine Rulers* or *Chronographia*,²³⁹ a history of Byzantine emperors beginning with Basil, the Bulgar Slayer (976-1025) and closing with Michael VII (1071-1078). Apparently when Zoë's father, Constantine VIII, realized he was approaching the end of his life, he arranged for Romanus to marry his daughter. Romanus was already married but it was arranged that

²³⁷ Joan Ferrante. *Conflict of Love and Honor: The Medieval Tristan Legend in France, Germany and Italy*. Netherlands, The Hague: Mouton & Co. N. V., 1973.

²³⁸ Denis deRougemont. *Love in the Western World*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983.

²³⁹ Michael Psellus. *Fourteen Byzantine Rulers, The Chronographia of Michael Psellus*, trans. E. R. A. Sewter. New York: Penguin Books, 1966. Originally published in 1953 by Yale University Press. Also, see Carolyn Loessel Connor, *Women of Byzantium*. Yale University Press, 2004.

his wife was forcibly admitted into a nunnery and he was brought to the palace to marry Zoë. As Carolyn Loessel Connor notes, such marriage alliances “were of utility politically, being of some “service to the commonweal' ”(212).²⁴⁰ Zoë was not asked to marry Romanus and neither was the wife of Romanus asked if she wanted a divorce or to enter a convent. The marriage was arranged between men, the ceremony performed, and the Empire was left to Constantine's “kinsman Romanus” (Psellus 59). After a reign of five and a half years, Romanus died and Zoë secured the crown for Michael who professed great love for her. But, as Psellos proceeds with Zoë's saga, Michael's duplicity becomes evident:

Till now, Michael had played a part: his attitude and look in his eyes showed love for the empress. It was not long, however, before all this was changed, and her love, as well as her favors to him, were repaid with base ingratitude (89).

As Psellos continues the history, he explains that Michael was afflicted with epilepsy and the unpredictability of the seizures made it impossible for him to be in her presence. But it was not only his health that undermined his relationship but

... he was covered with shame whenever he looked at Zoë, and it was beyond his power to meet her gaze, knowing how he had betrayed his love, foresworn promises, and broken his word (96).²⁴¹

Even though Zoë inherited the throne from her father, or as Robert Browning remarks, “she discovered a late vocation for matrimony,”²⁴² she was compelled to marry “a series of leading members of the civil aristocracy, raising them in turn to the imperial throne

(117).²⁴³ Her advanced age aside, she was not exempted from performing her function to

²⁴⁰ Carolyn Loessel Connor, *Women of Byzantium*. Yale University Press, 2004.

²⁴¹ This passage is remarkably similar to the way Aretousa describes the behavior of Rodolinos upon their arrival to Egypt.

²⁴² Zoë was forty-eight when she married for the first time and she was not physiologically capable of producing an heir.

²⁴³ Browning, Robert. *The Byzantine Empire*. Revised edition. The Catholic University of America Press, 1992.

solidify and appropriate control of the highest political offices to a few powerful men. Aretousa may be younger but, as an incarnation of Zoë and the countless other imperial women who lived through similar experiences, she is exploited for the same purpose. As a foreign bride, she might have even brought a political reconciliation, as many foreign brides often did. For that reason, the number of empresses who were named Irene (Ειρηνη), literally meaning peace, indicates their symbolic role as peace makers. All the same, at the heart of the marital alliances and this tragedy in particular, the overriding issue embedded in these arrangements plots the fate of the women as instruments of powerful, aristocratic men who conspicuously use them for their political purposes.

These examples of Byzantine political intrigues help to contextualize the practice of arranged marriages and to contextualize *Rodolinos*. It is significant of a crisis on dynastic authority that *Rodolinos* echoes the plot of *Il Re Torrismondo* in his own fashion.²⁴⁴ Despite the fact that the two tragedies differ noticeably, *Torrismondo* and *Rodolinos* encourage comparison as analogous works and the affinities they exhibit suggest a “... context that was more international than has been properly acknowledged,” as Louise George Clubb observes in writing about *Torrismondo* and *Hamlet* (657).²⁴⁵ Although it is difficult to chart the life and times of Troilos, the printing of *Rodolinos* in 1647 suggests that the two authors are not contemporaries.

²⁴⁴ Tasso's *Torrismondo* uses the same plot as Troilos does in *Rodolinos*. Germondo, the king of Sweden, wants to marry Alvida, the daughter of the king of Norway. The king refuses because of a blood feud and Germondo and Torrismondo, the king of the Goths, connive the marriage plot to deceive the Norwegian king, with the intention of Torrismondo to hand over Alvida to Germondo. Alvida and Torrismondo fall in love on their return journey and consummate their passion when they are marooned in a cave. When they arrive, Torrismondo is tormented for having betrayed his friend, but he is also torn because he loves Alvida. Rosmonda is approached to become the substitute bride. She is in love with Torrismondo, who is not her brother, but she reveals to Torrismondo that Alvida is his sister. When Alvida finds out of the betrayal and the fact that Torrismondo is her brother, she kills herself and so does Torrismondo. The queen is devastated at having lost her two children but in the end, Germondo and Rosmonda continue living and assume the governing of the Goths.

²⁴⁵ Louise George Clubb. “*The Arts of Genre: Torrismondo and Hamlet*.” *ELH* 47, No. 4 (1980): 657-669.

However, according to the *Rodolinos* editor, Martha Askiti, the tragedy was not intended for publication and may have been written much earlier than it was printed. In any event, the author could have been acquainted with Tasso's work but this idea remains speculative.²⁴⁶

Yet, the plot based on the scheme to carry out the fictitious marriage in *Rodolinos* recalls Tasso's premise in *Torrismondo* and the illicit pact between the two men causes the same consternation and instability. Rodolinos' subversion of the marriage plot authorized by the king in the name of male friendship, and his betrayal of male friendship through his love for Aretousa creates an impossible dilemma with death as the only solution. He, therefore, threatens suicide as a way out of the shame and the fear of dishonor for the woman he now loves and the friend he has betrayed.

Additionally, the plot used to secure the woman of choice by proxy involves a series of interconnected concerns. Rodolinos' ability to carry out the deception successfully compromises Aretousa and her imperial house, yet, by being "seduced" by the woman he set out to deceive he confirms the archetypal definition of the dangerous woman, as Eve Sedgwick writes that, "[o]nly women have the power to make men less than men within this world" (40).²⁴⁷ However, Rodolinos through his genuine love inspired by Aretousa recognizes his misguided friendship, the distortion of power, the unchecked selfishness, and his own unsavory conduct. The confession of his "instrumental use" of Aretousa forces him to confront the reality of the situation as his unexpected passion for her forecasts his eventual ethical transformation within the

²⁴⁶ Since direct borrowing cannot be determined, it may be that there was a different source that both dramatists used for their work.

²⁴⁷ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1985.

context of the disarranged relationship. Yet, despite the possible transformation of his confused conscience (αναγούρδισμενη συνειδηση, II.3.171), Aretousa's entrance in the next scene undermines any sympathy that his new understanding of his part in the deception suggests.

Aretousa: The Wronged Bride

Aretousa is introduced in the second scene of the first act as her “servant and loyal nurse,” Sofronia, entreats her, “I beg you to tell me the reason of your sorrow” (I.2.505-506). She begins by admitting to Sofronia of her turbulent psychic state governed by nightmares and horrific omens. In fact, she tells her of one dream that has left her very disturbed. In her dream, old Agathostratos, her father's tutor, who has been dead for at least twelve years, was forced to come to her country for the purpose of taking her with him. He carried orders from her father that she was to marry someone other than Rodolinos. In order to convince her that this was true, he carried as a sign (σημαδι) his crown and scepter (στεφος και το σκηπτρο του, 545) and was instructed to proceed quickly. Distraught though she was that she was leaving her love (ταιρι, 548), she boarded the ship. But then, before she left, Rodolinos wanted to join her, and as he boarded the black-sailed ship, he tossed his scepter. As the ship sailed away, great mourning swept the land (εγινεκε τοτες μεγαλος θρηνος, 550) and from the anguish of the dream, she wanted to awaken. She, of course, is convinced that what she experiences during sleep are not just dreams but “nocturnal visions” (νυκτικα φαντασματα, 559) that presage catastrophic events. Sofronia tries to dispel her mental and emotional distress by dismissing the dreams as creations of the mind that can be forgotten as easily as they were created when awakened. Aretousa remains convinced that the dream foretells dire

events.

Byzantines and contemporary Greeks, in general, believed dreams were “premonitory messages received during sleep” (MacAlister, 624) or, as Steven Oberhelman writes, dreams originated from physiological and psychological forces imposing themselves on the dreamer's soul” (22). Similar to the way dreams were used in classical tragedy to “foreshadow and advance the action” (MacAlister 5),²⁴⁸ the dream Aretousa describes is used to advance the plot by reflecting her concerns as well as her state of mind. And, by showing her fears and preoccupations, allows the audience to wonder whether the dream embodies a real external sign of the future or whether it resulted from the dreamer's fears or preoccupations (MacAlister, 5).

In the specific context of *Rodolinos*, Aretousa's dream was not just an irrational response to anxieties related to the future, but its contents could be used not only to understand the individual but to also project into the future. Dreams were interpreted favorably or unfavorably according to the social position and gender of the dreamer and the interpreter attempted to unlock the secrets of the dream. The importance of the dream depended entirely on the implicit understanding that the dream presaged an imminent event. There were several treatises on the subject, but *Achmet's Oneirokritikon* was consulted and referenced frequently. As Steven Oberhelman points out in his recent study of dreambooks, the art of dream interpretation was a serious pursuit and several prominent political and ecclesiastical figures produced their own versions of dream books.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁸ MacAlister, Susanne. *Dreams and Suicides: The Greek Novel from Antiquity to the Byzantine Empire*. New York: Routledge, 1996.

²⁴⁹ See Steven Oberhelman's *The Oneirocriticon of Achmed*, Lubbock, TX: Texas Tech University Press, 1991; the more recent, *Dreambooks of Byzantium* by Steven M. Oberhelman; Susanne MacAlister, *Dreams and Suicide*. And, the modern-day *Interpretations of Dreams* by Sigmund Freud.

Aretousa's would have prompted various interpretations based on her personal situation. She is convinced that the dreams are prophetic, unlike her nurse who attributes her inexplicable uneasiness to indigestion and the upcoming marriage.²⁵⁰ But, the dream would have also aroused a sense of suspense in anticipation of the events to follow. The ship in her dream was a well-known sign for the nation state in Greek literature and boarding a ship could possibly signify meeting an important person. However, the black sails, the dead man, and the great keening would alert the listeners not only to “great upheaval and tumult” (Oberhelman 207) but stir up images of death, or, more precisely, in Aretousa's case, her journey to Egypt which will become her journey to Hades. Even an audience familiar with dream conventions would expect that somehow the tragedy would be averted yet, just as the predictions of ancient oracles were often ambiguous and dependent on the interpreter's skill and imagination, dreams were also exploited by misreading the signs contained within the dream. In this drama, the dream reveals Aretousa's intuitive sense of danger as it foreshadows her fears and sorrow.

