

Kornaros's *Erofil*

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Anyone familiar with Tzortzis Chortatsis's *Erofil* and Vitsentzos Kornaros's *Erotokritos* can see in them the twin masterpieces of late 16th- to mid 17th-century Cretan literature. It appears that Konstantinos Sathas was the first to note briefly their affinity¹ and Stefanos Xanthoudidis, editor of both, the first to summarise their parallels and reversals in the plot, characters and names, and to provide the first samples of verbal similarities,² on which subsequent research mostly focused for a long time. The 1980s editions of the two works by Stylianos Alexiou and Martha Aposkiti (and Alexiou's brief account of the works' relationship)³ have encouraged a shift of interest towards their poetics. As a result, recent research has approached facets of their deep connection and expressed the "working hypothesis" that *Erotokritos* may be a "reaction, an answer" to, or a "revision" of, *Erofil*.⁴ It is

¹ K. N. Sathas, *Κρητικόν θέατρον ή Συλλογή ανεκδότων και αγνώστων δραμάτων* (Venice 1879), p. ξξ': "η διάταξις, εν μέρει δε και η υπόθεσις [του *Ερωτοκρίτου*] έχουσι στενήν προς την *Ερωφίλην* σχέσιν."

² Stefanos A. Xanthoudidis, Εισαγωγή, in: Βιτζζέντζος Κορνάρου, *Ερωτόκριτος*, έκδοσις κριτική γενομένη επί τη βάσει των πρώτων πηγών, μετ' εισαγωγής, σημειώσεων και γλωσσαρίου υπό Στεφάνου Α. Ξανθουδίδου (Heraklion 1915), pp. CXXIV-CXXVI.

³ Stylianos Alexiou, Εισαγωγή, in: *Ερωφίλη. Τραγωδία Γεωργίου Χορτάτση*, επιμέλεια Στυλιανός Αλεξίου – Μάρθα Αποσκίτη (Athens: Stigma 1988) (and reprints with improvements), pp. 73-4, the edition employed in this paper; Vitsentzos Kornaros, *Ερωτόκριτος*, κριτική έκδοσις, εισαγωγή, σημειώσεις, γλωσσάριο Στυλιανός Αλεξίου (Athens: Ermis 1980).

⁴ See, respectively, Wim F. Bakker, *Ο ποιητής της Θυσίας του Αβραάμ* (Διάλεξις εις μνήμην Ν. Μ. Παναγιωτάκη) (Heraklion: Vikelaia Dimotiki Vivliothiki 2003), p. 12, and Rosemary Bancroft-Marcus, "Chortatsis's *Erofil* and Kornaros's *Erotokritos*: two masterworks of the Veneto-Cretan Renaissance", in: S. Kaklamanis (ed.), *Ζητήματα ποιη-*

my strong conviction, too, that *Erofilī*, to put it in current terms, is the main intertext of *Erotokritos*. One step at a time: allow me to focus here briefly on their respective plots.

Erofilī

Prologue. Death (Χάρος) introduces Chortatsis's drama in a highly elaborate *memento mori*. The audience, however, need not be afraid of him today: he came to this palace in order to kill, before the end of the day, the king, his daughter and a soldier, as Zeus's justice demands. You are no longer in Crete, he says, but in Egypt; this is Memfi (Memphis), and Zeus has made you come here to take example from Filogonos's end and stand fearful of wrong. Glory is like a spark, wealth like dust, and your names are erased as if written on the sand by the sea.

I. In his opening monologue, Panaretos is caught between strongly conflicting opposites – an elaborate series of pairs we'll re-encounter in the play and in *Erotokritos*.⁵ He states that, although his love has been fulfilled, he suffers as if it had not; and justly so: he knows that he has fallen into an error, over a precipice,⁶ and that he deserves to be bitterly tormented by his afterthoughts. To ease his mind and seek help, he has decided to tell his faithful friend Karpoforos what he has done and kept secret so far. Thus *Erofilī*, unlike *Erotokritos*, begins as it ought to according to poetic theories of the period: *in medias res*.

Partly for this reason, the second scene is by far the longest in the play, covering most of the first act in its function as the

τικῆς στον Ερωτόκριτο (Heraklion: Vikelaia Dimotiki Vivliothiki 2006), p. 304. See also Wim F. Bakker, “Ερωτόκριτος και Ερωφίλη. Διακειμενικότητα και ποίηση: ο Πανάρετος και ο Καρπόφορος στον Ερωτόκριτο”, in: *Ζητήματα ποιητικής στον Ερωτόκριτο*, pp. 291-301.

⁵ On various Petrarchistic motifs in Kornaros's work see Michalis Lassithiotakis's research, now mostly collected in: Michel Lassithiotakis, *Littérature et culture de la Crète vénitienne* (Paris – Athens: Daedalus 2010). They are certainly not confined to *Erofilī* and *Erotokritos*; however, their reiteration in the latter in relation to the former probably deserves closer attention.

⁶ *Εγκρεμνός*, as in *Erotokritos*, II 1414, III 152, III 1164.

exposition through Panaretos's narration of what has happened so far.

But first, our hero is recommended by his friend as a person who rightly deserves the king's high favours because of his fine conduct, countless endeavours and praiseworthy virtues – and not because of destiny or fortune, as some people think. Zeus's grace has granted all people alike the sun and the sky, the stars and the moon, the earth, the wind, the sea. It is only he who works hard and struggles for what is good that will be rewarded.

