The poetics of plants in *Erotokritos* and *Panoria*

Tasoula M. Markomihelaki
Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

Καμίνι έχω στην καρδιά κι ένα δεντρό στη μέση
κι από τη λάβρα την πολλή μαραίνεται να πέσει.[1]
(A. Giannarakis, *Άσματα Κρητικά*, 1876)

In this paper[2] I propose to take us on a ramble through poetic woods, meadows and valleys, where we will try to pick as much "*flora poetica*"[3] as possible from the gardens that Vitsentzos Kornaros and Tzortzis Chortatsis have planted for their audience.[4]

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[1] I chose this *mandináda* as a motto for my paper because it combines two famous metaphors from *Erotokritos*, that of "του πόθου/τσ' αγάπης το καμίνι" (see also the simile "την καρδιά, που σαν καμίνι ανάφτει", I 632), and that of the tree planted in the heart, which is discussed later.

[2] I have preserved here the oral character of the lecture, mainly for sentimental reasons. The necessary footnotes and bibliographical references have of course been added. I wish to thank Professor David Holton for the honour of his kind invitation, and Alfred Vincent for improving my English and for the translation of *Panoria* extracts made especially for this lecture, before the translation by Rosemary Bancroft-Marcus became available. Wherever I use the new translation (see note 6 below), this is indicated in brackets [RB-M], and the verse numbering corresponds to that of her edition. In all other cases, verse-references are to the Kriaras – Pidonia edition, which was the most recent one at the time my lecture was first written. See: *Γεωργίου Χορτάτση Πανώρια*, Κριτική έκδοση με εισαγωγή, σχόλια και λεξιλόγιο Εμμανουήλ Κριαρά, αναθεωρημένη με επιμέλεια Κομνηνής Δ. Πηδώνια (Thessaloniki: Zitros 2007).

[3] Phrase inspired by the title of the English poetry anthology: *Flora poetica*. The Chatto Book of Botanical Verse, edited, with an introduction, by Sarah Maguire (London: Chatto & Windus 2003).

[4] A wider study on the landscape in Cretan Literature would be of great interest. See for instance, as a starting point, the volume Denis Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels (eds.), *The iconography of landscape: essays on the symbolic representation, design and use of past environments*

I assume there is no need to explain who Kornaros was and what his poetical romance is all about.[5] So I will just give a brief introduction to the other text, *Panoria,* and its author, and explain why I've decided to make a comparative study of the two.

Panoria is one of the three main plays of Tzortzis Chortatsis, the so-called "Father of Modern Greek drama", the author who (as far as we know from existing evidence) introduced Italian Renaissance concepts of drama to the Greek world. Chortatsis has also given us the comedy *Katzourbos*, the well-known and very influential tragedy *Erofili*, and a series of "Intermezzi", interludes, that is miniature dramas intended to be played between the five acts of the main play. All of his plays were written in the Cretan dialect and in rhyming couplets of fifteen-syllable verses. This distinguished playwright was a man of noble or bourgeois origin, with remarkable education and culture, well aware of literary developments in Italy. According to recent research on the identity of both poets, Chortatsis must have been one generation older than Kornaros.[6]

(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1988). Let us hope that the present study will be the first step towards such a project.

[5] For an informative introduction to this romance in English, David Holton's *Erotokritos* (Bristol: Bristol Classical Press 1991), and "Romance", in D. Holton (ed.), *Literature and society in Renaissance Crete* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1991), pp. 205-37, remain valuable.

[6] Introductory contributions on Chortatsis and his plays are to be found in the volume *Literature and society in Renaissance Crete*, chapters 4 ("The pastoral mode" by Rosemary Bancroft-Marcus), 5 ("Comedy" by Alfred Vincent), 6 ("Tragedy" by Walter Puchner) and 7 ("Interludes" by Rosemary Bancroft-Marcus). The book is also available in Greek translation: *Λογοτεχνία και κοινωνία στην Κρήτη της Αναγέννησης*, trans. N. Deliyannaki (Heraklion: Panepistimiakes Ekdoseis Kritis 1997). The most recent addition to the bibliography on this playwright is the impressive volume (over 600 pages) Georgios Chortatsis (fl. 1576-1596), *Plays of the Veneto-Cretan Renaissance.* A bilingual Greek-English edition in two volumes with introduction, commentary, apparatus criticus, and glossary, by Rosemary E. Bancroft-Marcus. Vol. 1: Texts and translations (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2013). See the Preface, pp. vii-xix. See also Stefanos E. Kaklamanis, *Έρευνες για το πρόσωπο και την εποχή του Γεωργίου Χορτάτση* (Heraklion: Etairia Kritikon Istorikon

Panoria is the only extant Greek play of the genre known in Italy as *tragicommedia pastorale*, the third genre of Italian Renaissance drama – the other two being tragedy and comedy. The adjective *pastorale*, "pastoral", means that the plot takes place in the countryside, especially in woody mountains and flowery meadows, and its main characters are shepherds and shepherdesses. Italian pastoral dramas are set in some unspecified period of Greek Antiquity on the mountains of a utopian Arcadia,[7] whereas their Cretan version takes place on the slopes of Mount Ida (Psiloritis), right in the middle of the island, between the capital Chandakas or Kastro (today's Heraklio) and Chortatsis's birthplace Rethymno.

According to travellers of the period, Ida had a well-wooded landscape, with numerous springs watering an abundance of orchard trees, vineyards, olive-groves, and cypress-dominated forests as well as culinary and medical herbs.[8] As Zuanne Papadopoli, a Cretan refugee in Italy after the fall of the island to the Turks, nostalgically recalls in the late 17th century:

Meleton 1993), and Spyros A. Evangelatos, "Γεώργιος Ιωάννη Χορτάτσης (ci. 1545-1610)», *Θησαυρίσματα* 7 (1970) 182-227; idem, "Νέες βιογραφικές ειδήσεις για τον Γεώργιο Χορτάτση του Ιωάννη (με ανέκδοτα έγγραφα που έχει συντάξει ο ίδιος) [Απόσπασμα από εκτενέστερη εργασία] Α΄ δημοσίευση", in: *Αμφι-Θέατρο Σπύρου Α. Ευαγγελάτου, συμπαραγωγή με το Δημοτικό Περιφερειακό Θέατρο Κρήτης, Γεωργίου Χορτάτση Ερωφίλη*, 1996 [performance programme]; and idem, "Μια δίκη (1582-1583) του Γεωργίου Χορτάτση του Ιωάννη", *Παράβασις* 3 (2000) 11-62.