After telling Sofronia the reason for her anxious state of mind, she recounts Rodolinos' arrival in Carthage and the reason for his visit. Upon laying eyes on him, Aretousa became enamored with his “appearance, virtue, fame, demeanor, and nobility” (η θωρια του, η αρετη του, η φημη του, η διαξη κι' αρχοντια του, 579-580) and she forgot the suffering her brother's loss had caused her. And,

... vowed to carry out the vengeance
giving his hand to my hand, he swore to me.
Then vengeance and passion combined,
before becoming a bride, he made me his paramour.

δικιαν εταξε μου,
και διδοντας το χειρι του στο χειρι μου, εμνοξε μου.

²⁵⁰ Although the Nurse dismisses the dreams as prophetic, she admits when she finds out Aretousa has committed suicide that she could have interpreted them (ξεδυλιανει, IV.6.417) but avoided doing so.

Τότες η γδικια μου σμικτη μ' αμετρο ποθο ανταμι,
 περι νυφη, ομπρος αγαφτικη δικη του μ'ειχε καμει.

(I.2.597-600)

The gesture of “giving his hand to my hand,” or better translated as “placing his hand in mine,” instead of the other way around, projects a sense of submission to her wishes and even reverence. Then, the mixing of vengeance and desire, the powerful emotions of hate and love, reveals Aretousa's devotion of family and her own physical attraction to the man. As soon as he placed his hand into her hand, she perceived herself as his lover whereby she gave up some control of one emotion over the other. As she tells Sofronia, “passion (love) and reason loosen and dissolve oaths and promises and end up differently than intended” (τ' ορκους και τα τασσιματα πως τσις σκορπα και λειωνει / ο ποθος και τσι λογισμους αλλως τσι ξετελειωνει, 587-588) as she recognizes the erotic awakening she experiences is problematic and points to the concerns of feminine desire and sexuality. Even though love compromises and complicates her original intention of vengeance, it is important to remember that his agreement to avenge her brother's death sealed the marriage arrangement and that she willingly activates her “instrumental use” to satisfy her father’s need for revenge. She becomes not only the instrument of retribution by being caught in the middle of the male conflict, but, more importantly, she bargains herself in exchange for her brother's blood. However, her willingness makes her into a very active participant and accomplice of the vengeance plot.

Paralleling Rodolinos’ tale of the journey from Carthage to Egypt and the capsizing of the ship, she confides to Sofronia that she succumbed to her passion when they found themselves alone in the cave. Aretousa’s passion and sexuality are minimized by the tactful way she explains the events that led to the loss of her chastity. This loss

creates a dilemma for Aretousa, a fact she wants to shield from discovery, even though, through her confession, it is made clear that her participation was consensual and without any reservations. By submitting to her physical desire, however, caused her to neglect the actual purpose of her bargain and she strayed from the course of her cause. This, for her, constitutes a breach not only in her behavior but a betrayal of her brother's memory and of her oath. She, therefore, torments and criticizes herself as a typical, easily seduced woman and parallels Rodolinos who is also torn between loyalties.

What adds to her mental and emotional distress is the way Rodolinos avoids her and does not behave the way a lover or prospective husband does

(σημαδι ο βασιλιος μου

/ δεν εδειξε, ωσαν γαμπρος γη ως αγαπητικος μου, 663–664). Finally, she admits, what she finds even more distressing is that “he trembles and becomes pale”

(τρεμει και χλωμος, 669) when she approaches him and looks away or keeps his eyes downcast, and when he speaks, it is only when absolutely necessary, and then, his words are guarded and perfunctory. This behavior only strengthens Aretousa’s doubts, and with each passing hour, she senses that all is not what it seems. Sofronia, once again, attempts to alleviate Aretousa's anxieties, by interpreting his behavior as an indication of his “immeasurable love” (αμετρητη ... αγαπη, 688, 687).

Here, as well as the play progresses, Aretousa's vulnerability becomes more than noticeable. She cannot fathom the change in Rodolinos’ behavior and trembles at the thought of her sexual transgression. Three days and nights have passed since their arrival in Memphis and there is no talk of the wedding. “To tell the truth,” she tells Sofronia, “I melt as the snow melts under the sun” (630), articulating the deep uncertainty and fears that consume her heart. Despite Sofronia's reassurances, she perceives herself as

“booty” (κρουσος, I.1.594), the unfortunate prize of a war that paves the way of her future.

Sofronia gently tries to ease her doubts and then informs her of Troilos' expected arrival as the cause of the delay for the wedding. When she learns that Troilos is Rodolinos' best friend, she becomes even more anxious. Aretousa now suspects that her brother will never be avenged. Sofronia reminds her that a good wife obeys her husband's will and wishes without questioning the motives. She does not argue with the advice Sofronia offers but she finds the friendship between the two men unacceptable since Troilos is her family's declared enemy (οχουθρος του γενους μου, 648).²⁵¹ Each new piece of information fuels Aretousa's anxiety and adds to her psychic turmoil. Assessing Aretousa's distress, Sofronia imagines the redemptive power of love will provide the cure and avert any tragic consequences. She reassures herself that since Eros mediates this affair, the love between the two young people will end old enmities and bring about harmony and reconciliation (Αμ' οπου οριζει ο ερωτας, πασ' οργητα τελειωνει / και πεφτει η μανητα η παλια οπου η νια αγαπη σωνει, 725-726).²⁵²

From the start, Troilos characterizes Aretousa as a woman who accepts marriage as a kin-based, political arrangement which supercedes the possibilities of erotic involvement. She accepts Rodolinos as avenger of the death of Aretousa's brother and, by extension, the family's honor. Whether she found Rodolinos attractive or not, she had no choice but to accept the wishes of her father and, as her ardent devotion to her brother's memory indicates, her kin loyalty is comparable to the obsessive loyalty

²⁵¹ The literal translation is “enemy of my race” which applies to much more than the immediate family. *Genos* can be viewed as a way to determine a person's identity “as well as the collective group in which membership is ascribed through birth.” Jonathan Hall, *Ethnic Identity in Greek Antiquity*, 35.

²⁵² Friar Lawrence uses the same logic when he decides to perform the wedding ceremony for Romeo and Juliet.

Rodolinos shows for his own kinsman. In Venetian Crete as in present-day Crete,²⁵³ when a person is killed, the wronged family requires revenge (γδικία), even, as in this case, the death took place on the battlefield. Since “the life of the unfortunate man ended by Trosilos' hand” (εκ του Τρωσιλο ετελειωσε το χειρι ο κακομοιρης, I.1.179), the obligation to avenge his blood is justified and required. Revenge is an act that restores the honor of the family and is a solemn duty intimately connected to the concepts of honor and shame.

The word “vengeance” and its variants (γδικία, γδικιωσει, γδικιωτης) appears repeatedly throughout the text as if to shape the reader's consciousness of its importance in Aretousa's duty to serve her father's need to avenge his son's blood. To this end, Sofronia reminds herself and Aretousa that when she was only a girl of five years old, the king put Aretousa in her care and asked that she bring her up and to teach her “to avenge [my] loss, his kingdom's loss and for all those whose blood was shed and washed with rivers of tears (αναθρεψε, Σωφρονια βγενικη μου, μ' εγνοια πολλη σ' τσ' αγκαλες σου τη γδικια τη δικη μου, III.9.451-452). The training Aretousa received at the hands of her nurse engenders an education of a different sort: she is exposed to unreserved duty to honor her father and brother and continually. The duty she absorbs from the nurse shapes Aretousa's beliefs, sensibility and actions. The instruction she has received under the tutelage of her nurse validates the reason Aretousa accepts the marriage with Rodolinos in the first place but downplays her part in the agreement to have Trosilos killed. Looking at Aretousa's vengeful motivation as an active participant in the scheme to avenge her brother and the approval she exhibits at the completion of the anticipated revenge, sheds light on the power of loyalty and blind obedience grounded in

²⁵³ Although illegal, it is not unusual for vendettas of this sort to take place in Crete.

kinship. Of course, the nurse's primary function is to serve and support her mistress. Thus her encouragement that love will restore peace.

The nurse's admission of her role in Aretousa's instruction, however, offers another dimension to Aretousa's inclination for such actions stemming from the socialization to which she was exposed as a child. In fact, Aretousa's purpose to carry out her father's retributive justice that became her own and her resolve to wipe away the perceived injustice against her family, contributes to her downfall which makes her even more tragic. In retrospect, Aretousa is exploited by all and because she fails to recognize the loss of her innocence in the ploys and machinations of her kin and others alike, she generates sympathy and understanding alike.

It is within this context that Aretousa's function in the marriage plot becomes clear. Her honor depends on avenging her brother's death and killing his murderer. Being a woman in a world of manipulative men is difficult especially when she is easily accused of creating problems among them. Thus Rodolinos compares Aretousa to five celebrated female figures whose beauty was politically dangerous.

Troilos' depicts Aretousa as the embodiment of and superior to "Helen, Semiramis, Rachel, Herse and Polyxena"

(Ελενης, τση Σεμιραμης, τση Ραχηλ, τσ' Ερσεες και Πολυξενης,, II.3.204-205),²⁵⁴

(ονοματατα φημιστα, II.3.203). Aretousa is an ideal mix of female beauty, power and self sacrifice to the male order which explains the male vulnerability. It is her fault after all!

²⁵⁴ Helen is renowned for her role in the Trojan war and holds a position of admiration and scorn at once. Semiramis is known as the famous queen of Babylon whose tantalizing reputation centers on her erotic pursuits. Rachel, the intended bride of Jacob and Jewish matriarch, was betrayed by her father who tricked Jacob to marry her sister, Leah instead (Genesis 29:23-26). Herse is poorly documented as the love of Hermes who visited her nightly concealing their involvement by the darkness. Hermes is known as the god of deception and protector of those involved in commerce (as Rodolinos deceives and traffics in women). Finally, Polyxena, the Trojan princess, depicted as the loyal sister who offered to become Achilles' slave in order to retrieve her brother's body for proper burial. She us depicted as a strong, valiant maiden, who does not shrink from her fate.