Panaretos was not even five years old when he was brought to this palace. Only Karpoforos knows that he is a king's son, because the – unnamed – person who took him there urged him to keep it a secret. His host only knows that the boy came from Tsertsa. In Act IV (675-680), when Panaretos in chains finally reveals his identity to the king (to no avail), he provides more details: he is the son of Thrasymachos, the rich king of Tsertsa, Filogonos's friend, who had been defeated and killed by their common enemies.

Even though Filogonos was unaware of the boy's royal descent, he loved him as his own and had him raised together with his only child, Erofilis, a girl of the same age. Affections naturally developed between them. But when they came of age, they had to be separated, although they kept meeting at the palace. "Unbelievably", however, their love then rapidly grew and changed into a "fire of desire". Panaretos, just like Rotokritos, tried in vain to quench it at its beginnings, but it had got hold of his senses (κι όλα τα λογικά μου / μου πήρε, I 182-3). Karpoforos agrees that it is hard to uproot the tree of love growing deep in a young heart; most fortunate is the man who can free himself from such a slavery. He is hardly surprised though: mutual affectionate glances give birth to desire; and once desire settles in the hearts, people no longer have the power to expel it. On the contrary, Eros, full of anger, will only return to redouble his blows.

This is the state of affairs when war with Persia breaks out and Panaretos is put in command of the army by the king. Torn

between duty and love, he is obliged to opt for the former. In parting, however, mutual feelings become apparent though still unspoken. Without even the hope of ever being able to talk to his beloved about his desire and sufferings, Panaretos goes away to war trying hard to get killed. Instead, he returns victorious.

To celebrate the victory, a joust takes place; it is, of course, our valiant hero who wins. Before that, however, seeing clearly that Erofilis's feelings had not changed during his absence, he meets her in her chamber and asks for her permission to participate and for her precious favour (θέλημα και τη χάρη σου την ακριβή μου δώσε, I 316). She cannot give him what she already has bestowed on him ever since she met him, she declares and offers him the pendant she wore on her bosom. The tree of his love has just been watered and spreads out fast. He comes back after the joust saying that he cannot present her with his prizes as he ought to, for they are not suitable for maidens; he offers his body and soul instead. Aphrodite's child will soon reward him: their love is consummated. But first, Panaretos emphasises, ring and vows made the wedding.

It was precisely then, however, that he realised he should not have married the king's daughter in secret. What is worse, he cannot put an end to his error. As a result, love makes him suffer, overshadowed as it is ever since its fulfilment by regrets and fear: in case the king finds out about it, he is going to kill him; if not, he is soon going to arrange a suitable royal marriage for his daughter. Panaretos can only sigh and wish for his own death – to which he has already referred ten times! Yet, he'd rather be torn to a thousand pieces (as he will be) than be deprived of the sight of his beloved.

Exceptionally extensive though this scene is, in *Erotokritos* it actually expands to three and a half parts out of five: the unseemly love growing rapidly in the young heroes' hearts in Part I, the joust in Part II, the secret engagement in Part III and the war in the second half of Part IV. What is past when *Erofilis* begins is taken right from the start in Kornaros's work – strongly supported, though, by numerous other passages in the play.

In the following scene one side of Panaretos's fears is realised: the king has finally decided to accept royal proposals and marry his daughter – which leads us to the first half of Part IV in *Erotokritos*. Filogonos himself has grown older and has to see to the future of his kingdom after his death. So far he has been unwilling to let his dear Erofilis part from him, but now, before she gets too old to be married, he must. There is a choice between two proposals. On his way to tell her about them and let her choose, he also asks his counsellor(s) to consider the best option. The latter cautiously wishes for a match worthy of their sole and noble heiress, being well aware of the twists of Fate. And the Chorus, consisting of Erofilis's maidens, prays to Eros, on behalf of Panaretos, for their lady not to accept the match for fear of the king.

II. She does not, on the pretext that she cannot be parted from her father, as deeply moved Filogonos reports. Nevertheless, she has to get married. So, he is going to send Panaretos, who knows each king's powers, to persuade her to choose any of the two.

Finally Erofilis enters, accompanied by her horrified nurse, Chrysonomi, who has just been told of the secret marriage. Unlike Panaretos, his bride is certain that she has committed no error: for as long as she lives, she will not consider their love unworthy of her, hence she has no regrets. Yet, she suffers from terrible premonitions, even foreseeing the emergence from the royal graves of "a certain Shadow". And the dream she had last night, a loving pair of doves attacked by a vulture, surely depicts the couple's end to be brought about by her father.

Now the unique scene between the lovers, right at the centre of the play, is being prepared. But before it takes place, Panaretos is summoned by the king not to offer his advice as to the best candidate, but to be ordered to act as a matchmaker and persuade his own wife to accept marriage. And it is only now that we hear that the grooms-to-be are the kingdom's enemies, the ones defeated by Panaretos: the king of Persia and the king of the East. Now Filogonos's motivation is also revealed: his heiress's marriage to one of them will secure peace. In despair, Panaretos calls

for death as the only end to his sufferings in case – a near certainty – Erofilo yields to her father’s demand. Now that the king is beginning to show his real face, the Chorus recalls the golden age of quality and equality before greed and arrogance, in the guise of honour, settled in to end it and abolish freedom.

III. Laughter and tears, joy and sorrow are born together and alternate rapidly (a persistent motif in *Erotokritos*, too), Erofilo says, and blames her Fate as she sees that her happiness is about to turn to immeasurable pain. She was defeated in her war against mighty Eros, became his slave and gave him power over her heart; treacherous as he is, he is now ready to turn his false love into battle. This is when Panaretos joins her on stage.