[7] See for example: Terry Gifford, "Constructions of Arcadia", in his: *Pastoral* (London and New York: Routledge 1999), pp. 13-44; and the essays by W. H. Auden, "Arcadia and Utopia" [1948], and Laurence Lerner, "The Pastoral World – Arcadia and the Golden Age" [1972], in: Bryan Loughrey (ed.), *The Pastoral Mode: A selection of critical essays* (London: Macmillan 1984), pp. 90-2 and 135-54 respectively.

[8] Bancroft-Marcus, "The pastoral mode", pp. 79-80. Interesting information on the measures taken by Venetians for the protection of Cretan forests can be found in A. Papadia-Lala, "Η προστασία του φυσικού περιβάλλοντος στη βενετοκρατούμενη Κρήτη", in *Πεπραγμένα Η΄ Διεθνούς Κρητολογικού Συνεδρίου*, vol. B2 (Heraklion: Etairia Kritikon Istorikon Meleton 2000), pp. 177-85 (see especially 179-82).

> The mountain itself was surrounded by trees both wild and cultivated, and made delightful by the sound of precious waters which would splash down everywhere.[9]

It is therefore to be expected that the role of plants in Chortatsis's pastoral play should be central and not merely decorative.

Kornaros's narrative poem also takes place in an undefined ancient era, but mainly in an urban environment, in the city of Athens. It is not a pastoral poem. So what's the point of making a comparison with Chortatsis's *Panoria*?

The fact that Kornaros was closely acquainted with Chortatsis's work is supported by various studies on the intertextual relationship between *Erotokritos* and the tragedy *Erofili*, the most recent of which has been presented in this lecture series by Natalia Deliyannaki.[10] But what about Kornaros's acquaintance with Chortatsis's other works? This is an intriguing question. As David Ricks pointed out 25 years ago, "The style of *Erotókritos* needs to be made the subject of a detailed study through comparison with other literary texts belonging to various *genres*."[11] So when

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[9] Zuanne Papadopoli, *Memories of Seventeenth-century Crete. L'occio (Time of leisure)*, edited with an English translation by Alfred Vincent (Venice: Hellenic Institute 2007), p. 168. Greek translation: Tzouannes Papadopoulos, *Στον καιρό της σχόλης. Αναμνήσεις από την Κρήτη του 17ου αιώνα*. Εισαγωγή και σχολιασμός Alfred Vincent, Μετάφραση του *Occio* και επιμέλεια Ναταλία Δεληγιαννάκη (Heraklion: Panepstimiakes Ekdoseis Kritis 2012).

[10] See "Kornaros's *Erofilî*" in the present volume of *Κάμπος* and "Η ανάγνωση της *Ερωφίλης* στον *Ερωτόκριτο*" in the forthcoming Proceedings of Neograeca Medii Aevi VII. An earlier extended comparison of *Erotokritos* with *Erofili* was made by R. Bancroft-Marcus: "Chortatsis's *Erofili* and Kornaros's *Erotokritos*: two masterworks of the Veneto-Cretan Renaissance", in: Stefanos Kaklamanis (ed.), *Ζητήματα ποιητικής στον* Ερωτόκριτο (Heraklion: Vikelaia Dimotiki Vivliothiki 2006), pp. 303-53. In the same volume, see also Wim Bakker, "*Ερωτόκριτος* και *Ερωφίλη*. Διακειμενικότητα και ποίηση: ο Πανάρετος και ο Καρπόφορος στον *Ερωτόκριτο*", pp. 291-301. Both papers include earlier bibliography.

[11] "The style of *Erotókritos*", *Cretan Studies* 1 (1988) 239-56 (241); a few lines below, Ricks suggests the comparison of Kornaros with Chortatsis: "Above all, we have Kornáros' most distinguished con-

Professor Holton invited me to give a lecture that would examine *Erotokritos* in comparison with Cretan drama, I thought of *Panoria* as a good starting point since the two works share at least one common feature, Mount Ida: on this mountain is set not only the whole action of *Panoria* but also an "unexpected and poignant pastoral digression nested within the description of the stormy, black-clad champion of Crete, Charidhimos of Gortyni" in *Erotokritos*.[12] So, starting from the mountain, there is revealed a whole world of trees, plants and flowers worthy of further and deeper examination, and – why not? – enjoyment as well.

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Panoria "centres on the loves of two pairs of shepherds, Gyparis and Panoria, and Alexis and Athousa. Two comic characters, Giannoulis, the father of Panoria, and the worldly-wise old woman Phrosyni, try to persuade the two shepherdesses to accept the advances of their swains. The successful outcome is brought about by the intervention of Aphrodite and her son Eros. The tragic posturings of the two love-sick shepherds are counter-balanced by the comic, and often bawdy, talk of the two older characters."[13]

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temporary, and possible rival, Hortátsis. It is certainly an attractive suggestion that Kornáros' plain style evolves by way of reaction to the more florid and ornate style of his contemporary."

[12] Bancroft-Marcus, "The pastoral mode", p. 81. See also Alfred Vincent, "Τραγούδια στο βουνό του Δία. Ο Ψηλορείτης σε έργα της Βενετοκρατίας στην Κρήτη", in: Iosif Vivilakis (ed.), *Δάφνη. Τιμητικός τόμος για τον Σπύρο Α. Ευαγγελάτο* (Athens: Tmima Theatrikon Spoudon Panepistimiou Athinon) [= *Παράβασις*, Μελετήματα 1], pp. 375-92. Information on the landscape of Venetian Crete is presented in Christina I. Mitsopoulou, Ο ρόλος και η σημασία της φύσης στο *Μαινόμενο Ορλάνδο* και στον *Ερωτόκριτο*. Unpublished PhD thesis, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Department of Italian, 2005 (http://thesis.ekt.gr/thesisBookReader/id/18989#page/1/mode/2up), pp. 92-5; specifically on Mount Ida, see p. 180 of the same thesis.