Aretousa is thus projected as the dangerous and exciting cause of male moral failure and the tragic consequences she unwillingly kindles. Each name summons the image of a woman whose fame and worth was compromised and while some were able to overcome their predicaments or endure the ordeals they confronted, others were subdued either through submission to the demands of the situation or escaped through death. Regardless of the outcome, each character's reputation rests on honor or shame. The common element between these figures is that all five mediate cultural contexts that shape their lives, social standing, and historical reputations. While distinct in many critical ways, these characters share fates shaped by well established disproportionate gender inequality and they are all associated with myths and images that involve the continuation of various forms of male power structures. In essence, Aretousa as an aristocratic woman is conceived as driven by the passions of love and revenge. In the larger sociopolitical context, then, Aretousa's association with the five figures communicates well-established moral and ideological models.

Aretousa defines herself as “Africana” (Αφρικωννα, III.9.536).²⁵⁵ The term is important to her characterization for several reasons. First, the term emphasizes her native Carthaginian identity,²⁵⁶ and, secondly, it points to the transition she must make in order to adjust to her new situation. As an imported bride, the preparation for her new function involved a formalized education “to enable her to cope with the complexities of life and political intrigue” (Garland & Rapp, 92)²⁵⁷ in the court. Furthermore, as a

²⁵⁵ Mary of Alania, the Georgian princess, was known as the Alan in Byzantine circles, owing to the turbulent relations between Georgia and Byzantium, it is possible that this was a deliberate slur (95). Despite her significant role in Byzantine politics, she was confronted with many difficulties.

²⁵⁶ She refers to Trosilos as the “Persian” (Περσης,) with a contempt that almost sounds as if she shares the sharp disadvantage of the foreigner.

²⁵⁷ Lynda Garland and Stephen Rapp. “Mary of Alania: Woman and Empress Between Two Worlds” in *Byzantine Women: Varieties of Experience 800-1200*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Llimited, (2006): 91-124.

foreigner she was expected to foreswear her natal family and the customs of her ancestors. As important is the sense of disempowerment is compounded by the lack of “a family support network, the typical powerbase on which indigenous aristocratic women depended and of which they were so proud” (Garland & Rapp, 91). Considering the premise under which Aretousa is brought to Egypt, the disadvantage she may have experienced is understandable.

The Proxy Bride and the Second Marriage Plot

The necessity for an urgent solution generates another marriage plot that provides a parallel to the first marriage plot. The solution is simple according to Erminos who advises Rodolino that in order to “save face, your friend and you honor, in place of Aretousa, give him your sister”

(Μ' α θα φυλαξεις το πρεπο, το φιλο, την τιμη σου, στον τοπο τσ' Αρετουσας σου δος του την αδελφη σου, ΙΙ.471-472), exhibiting pragmatism and expedience. The error Rodolinos committed is not as important as finding a satisfactory solution to contain the crisis. After all, as Erminos who devises this marriage plot²⁵⁸ determines, “she is even more beautiful” (πλια ομορφη, Ι.Ι.476) than Aretousa. The solution that Erminos offers is the hope that Rododaphne's beauty and dignity will distract Trosilos, prevent the rupture of the friendship between the two men, and, above all, preserve appearances which was of the utmost importance.

Rododaphne’s substitution as the bride of Trosilos creates a new “sphere of exchange,” another recurrence of the “key role of royal women in the area of dynastic continuity” (Duggan xviii). The intended exchange shows the interchangeability of women²⁵⁹ and

²⁵⁸ Ironically, it is Erminos who devises this plot although by court standards, it was probably a standard practice and preserving the integrity of the king warranted interventions of any measure and that precluded individual aspirations such as Rododaphne voices.

²⁵⁹ As the drama progresses, interchangeability of husband is expected of Aretousa when Rodolinos

also stresses the need to protect the interests of sons at the expense of daughters. This strategy requires the cooperation of the mother and daughter in the service of marriage. Indeed, Erminos's recruitment of the queen mother to persuade her daughter to marry Trosilos without revealing the offensive details to her of the sudden honor bestowed on Rododaphne, is a very shrewd calculation. Rododaphne, as an imperial princess is the logical and plausible choice as substitute bride, a tactic that was probably a typical court practice in the effort to prevent exposure and to manage the harm similar predicaments may have posed.

Rodolinos' mother, Annazia, is not told of the circumstances of the proposed marriage but she is led to believe that a union with the king of Persia is not only timely but presents a magnificent opportunity that must be seized. Annazia's ignorance of the true motives of the proposed marriage and the severity of her son's predicament is concealed in Rodolinos' comment about his mother's enthusiastic response of Trosilos as a prospective son-in-law. She regards Trosilos worthy of her equally precious daughter because of his fame, power and noble status throughout the land and, therefore, offers an auspicious match. Interested as she is in securing advantageous marriages for her children that will serve as a reflection on herself, Annazia recognizes what she must do in order to accomplish her task.

It becomes unmistakably clear that Rodolinos and Erminos rely on Annazia not only because of her influence as queen (βασιλισσα)²⁶⁰ but because her power of persuasion and negotiation skills render her well suited for the task. Yet, despite her

reveals the true circumstances of the marriage.

²⁶⁰ The term *vasilissa* (βασιλισσα) was not only honorific but it expressed “the concept of a woman at the pinnacle of her power” (Dion C. Smythe, “Behind the Mask: Empresses and Empire in Middle Byzantium” in Ann J. Duggan, ed., *Queens and Queenship in Medieval Europe*. Rochester, New York: The Boydell Press, (1997): 141-172.

exalted position – the honorific *vasilissa* signifies and which, as Dion C. Smythe notes, expresses the “concept of a woman at the pinnacle of her power” (143) – she is deceived as well. She is not unlike Clytemnestra whose husband, Agamemnon, deceived her into believing that their daughter Iphigenia was intended as the bride of Achilles. Instead, upon their arrival, mother and daughter discover that the marriage is a sham, only an enticement to persuade Clytemnestra to bring Iphigenia as a sacrifice to the gods to allow the Greeks to sail to Troy. Annazia, thus, judges the marriage proposal with Trosilos genuine and foresees a glorious future for her daughter as queen of Persia. In agreeing to have her daughter marry the Persian king, Annazia recognized the useful political associations and proceeds eagerly to bring about the desired result, although Rodolinos is doubtful that Rododaphne who abhors the idea of marriage will concede.

The characterization of Annazia relies entirely on her role as the empress widow and mother of the imperial children, Rodolinos and Rododaphne. Her portrayal is based on women found in historical and literary accounts and her character is informed by social and gender expectations and the maintenance of power regulated within the institution of marriage used to create an impression of stability and harmony. The responsibility thrust upon her to persuade her daughter to accept the king of Persia as her marriage partner reveals an understanding of the cultural forces that must be affirmed and perpetuated through the continuity of prescribed roles. Judith Herrin who writes about Byzantine empresses condenses the gendered role Annazia holds. Unlike the emperor who was expected to “lead armies, direct government, defend orthodoxy, and exercise imperial philanthropy,” the empress was “... to give birth to legitimate children, preferably sons, and perform all other duties of the imperial

spouse” (249).²⁶¹ Even more succinctly, John Carmi Parson writing about English queens reflects the imperial role of Annazia As the product of socialization within a particular tradition her

life in the realm was represented, or constructed, chiefly through such formalized ritual displays as her coronation, childbearing, intercession, pious exercises, or her reception by ecclesiastical or civic dignitaries. The most consistent theme evident in the acts or utterances that characterized such performances is the frequency and subtlety with which they emphasized her subordination to the king, her isolation from his authority, and the decentering of her sexuality, especially as perpetuator of the royal lineage. (Parsons, 317)²⁶²

While this view addresses the roles of English queens, it applies to Byzantine empresses well. Byzantine women gained political power through their husbands, as did many women in Europe, but also through inheritances from both male and female family members. Byzantine attitudes reflected in subsequent generations as well remarkably favored the role of the mother. In cultural and legal practice, the Byzantine mother remained dominant as head of the household and protector of her children’s interests, especially if she had been widowed while her children were still young. Empresses ruled as regents for their underage children with a retinue of male advisors. Anna Dalessena, for instance, the mother of the Emperor Alexios Komnenos I and grandmother of Anna Komnena, played a critical role in Alexios’s rise and hold to power. Alexios, a strong-minded and accomplished man, continued to rely on her political and administrative expertise to run the Empire. Similarly, Annazia via her participation in the marriage negotiations is allowed a more active role in political

²⁶¹ Judith Herrin, *Women in Purple Rulers of Medieval Byzantium*. London: Weidenfield & Nicholson, 2001.

²⁶² John Carmi Parsons. “ ‘Never was a body buried in England with such solemnity and honour ’: The Burials of Posthumous Commemorations of English Queens to 1500” in *Queens and Queenship*, Anne J. Duggan, ed. Rochester, NY: Boydell & Brewer Ltd., 1997.

decisions, yet by deferring to the wishes and commands her son dictates, her power remains within boundaries.

As a widow, therefore, she was presented with various possibilities. Recent feminist scholarship has paid attention to powerful women in literature and history. Judith Herrin, for instance, has reminded readers as she charts the female ruler phenomenon in *Women in Purple Rulers of Medieval Byzantium*, individual great women of Byzantium had long exercised political influence well beyond the prescribed female roles. The importance of high-ranking women intervening in political processes in the court and in confrontational roles and as religious patrons, were substantial. Indeed, surviving records confirm, the extent to which many of the empresses were responsible for the administrations of estates and the whole range of political, social and legal responsibilities associated with that.²⁶³ However, during the Renaissance, by which time the Byzantine Empire had declined, prominent women diminished in number and stature. Unlike the long heated debate of female rule in sixteenth century England, women of Annazia's station, if they were young or as in Zoe's case where age did not matter as long as she claimed the title, they would have been encouraged to marry or, in all probability, retreat voluntarily or forcibly to a monastery. In such an environment, few women succeeded to formally reign as monarchs in their own right. The empress Irene was one such exceptional ruler who actually used the title *vasileus* (king) rather than *vasilissa*, the female title for queen, adapted to the demands of her role and fashioned a political career comparable to men (Herrin, 262).

Annazia's identity as queen depended largely on meeting her social obligations, devotion to her dead husband expressed by her chastity, and maintaining the interests of

²⁶³ See, for example, Judith Herrin, Angeliki Laiou; Lynda Garland.

the family. Such precarious elevation means, as John Carmi Parsons suggests, the restraint of the feminine, in which the queen's image was constructed as a “paradigmatic figure of the completely perfect and totally absent woman upon whom the social and moral order depended (Parsons, 337). Annazia is reasonably empowered because of her widowhood but also, as she observes, mothers “are honored and tended to because of their children” (Για τα πατρια ολοι την τιμου, κι ολοι την προσεχου, II.4.513). She also recognizes that her own honorable position is affected by the accomplishments of her children whereby her sole purpose is to prepare them for success. Thus, Annazia becomes identified with maintaining the social and political order of the house and, as the mediatrix will conduct the marriage negotiations between her daughter and the king of Persia. As the widow empress and mother of the king she is entrusted with the responsibility to broker a significantly powerful alliance and to thus contribute to “male sovereignty and to the affirmation of hierarchical social relationships” (Parsons, 318).