Although his mind’s eyes can see that Erofilo has him planted in her heart, as she assures him, he nevertheless dreads her loss. “Για σέναν εγεννήθηκε στον κόσμο το κορμί μου” is her firm answer (“for you was my body born into the world”, III 150). But on he goes begging her not to forget him and agree to her father’s request. At long last he concedes that his unjustifiable anxiety must be due to the sudden turn of events (although he remains in a very confused state of mind, as his following monologue demonstrates). Together, later on in Erofilo’s chamber, they must work out a plan to dismiss the marriage proposals – it is there and then that their relationship will be revealed to Filogonos.

In a chilling contrast to the preceding love scene, the Shadow of the king’s brother emerges from Hades and we are finally informed of Filogonos’s past crimes. To seize the throne, Filogonos murdered his brother, who was the rightful king, and his two sons; moreover, he was united with his wife and had with her his only daughter. The day of divine justice has come; for punishment to be even heavier, Filogonos will see his daughter in a lover’s arms; the young man’s death will soon bring about the death of his child and his own. Delay, meant to give him a chance to repent, only made Filogonos worse. The Chorus praises the straightforward, unpretentious life of common people and condemns greed for glory and wealth, and Filogonos’s crimes because of it; he is

about to receive punishment, but, alas, their lady is in danger of going down with him.

IV. In Act IV the counsellor hears from Erofilis's nurse that the secret marriage has been revealed. He is amazed it ever took place, but believes that the king is to blame: he should have known better and taken precautions. Now Panaretos is in chains and the infuriated king is considering the cruelest revenge against the couple. He consents to hear what Erofilis has to say, in the presence of his counsellor and, for the first time, the commenting Chorus, only in order to be refreshed by her tears.

In confronting him, Erofilis courageously argues that a golden age of equal opportunities according to virtue, wisdom, valour and grace may still be possible, and at their will, since her husband has proved to possess these merits. She is brutally dismissed, while her maidens comment on the tyrant's cruelty. In the course of this scene, however, Erofilis gradually bends and admits her error in evoking her dead mother's sympathy for it. On the basis of Erofilis's arguments, and on the grounds that Panaretos alone has saved the kingdom from the enemies now asking for her hand, the counsellor attempts to bring Filogonos to his senses; in vain. The outraged king has decided to torture and kill Panaretos, but to let his daughter live to see his members separated from his body and to lament and repent for the rest of her life. And, needless to add, he does not believe Panaretos when he reveals his royal identity, but promises to reward him well for his services. The Chorus prays to the Sun to hide and send a terrible storm to destroy the palace and terrify the king, so that he abandons his evil thoughts and acts as a kind father.

V. In the final act, a messenger relates to the Chorus in every ghastly detail Panaretos's tortures and death. The raging king then placed the dead man's head, heart and hands in a golden basin which he intends to present to his daughter; the rest of the body was thrown to his lions and devoured. Filogonos is now fully satisfied: contrary to what certain people believe, only terror safeguards reign and it is now that he truly is to be considered a king. Erofilis has been summoned and she approaches with her nurse, to

whom she bids farewell, conscious that her end is near. Filogonos pretends to have forgiven the couple, even to acknowledge Panaretos's royal lineage (of which Erofilo hears now for the first time), and offers the macabre basin as a token of his generosity. When the terrified Erofilo finally uncovers it, her lamentations rapidly alternate with Filogonos's vengeful replies. Left alone by the "wildest of beasts", as she now calls her father, she sets on a long lament, first addressed to her beloved and then to her evil, deceitful destiny; in a final address to Panaretos to receive her body, she kills herself. Her maidens find her; Chrysonomi joins them and bitterly laments her mistress. They interrupt her, seeing the king approaching: they are determined to kill him. And they do, after he – ironically – comments that those who tread badly can only have a bad end and boastfully declares himself happy now: wealth is of no use without what *he* terms honour. The maidens abandon his corpse prey to dogs and leave to prepare their mistress's burial. All happiness and wealth is no more than a passing shade, a bubble in the water, a fire to die out sooner, the higher its flames rise.

Erotokritos

I. The tyrant's death has paved the way for the emergence of a righteous king, the very first character to be introduced in *Erotokritos*. The story is set in Greek, pre-Christian times and in Athens, "which gave nurture to learning and was the throne of what is noble and the river of knowledge" (I 25-26).⁷ Focus shifts from fictitious Memfi to the first of ancient glories Death in his Prologue to *Erofilo* (23, 25-26) emphasises he has destroyed forever: "Where are the Greeks' realms? [...] Where is Athens today, once renowned in arms and letters?"⁸ As opposed to the vaguely

⁷ Excerpts are adopted or adapted from: Vitsentzos Kornaros, *Erotokritos*, a translation with introduction and notes by Gavin Betts, Stathis Gauntlett, Thanasis Spiliadis (Melbourne: Australian Association for Byzantine Studies 2004) (*Byzantina Australiensia*, 14).

⁸ An amusing passage by Zuanne Papadopoli bears witness to a related image of Athens in 17th-century Crete. Rethymniots, he writes, "had a natural gift for poetising, to the admiration of all those from the other

“oriental”, similarly pre-Christian world of *Erofilī* (Egypt, Persia, “East”, Tsertsa, perhaps a milder version of extravagant settings in contemporary drama and opera, and certainly a way to take distances from “here” and “now”), Kornaros reconstructs Athens as the setting of the story and at the centre of the contemporary Greek lands that mostly constitute the geography of the work. The pre-Christian – or rather: non-Christian – setting, which Kornaros follows consistently,⁹ also serves to enhance his heroes’ moral achievement: they were “in love’s furnace with honour, something truly precious to be done at *such* times” (I 23-24).