[13] David Holton, "Chortatsis, Georgios", in: Graham Speake (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Greece and the Hellenic Tradition* (Fitzroy Dearborn: London 2000), Vol. 1, p. 324.

As we said, in *Panoria* the setting itself places us in a rural landscape. We are on the slopes of the mountain, and we have indications, from the characters' speeches, that Chortatsis intended forests (I 1, II 235, 481), a meadow (I 307) and dales (III 340) with rich vegetation (I 10, II 165, 199, 203, 208, 481), a spring (II 235, 483-4) and a bay tree (II 522) to be depicted on the stage set.

In Chortatsis's play what initially attracted my interest is the way the flora depicted in the scenery becomes part of the story. It becomes involved with the characters, via two rhetorical figures: apostrophe and personification. *Apostrophe,* you will recall, is "a figure of speech in which a thing, a place, an abstract quality, an idea, a dead or absent person, is addressed as if present and capable of understanding", while *personification* is "the impersonation or embodiment of some quality or abstraction; the attribution of human qualities to inanimate objects".[14]

After the Dedication and the Prologue, the play begins with the young lover Gyparis desperately addressing the forests around him (and after that, the springs, the sheep and the mountain itself), begging them to leave him alone so as not to hear his deep sighs:

> Ye wooded groves, fly hence from me, depart,
> Lest I should scorch you with my lovelorn sighings!
> Within my breast a fiery furnace burns,
> And from my doleful mouth a flame emerges
> Which surely will ignite whate'er it finds,
> And may, I fear, fill all the world with cinders! (I 1-6) [RB-M]

Apparently the trees actually carry out his request, because a little later Gyparis admits that he saw "great trees and boulders / Uproot themselves to flee my woeful sighs, / Because they felt too sorry

[14] J. A. Cuddon, *A Dictionary of Literary Terms*, London 1987, pp. 53 and 501-2 respectively. A quite recent contribution on the second figure is the chapter "Prosopopoeia: the speaking figure", by Gavin Alexander, in: S. Adamson, G. Alexander and K. Ettenhuber (eds.), *Renaissance Figures of Speech* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2007), pp. 96-112, where the author examines, among other things, "its relationship with neighbouring figures, notably apostrophe" (p. 98).

for my torments" (I 74-6) [RB-M].[15] Trees are so much depressed by his sorrow that they prefer to uproot themselves in order to get away from him. The personified forests spend their day listening to his feelings, and the dales echo his complaints about Panoria's heartlessness; whereas elsewhere in the play we are told forests enjoy looking at her beauty and mountains step aside for her to pass. Panoria's beauty makes Ida's landscape burst into blossom. According to Gyparis:

> The hills and forests would rejoice to see her,
> mountains would stand aside to let her pass,
> fields burst into flower, wild herbs would bloom,
> plants flourished in their joy, trees filled with fruit (I 315-18)[16]

Forests and meadows even play the role of the protagonist's friend and confidant, when he asks for their advice, in Act II, on whether to kiss the sleeping Panoria (II 235-6).

Later, when Gyparis is about to attempt suicide, he first addresses all the natural world around him, including all the flora ("Dear World, your fields and mountains, trees, ravines, / Your rivers and your springs, your fruits and flowers, / I leave to joyful lovers to enjoy / As they deserve, together with their sweethearts", II 467-70 [RB-M]) in a lyrical farewell ("O forests, fields, and mountains, trees and grass, / ... I leave you life eternal in this world", II 47, 485 [RB-M]).[17] And even later, at the beginning of the Fourth Act, when no solution has yet appeared to Gyparis's

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[15] Similar pictures are to be found in Torquato Tasso's *Aminta,* one of *Panoria*'s models, as E. Kriaras, who has compared the two plays in detail, has shown: *Γύπαρις. Κρητικόν δράμα.* Πηγαί–κείμενον υπό Εμμανουήλ Κριαρά (Athens 1940), pp. 20-43, 113.

[16] For the relation of the scenery flora to Panoria and her grace, see also what Gyparis says in II 199-210.

[17] Cf. the farewell addressed to the forests by Amarilli in Guarini's *Il Pastor fido*, IV 751-6: "Dunque addio, care selve; / care mie selve, addio! / Ricevete questi ultimi sospiri, / fin che, sciolta da ferro ingiusto e crudo, / torni la mia fredd'ombra / a le vostr'ombre amate ..." Battista Guarini, *Il Pastor fido*, a cura di Ettore Bonora, edizione integrale commentata (Milan: Mursia 1977).

love deadlock, the desperate lover appeals to all plants to wither ("Today let meadows parch and mountains fall; / Let forests catch on fire and heavens darken; / Let streams run turbid, fountains cease to flow; / Let grasses wither, trees be smashed to splinters", IV 117-120 [RB-M]).

The young shepherd's dependence upon his natural environment is seen even at the very end of the play. In his happiness at Panoria's change of mind in deciding to accept his proposal of marriage, Gyparis doesn't forget his familiar forests, trees and flowers. The play ends the way it started: with his apostrophe to all the flora, which becomes a witness to his joy, as if it were human. Recognising their support in his drama, Gyparis prays that weather conditions may favour the plants' growing and flourishing:

> O, blessed forests, burgeoning with trees,
> with your green branches loaded down with flowers [...]
> who are witnesses
> to my delight, who saw my heart set free,
> since it's not in my power to give you gifts
> other than words to express my gratitude,
> I pray now to the heavens, the sun, the moon,
> the stars, the night, the dawn, to give you always
> abundant blessings, that no wind may touch
> this land of yours, no snow, no fire, no clouds;
> that shepherds may not ever bring their flocks
> to graze upon the grasses in your meadows,
> so they'll be left for ever green, untouched,
> fresh, flowering, ever fragrant, beautiful;
> so girls will gaze on you, young men will praise you,
> and weave you into garlands for their hair. (V 383-400)

A last, impressive personification is that of plants presented as being themselves in love. It seems that on the stage set there should be a representation of a plane tree with a vine winding around its trunk. Frosyni points out how many plants, just like people, need a partner in order to flourish and bear fruit:

But why do I speak of beasts? Trees also love;
That's why they don't bear fruit without a partner.
Lemon with citron often makes a match,
sweet apple trees join bitter oleander.
Look how this lovely vine winds tight around
that plane tree, holding it in close embrace.
Tell me, my girl, if they were separated
wouldn't they be just like orphans, each of them?
The vine would lie spreadeagled on the ground,
trampled all day by shepherds and their flocks.
Without the vine, the plane-tree would remain
alone, without its fruit, without its beauty.
Men too, without women, they're no use at all,
nor can a woman live without a man.
(III 107-12, 119-26)

In *Erotokritos*, references to plants in descriptions of the characters' environment are infrequent in proportion to the length of the text, and plants do not participate in the story in the way they do in *Panoria*, by personification or apostrophe. Forests are among the places Rotokritos is advised to travel[18] in order to forget his beloved in Part I (1243); there is a beautiful orchard in the grounds of his family home (I 1393-1400); Rotokritos travels through forests and meadows on his way into exile in Part III (1715-21); and later he sleeps rough under a tree while taking part in battles against the Vlachs. On three occasions a story embedded in the main narrative is set in a rural environment: Charidimos's father's sword was stolen by the father of Spidoliondas while its owner was sleeping under a tree by a spring (II 807-14); Charidimos and his wife lived happily on the slopes of Mount Ida until the fatal accident when he killed her by mistake (II 631-7); and finally Rotokritos's death, according to his own false account, was supposed to have occurred at a clump of trees, again next to a spring (V 903).

[18] For travelling as a way to forget the passion of love see Massimo Peri, *Του πόθου αρρωστημένος. Ιατρική και ποίηση στον* Ερωτόκριτο, μτφρ. Αφροδίτη Αθανασοπούλου (Heraklion: Panepistimiakes Ekdoseis Kritis 1999), pp. 75-8.

Of all these environmental features, the only one described in detail is the garden of Rotokritos's family home. Aretousa, her mother and her nurse have come to visit Rotokritos's sick father. Rotokritos's mother takes her distinguished guests out for a walk in the garden. The inclusion of the admiring reference to trees and flowers at this point cannot be fortuitous: at the end of the orchard, Aretousa spots Rotokritos's little garden house, inside which she will discover that the unknown night singer with whom she's fallen in love is Rotokritos himself![19]

> There was a lovely garden with perfumed trees –
> no other more beautiful existed.
> They went there, and she [Rotokritos's mother] held Aretusa's hand.
> Over her she scattered flowers that she picked. She showered her with roses.
> Where there was a fair tree they stopped and examined it.
> Aretusa took great pleasure in everything and gave praise.
> The plants were arranged with care and order
> and had been laid out with great artistry and skill.
> At the end of the garden there stood
> a dwelling, constructed with great artistry.
> This belonged to Rotokritos... (I 1393-1403)[20]

Towards the end of our account of the poetics of plants in the romance, we'll return to the above description to see how it relates to a central plant metaphor concerning Aretousa.

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[19] All the *Erotokritos* translations are from *Vitsentzos Kornaros, Erotokritos*, A translation with introduction and notes by G. Betts, S. Gauntlett and Th. Spilias [Byzantina Australiensia 14] (Melbourne: Australian Association for Byzantine Studies 2004). The translation is in prose and does not claim to be poetical; we have set it out here in lines simply to facilitate reference to the original Greek.

[20] Michel Lassithiotakis examined the same passage but from the point of view of description techniques: "Οι περιγραφές στον Ερωτόκριτο. Αφηγηματολογική και υφολογική προσέγγιση", in his volume: *Littérature et culture de la Crète vénitienne* (Paris – Athens: Daedalus 2010), pp. 383-4 and 397.

Yet, by contrast with the literal use of plants, trees, flowers and blossoms as part of the scenery, what impresses the reader or listener is their poetic exploitation as part of the overall poetics and rhetoric of the two works. Flora is used by both poets to enrich the imagery and to make their messages more intelligible to the audience. (We have already seen how this works in connection with personification.)[21] We will start with *Erotokritos*, and what better to begin with than the metaphorical use of plants for the depiction of the romance's dominant theme, Eros, erotic love.[22]

Part I of *Erotokritos*, where the poet describes how love was born and evolved between the two young protagonists, has far more *metaphors* and *similes* of Eros as a plant than any other part. Massimo Peri, who has demonstrated Kornaros's acquaintance with the medical bibliography of his time, believes that the love-tree metaphor derives from a passage in Ovid well known to authors of medieval medical books (p. 158).[23] The Ovidian idea is that "a big tree which now casts its shadow over a walker, when first planted was just a small twig; at that time it could be easily uprooted with one hand, whereas now its roots keep it firm." It is the same with Rotokritos's and Aretousa's love: their confidants, Polydoros and Frosyni respectively, are trying to make them uproot their socially unacceptable love before it's too late. Let's see how the theme of love is elaborated in terms of plant poetics.

As Tina Lendari has remarked, the tree of love is deeply rooted in lyrical and oral poetry and is a motif common to East and West.[24] At the beginning, declares the poet of *Erotokritos*, their love was a small thing, but eventually it began to put out side-shoots like the roots which make a plant firm in the ground: "να κάμη / αρχίνισεν απλοκαμούς σα οι ρίζες στο καλάμι" (I 102). But what's worse for the young protagonist is that an improper

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[21] Mitsopoulou, *Ο ρόλος και η σημασία της φύσης*, pp. 181-8, quotes some of the extracts that will discussed below.

[22] Holton, *Erotokritos*, pp. 57-60: "The poet's stated themes".

[23] Peri, *Του πόθου αρρωστημένος*, p. 158.

[24] Tina Lendari, "Ο *Ερωτόκριτος* και η ελληνική δημώδης μυθιστορία", in the volume *Ζητήματα ποιητικής*, p. 63.

love like his is as dangerous as a poisonous plant. His friend Polydoros insists on this point:[25]

> How did you dare to let such a tree be planted
> in your heart, unhappy one, to torture you?
> It has harmful leaves, a poisonous crop,
> and is laden with thorns from its root to its top;
> its flower is lethal, its fruit does harm... (I 175-9)

Similarly, for Frosyni, Aretousa's forbidden love is something "evil that takes root inside" a person (I 718).