Annazia embodies male authority the political and social interests of her children. Her political astuteness and pragmatism dominates emotionality. Thus, Annazia is exalted as a good woman and a good mother whose fortune rests on her son and daughter to whom she refers as “κορες των αμματιων μου” (II.4.518), loosely translated as the “apples of my eyes,” an image that contradicts the predominant impression of mothers favoring sons. Her concern about her daughter's social and political future and her choice to exert her authority over her daughter is considered natural and appropriate. Annazia's course of actions conceive “women as bridges between and among members of families” rather than “marginal, transient members of families” which, in this case, sustains the value of arranged marriages and “a better basis for understanding both the effective and

economic consequences of kinship” (McKee, 63).²⁶⁴ She becomes a paradigmatic figure for as she circulates imperial ideas as a maternal ideal throughout society.

In preparing the princess Rododaphne to accept the decision her brother, Rodolinos, as king makes for her future, Annazia’s depiction conforms to the familiar model of mother-daughter relationships in which mothers prepare their daughters to become proper wives and future mothers. Annazia’s efforts to persuade Rododaphne to marry Trosilos reveals the value attached to daughters and affirms what Ann Marie Rasmussen refers to as the “instrumental function” articulating the mother’s socializing role in educating her daughter to comply with the dominant expectations and who “is oriented exclusively toward society and men” (44).²⁶⁵ The daughter then is the medium of an exchange, and, consequently, her “instrumental function” upholds and legitimizes the rationale of the intended marriage to solidify a possible dynastic alliance.

The intention of the exchange is to discuss with Rododaphne the expectations marriage offers a woman and to grasp her real purpose as an imperial daughter. The logic and thrust of Annazia’s argument in favor of marriage is clear and emphasizes the need to preserve and defend the institution of marriage. Annazia argues in support of marriage as a source of triumph for a woman’s life whereas the younger woman argues against marriage.

Having been warned by Rodolinos that Rododaphne is devoted to Artemis and acts as if she were born in the wilderness, it is therefore expected that she is unlike other young women and opposed to marriage. When looking for motivations of Rododaphne’s

²⁶⁴ Sally McKee. *Uncommon Dominion: Venetian Crete and the myth of ethnic purity*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000.

²⁶⁵ Ann Marie Rasmussen analyzes mother-daughter relationships uses the term “instrumental function” originating with Trude Ehler. See “EZ IST IR G’ARTET VON MIR” Queen Isolde and Princess Isolde in Gottfried von Strassburg’s *Tristan Und Isolde*’ in *Arthurian Women: a casebook*. Thelma S. Fenster, (ed.). New York: Garland University Press, (1996): 41-57.

continued rejection of marriage, what she says is very telling. As a devotee of Artemis hunting for wild boar in the forests and a life of chastity, Rododaphne claims her independence and her own ideal path. Non-marriage, in Rododaphne's case, provides an alternative which is not a “social refuge, but a stringent choice of a high ideal” (Lynda Garland, 24)²⁶⁶ that poses a threat to the practical purposes imperial daughters serve. As Annazia appeals to reason, emotion and human action, she directs the way Rododaphne should view marriage.

Consequently, it comes as no surprise that Rododaphne’s initial response to her mother’s professed excitement at Trosilos’ arrival in Egypt to attend her brother and Aretousa's wedding, confirms her brother's comments and clearly signals her indifference to the celebrated king as well as to introduce the contentious tone in the discussion that follows. “What does that have to do with me?” (ὐτ’ ἀπο με να γενει;, II.4. 244) she asks, and, Annazia, instead of answering the question, proceeds to lecture her on the importance of her daughter's appearance, a strategy that paves the way of broaching the topic of marriage. Fine clothes, precious jewels, the traditional diadem, and the golden belt are part of an aristocratic woman's apparel that not only reveals the wealth of her house but “enhances the beauty with which nature has endowed” (να λαμπρυνεις τσ’ ομορφιας που σου 'δωσεν η φυσης, II.4.250). Unadorned beauty, Annazia reasons, “concealed under humble garments is like a precious stone buried in lead which remains unrecognized when one comes across it” (253-255). Annazia's insistence on making Rododaphne more attractive to reveal the beauty that determines a woman's worth and acts as her natural dowry formulates the notion that female identity depends on external approval especially by heightening male interest and desire which determines a woman's

²⁶⁶ Lynda Garland. *Byzantine Women: Varieties of Experience, 800-1200*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2006.

value based on the male desire she can arouse. Annazia “assumes that female identity is synonymous with sexual identity” and the purpose of the woman is “shaped in accordance with society’s (men’s) demands” (Rasmussen 43). The importance Annazia attaches to a woman's physical appearance in order to make her more appealing and thus more marriageable, only emphasizes and reduces her to Rasmussen's term of a basic “instrumental function” which Rododaphne understands deeply and rejects and emphasizes the different sensibilities between mother and daughter.

Rododaphne finds that even if it is considered critical and necessary for aristocratic women, the focus on this activity overrides the cultivation of other qualities such as elevating the mind and disciplining the will. The emphasis on physical appearances, as she tells Annazia, results in the natural degeneration of our sex (γενος μας, 258).

According to Rododaphne, a modest maiden (φρονιμη κορη, 261) endangers her chastity by such frivolity which inevitably leads to other activities that expose her to more damaging influences, among them social gatherings and theatrical performances from which she must be kept away (απο χορους και θεατρα ν'απεχει, 262). In her defense that the refinement of physical appearances is not a trivial female activity and an activity that is not specific to women, Annazia retorts that men adorn themselves as well.

However, their physical appearances are dependent on their masculinity which they enhance with their valor and that is accomplished by “painting themselves with blood” (βαφονται μ' αιματα, 279), a grim yet powerful image of virility and the high price such an emblem exacts on both men and women. Even as Annazia distinguishes between the ways women and men create, use, and sustain their social roles, it becomes clear that each remains distinct yet inextricably bound to each other as appearances and behavior impact on the individual and the family.

Rododaphne is able to see the way her mother equates the value of women's worth as mere ornaments for their husbands or their family analogous to the worth of the jewels she is instructed to wear. She therefore cleverly points out but not without irony, "I thought silence is considered a woman's most valuable ornament" (εθαρρουν ενα ταπεινο σωπασμα στη γυναικα να' ναι καλλια παρα εμιλιες φρονιμω δεκα, II.4. 91-92), echoing the Sophoclean maxim, "Silence is a woman's ornament,"²⁶⁷ and St. Paul's dictum, "Let woman learn in silence with all subjection."²⁶⁸ The subject of silence Rododaphne introduces becomes "even more clearly gendered," according to Silvia Montiglio, "precisely because silence is a token of marginality" (290, 292)²⁶⁹ and, as such, creates rules of personal conduct that affect a woman's participation in public life. For Rododaphne, the ornament of silence is another aspect of personal power, but even more, a sign of the true worth "buried in lead" (II.4.254) that lies in wait, a metaphorical shield that defends a woman's chastity.

The suggestion therefore that Annazia makes that she may want to become Trosilos' bride and hold the title of queen of Persia leaves Rododaphne unimpressed. "Frankly, Mother," Rododaphne tells Annazia, "I cannot deny that I intended to live a free (λευτερη) and simple (λυτη) life ... without a husband (συντροφο), literally, a companion (IV.iv.325-328). But Yet, Rododaphne's declaration of her lifelong intention of living alone and introspectively implies resistance although, ironically, places her more in demand.

Annazia, as a widow, has recovered from her grief sufficiently to find marriage still appealing and essential for a woman's life fulfillment and offers her unsolicited

²⁶⁷ The quotation is found in Sophocles, *Ajax*, I.293.

²⁶⁸ I Corinthians 14:34.

²⁶⁹ Silvia Montiglio, *Silence in the Land of Logos*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000.

wisdom on the subject most enthusiastically. She compares marriage to a “heavy and burdensome yoke” (ζυγος βαρυσ και κοπαστιο γομαρι, 334) that requires the cooperation of both the man and the woman in order to function well and efficiently. Since one depends on the other, the couple (αντρογονο, 337) depends on the individual attributes each brings to the partnership. When coupled that way, they complement each other and organize the feminine and masculine qualities for a common purpose. She gives the impression that marriage offers the possibility of equality as debated during the Renaissance.

She embarks on a lecture expounding on the merits of married life in contrast to the single life. She recollects her own happy married days shortened by the death of her loving husband and she is reminded of that loss each time she lies on her “widowed bed” χηρεμενο μου κρεββατι (II.4.365). Through her nostalgic reveries, Annazia exalts the married state through a number of examples of ordinary events that demonstrate the benefits of marriage and the way that love has kept her chastity intact. As she recalls the tender moments of her husband's embraces, she reveals a sensual specter of herself that has been denied as required by the dignity of widowhood and disavowed by her age. Annazia wants other women, especially her daughter, to embrace her enthusiasm about marriage. Rododaphne acknowledges that a husband may indeed lessen the level of loneliness (ραθυμια, 406) but, marriage, all the same, is a “heavy burden” (δυσκολο γομαρι) (415). “It is better for a doe to run free in the meadow than a cow with the yoke” (II.4.479-480) summarizes Rododaphne’s vision of marriage. The image emphasizes the levels of constraint within the confines of marriage and questions the way marriage impacts a woman's life.

Although Annazia’s enthusiasm about marriage sounds reasonable, her daughter’s

objections point to the flaws and risks rather than to the benefits of the practice. Using the same imagery of the yoke, Rododaphne offers a most cogent argument contrasting her mother's idealized views of marriage. Rododaphne's objections echo the words of young women in similar predicaments from Polyxena and Iphigenia to the more contemporary voice found in Tasso's *Rosmonda* and Chortatzis' *Panoria*. Unlike her mother's devotion to the marital enterprise, Rododaphne's opposition counters her mother's view that marriage not only completes but perfects a woman. She minimizes the celebrated attributes of marriage as she tells her mother that it "may be true that marriage offers companionship and to soften life's burdens" (II.iv.407-8). Rododaphne understands marriage as a representation of the "heavy yoke of slavery" (βαρυ ζυγο σκλαβιας, II.4.436) and, unapologetically, claims that a woman through the act of marriage only

loses her virginity
and exchanges her freedom with burdensome service all at once.
... δεν ξεφορτωνεται παρα την παρθενια της
κι αλλασσει κ' εισε δουλειη γιαμια τη λευτερια τση

(II.4.425-426)

Furthermore, she claims, "once the two precious treasures are lost, they cannot be rebought"

(δυσ οθησαυρους πολυτιμους, που μια χαθουσι, δεν μπορου πλιο να ξογοραστουσι, 427-428), conveying the material value attached to virginity and horror a woman endures at the loss of her physical integrity and intellectual and emotional freedom as well. It is for these reasons, she explains, that she has chosen to avoid "coupling with a man"

(την εσμιξη τ'αντρος, 463). "I am not looking to carry humanity's burdens"

(της ανθρωποτητος τα βαρη δε γυρευω, 464), she declares but to carry on a life based on her own good sense rather than on what others consider acceptable living, including her

mother. It is important to note that she does not claim that women are superior to men or that men are superior to women. What she claims is that she abhors what marriage does to women and she therefore concludes that the single life is superior to the married life. Such an understanding indicates an intelligent and cultivated mind which is undermined by tactics such as the excessive interest in the external appearances her mother promotes.