The mighty king of Athens, then, Heraklis, is brave, “distinguished among all others, above the wise, first among the great, a model ruler, worthy in every way, whose speech was a lesson and law to mankind” (I 27-32). By contrast to Filogonos’s union with his murdered brother’s wife, Heraklis married young and his impeccable queen excels in prudence: a perfectly matched, loving couple. The delayed birth of their daughter is perhaps meant to find them ever wiser and caring for her. And Aretousa is worthy of such parents: she is a young maid of thirteen “adorned with all the graces and virtues”,¹⁰ just as her name (Areti: “Virtue”) indicates, topped with a strong inclination towards reading. The equally gifted eighteen-year-old Rotokritos is the son of the king’s most trusted counsellor; just as Filogonos originally loved Panaretos as his own, for the sake of the person who brought him to Memfi, this king, too, “for his father’s sake,

cities who got to know them. Regarding this it was believed, albeit groundlessly, that because Rethymno was located exactly opposite Athens – though at a great distance over the sea – by some unfathomable mystery that air which facilitated poetry penetrated as far as Rethymno.” See *L’Occio* [1696], edited with an English translation, introduction, commentary and glossary by Alfred Vincent (Venice: Hellenic Institute of Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Studies 2007), p. 216.

⁹ A unique mention of heaven and hell respectively (*Παράδεισο*, III 1498, and *κόλαση*, III 460) as well as other contemporary religious hints in *Erotokritos* are worth examining in relation to Christian thought underlying *Erofilī*.

¹⁰ I 65: Όλες τσι χάρες κι αρετές ήτονε στολισμένη. Cf. *Erofilī*, I 584: κι απ’ ολονώ των αρετώ τσι χάρες στολισμένη.

regards Rotokritos as his own child” (I 90). But frequenting the court, alas, “the palace boy” falls in love with the princess.¹¹

In spite of his efforts, Rotokritos falls deeper and deeper in love with unsuspecting Aretousa; the “insidious boy”¹² has cast an arrow straight into his heart. Unlike Panaretos, our young hero confides his secret love to his friend in time for Polydoros to warn

¹¹ Panaretos, the “sole branch of an uprooted royal line” (Prol. 105-6), unlike the dearly loved Rotokritos, has been deprived of parental upbringing. There is a hint that Filogonos’s affection for Erofilis is not a pure fatherly one (incest lies behind the story of *Orbecche*, Chortatsis’s model) – and a hint of irony in the very choice of his name (“he who loves his offspring”), one that will become a ghastly certainty in the course of the play. And Erofilis, an offspring of crime, never really knew her mother, after whom she was named (a detail probably also hinting at Filogonos’s incestuous inclinations). It is important that each of our heroines is a king’s only child: their choice of husband is crucial both for their respective kingdom and for the adversities it causes in the plot of each work. But the protagonists in *Erotokritos* are not orphans; all four parents are alive and well, loving and prudent, and, in time, will join in the celebrations of their dear ones’ wedding. However, there are two examples of the opposite, both in Part II, both connected to Rotokritos as David Holton (“Πώς οργανώνεται ο *Ερωτόκριτος*,” *Cretan Studies* 1 (1988) 165-6) has shown: Drakokardos, the elusive Lord of Patra, and the Cretan. The former is ugly, wild, solitary (he only sides with hostile Spitholiondas), heavily armed in rusty armour; in love, though, and in the hope that he will eventually win his unresponsive beloved’s heart. With his dragon heart and dragon looks, he has never known any joy or laughter. He loves nobody and always goes looking for trouble. The reason for all this is that his parents died when he was a baby and he was brought up by a sorceress. The Cretan Charidimos, too, fell in love, and he fell in love with a commoner – whom he married and killed in an accident brought about by her jealousy. His father “had died and left him as an infant of three days. His mother reared him without a father’s caress. [...] At the time he fell in love [...] he was completely on his own as both had died. There was none to talk to him or advise him” (II 595-8, 617-20). (Cf. Wim F. Bakker, “Τα τρία αστέρια της γκιόστρας”, *Θησαυρίσματα* 3 (2000) 341.) King Heraklis will not fail to emphasise (IV 269-77) the importance of parental care and guidance, above all in matters of honour. This is a detail, but one illustrating, I think, the care Kornaros has taken in presenting, right from the start, the ideal moral world in which his protagonists are brought up and to which they will respond.

¹² “Πίβουλο κοπέλι”, “πίβουλος [έρωτας]”: see *Erotokritos*, I 100, 1039, 2144, II 628, III 352, 1604. Cf. *Erofilis*, III 43.

him against it. How could he dare allow such a tree be planted in his heart? Royal courts have ears and listen, palace walls have eyes and see:¹³ the king (*this* king) may be kind, but errors concerning honour are ruthlessly punished. Rotokritos is fully aware he can never have what he longs for; also that death awaits him in case his feeling is revealed. But desire has spread out its roots, branches, sprouts, leaves and blossoms and has enslaved him; reason has no power over love. Rotokritos takes his friend's advice and stops visiting the palace. He'd rather die everyday an honourable death than one full of shame.

This is when his serenades begin. Hearing, copying and learning his songs by heart, Aretousa begins to fall in love with the unknown singer. The artful words Panaretos denies he has employed,¹⁴ did move this young maid into desire. The king's failed attempts to discover the serenader's identity¹⁵ only make her feelings grow stronger: no other singer compares with him, moreover he has given an early example of his excellence in arms. She struggles against her infatuation and seeks refuge in her favourite occupations, embroidery and books, to no end; she gives them up and becomes increasingly anxious to know who the gallant singer is: certainly the branch of a tall tree,¹⁶ she confides to her prudent nurse, Frosyni, who realises the full danger and tries in vain to bring her to her senses. She, too, knows her error, but she has no longer power (εξά) over herself.