Rotokritos repeats his friend's plant image, yet without the poisonous element: for him, his love is now a big tree with roots, branches, leaves and blossoms, depicted in just one verse, with *polysyndeton* structure but no adjectives at all:

> Gradually desire thrust me into the depths
> and sent out roots and branches, shoots, leaves and flowers. (I 301-2)

More impressive is the *metaphor* where the Eros plant is planted and grows inside the lover's body. The subject of this metaphor is the talk about Rotokritos's valour, which increases the young girl's love for him:

> Their words grew and flowered in her heart like trees.
> The shoots embraced and seized her soul... (I 624-5)

Eros that doesn't respect differences in social rank is like a harmful plant in a vivid *proverbial phrase* expressed by Polydoros again:

> Those who grasp stinging weeds and prickly thorns
> are all called fools. (I 219-20)

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[25] See also Lendari, ibid., and Tina Lendari, Οι "πρόγονοι" του *Ερωτόκριτου*, in: Kostis Giourgos (ed.), "*Ερωτόκριτος*. Ο ποιητής και η εποχή του", *Η Καθημερινή. Επτά Ημέρες* (11/6/2000) p. 23.

Once again, later in the romance, this improper love that should have been controlled at the start is compared to a young plant. According to Frosyni:

> Now that the wood is green, you can straighten it if you wish.
> When it dries out, you can only break it. (III 279-80)[26]

Love is an "illness", like a plant that cannot easily be removed once it has rooted. Frosyni wishes:

> ... that you had cured the ill at the beginning.
> But now that it has thrown down roots and fruited abundantly,
> [...] you must be brave in the war you have entered...
> (IV 676-7, 679)

As Peri has remarked, in all but one of these similes and metaphors Eros is shown in a negative light, as a hostile power which subjugates the lover.[27] The plant figures contribute to this; they are used mainly as an instrument of persuasion by those characters who are desperately trying, in the first part of the romance, to dissuade the protagonists from loving each other.

By contrast, when Aretousa talks of the tree of love, she depicts it as the power that gives life, relief and healing to both animate beings and inanimate objects:

> Not only humans, who have speech and intelligence,
> run to this tree of love to eat from it.
> The stones, trees, objects of iron, and animals of this world,
> all know passion and feel that it heals them. (III 1271-4)

In *Panoria,* on the other hand, we have no trees or other plants representing Eros, either negatively or positively. In this play, Eros himself appears as a character and delivers a monologue in the last Act. Introducing himself, he tries to refute people's accus-

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[26] Frosyni had already in Part 1 compared Eros to a tree: I 669-70.

[27] See Peri, *Του πόθου αρρωστημένος*, pp. 109-10. Some of the other hostile powers with which Eros is compared are: fire, a misleading dream, a wound, an illness, poisoned food, a net, a forest (ibid. p. 110).

ations. One of the benefits he offers the world, he claims, is that everything in it is nourished and blossoms, both literally and metaphorically, because of him: "Through me all things are nurtured, bloom and flourish" (V 24) [RB-M]. This is the only passage where Eros is connected with plants in the pastoral comedy.[28]

* * *

After the connection of plants with the main driving force of the two plots, what naturally comes next is the use of rhetorical tropes and figures in the depiction of young lovers. We will start with Aretousa, who is the real main protagonist of Kornaros's romance, despite the fact that the young man's name forms the title of the work.[29]

Vicky Panagiotopoulou has noted that the readers of *Erotokritos* cannot directly visualise Aretousa because the narration lacks a description of her external appearance[30] and Giorgos Kallinis has described the "portrait" of Aretousa which is built up in the absence of the female body in the romance.[31] Let us see how plants and flowers contribute to an image of the heroine.

From the very beginning of the romance, Aretousa is compared to a "tender shoot"[32] which grows "abounding in beauty, wisdom and grace" (I 57-8). In the eyes of Rotokritos, when he falls in love with her, every flower he sees reminds him of his beloved:

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[28] In the same playwright's *Erofili*, the plant of love appears twice in the First Act: vv. 185-90 and 343-50.

[29] "There is no doubt that of the two protagonists Aretousa is more fully and more sympathetically portrayed"; Holton, "Romance", p. 220.

[30] "Το ωραίο στον *Ερωτόκριτο*: οι αναγεννησιακές αισθητικές αντιλήψεις του Βιτσέντζου Κορνάρου", in: *Ζητήματα ποιητικής*, p. 106.

[31] "Το «πορτρέτο» της Αρετής. Από τις «προσωπογραφίες» ωραίων γυναικών της μεσαιωνικής και αναγεννησιακής μυθιστορίας στην απουσία του γυναικείου σώματος στον *Ερωτόκριτο* του Β. Κορνάρου", in: *Ζητήματα ποιητικής*, pp. 119-29.

[32] "Τρυφερό κλωνάρι". This recalls the name "Rodamne" in the romance *Livistros and Rodamne*, which also denotes a tender shoot.

> Where he saw a lovely tree adorned with blossoms
> he said, "That is Aretousa's lovely body."
> Where he saw flowers of a red hue
> he said, "So too are the lips of my beloved." (I 125-8)[33]

Yet "such a tree" is out of his reach, according to Rotokritos's friend Polydoros (I 1108). On the other hand, later in the romance, Frosyni, Aretousa's nurse and confidante, uses the same metaphor, but in a more elaborated form: Rotokritos is a gardener whose "hand is not worthy of reaching towards such a tree"; the apple tree and its fruit apparently representing the girl's virginity (III 76-82).