Annazia, however, is astute enough to expect her daughter's opposition to her proposal and anticipates the necessary action. The dispassionate, flatly-stated, "You were not born for yourself" ... δεν εγνηκες ογια την εμαυτη σου, (II.4.485), not only negates Rododaphne's arguments but restores the original purpose of the conversation. She has been nurtured in order to marry kings, and that includes to obey the commands of her brother who "wishes" that she place her "neck under such a sweet yoke" (γλυκο ζυγο να βαλησ του λαιμου σου, II.4.487-488), the marriage with Trosilos. Annazia's declaration is a harsh reminder of the expectations and requirements of daughters and forces her to concede. Besides her interest to ensure a successful marriage pact, she wants to ensure the continuity of her legacy, that is, she wants Rododaphne to obey, imitate, and continue the prescribed social roles. Thus, Rododaphne's desire to remain unmarried, single (λευτερη) becomes an illicit passion that cannot be indulged and must be constrained. As the sister of the king, she recognizes her role is nothing more than to be at his service, a (δουλα) his slave, despite her royal title, she is as much as subject to his will as the most common citizen. Another fact is that Annazia will not accept a negative response. Therefore, as if to reduce and soften the menacing intentions the proposed marriage implies, Annazia appeals to her daughter as a mother by reminding her that she is approaching the end of her life and she needs to see her settled happily

with a family and to have the opportunity to play with her grandchildren before she dies. Annazia's pleas underscore the emotional extortion women exercise on other women.

However, before Rododaphne can accept her brother's mandates and her mother's instruction, she must understand that she is bound by social expectations defined by her social status. When she is told in no uncertain terms she has no choice, she understands that she cannot exercise her will. She must begin to see herself as a woman whose lot is determined by the fact that she is a woman. Rododaphne abruptly consents to accept the guidance of her wise mother (503-504) and act as a dutiful daughter is expected to act, "as a servant, mother, to your command" (ὡς δούλη σου, μάνα, τσ' υποταγῆς σου, II.4.308). Annazia overturns resistance by exerting her authority and restores marriage to its exalted position as a necessity for the continuity of the family and the community. For Annazia, convincing her daughter to conform to the identity and role of an imperial princess is consistent with the social expectations of a woman's function that dominates *Rodolinos*. The initial spirited and well-argued refusal to defy the tradition and then to bow to the "sweet yoke" of marriage is not as surprising as it appears.

Her future ruthlessly blocked, the actual purpose of the meeting is accomplished. Annazia addresses her recalcitrant daughter exactly the way mothers were expected to prepare their daughters to assume their social roles. The direct and logical objections Rododaphne voices amount to little more than echoes of young women who experienced the same kind of coercion. The outcome of this exchange expresses the suffocating despair imposed on daughters who serve to salvage and preserve lineages. The kind of treatment Rododaphne receives from her mother is not exceptional or unusual but historically conventional. Surely, the exchange between mother and daughter was meant to draw attention to the issues involved in marriage rather than offer any real options to

the young woman who was destined as substitute bride.

For Rododaphne to change her mother's mind about marriage was an impossibility. Annazia views the marriage as a bargain that reinforces the "homogeneity and hierarchical structure" (Montiglio, 80) and ensures the continuity and preeminence of her own country as a political power. Her attempt to resist marriage is stifled. The disagreement between mother and daughter ends with Annazia triumphant while the defeat for Rododaphne is harrowing. Rododaphne's inability to escape marriage in an arrangement in which she is crucial, conceptualizes the larger rigid aspects of the familiar dilemma. And yet, even as Rododaphne accepts her mother and brother's commands, her "deep sigh" as she leaves her mother, reveals much more than if she continued to defend her position. As she accepts her fate and retreats, ironically, she embraces silence, the woman's ornament, which "signals the unbridgeable distance between mother and daughter" (Montiglio, 291).

However familiar the arguments in the debate of marriage are presented through the mother-and-daughter exchange, it offers a sober corrective to a tendency to idealize relationships between women. The concession to her mother's demands, Rododaphne's response suggests her practical understanding that chastity is only an ideal that exists for a single woman only in a utopia or a convent, not a plausible destiny for a woman, and that it is in her interests to accept the marriage Trosilos offers. Faced with the conflict between her own desires and her family's interests, Rododaphne recognizes that she ought to obey in silence what her mother tells her, (αφουκραται τση μαννα τση τση φρονιμησ ωις ο,τι τση διηγαται, (II.4.503-504). Even if her pursuit of chastity is admirable, in order to remain a good woman, she must obey the obligations of her position.

Rododaphne's tragedy does not arise from extreme ambitions but from her desire to retain her independence without the inherent constraints of her role as an imperial daughter but she cannot escape the historical circumstances. Rododaphne is presented as a young woman who hopes to escape such a fate, but, by the end of the discussion, her hope is "extinguished and dead" (σβηστη και νεκρωμενη, IV.1.20), destined to marry against her will because of her mother's wishes and the orders her brother delegates. Rododaphne's character is blameless yet she is doomed simply because of her aristocratic birth and complicated by family circumstances. Despite the circumstances that render her ineffective, as a woman in this cultural setting, she could not have denied her role recalling Rubin's observation that "women do not have a right to themselves" (117). And so, she finds a literary and historical lineage but gets no release from the bonds of tradition. Faced with a marriage she dreads, she pleads with Fate (Τυχη, IV.1.23), to not let her live (να ζησω μη μ' αφησεις, 24) if the situation cannot be changed.

The Revelation

"What are these gifts?" (Ποια 'ν 'τουτα τα χαρισματα, III.9.415), voicing incredible disbelief Aretousa asks as she examines the lavish gifts she receives from Trosilos. Her wonder at the sight of the gifts is not one of pleasure but an indication of the frightening possibilities the gifts represent. The first gift is a portrait of herself dressed in a military costume. Sofronia's intuitive comment about the "intentions, plans and acts of others will be revealed as time passes" (αμ' ο καιρος θωρω πωςπραματ' αλλα χωνει, κι αλλων καρδιες και λογισμους και πραξεις φανερωνει, (III.9.531-532), alerts the reader. She is portrayed donning a shining helmet (κασιδι λαμπροτατο, III.9.421) and holding a sheathed arrow

(βερτονι ξιφωμενο, III.9.422)²⁷⁰ and surrounded by myrtle and palms (μυρτια και βαγιοναν, III.9.426). But the object that causes her to shudder is the recognition of the “greatly crafted diadem” (διαδημα πλουσοτατον, III.9.431). She recalls the time, the place, and the hour that she bestowed the crown to the disguised victor of the joust her father had arranged in order to find a suitable husband for his daughter who would avenge the blood of his son. It did not matter who the man was as long as he agreed to kill Trosilos, (του γδικιωτη αγια ταρι του τασσοντας να με δωσει, IV. .480) and Aretousa was regarded as the prize. The realization that Trosilos possesses *that* particular crown firmly establishes the identity of the triumphant contender as none other than Trosilos and arouses her anxiety and suspicions. The crown then unveils another part of the deception and moves the plot forward.

The crown recreates the event in Aretousa's mind and fastens the past to the present. However, since she is unaware of the arrangement between the two men, the meaning of the gifts remains obscure and she is at a loss. Sofronia tells her that as Rodolinos' friend, it is appropriate to send gifts to the bride. Trosilos by sending the gifts masks his real intentions and does not reveal his desire for her. Certainly she becomes agitated at the sight of the crown and, by not having to face Trosilos, she can look at the gifts over again and to speculate why Trosilos sent them just before the scheduled wedding ceremony with Rodolinos is about to take place.

Confounded as she is, she begins to rationalize the way the crown ended up in Trosilos' possession. If the participants in the joust were aware of the purpose of the competition, she reasons, then the winner would have accepted the terms to marry

²⁷⁰ The definition for βερτονι ξιφωμενο is according to the glossary accompanying the play as βελος, an arrow, but lacking the bow which suggests an ornamental and probably symbolic purpose.

Aretousa and to avenge her brother. The victor of the competition, “clad in black and riding a black steed” (μαυρη στολη ντυμενος, κι' ειχε μαυρο αλογο, 499-500) accepted the crown, had it placed on the helmet that concealed his face, did not identify himself and left immediately without claiming his prize. As she begins to ask, “Where did he find it? Who gave it to him? Why is he sending it to me?” (που το ’□□□; τις του το ’δωκε; γιαντα το πεμπει εμενα; (529), the possible answers become incomprehensible and alarming. She realizes that the disguised contender must have been Trosilos. “What daring! (τετοια αποκοστια, 525). But how did he intend to carry out the vengeance on behalf of her family? Implicit in his actions is the risking of his life to participate in the joust since he entered enemy territory. And, if indeed it was him, she surmises, then he must love her from afar (κουρφην αγαπη τοσην, 525), but now he has come to claim his prize. She recognizes that indeed she is between two men who both love her. Certain that Rodolinos has the answers to her questions, she proceeds to meet with him to have the matter clarified.

Aretousa’s suspicions and apprehensions are not left unanswered for long.

Rodolinos’s having failed to confess his betrayal to both Aretousa and Trosilos, he bluntly informs her:

Ο Τρωσιλος ταιρι του σε πεθυμα, Αρετουσα;
 μεγα ν’αλλαξεις βασιλιο με βασιλιο μεγαλο,
 γι’ αντρα τον ενα νε δεχτεις εμπορειες και τον αλλο!