The serenader's silence only made things worse for both parties. Although Rotokritos keeps clear of the palace, his heart's eyes are constantly fixed on Aretousa. In his second – and final – long conversation with his friend, Polydoros wonders how could

¹³ I 189-90: γιατί οι αυλές των αφεντών έχουν αφτιά κι ακούσι, / και τα τειχιά του παλατιού μάτια και συντηρούσι. Cf. *Erofilī*, I 129-30: γιατί τα ξύλα, το νερό, οι πέτρες και το χώμα / τω βασιλιάδων ολονών, έχουν αφτιά και στόμα, as first noted by D. A. Zakythinis, "Ο Ερωτόκριτος κ' η Ρωμοσύνη", *Ημερολόγιον της Μεγάλης Ελλάδος* (1931) 75.

¹⁴ *Erofilī*, I 325-32. Cf. *Erotokritos*, notably I 887-90.

¹⁵ Twice concealed: cf. his return to Athens in Part IV, and compare Panaretos's hidden royal identity.

¹⁶ Cf. *Erofilī*, Prol. 105-6, IV 552.

Rotokritos be in love without any response at all, as desire has to be nourished by mutual glances (a fact Karpoforos, too, had not failed to note). He has abandoned the one feature that distinguishes man from animals: reason. Rotokritos, like Aretousa, is fully aware of his error, but he, too, has lost power over himself.¹⁷ Once more he takes Polydoros's advice and leaves for a journey to Egripos in his company – one that corresponds to Panaretos's absence at war at this precise point of the story.

It is then that the joust is announced. Aretousa, full of desire and eagerness, sets out preparing a golden, adorned chaplet for the winner, certain of who that will be. The only problem is how to recognise him: on this occasion he will not be carrying a lute in his hands to strum and to sing. Rotokritos's absence will enable her to identify him with her serenader. Now that she knows, however, "her first cares ceased but others came, greater and with deeper roots" (I 1533-34). In spite of Frosyni's sermons,¹⁸ Aretousa, like Panaretos, is caught between love and fear; but Eros is more powerful than her father's right. Nevertheless, she stresses that her nurse need not worry: Rotokritos will not be allowed to touch even her finger until the circle turns and he becomes her husband. And in spite of Polydoros's attempts to protect them both, it will not be long before the two of them will start to exchange those indispensable glances.

The very first dialogue in *Erotokritos*, and one to be resumed soon, is between Rotokritos and his brotherly friend – in a direct reference to *Erofilo* and the long scene between Panaretos and his friend, after which Karpoforos, despite his promises of help, disappears from the play. In a marked, clearly intentional contrast with him, Polydoros will stay by his friend's side throughout the

¹⁷ See I 1195-6.

¹⁸ Frosyni, like Chrysonomi, is worried that she may be considered an accomplice; soon, however, the affection of both nurses for their protégées prevails over their fear. See *Erofilo*, IV 52-4: *κι απολπισμένη ολοτενιάς στέκω για μένα πάλι, / γιατί όσοι κι α γρoικήσουσι το πράμα, δε μπορούσι / παρά πως έβαλα κι εγώ σ' τούτο βουλή να πούσι, and Erotokritos*, I 1705-10: ...και θέλει πει και μια βουλή ήμουνε μετά κείνη...

work. But his main dialogue with Rotokritos, although split in two, is confined to Part I in a telling parallel to the unique dialogue of the two friends in Act I of *Erofilii*.

For the time being Rotokritos is simply, though incurably, in love; Panaretos and his beloved have consummated their love, and in secret, when Karpoforos hears his friend's confession. The concept of error, a fundamental issue in both works, has a very different content: in *Erotokritos*, as we have seen, stress is laid on the loss of reason, man's distinctive feature that sets him above the beasts, because of love; love thus enslaves those defeated by it, who subsequently lose power over themselves. This is the error both Rotokritos and Aretousa are perfectly aware they have committed: an error against free will, as Karpoforos, too, would agree. His friend's error, however, goes much deeper. As a matter of fact, it is enough for Karpoforos to hear of an error in order to turn his own words round immediately, even before he is told what that error was: Panaretos has ceased to be the all-virtuous man his name suggests. And as a consequence of his total and irreversible submission to it, he can never be his own master again, as Karpoforos originally thought and described; he is subject to fate, to destiny – and the heavens. The fruit Karpoforos bears cannot be delivered, so, far from betraying a – bizarre – deficiency on Chortatsis's part, he has to abandon both his friend and the play.¹⁹

As Kornaros's Poet puts it, echoing Karpoforos (*Erofilii*, I 185-92): "few are those who flee Eros; few are those who escape; few are those who win when they quarrel with him" (I 1053-4). Certainly not Karpoforos's friend or Erofilii. But Kornaros's work is not against love, and, next to the fully sympathetic way its

¹⁹ For more details see my "twin" paper "Η ανάγνωση της *Ερωφίλης* στον *Ερωτόκριτο*", to be published in the proceedings of Neograeca Medii Aevi VII (Heraklion, 1-4 November 2012). Cf. Marina Rodosthenous, "Youth and Old Age: A thematic approach to selected works of Cretan Renaissance literature", Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Cambridge (2006), pp. 95-110, 115-16 and 117-46, 159-60.

development is presented, this is what the outcome of the joust will demonstrate next.

II. The respective hero's absence and his participation in the joust on his return are crucial to the plot of both *Erofilii* and *Erotokritos*: the absence, during which Panaretos tries to be killed and Rotokritos to be healed, both in vain and both with no hope of ever even being able to let their beloved know of their feelings, consolidates mutual love, which becomes overt before the joust and expressed after.