When the problems for the couple in love have started, Aretousa compares herself, in an extensive simile, to a "reed in the wind's raging". "Epic" or "Homeric" similes are part of the epic tradition with which Kornaros was undoubtedly familiar, as David Holton has shown:[34]

> Like the reed in the mischief of the wind
> which does not allow it to take any rest,
> but the winds blow it sometimes this way, sometimes that,
> and it goes up and down and is always trembling,
> even so do I too find myself – a curse on such an existence!
> (III 219-23)

Yet the extended simile which more than any other describes in detail the girl's emotional state in terms of flora vocabulary comes

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[33] "Moreover, the poet subtly and implicitly uses the metonymy of roses for Areti's cheeks and lips (IV 649) when he describes the movement of her tears": Marina Rodosthenous, "Youth and Old Age: A thematic approach to selected works of Cretan Renaissance literature", Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Cambridge, 2006, p. 38. Kallinis remarks on the same extract that "το ανθισμένο δέντρο είναι σαν το σώμα της αγαπημένης, τα κόκκινα άνθη σαν τα χείλη της, δηλαδή η θέαση της φύσης ανακαλεί την ομορφιά της κόρης ή, καλύτερα, η ομορφιά της κόρης προβάλλεται πάνω στην ομορφιά της φύσης. Η φύση θηλυκοποιείται, καθώς τα στοιχεία της αποκτούν ανθρώπινη διάσταση" ("Το «πορτρέτο» της Αρετής", p. 125).

[34] *Erotokritos*, p. 82.

much later, towards the end of the romance, at the very moment when Rotokritos finally reveals himself to Aretousa, in the jail, putting an end to her torments, and preparing for the happy ending of the story. Eighteen verses unfold the image of a flower, made by nature fairer than any other, which suffers during winter and loses its beauty, but gets new life when the sun comes out again. The flower, of course, stands for Aretousa, the sun for Rotokritos, and the cold and darkness for the prison:

> Just as when wind comes with snow to chill and wither
> a flower which nature has made fairer than others;
> it loses its beauty and has no scent
> while the tempest lasts and while snow falls,
> but when the sun comes out to see it, it immediately becomes beautiful
> when struck by the warmth, and it spreads out its leaves
> as it casts the encircling snow to the ground as water;
> as before, it displays its scent and beauty,
> giving forth all its charms to the rising sun,
> although the snowstorm had made it ugly, in the night's darkness;
> even so Aretusa had wilted through her sufferings,
> miserably rendered featureless and unrecognisable.
> The prison's darkness and anxiety's chill
> had made her fair youth exceedingly ugly.
> But when she saw her sun enter the dungeon,
> she revived immediately, throwing off the ugliness.
> The beauty which had left her returned.
> She who had been covered with snow
> became warm again and alive. (V 1107-1124)

David Holton finds this simile very successful, "fresh and evocative", remarking that "surprisingly, the simile is centred on nouns more than verbs (surprisingly, because there is a considerable amount of action): flower, nature, wind, snow, beauty, fragrance, leaves, sun. The intertwining of these simple concepts is precisely what gives the simile form and meaning", whereas "after the simile is formally terminated (line 1117), epithets which

were appropriate to the flower are re-used figuratively of Aretousa: μαραμένη (1117), χιονισμένη (1124)."[35]

As for the other lover in the romance, Rotokritos himself, plants are only briefly used in imagery relating to him: according to his beloved, he is a "branch of a lofty tree" (I 658), a "fragrant blossom", deriving from a tree "planted in a worthy and fair place" (I 663-4). Yet there is also a reverse side to the coin. Frosyni, Aretousa's nurse and confidante, as we said, compares him to his most dangerous rival for the hand of the young princess: during the tournament in the Second Part, the protagonist is opposed to Pistoforos, the heir to the throne of Byzantium, in terms of flowers, in a distich which combines three figures of speech: *metaphor, parallelism* and *antithesis*.

> I beseech fortune and fate to grant
> that this prince [Pistoforos], and no other, be destined for you;
> that you marry him, that you be honoured as befits you,
> and that Rotokritos look at you from afar as a servant;
> that you leave befouled grass and a poisoned flower
> and take the fair rose that smells of musk. (II 443-8)

We may also note in passing that all the knights who take part in the spectacle are described in detail by the poet as they enter the arena, with special attention to the symbolic images and verses on their helmets. Five participants display imagery involving some sort of plant (flowers, trees green or withered, a vine, and "golden trees"). The prize for the most impressive outfit is a finely-wrought, bejewelled "flower", presented by the Queen to the prince of Byzantium.

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[35] *Erotokritos*, p. 83. Kallinis has commented on the same simile: "Το ερωτευμένο υποκείμενο (Αρετούσα) και το ερωτικό αντικείμενο (Ερωτόκριτος) γίνονται στοιχεία της φύσης, εκείνη ένα λουλούδι κι εκείνος ο ήλιος, αποδεικνύοντας ότι ο κόσμος του αναφορικού μέρους των παρομοιώσεων και ο κόσμος της ιστορίας είναι δύο κόσμοι συνεχείς, κάτι που συμβαίνει στην πλειονότητα των εκτενών παρομοίωσεων στον *Ερωτόκριτο*"; see Giorgos Kallinis, "«Σαν τ' αρμηνεύγει η φύση». Η λειτουργία της εκτενούς παρομοίωσης στον *Ερωτόκριτο* του Βιτσέντζου Κορνάρου", *Παλίμψηστον* 28 (2012) 137-52 (p. 150).

But the poet keeps an extended simile, with roots in Italian literature, for Aristos, Rotokritos's opponent in the war with the Vlachs: at the moment when Aristos is about to die, he is compared to a flower that "a plough comes without pity [and] tears it up by its deep roots". Aristos is young and handsome, and the flower to which he is compared "in this imagery becomes personified, since its withering is directly related to youth and old age":[36]

> Just as a bud or flower stands fresh with beauty and grace
> in a field giving off much scent,
> but a plough comes without pity, tears it up by its deep roots,
> and it immediately fades and withers with its beauty crushed;
> if it is red, it grows pale; if white, it blackens;
> if blue, it perishes immediately and yellows;
> it loses its beauty and scent, its grace and freshness;
> it straightway ages, withers, and no longer has its youth;
> even so was it with Aristos when his soul went out from him,
> leaving him without blood, white, pale, and faded. (IV 1889-97)

Professor Kriaras has shown that the above comparison appears to echo Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*.[37] Ariosto borrowed it from Virgil, and it can also be found in Groto's *Lo Isach*, the model for another work sometimes attributed to Kornaros, the drama *Abraham's Sacrifice*. Marina Rodosthenous remarks that the image in Ariosto is not as expanded and detailed as it is in *Erotokritos* and she points out "how skilfully Kornaros describes the attributes of a flower before and after its uprooting. Through

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[36] Rodosthenous, "Youth and Old Age", p. 76.