Trosilos wants you as his wife, Aretousa;
 you will exchange one great king for another as great,
 if you can accept one as your consort, you can accept the other!
 (IV.3.170-172)

The intention of this cold and hastily-presented information is not to admit to the facts that led to this predicament or to reveal his anxieties but rather to steer Aretousa into

a sense of helplessness and acquiescence.²⁷¹ The stunning revelation renders her practically lifeless (κι' αληθινα κ' επιστεψα πως πεφτω αποθαμενη, 175), as if her mind were blotted out, grasping the enormity of the situation. For all her astonishment at the turn of events, she refrains from expressing her anger and distress as her bewilderment collapses into a new understanding of the real role in this transaction. “He sold me” (μ' επουλησε , 179) she tells Sofronia, as a piece of property, confirming her belief that the purpose of the marriage was to dominate Carthage (η Καρχηδονα αρεσει του και θελει την εκεινη, 159). This conclusion becomes even more plausible by the news of her father's death which now elevates her to the anticipated position as queen, and thus makes her assumption more than plausible. “But,” she continues as she elaborates the matter, “is the buyer taking me as his slave or his mistress?” (αγοραστη του / με παρνει, ωσα σκλαβα γη ως αγαπητικη²⁷² του, IV.3.179-180). In contrasting “slave” (σκλαβα) and “mistress” (αγαπητικη), she exploits the heavy historical meanings associated with these terms and formulates the moral and political premise of the transaction between the two men. Outraged and humiliated at the injustice and the betrayal (αδικια και προδοσα, 144), she becomes acutely aware of her vulnerable position, especially the impression that he can exert total control over her because she loves him.

She recoils at the proposition of exchanging one man for another as she grasps the distressing truth and the ramifications such an act implies. More importantly, through the unexpected mandate, Aretousa recognizes the misrepresented terms of the marriage to which she is bound. This new awareness totally changes her. His chauvinistic attitude

²⁷¹ This scene is reminiscent of Hamlet when he tells Ophelia to “Get thee to a nunn'ry” (III.1.121) where it is difficult to discern his true emotions or the sincerity of his words.

²⁷² “Αγαπητικη” translates into lover, but in this context, the inference is that love is not part of the equation and that fact the a buyer (Trosilos) is involved, transforms Aretousa into human stock.

becomes more evident as he places Aretousa once again within the system of exchange Rubin discusses, only, this time, it is not her father who trades her, but her purported husband, who has no right to do so as Sofronia observes (*μ' άλλον βασιλιον ανομα προξενα τη*, IV.5.328), without interrupting her functional use as the goods in an exchange. Faced with the fact that marriage to either man represents a deplorable future for her and that she cannot possibly combat the two men who as kings do as they please without providing a reason (*βασιλιοι το θελου καμνου παντα / διχως να λενε ογιαντα*, IV.5.332), she deliberates her options.

Her outward silence at the stunning revelation of the exchange Rodolinos has planned with Trosilos, humiliates and compromises her perception of herself. Up to this point, Aretousa has been presented sympathetically as a beautiful woman caught in a web of deceit, and as a dutiful daughter and loyal sister who accepted the responsibility to avenge her brother. Her experience speaks to others who suffered similar fates and binds them to her plight. She masks her distress in silence especially that, despite all her efforts, her brother's death will not be avenged, a recognition of the original reason for becoming a player in the marriage alliance comes to the forefront. Love becomes peripheral and secondary; it certainly does not provide the solution Sofronia anticipated and hoped. In fact, quite the opposite results since love factors as the agent of dissolution of the three kingdoms, as predicted by Melloumenon in the prologue.

The betrayal she has suffered is underscored in the discussion with her nurse and becomes more poignant as her isolation becomes more apparent. Even as an aristocratic woman, she remains a foreigner (*ξενη*, IV. 426), alienated from both societies caught between two contested worlds, and perceives herself as ill-fated, doomed (*αριζικη*, V.5.334). “Today,” she says, “it became evident that the damage is real, my

shame undeniable and my betrayal unmistakable”

(αληθινή είναι η νε εζημία, βεβαία η ντροπή μου και δίχως λάθος φαίνεται σήμερα η προδοσή μου, IV.3.103-104). She recognizes that Rodolinos has violated all the terms by which their marriage agreement was established and by his violation her personal integrity is ruined. Compelled by the humiliation that has compromised her whole being, she chooses to display her strength of character through sheer will and finds the incentive to face her situation by taking the only recourse available to preserve her social position.

Estimating that her reputation is far more valuable than living a disgraced life, she wants to prevent the disclosure that the “daughter of the king of Africa was despised and abandoned (Δε θέλω αφήσει ν' ακουστεί πως καταφρονεμένη / η θυγατέρα τσ' Αφρικής του βασιλίου απομένει, IV.3.231-132) at all costs. Driven by the desire to protect her reputation, she responds to the “κομπομα,” the metaphorical knot that keeps everyone bound to each other, by initiating her own campaign of vengeance. Faced with the need (ανάγκη, 483) to absolve her family from shame, the terrible burden brings her to a point of extreme vulnerability. By orchestrating and controlling the circumstance of her own death, she unleashes “her personal hatred for the disgraceful type” the two men exemplify (Zeitlin, 220).²⁷³ Instead, like Phaedra, as Froma Zeitlin writes, she “desperately seeks to repress her desire” and face her moral responsibility. Unlike her confounded portrayal of the first act, she is presented as dignified, composed, and assured. She would rather die than live with the shame and “save the honor by which she defines herself in her eyes and in the eyes of others” (220)²⁷⁴ pointing to the value of

²⁷³ Froma I. Zeitlin. *Playing the Other: gender and society in classical Greek literature*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1996.

²⁷⁴ Froma Zeitlin. *Playing the Other: gender and society in classical Greek literature*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1996.

public opinion to a person's identity.

Once Aretousa accepts the reality and significance of the situation, she does not plead with Rodolinos, she does not rave, curse him, or devise a scheme to cause a change of heart nor does she ask for help from anyone. Sofronia describes Aretousa's understandable anguish and voices her concerns that “she might kill herself” (βάλθει να σκοτωθει, IV.5.342), especially since she locked herself in her chambers for about an hour and there is no sign of her. Just then, two of her ladies appear to confirm Sofronia's fears. The pain of my honor²⁷⁵ (ο πονος της τιμης μου, V.7.483), as she tells Sofronia, provides the incentive to either accept the conditions of the marriage Rodolinos proposes or to resist.

Aretousa's Choice: Undoing the Knot

Looking at suicide as it is presented in *Rodolinos*, the act is linked to the ideas of honor and shame. When an individual chooses, as Aretousa does, to end her life, through this act she becomes “a moral witness” and “has the capacity to act as a critique of the mode by which the aristocratic community is currently constituted” (Timothy Hill, 23).²⁷⁶ Besides by presenting suicide as a requirement for a person's honorable restoration, the act promotes a kind of behavior that is sanctioned and praised. Aretousa's suicide, therefore, is not only essential for the recovery of her individual honorable reputation but serves an important function as a social and political act. The decision to willingly die, “to retain dignity by dying from her own hand rather than being shamed” (Garrison 22), proclaims publicly that she was wronged and her action will not only provoke a reaction but also undo the knot, (κομπομα) that has been directing the drama and provide a

²⁷⁵ Honor or time (τιμη) here is used here with the classical sense of worth, status, or social standing.

²⁷⁶ Timothy D. Hill. *Ambitiosa mors: Suicide and Self in Roman Thought and Literature*. New York: Routledge, 1994.

resolution.

That honor and shame are indeed strong incentives for ending a life and while frustrated erotic desire may be another element for her decision, the act is an expression of power. This idea corresponds well with what Sharon W. Tiffany claims of “modes of political action involving expressions of power,” are not necessarily limited to “public administrative roles” but include “manipulation, bluff, influence, gossip, ... or suicide” which may turn out to be a very effective form of political action (45).²⁷⁷ Similarly, Aretousa's choice offers her a way out of the hopeless prospects of her situation. It is not therefore an uncontrollable impulse that propels her to take such action but reasons that “are in themselves entirely lucid and rational,” (Hill 24).

The staging of the suicide as a spectacle provides the opportunity to scrutinize Aretousa's character and to verify all the virtuous qualities with which she has been ascribed. As Timothy Hill writes about Dido, the scene of the actual suicide, very dramatically indicates her sense of purpose “to both display an awareness of her lapse of the ethical standards demanded of her, and to demonstrate the erotic desires that led her to this lapse form a valid aspect of her social position” (105). Although Aretousa and Dido are not exact parallels, their fates resemble each other in their respective exploitation and in their efforts to evade the loss of their honor. Their methods of ending their lives is also very different.

“I have chosen, as you have witnessed, to die today,” she informs her attending maids who have, indeed, observed her gulp the poison that guarantees to kill her (φάρμακι δυνατόν, 391) from a golden vial, “for the reputation of my race and all

²⁷⁷ Tiffany, Sharon W. “Models and the Social Anthropology of Women: A Preliminary Assessment.” *Man* (NS), 13 (1978): 34-51.

Africans”²⁷⁸ (για την τιμη του γενου μας κι' ολω των Αφρικανω /
 εδιαλεξα ωσαν ειδατε, σημερα να ποθανω, IV.2.389-390). The added emphasis on
 γενους μας , our race, makes it clear that she is dying in the name of her people and they
 are all included in her action and what that action represents. If, indeed, her suicide is
 triggered by the reasons she claims to her female attendants, then she is operating in an
 entirely rational and clear-headed way which places love in a secondary, if not, non-
 essential position. It strongly suggest that her choice to kill herself is not only for her
 sake, but for theirs as well. The fact that Rodolinos and Trosilos violated the terms of the
 arranged marriage and, by extension, all she represents, implicates their honor as well.
 That Aretousa's choice will be emotionally and personally understood by the witnesses,
 regardless of gender, is expected because the act stresses the positive value of such a
 sacrifice for the collective not only the individual. Her act embodies a powerful example
 and imitates past heroines whose actions set ethical standards. Classical literature and
 historical accounts abound with female characters who willingly ended their lives for the
 sake of a principle, especially in defense of chastity and family. One of the most notable
 and most-often revived examples is, of course, Lucretia whose loss of chastity caused her
 to commit suicide. As such, Lucretia opened the way to future glories. Similarly,
 Aretousa faced with the present ruinous realities through her resistance provides a similar
 opening for the restoration of the glorious past.

She controls the scene suitably dressed as a bride and a queen, she retains her
 innate nobility and her position as the monarch of Carthage which she inherited following
 her father's death. Sofronia and the women who accompany her have assembled to
 witness her death. She reminds her friends that her death will allow her to join her father

²⁷⁸ It seems that Africa and Carthage are synonymous and interchangeable.

and her brother to tell them of her misfortune and that the reason she has chosen to end her life is “for her honor and theirs” (για την τιμη τωνε κι ογια την εδικη μου σημερο με το θανατο τελειωνω τη ζωη μου, IV.7, 541-544). she also instructs them to look after one another, to return to Carthage/Africa (στην Αφρικη να στρεψετε, IV.7.502), to take all her beautiful clothes and precious jewelry for themselves, but, most of all, to bring her ashes back to her mother (τον αθο μου σ' τση μανας μου να παρεις (IV.7.495). The request she places on her nurse and her companions, (φιλαινε| Καρθηγενε| μου, IV.7.387), obligates them to provide one final honor. More importantly, such a duty ensures her continued existence in their memories, just as she kept her brother's memory alive.