There is only a brief mention of the joust in *Erofilii* and Panaretos's victory in it. Kornaros, on the other hand, composes nearly 2,500 lines in order to build the sophisticated world his joust serves. Part II has deservedly drawn most of scholarly attention to *Erotokritos* and in all likelihood still has a great deal to reveal, possibly also in the direction concerning us here. For the limited purposes of this paper, allow me simply to mention a few points.

The majestic appearance of the Prince of Byzantium, Pistoforos ("The bearer of faith"), leaves no doubt as to who is the eligible husband for Areti. The king pays him exceptional tributes and the queen awards him her prize, the precious flower – at which point Rotokritos feels that Areti became someone else's bride. And indeed, the marriage proposal Areti is to refuse in Part IV does come from him. This is a "correction" of the rather vague reference to the proposals by the king of Persia and the king of the East in *Erofilii*. What is more important, however, is that these proposals, which will determine the adverse turn of events in both works, are not made in *Erotokritos* by enemies seeking to protect their realm and are not welcomed by the king only as a means of securing peace for his kingdom. In *Erotokritos* it is a marriage between the past glories of Byzantium and Athens that is put forward – the two major "anachronisms" in an otherwise consistent, more or less contemporary world. In rejecting this well worth investigating, complex union, Areti opts for the present, if not – more accurately, perhaps – for the future.

The winner of the joust is Rotokritos, as he ought to be for a number of reasons: first of all, he himself needs Areti to see him fight and win the prize for Athens; his success does actually foreshadow his future victory for Athens in a real war, in Part IV. And since he knows he can never have her as his bride, he will be happy instead to keep the chaplet she has made always by his side (an interesting reversal of the prizes, presumably of a military sort, Panaretos cannot offer to Erofilis; by contrast, the Cretan can offer any prizes to his dead wife). His victory is not only a victory for Athens, it is also a victory of Love against its defiance.²⁰ For this, he is about to receive from his beloved not only the much desired prize but also her ring and vows. Now he has proved himself a champion for Athens and for Love; in time, he will prove himself truly worthy of both.

III. "The time and the moment has come for their sufferings to be spoken" (III 565). Aretousa must talk with Rotokritos and she finds a safe way, the famous iron-barred window. It is, however, her dialogues with Frosyni that are conveyed, not the ones with her beloved. At their centre lies the issue of error: because "the mistake which offends and wounds honour is not silenced in death, nor is hidden by the grave" (III 189-190).²¹ That is the error committed by Erofilis and Panaretos, though; and as Frosyni points out, "tardy regrets have no value" (III 291). Areti may still be struggling between her father's honour and fear, and her ever growing love; but although she is left with no power and reason, she is steadfast as a rock: she will make it clear to Rotokritos honour is above all.

When he asks to hold her hand, she firmly refuses: not until he becomes her husband with her father's acceptance. So she suggests that his father should go ahead with the marriage proposal. Too soon.

²⁰ Cf. David Holton, *Erotokritos* (Bristol: Bristol Classical Press 1991), p. 52 and Bakker, "Τα τρία αστέρια της γκιόστρας", pp. 357-66 and 371-372 in particular.

²¹ Cf. Tasoula Markomichelaki, "Ερωτόκριτος Ε 1191-1200. Ένα σχόλιο του Κορνάρου στην *Ερωφίλη*", *Κρητικά Χρονικά* 31 (2011) 183-94.

Pezostratos agrees to do it against his better judgement, forced by his son's threats to go into exile and die there. He begins by referring directly to the "golden age" chorus of *Erofilo* and the heroine's words to her father in Act IV, as to past respect for virtue rather than wealth and power; the latter pass but not the former: in line with Karpoforos, he declares that "not even the wheel, turn as it will, ever has the power to dissolve wisdom and virtue" (III 909-910). But then he utters the proposal. How could he, old fool? Areti is soon to marry the prince of Byzantium, the king tells her. Pezostratos is never to set foot in the palace again and his son is to be exiled.

This is when Areti decides it is time for them to be engaged. Unlike *Erofilo*, she discusses her decision with her nurse. Against Frosyni's strong objections (including her certainty that the king will kill Rotokritos should he find out) she argues that she will not abandon love even in the face of a hundred deaths. Certainly Frosyni does not want to lament over her dead body (as Chrysonomi did) when she (too) takes her own life. Assured once more that Aretousa's honour will not be harmed, Frosyni reluctantly agrees to stand as a witness to the engagement.

Although Rotokritos predicts that the king's unfounded anger will subside in time, and pretends he has not lost hope, he only does so in order to console his father. He is, in fact, in as desperate a state as Panaretos, fearing that his beloved will forget him and accept any royal marriage her father decides for her. She'll hear of his death in exile; until then, he asks of her to bring him to mind. He, on the contrary, will never care for another:

καλλιὰ ἔχω εσέ με θάνατο παρ' ἄλλη με ζωὴ μου,
για σέναν ἐγεννήθηκε στον κόσμο το κορμί μου.

A considerable number of similarly phrased passages in the two works has long been noted. This line, however, "for you was my body born into the world", placed word for word at the centre of *Erotokritos*, in the lovers' first – and in fact only proper –

dialogue,²² is clearly meant to refer the reader to the corresponding scene in Chortatsis's drama, in which it is pronounced by Erofilis in her effort to demonstrate her own everlasting loyalty.²³ Aretousa seals her eloquent speech with the vow that Rotokritos, no one else, will be her husband, and finally, just for once in the whole work, allows him to hold the hand offering him the engagement ring. For now, this is their marriage, she stresses – and there is no doubt as to which marriage, equally sealed by a ring and vows, she points at. In spite of it all, and more that is to come, Rotokritos, like Panaretos, will not be completely assured of her love and faith, until he puts her to the ultimate test in Part V.