[37] E. Kriaras, *Μελετήματα περί τας πηγάς του* Ερωτοκρίτου (Athens 1938), p. 108. See Canto XVIII, stanza 153: "Come purpureo fior languendo muore, / che 'l vomere al passar tagliato lassa; / o come carco di superchio umore / il papaver ne l'orto il capo abbassa; / cosí, giù de la faccia ogni colore / cadendo, Dardinel di vita passa; / passa di vita, e fa passar con lui / l'ardire e la virtú de tutti i sui." Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso. A selection*. Edited, with introduction, notes and vocabulary, by Pamela Waley (Manchester: Manchester University Press 1975), p. 107. Mitsopoulou, *Ο ρόλος και η σημασία της φύσης*, p. 22 (and note 21) also refers to this borrowing from *Orlando Furioso*.

vivid use of colours and careful choice of verbs and nouns he identifies the circle of human life (youth and old age) with that of nature."[38]

As for the pastoral comedy *Panoria*, it is of course to be expected that the poet would employ figures involving flowers to describe young women who live in such an ideal rural lanscape. Here, the connection of the play's characters to plants is made either literally or through *metaphors*, *metonymies* or an extended *simile*.

Flowers literally adorn women's heads: "That's why you see girls sit all day and comb / Their topknots, beautifying them with flowers" (I 413-14) [RB-M]. Metaphorically, flowers are used as another way to refer to the colours of a woman's face:[39] "May rose and lily wither in your face" (II 403), and "I too had roses blushing in my cheeks" (III 149) [RB-M].[40] Panoria's beauty was not created to be wasted (i.e. not enjoyed by a lover) like that of short-lived wild flowers growing in a remote place:[41]

> The heavens have not adorned your lovely face,
> my lady, with so many beauties, just
> for you to waste it, like a flower, a rose
> growing in woods or on a precipice,
> so no one can enjoy or even see it [...]
> Just as all plants, all blooms, all flowers wither,
> one day you too will see your beauty's gone. (III 79-84, 139-40)[42]

And at the end of the play the heat of the fire within her brings sighs to her lips and tears to her eyes, just as a piece of green wood thrown on the fire crackles and exudes moisture as it begins to burn:

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[38] Rodosthenous, "Youth and Old Age", p. 76.
[39] Cf. *Erotokritos*, IV 649.
[40] See also Peri, *Του πόθου αρρωστημένος*, pp. 110-11 ("Ερωμένη/ος").
[41] Rodosthenous, "Youth and Old Age", p. 128.
[42] Cf. *Erotokritos* IV 605-6; for the ephemeral life of flowers, see the four-part simile in III 1191-2.

Just as a green log, once it starts to burn,
gives out loud cracks and oozes liquid drops,
so too my breast beats hard and gives out sighs
and tears from the fire that's raging in my eyes. (V 101-4)

We might, finally, note that Panoria's best friend is called Αθούσα, the equivalent of Blossom or Flora.

Closing this section about plant images relating to specific characters, I would like to focus on a metaphorical motif that is common to both texts: the implanting of the love object in a person's heart.

In *Panoria*, which was written before *Erotokritos*, this image applies to both young lovers: Gyparis describes it very briefly when he urges his eyes and soul to look at Panoria and "plant them in my heart even more deeply" (II 180) [RB-M]. His friend Alexis, in Act III, expands the metaphor in eight verses, as many as in *Erotokritos*, where Aretousa, right in the middle of the romance, puts a strong emphasis on the same metaphor.[43] Let's compare the two passages: [44]

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[43] The same metaphor appears briefly in *Erofili*: "Οϊμέ, κι ας μού 'το μπορετό, το στήθος μου ν' ανοίξω, / και φυτεμένο στην καρδιά πως σ' έχω να σου δείξω, για να 'χες πει, Πανάρετε, χωρίς το θάνατό μου / ν' ανασπαστώ, Ερωφίλη μου, δεν είναι μπορετό μου" (III 125-8). There too its position is in the middle of the play.

[44] To facilitate the detailed stylistic comparison of images (numbered in brackets) and phrases (indicated by bold type), I preferred to include the extracts here in the original Greek. The English translation follows:

Panoria: Since boyhood you've been planted in my heart; / Upon its leaves your portrait's long been painted. / And as I grew, Love grew along with me, / As if we were two trees planted together; / Love put out tender shoots within my heart / And rooted there, entwined like clinging ivy, / And cannot be uprooted, not unless / My soul be pulled out too and pass to Hades! [RB-M]

Erotokritos: This heart of mine with great joy planted your handsome looks inside itself and nourishes you daily. You have taken root in its inmost parts and its blood waters you, so that you flower and grow. When it took you in, it turned the lock on you and no longer wants to open. It has broken the key in order not to show you to another [woman]. How can another tree, how can other plants and other flowers take root inside it when its key is lost?

Panoria
...απόσταν ήμουνε μικρός [1] **σ' εβάστου φυτεμένη**
μέσα στα φύλλα τση καρδιάς κι είχα ζωγραφισμένη.
Κι [2] **αγάλια αγάλια επλήθυνεν** ο Πόθος μετά μένα,
σα νά 'χαμε είσται δυό δεντρά, ομάδι φυτεμένα·
έκαμε [3] **κλώνους τρυφερούς** και [4] **ρίζες στην καρδιά-μου**
κι [3-4] **επεριμπλέκτη ωσαν κισσός μέσα στα σωθικά**-μου.
Για τούτο [5] **να ξεριζωθεί δεν ημπορεί,** οξ' [6] **ομάδι**
με την καημένη-μου ψυχήν, όντα διαβεί στον Άδη.
(III 605-12)