She also tells them that when her soul leaves her body, her spirit “will force Rodolinos to stand by her” (στανωδς να στεκει μετα μενα, IV.7.434), suggesting a marriage beyond mortal existence. While the suicide scene evokes the fusion of wedding and funeral rites, this idea prompts the image of the “bride of Hades” whereby her death is no less than a marriage. But despite her love and her loyalty to him as a wife, she still must subdue the “arms of anger and the angst of [her]soul” so that she her “hand may end the pain of [her] shame” (λειπουσιν οπλα του θυμου, μανητα της ψυχης μου, για να τελειωσει ιν χερα μου τον πο νο τσ' εντροπης μου; IV.3.213-214).

When Rodolinos is informed of Aretousa's imminent death, he runs to her side. As she lies dying, he holds her and confesses his love for her. “My beloved, Aretousa,” he asks her, “what caused the death of your glorious beauty and killed my soul and my sight is gone” (... Αρετουσα , / ποιο πραμαν εθανατωσε τα καλλη σου τα πλουσα, / κ' ενεκρωσε μου την ψυχη κ' επηρε μου το φως μου, V.2.209-211)? “You will die, as it is

destined, with my own hand” he continues, “against fortune's orders we can be together in Hades” (*Ας νεκρωθει, σαν ειν' πρεπο, με το δικο μου χερι, / στανιως τση τυχης να 'μεστα κιασ εις το Αδη ταιρη, 217- 218*). He tells her of his intentions of killing himself to avenge her death, at which point, she speaks with her eyes shut. “I could not live without you or to be shunned and rejected by you, and it seemed kinder, my heart, to die” (*εγω δεν ειχα μπορεση να ζησω διχωστας σου, / να'μαι στην καταφρονεση, να' μαι στην ορηγητα σου, / και πλι' αλαφορο μου φανηκε, καρδια μου, ν' αποθανω, V.2.232-234*). The intensity of their words give an erotic charge to the death about to envelop them. “Know that your death kills me” (*Ο θανατος σου το λοιπο, ξευρε, με θανατωνει, V.2.241*), he reassures her, and as the Chorus observes, “she regrets killing herself” (*το πως αποθαινε πολλα να μεταγνωσει, V.2.244*). The futility of this recognition is even more frustrating, and as she breathes her last breath, with tears pouring down his face, resolved not to survive Aretousa, “bares his sword and kills himself” (*γδυνει το σπαθι του και σφαζεται απατος του, V.2.306*), literally, slaughters himself. His confession redeems him and Aretousa dies knowing that he really did not intend to abandon her and his suicide affirms the ultimate demonstration of love for her. As death settles down on her, she is perceived by those attending as extremely radiant attributing the cause of her radiance to her noble behavior and to the power of love that will continue after death rather than the heroic behavior she exhibited earlier. In the end, their death is celebrated with grief while, at the same time, shaded by the bittersweet consolation of their marriage surviving in Hades.

But death does not stop here. Just before Rodolinos takes his life, he drafts a letter to Trosilos. When Trosilos reads the letter, he decides that life is not worth living under the circumstances and kills himself as well. And, finally, Rododaphne dies of

heartache. The last scene brings Annazia back and given the heavy burden to carry on. Her laments retell the grief of past losses and the despair of the moment compounds her anguish as she stands paralyzed before the future.

What makes their tragic end more tragic is that the disaster could have been avoided. Ironically, when Erminos explains to Trosilos the predicament in which Rodolinos finds himself. Trosilos, revealing aspects of his noble character that are only hinted at when Aretousa speaks of the disguised contender of the joust, agrees in the name of friendship to bow out as a potential husband for Aretousa and consents to marry Rododaphne. As Erminos points out, the triple alliance between the three kingdoms will render them invincible

(οι τρεις σας βασιλειαεσ αμαδι να σμιχτουσε, απου εχθρουσ σας να μπορουν ολους να φυλακτουσι, V.1.69-70), as the new alliance bound by imperial power and honor

(κομπο τσ' ευγενιαεσ και τση τιμηεσ, V.1.92). This last deadly irony intensifies the tragedy.

However, mentally Rodolinos and Trosilos fall victims to their own deceit and, Aretousa's oath to avenge her brother's death is realized. And, by the end of the day, the four imperial heirs adorn the stage lifeless, as the Melloumenon of the prologue predicted.

CONCLUSION

This study has focused on the role of the marriage plot, a theme that has been largely ignored by contemporary scholarship in three Cretan Renaissance texts – *Erotokritos*, *Panoria* and *Vasileus Rodolinos*. The texts present characterizations of women influenced by classical literature, the epics, ancient novels, and chivalric romances. The female characters are endowed with intelligence, courage, fortitude, and physical beauty. (They are always beautiful and usually blond.) But with beauty, intelligence and fearlessness, they are also powerful and potentially threatening. If, however, rebellious or unconventional behavior is exhibited, such as defying the father or denying one's obligations, the worst threat to the social order is exemplified. Rational women, honorable women, simply obey and embrace the responsibilities attached to their social status.

Misbehaving women, disobedient women, resist conformity but they also act as models of how not to behave. Ultimately, all three texts, each in its own particular fashion, introduce female characters who serve as examples. They become the pattern by which future generations of women will measure themselves and be measured. The rebellious but conformed women in the *Erotokritos* and *Panoria* are elevated to ideal female status while the victims of men who betray the order of the marriage plot, Aretousa and Rododaphne of *Rodolinos*, find release through death.

The literary construction of such characters presents one of the ways the women of Venetian Crete were instructed to act to reinforce threatened traditions. Although these three texts take place in diverse and mythical locations and times, they represent contemporary Veneto-Cretan society and the importance of women in sustaining precarious alliances. Bringing daughters into line, either through coercion or

unconcealed violence, is the objective in the different literary strategies of chivalric epic, pastoral and tragedy in these Cretan texts.

Each text communicates emphatically the expectations of daughters within the marital dialogue. Daughters who chose to marry out of their ethnic or social class, even with paternal approval, as shown in the historical “*Abduction of Aēdonitza*” of the first chapter, find themselves embroiled in a dangerously powerful public act. Intermarriage “required an adjustment of old arguments” (Duby and Klapisch-Zuber, 139),²⁷⁹ and although sanctioned by a treaty drawn between the Byzantino-Cretans and the Venetians, it threatened the loss of “ethnic purity” (McKee) and the women risked violence by stepping out of line and marrying out of their ethnic boundaries. Such restrictions allow in alleged cases of violation penalties including the violent abduction Aēdonitza endures. The act of abducting her publicly transforms her into an emblem of the violence and humiliation awaiting those who defy traditional practices which probably reflects the degree to which intermarriage was viewed as a contemptible practice. The abduction alludes to three major factors which impact on the social relations between the Byzantino-Cretans and the Venetians: the widespread and persistent uprisings between the Byzantino-Cretans and the Venetians; the family obligation to uphold the Orthodox faith by opposing intermarriage and thus perpetuating the myth of ethnic purity; and the explicit connection between female chastity as a reflection of the family's honor. The purpose of the abduction has to do with contemporary events; otherwise such a violent act would not resurface and the practice would have become obsolete.

Similarly, the protagonist of the *Erotokritos*, Aretousa, brings out the ever-present anxieties about female independence. By refusing to accept her parents' will and desire

²⁷⁹ Georges Duby and Christiane Klapisch-Zuber. *A History of Women in the West*. Vol. II. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994.

to marry the suitor they deemed worthy in order to strengthen dynastic ties, she challenges the established order. The concern of the parents is not their daughter's emotional state as much as the expansion of their political power. Aretousa, therefore, is depicted as the major figure who acts defiantly in order to preserve her autonomy (εξουσία) and to secure a meaningful life.

Moreover, the characters in all three works are all powerful in different ways and their characterizations are used to deal with the inherent tensions through the marriage plot. Because chastity and, by extension, sexuality, was fundamentally central to a woman's virtue and value, the loss of virginity or jeopardized chastity placed her in a highly sensitive position. For example, Aretousa of *Rodolinos*, is viewed as compromised because she succumbed to Rodolinos prior to the official marriage ceremony. In fact, Rodolinos expresses this concern very vividly during his confession to Erminos. The possibility that Trosilos will discover that she is “ruined” because of the loss of her virginity diminishes her virtue, but more importantly, the husband's honor and genealogical claims are jeopardized. In a similar manner, Yiannoulis, Panoria's father, expresses his fear the loss of her virginity will cause to her marketability as the wife to a choice member of the community.

Panoria and Rododaphne, Rodolinos' sister, who oppose marriage most fiercely and voice their objections logically and graphically, find themselves constrained by the historically constructed marriage institution. Panoria wants to remain single and roam the woods and Rododaphne has vowed chastity by devoting herself to Artemis. The desire to remain unmarried, to avoid what all others term as the “sweet yoke,” provides eloquent critique of their vision of marriage. Their objections echo Maria Equicola, *De Mulieribus* (On Women written in 1500 or 1501), who in an astoundingly perceptive

passage writes:

The woman is occupied exclusively at home where she grows feeble from leisure, she is not permitted to occupy her mind with anything other than the needle and thread ... ; then scarcely having passed puberty, authority [over her] is given to a husband; he erects and elevates himself a little more highly than his wife], he puts her in the household as in a workhouse, [treating her] as if she were unable to grasp the most important matters and hold the higher offices ... so that just as to the victorious go those conquered by war, in the same way the mind of even the most spirited women yields to habit. We cannot ignore the fact that we do not exist by natural necessity but that we form into groups either by example and private discipline or by chance and favorable circumstance or even through all these lines (224).²⁸⁰

But what choices do they have? In the case of Rododaphne, she is persuaded by her mother to accept Trosilos as her husband and to bow to her daughterly obligations. In *Panoria* the use of a magic spell is intimated, and, when that strategy fails, divine Eros intervenes to culminate the marriage. The image of the matchmaker highlights the condemnation of what seems unchaste behavior, partly because she is viewed as a witch and partly because she is considered sexually available. Eventually the opposition is quelled and the acquiescence of the female characters ensures the continuity of the tradition and the reproduction of traditionally sanctioned practices.