IV. The king discusses with his queen his suspicions that Rotokritos had himself initiated the marriage proposal, even that the unknown singer was him; that would have made it easy for Areti to fall for him, too. Now that he is in exile and nothing has been heard about her, it is high time they arranged her marriage.

On a night of such a discussion, Areti, like Erofilis, had a frightful dream; she was in danger of drowning in stormy seas, then in a torrent. She dreads that Rotokritos is taken slave or drowned. Frosyni, like Chrysonomi, tries to comfort her, but she herself sees misery and suffering approaching. What she tells Areti, however, is extraordinary: "If dreams had such power, what would free will (φτεξούσιο) and wisdom be worth in men? It is man, not destiny, who decides his own actions, whether good or bad. Here the future is not determined nor do dreams have the power to bring a man tortures or woes. One sleeps according to how one has made one's bed, and the person who tells of such things is deemed mad" (IV 137-44).

Before evening, messengers arrived from Byzantium bringing their king's marriage proposal. Aretousa now realises that the dream was about herself. She goes to meet her parents supported,

²² Their less extended dialogue on the night before Rotokritos's departure can only be seen as its sequel; and in Part V it is Kritidis's story and Aretousa's lament, not a genuine dialogue and "officially" not one between Rotokritos and Areti.

²³ Cf. Bakker, *Ο ποιητής της Θυσίας του Αβραάμ*, pp. 12-17.

literary and metaphorically, by her nurse – like Erofilo on another, much scarier occasion. We follow step by step Areti's threefold refusal on precisely the pretext Erofilo had employed,²⁴ and the king's mounting anger. Heraklis, unlike Filogonos (II 1-14), is not fooled; his suspicions were accurate. He cuts off her hair, and sends her to the most horrible and dark prison along with Frosyni, a place reminiscent of the one in which Panaretos met his death.²⁵ He acts as a pitiless wild beast, not as a father, and Areti, like Erofilo,²⁶ does not fail to note it.²⁷

In prison, Areti expresses her despair in the darkest terms of Chortatsis's drama: whoever seeks grandeur, prides himself on his power, boasts of his wealth and ignores the fact that he is just a passerby, is a fool. All is vain – blossoms and flowers that pass and slip away; they shatter like glass, vanish like smoke. "O unstable fortune, you who know no pause but run and go hither and thither like mad. When you raise us to the heights, you seek the depths, and when you show us what is sweet, it is then that you poison us". Poor common people know no torments like these; but she, because she is the daughter of a king, must be "night and day afflicted by a thousand woes and tortures" (IV 591-646, 717-30).²⁸

"There is no other remedy like patience, my child", says Frosyni and continues: it is wrong, impermissible (ἀπρεπο),

²⁴ Cf. Emmanouil Kriaras, *Μελετήματα περί τας πηγὰς του Ερωτοκρίτου* (Athens: Byzantinisch-Neugriechische Jahrbücher 1938), p. 15.

²⁵ Compare *Erotokritos*, IV 585: Στην πλια χερότερη φλακή, στην πλια σκοτεινιασμένη..., and *Erofilo*, V 41-5: Στην πλια βαθύτερη μερά, στου παλατιού τον πάτο, / σ' τουνού του πύργου του ψηλού το βάθος αποκάτω, / σε μέρη τόσα μοναχά κ' έτσι σκοτεινιασμένα, / απού ήλιου ακτίνες φως ποτέ δεν έχουσι δοσμένα, / γείς άγριος τόπος βρίσκειται...

²⁶ See *Erofilo*, V 435-40: Ω κύρη μου, μα κύρη πλιο γιάντα να σ' ονομάζω / κι όχι θεριόν αλύπητο κι άπονο να σε κράζω, / πειδή περνάς στην όρεξη πάσα θεριό του δάσου, / και πλια άγρια παρά λιονταριού μου 'δειξες την καρδιά σου. / Θεριό λοιπό ανελύπητο παρά θεριό κιανένα, / για ποια αφορμή δεν έσφαξες την ταπεινή κι εμένα; Cf. *Erotokritos*, IV 484: Ωσά θεριόν αλύπητον, όχι σαν κύρης κάνει, and 497-508.

²⁷ Cf. Bancroft-Marcus, pp. 310-13.

²⁸ Cf. *Erofilo*, mainly in the Prologue, particularly lines 131-6, and I 559-76, II 49-60, III 397-414, V 667-74 – and more.

“when someone is afraid and, losing all he knows, abandons himself to torment and gives up hope. Ignorant people are lost and can do nothing, but many times the prudent overcome difficulties. If such sufferings befall a person who knows and understands, *he gains strength and wins the battle against fortune*. Those who have wisdom should neither despair, nor hope for too much, but follow reason” (IV 671, 687-94).

It is a battle Aretousa will not fight for the time being. But, still, she will not lose hope: hope of Rotokritos, even a little bit of it.

Three years go by, a fourth begins, with Areti in prison and Rotokritos in exile. The war against Athens that Rotokritos had spitefully wished for on his way into exile breaks out. Whereas the hopeless Panaretos had gone away to confront his king's enemies, Rotokritos, made unrecognisable, *returns* to fight in the *hope* of change. He fights like a dragon, like a lion against them, and also saves his king's life in a terrible battle. A counsellor suggests the unknown fighter should represent Athens in the crucial duel with Aristos (“The best”), the one to determine the outcome of the war. King Heraklis, having already attempted to offer the stranger half of his lands and succession to his throne, angrily dismisses him: in clear contrast to Filogonos, he would rather die than become ungrateful in old age. Luckily Rotokritos appears and offers himself to fight, to receive once again the gratitude of the king, who by now sees in him not just his heir but his own son. This is the right time for *this* hero to win the war.