Erotokritos[45]
Και πώς μπορεί τούτη [1] **η καρδιά** που με χαρά μεγάλη
στη μέση της εφύτεψε τα νόστιμά σου κάλλη
και [2] **θρέφει σε καθημερνό**, στα [4] **σωθικά ριζώνεις,**
ποτίζει σε το αίμα τση κι [3] **ανθείς και μεγαλώνεις**
κι ως σ' έβαλε, σ' εκλείδωσε, δε θέλει πλιο ν' ανοίξει
και το κλειδίν ετσάκισεν άλλης να μη σε δείξει,
και [5] **πώς μπορεί άλλο δεντρόν, άλλοι βλαστοί κι άλλα άθη**
μέσα της πλιο να ριζωθούν, που [6] **το κλειδίν εχάθη**;
(III 1415-22)

If we accept that Kornaros was acquainted with Chortatsis's *Panoria*, this impressive imagery could have been drawn from the pastoral comedy; however, the motif has a longer history, as Tina Lendari has shown, commenting on the same metaphor as it appears in the medieval Greek verse romance *Livistros and Rodamne* (vv. 3631-65).[46]

In *Erotokritos,* however, the imagery is enriched with the motif of the lost key; this has apparently to do with the sex of the person talking: Aretousa experiences the jealousy of a young girl

[45] Ricks, "The Style of *Erotókritos*", pp. 250-1, has commented on this image in detail in the context of the longer passage III 1407-64.
[46] Lendari, "Ο Ερωτόκριτος και η ελληνική δημώδης μυθιστορία", pp. 60, 64, 73-4, and Tina Lendari, *Αφήγησις Λιβίστρου και Ροδάμνης (Livistros and Rodamne) The Vatican version.* Critical edition with Introduction, Commentary and Index-Glossary (Athens: Morfotiko Idryma Ethnikis Trapezis 2007), pp. 420-1. In *Livistros*, though, the plant in the heart is love itself ("κλωνάριν πόθου") rather than the object of love.

in love. No other woman should see and enjoy Rotokritos's beauty. The key to access the garden with its single "tree" has been lost. Alexis, on the other hand, declares that he is willing to lose his life if he has to uproot his love, and that the plants in his heart are two: both his beloved and himself. But Aretousa doesn't need to declare that she would sacrifice her life: she's got plenty of time to prove it by the sufferings she will undergo in jail on behalf of her love. For the same reason there is no place for a second plant in her heart: she'll also prove that she is not at all interested in herself. Her old self will die in favour of a new character emerging from the experience of love: "όλη εξαναμαλάχτηκα, δεν είμαι πλιο σαν ήμου" ("I have changed entirely and I am no longer what I was", III 516).

It is time now to return to what I promised earlier: a second visit to the garden of Rotokritos's house in Part I. Listening to the above verses spoken by Aretousa, we cannot but bring it to mind. It is as if Aretousa remembers her walk in that beautiful orchard while depicting the image of the garden of her heart. Yet the real image is now reversed: all other trees have vanished and only one can fit. The owner of that real garden now becomes the metaphorical plant in the new garden. And although the real garden was open to visitors (*including* Aretousa) to see and admire, the imaginary one is locked and nobody (*but* Aretousa) can enter and enjoy the single tree. On the other hand, as the real garden gave the girl "entertainment and amusement", so her heart had planted the tree "with great joy" in the imaginary one.

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In *Panoria* Chortatsis has shown himself to be a competent connoisseur of the theory of pastoral drama, successfully combining comic and tragic elements in his play. A humorous dialogue between the two older characters, Giannoulis and Frosyni, is full of sexual allusions, all of them expressed through metaphorical plant images that enhance this comic intermezzo right in the middle of the play:

ΓΙΑ. Ζιμιό άφησε τα βάσανα και πιάσ' τον πόθο πάλι
να δεις πώς ξανανιώνουσι τα πρωτινά σου κάλλη.
ΦΡΟ. Σαν ξεραθεί ο **βασιλικός**, Γιαννούλη, δε γυρίζει
στην πρώτη ντου ομορφιά ποτέ, καλά και να μυρίζει.
ΓΙΑ. Την **αγκινάρα** την ξερή εγώ 'δα να καρπίσει,
ωσά τζη βάλει την κοπρέ κιανείς να τη σκαλίσει.
[...] Έδε γιωργός απ' είχα 'σται να ξανανιώνω γράδες!
τ' **αμπέλι** σου εξανάνιωνα με τσι **καταβολάδες**! ...
ΦΡΟ. Οι γέροντες κατέχω το πως όρεξη τσι σέρνει,
μα τίβετας η μπόρεση να κάμου δε τζι φέρνει.
Το **κυπαρίσσι**, όσο γερά, τόσον αδυνατεύγει
και το λιοντάρι πλειότερα στα γέρα του αγριεύγει. ...
ΓΙΑ. Τούτα τα λόγι' ας πάψομε κι ας έρθομεν εις άλλο.
Πότες μ' αφήνεις μια φορά τα βούγια μου να βάλω
να βοσκηθού, Φροσύνη μου, στην **αποκαλαμέ** σου
με το πρεκάτσο σου κι εσύ και με τσι πλερωμές σου;[47]
(III 305-10, 315-16, 321-4, 327-9)

With this we come to the end of our promenade through a blossoming Cretan landscape. We have examined two works, belonging to different literary genres, by the leading poets of the

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[47] Translation:
Gian. Stop being a misery, seize on love again!
You'll see how your lost beauty'll be renewed.
Fros. But once the **basil**'s withered, though it keeps
its fragrance, John, it won't regain its beauty.
Gian. I've seen a dried-up **artichoke** bear fruit
once someone hoes it and piles on the muck.
I'm the farmer who could make old ladies young!
I would renew your **vineyard** with my shoots.
Fros. I know old men still feel the inclination,
but they don't have the strength to carry it out.
The ageing **cypress** makes a show of strength,
and lions rage all the more as they grow old.
Gian. Let's just stop there and speak of something else:
When will you let me bring my oxen over
to graze, Frosyni, in that **field** you've mowed?
I promise you you'll get fair recompense.

Cretan Renaissance. Both poets, well acquainted with the theory and literature of the Italian Renaissance, make extensive use of imagery from nature, especially of trees, plants and flowers, in order to create background settings for their characters, to portray them in crucial moments of their life, and to depict the motivating force of their stories, Eros.