Although women were viewed as dispensable and interchangeable because of their potential as wives and mothers, approval is given to the characters who voluntarily choose to sacrifice themselves for the sake of country or family. Thus, Kornaros inscribes the *Erotokritos* both within and in contrast to the Renaissance tradition and presents the marriage plot by reinventing the chivalric romance. In general, he highlights the way love causes turmoil to the traditional social and political structures but, finally, allows that love plays a significant role in conjugal harmony which carries over to

²⁸⁰ Cited in *Declamation on the Nobility and preeminence of the female sex*. Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim. Translated and edited by Albert Rabil. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1996.

amiable and effective rule. Aretousa of *Erotokritos*, in her Penelope-like emulation, makes choices that in the absence of Rotokritos heroically uphold the promises of their clandestine marriage. Similarly, Aretousa of *Rodolinos*, in her voluntary albeit culturally prescribed role of marrying on the condition that her brother's death is avenged by her husband, by her suicide ensures the honor and reputation of herself, her family and her country.

As objects of exchange among men, women find it difficult, if not impossible, to create solidarity among themselves. When they are married, they represent patriarchal power against the wishes of their daughters, as we see in the representations of the mothers in *Erotokritos* and *Rodolinos*. The only women who are sympathetic or apologetically supportive of the young women are their nurses who are, above all, devoted, reliable and fearful of any change because of the disturbance and the punishment that may follow. These stereotypical docile nurses act out of a subordinate position. Single women and women who refuse marriage are the most vulnerable. They have no real existence outside of the social order. They might fantasize a life alone in the woods or a life celibacy but, in these texts, their rebellion fails. Panoria is subdued and brought back into marriage by the magic of Eros' violent penetrating arrows, and Rododaphne, refusing marriage, dies. The attention each character triggers for her defiance and the punishment or reward received exemplifies the domination of the woman within the household and reflects the domination of the larger social arena of the mythical country where each of the marriage plots unfolds. The defiance is essential in order to expose the extremely regulated aspects of the institution of marriage and the need for marriageable women to comply with the demands of their civic roles. As Judith Herrin observes on the arranged marriages of aristocratic women, it becomes evident

from the plot that royal women and probably most wealthy women were expected to abide with a future determined by others (260).

The proposed marriages as they are depicted in the three texts are either arranged or forced by the parent(s). The language used to describe the situations is tinged with pessimistic overtones and dark omens, most prominently, the image of a living death or a life of enslavement. The foreboding sense akin to death dominates at the prospect of separation from all that is familiar, mainly the familial structure. The separation also implies the absolute sheltering of the young women and the anxiety and emotional trauma the sudden release from the family's intimacy and the relocation to a new family caused. In fact, death seems preferable, if not desirable, in most instances. And since a marriage resulted from an agreement between two families sometimes a peace arrangement between feuding families, the woman's role was to demonstrate and affirm publicly a new alliance between families, sanctioned and legitimized through the marriage rite. In these texts, the wedding ritual sanctifies the sexual union and seals the commitment of the couple "to procreate" and to ensure "the pledge of their respective kin to exchange property" (Muir 37). The women who are used in these marital exchanges for the economic, political and social benefit of their families, experience marriage differently than their male counterparts. Marriage imposes restrictions, especially on women, and looking at the marriage plot closely "disabuses us of the notion that marriage has the same impact for one sex as for the other" (Kelly 3).²⁸¹ It is not surprising then that despite the happy endings of *Erotokritos* and *Panoria*, the reformation of the young women is necessary before they are integrated in the society where widely-accepted social conventions are restored.

²⁸¹ Joan Kelly. *Women, History, and Theory The Essays of Joan Kelly*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984.

The outward expression of the wedding ritual was not always necessary to validate a marriage, however. The mutual consent of both parties constituted a legitimate marriage. Yet, disapproval is more evident toward the women who consent to their own seduction. Consequently, Aretousa, the *Rodolinos* heroine, whose father accepted Rodolinos' formal request for her hand in marriage, suffers for the premature consummation prior to the official wedding. Still another example is found in *Erotokritos* where the mutual promises of fidelity by the young lovers are made and the ring Aretousa gives Rotokritos symbolizes the emotional and future sexual union of the couple. In this case, the nursemaid serves as a witness who silently and disapprovingly accepts the choice her young mistress makes.²⁸² Unlike the marriages in *Erotokritos* and *Rodolinos*, *Panoria's* protagonist requires the divine presence of Aphrodite and Eros to perform ritual and legitimize and consecrate the marriage.

Drawing on data based on Byzantine arranged marriages which continued till recent times, Judith Herrin and Angeliki Laiou have examined the practice, and two particularly striking aspects about Byzantine marriages emerge. The first involves the wide age gap between the typical bride and groom – she was young, often still a child,²⁸³ while the bridegroom was usually over thirty. How physically lovely the bride was or how enchanting her personality, mattered very little since the social benefits were far more important. In fact, there is no reason to assume that the couple had even had a glimpse of each other until the designated day of the ceremony. In contrast, the couples

²⁸² Aretousa's suicide in *Rodolinos* which was staged as a spectacle can be acknowledged as public confirmation of the promised marriage and the retrieval of her honor. Similarly, in *Erotokritos*, an official wedding is performed to confirm the acceptance of the couple as heirs to the social status the parents held.

²⁸³ Judith Herrin cites the case of Simonis was married to Kral Milutin of Bulgaria who was forty years her senior and raped her at the age of eight. She could not bear children and, after “an utterly miserable life she was eventually widowed and permitted to return to Byzantium” (Judith Herrin, *Imperial Feminine* 35).

of the Cretan Renaissance texts are compatible in age, physical appearance and in intellectual capacity (although the women seem more determined and decisive). The second important feature involved the negotiations over the dowry arrangements before the union or transaction was approved and legitimized. Marriage required the “trafficking” of young princesses in order to solidify political alliances between aristocratic houses. The arranged marriages were regulated by the principal males of the family and involved the exchange of women and property. This practice persisted till the end of the empire and beyond.

Similar to the historical accounts involving the exchange of woman and property and the woman’s value based on her family connections, the texts capture the conflicts arising from the clash of political aspirations and economically-based interests and expose the contradictions that characterize such practices. The texts highlight consistently the subordinate position of the woman where autonomy is curtailed as she remains under the protection of male relatives. The consolation prize is a household of her own which she may have had no desire to acquire. Aretousa of the *Erotokritos*, Rododaphne of *Rodolinos*, and Panoria compare marriage to a yoke, a form of enslavement, the fate that every woman since ancient times sought to avoid. Ironically, the men did not want their women to be taken captive, but these same men practiced the actions they detested in other men. At the same time, as the would-be bride of *Rodolinos* makes clear, the aristocratic woman is fatefully measured by the reputation that comes with her social status. Her reputation, bound up with her chastity, assured the legitimacy of the next generation and confirmed the honor and authority of her father and husband. The marriage plot therefore reveals the way with which women were constrained, slandered, or elevated, depending on the circumstances.

Furthermore, when examining the exchanges between the female characters in the three texts, the dominant voice is one that instructs conformity and the daughters have no other choice but to either conform or die. The exchange between the more mature women and the young uncooperative maidens opens up “a range of alternatives and resistances around notions of femininity and the areas of knowledge and life events commonly associated with it: sexual desire, motherhood, reproduction, marriage, gender, sexuality” (Rasmussen 23). These female representations show the way the marriage plot restrains women and perpetuates the long established practices that have kept female power yoked within tradition.

Dutiful daughters were forced to engage in incredible struggles in their efforts to escape or alter their fated lives. These attempts to break free from the background staged by the ancient, Byzantine, and Venetian influences are thwarted and the re-enactments of centuries-old traditions resurface to negate the heroic attempts of the women. Despite the nobility, tenacity, strength, energy, and persistence with which women faced the struggles imposed on them, often by the demands of their own families, they could not escape their fate. It seems the only choice these women have is marriage or death. In each attempt to escape her fate, the woman is held back and remains hostage to her situation. Just as Crete could not escape her fate as a valuable colony, the women in the texts are concrete reflections of their circumstances as valuable objects of exchange.

If we apply the representations of the marriage plots in the three texts to women living in Venetian Crete, a fair index of the society in which they were written emerges. As the experiences of the female protagonists reveal, marriage was still central to a woman's identity and her role in the social and biological reproduction essential. It also becomes evident that the daughters' resistant energies and desires had to be tempered and

disciplined. Marriage in these texts emerges as an institution that questions and challenges the illusory “perfect union” and verifies the notion of forced marriage (στανιο στεφανι) as the daughters refer to marriage.

This study began by suggesting the significance of the marriage plot as a central device to maintain social and political structures. Any conclusions that may be drawn regarding the significance of the marriage plot based on the evidence gleaned from the three texts in this study reveals the serious political purpose the practice performed as a mechanism used to permit fathers and kin to exercise their power at the expense of daughters, sisters, or women, in general. Ultimately, the marriage plot is used to explore social and ethical questions in a context that keeps the marriage debate in the forefront and places women in roles that embody and challenge their settled functions.

However, despite the designated roles women had in these social and political constructs, the texts redirect us to imagine that the women of Venetian Crete did not simply accept the way they should think, feel, and act without resistance. Instead they not only “speak but argue and examine and question everything” (Foley, *Female Acts*, 333) quite vigorously in their attempts to articulate their opposition to their intended “instrumental function” (Rasmussen 23). It becomes quite clear that the practice of arranged marriages was widespread and that marriage was compulsory and considered as the most important event in defining a woman as a woman. However, we should remain wary that the outspoken, resistant characterizations were created in order to “initiate political reform” (Benson 2). Rather, these images of the female characters were used to reinforce and naturalize dominant practices. In what appears to be a sympathetic attitude toward the position women hold, the authors “defend their society and their own literary voices against new womankind,” and in the end, this “self-defense succeeded”

(Benson 2).²⁸⁴

The marriage plot as presented in these texts confirms the importance of literary texts in contributing to our insights into the history of a place and the people who lived at that time, especially in areas such as Venetian Crete where the documents representative of the time are limited to documents such as wills, marriage contracts, property transactions, or court records. To reconstruct the historical realities of the women of Venetian Crete is an impossibility but reconsideration of the way the marriage plot is used to effectively control the female characters in the three texts, provides glimpses into the Veneto-Cretan world. Through the marriage plot, daughters are kept in line by channeling their desires – physical, spiritual, or other – in ways that ensure familial honor, status, and power. Reading the marriage plot in these texts, thus, demonstrates the ways in which the exchange of women functions as a very effective and indispensable means of sustaining established order. Even though these three texts, especially the *Erotokritos*, have elicited several studies, a thorough knowledge of the literature of the Cretan Renaissance requires the efforts of critics and literary historians. If current scholarship supplies the needed critical response, these texts will reveal a most powerful and complex literature waiting to be mined.

²⁸⁴ Pamela Joseph Benson. *The Invention of the Renaissance Woman The Challenge of Female Independent in the Literature and thought of Italy and England*. University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania University Press, 1992.

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