V. At the point corresponding to the messenger's account of Panaretos's horrible death at Filogonos's hands, Rotokritos, originally (also) thought dead, finds himself in the caring hands of king Heraklis and in his friend Polydoros's company, lying in Aretousa's chamber and bed, slowly recovering from his near-fatal wounds. Still unrecognisable (perhaps a subtle reference to Panaretos's hidden identity?), he tells Heraklis “his” story, partly inspired by the Cretan's²⁹ and partly by Panaretos's (μικρός

²⁹ See Holton, “Πώς οργανώνεται ο *Ερωτόκριτος*,” p. 166 and Bakker, “Τα τρία αστέρια της γκιάστρας,” p. 350.

εξενιτεύτηκα..., V 159) and his own, and asks for Areti's hand. It is yet another proposal she is certain to reject. To accept it, first she has to confront her beloved's death and her Fate. This is why Rotokritos, like Panaretos before him, must "die" now.

In the Poet's much discussed address to Rotokritos ("It is wrong, Rotokritos, for you to do this...", V 723) Panaretos's anxieties in Act III are clearly evoked (once more) to excuse Rotokritos for what he is about to do: "Though he may stay all night in her embrace, when he rises, passion's torture racks him. He thinks he has lost her and she has renounced him. All day and all night he trembles in fear, always seeking a weighty proof from the one he loves. This mad concern tortures him time and again" (V 741-746).³⁰

In contrast to the pair of doves and the vulture in Erofilis's dream in which she foresaw her lover's killing and her suicide, a pair of pretty birds fly into Aretousa's prison and chirrup around her head. The "signs of joy" which precede the stranger's invented tale are misinterpreted by Areti, who believes she is following Erofilis's course step by step: her beloved is dead and she is to plunge a knife into her heart and join him in Hades.

Rotokritos's reported death, caused by a small poisonous bite, is far removed from the horrors of Panaretos's execution and the macabre basin. But death it is (supposed to be). Areti's lament (V 985-1048) is structured on Erofilis's: first she addresses Rotokritos, then her Fate and again Rotokritos. However, contrary to Erofilis, now the time has come for her to fight and win the battle against fate. "Through the memory of you I could overcome fortune"; now, what hope is there left for her? However, "now that hope is gone and lost from my heart, I no longer fear the sufferings inflicted by fortune. Today I became fearless; I no longer have anything to hope for; fortune does not matter to me; destiny does

³⁰ Cf. Dia Philippidou and Wim F. Bakker, "Και πάλι για το τέλος του *Ερωτόκριτου* (η τελευταία δοκιμασία της Αρετούσας)", in: T. Markomihelaki (ed.), *Ο κόσμος του Ερωτόκριτου και ο Ερωτόκριτος στον κόσμο. Πρακτικά Διεθνούς Επιστημονικού Συνεδρίου (Σητεία, 31/7-2/8/2009)* (Heraklion: Dimos Siteias 2012), pp. 77-87.

not command me". She will defeat them through her imminent death and her contemptuous references in plural: "You have no power over our souls. There are no fates, no destinies, no profits in Hades; enough with what you've taken". But her ultimate wish, "their souls to do in Hades what their bodies have not", cannot be fulfilled: no-one is dead. Now that they have both regained full power over themselves through their trials, it is time for Rotokritos to reveal himself and for the wedding to take place.

A righteous ruler like Heraklis is not simply grateful to the man who saved him and his kingdom and thankful that his daughter finally agreed to marry him and no other; he is also ready to concede his throne to the person proven worthy of it, for the full reversal of Chortatsis's drama to be completed.³¹ The reasons for his past anger no longer exist. Rotokritos "is not royal like us", he tells Areti while adopting Erofilis's arguments in Act IV, "but his grace is such that he is hailed a king for his strength and wisdom" (V 1423-24).

In an unmistakable reference to the Dedication of *Erofilis*,³² Kornaros proudly concludes his work after having his Poet stress to the readers not to fail amid dangers but always to have hope; those who are wise will not be lost in sufferings: the rose is born amid thorns, just as this faithful love overcame sufferings and ended in joy.

The dark world of *Erofilis* has given way to a just and serene world for those who have struggled successfully through adversities and trials to earn it. The burden of *vanitas vanitatum* weighing heavily both in the Prologue and Epilogue of the play is lifted in *Rotokritos*. And the demand set forth by Karpoforos, Erofilis and the Chorus is achieved here. The battle against Destiny, Fate, Fortune is won, in time, by virtue. In fact this

³¹ Cf. Bancroft-Marcus, pp. 318, 328-31.

³² Next to the common metaphor of the ship coming into harbour, mention of the "slanderers" finding fault in everything they see leaves no doubt as to the connection. Cf. Xanthoudidis, p. CXXVI, Krriaras, pp. 12-14, 17, and Komnini D. Pidonia, "Παρατηρήσεις σε κρητικά και άλλα κείμενα", *Κρητικά Χρονικά* 24 (1972) 279-80.

outcome is implied in the very first lines of the Prologue: “The circle’s turns that rise and fall, and those of the wheel that now mount high and now plummet to the depths, time’s changes that never rest but advance and speed to good and evil...” The circle, the wheel, is only once defined in Kornaros’s work: it is the circle of *time*.³³ But that would be the subject of another paper.

³³ “Ο κύκλος του καιρού”, IV 257. Cf. Holton, *Erotokritos*, pp. 58 and 60.