

Portrayal of Women in Niketas Eugenianos' *Drosilla & Charikles*. Drosilla through Nature and Literary Exempla, and in Interaction with other Characters

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*Niketas Eugenianos' Drosilla & Charikles is one of the four Komnenian novels produced in twelfth-century Constantinople. In this erotic fictional narrative following the traditional novelistic plot, the two lovers get separated once and again by Fate before finally managing to reunite. The female protagonist, Drosilla, is pursued by a series of suitors who explicitly compare her to nature and to diverse characters from the mythological and literary tradition. Drosilla has little to no agency, no say over her own destiny. Nonetheless, she is aware of the literary tradition to which her story is ascribed and of the expectations put on her. Just as male characters compare her to other women, she also defines herself in relation to them. Existing scholarship has already identified the literary models used by Eugenianos for the composition of this novel, and recent ecocritical studies have tackled some aspects of female characterization in medieval Greek novels, but *Drosilla & Charikles* has so far received only partial attention in this regard. The author of the present article explores *Drosilla* as a character analysing the hypotexts and natural elements used by male characters for her portrayal, which reveal the contemporary perception of femininity.*

Introduction

Drosilla & Charikles (hereon abbreviated as *D&C*) was composed by Niketas Eugenianos around the middle of the twelfth century in Constantinople. This text, produced in the highly competitive intellectual environment of Komnenian Byzantium and aimed at a very educated audience familiar with the literary canon, might have been composed on commission, and was probably presented in *theatra*.¹ Comprising nine books, the story of *Drosilla* and *Charikles* follows

1 E. JEFFREYS, *The Novels of Mid-Twelfth Century Constantinople: The Literary and Social Context*, in: I. Shevchenko – I. Hutter (eds.), *AETOS*, (Studies in Honour of Cyril Mango presented to him on April 14, 1998), Berlin 1998, 191–199. P. ROILLOS, 'I grasp, oh, artist, your enigma, I grasp your drama': Reconstructing the Implied Audience of the Twelfth-Century Byzantine Novel, in: C. Cupane – B. Krönung (eds.), *Fictional Storytelling in the Medieval Eastern Mediterranean and Beyond*, Leiden 2016, 463–478.

the conventional structure of the ancient Greek novels,² with a happy ending delayed by obstacles including separation of the lovers, apparent death, and encounters with antagonistic forces such as pirates and barbarians, and other suitors.³

Throughout her adventures, Drosilla encounters two male characters – apart from her beloved – who try to get her attention, but she nonetheless preserves her virginity intact, an idea which is heavily emphasised throughout the text. All three men carry out attempts at getting the attention of the maiden using similar devices. Both Charikles and the suitors describe Drosilla idealistically and compare her to literary and mythological *exempla* and to elements of the natural world. In this article, I explore Drosilla as a character by looking at several excerpts from the text in which this comparison through the male gaze of her suitors is explicit. I will however not dedicate much space to the identification and comparison with these literary models, as my aim is not to analyze Eugenianos' choice of models but to understand the function of these elements in the narrative. For a comparison between Drosilla's portrayal through the male gaze and her actions, I will also analyse her interaction with other characters, which will in turn provide insight into the dynamics between them, thus highlighting her dimensionality as a character.

Such an approach will allow for further exploration of the idealistic expectations put on her, as well as of the relation between the natural and the erotic and, finally, of her 'self-portrayal', as far as this can be reconstructed and despite the author and intended audience being prevalently made up of men.⁴ By using Drosilla as a case study, I aim to provide some insight not only into her character in *D&C* but also, on a broader level, into twelfth century Byzantine perceptions on femininity.

Female characterization and general attitudes towards femininities in *D&C*

The heroines of erotic fiction are in the twelfth century constrained by rigid conventions regarding sexual morality. As pointed out by Corinne Jouanno, these societal rules are somewhat more present in the Komnenian novels than they were in their ancient predecessors.⁵ Such an emphasis on the role of women and the importance of social 'decency' seems to be, following Jouanno, a result

2 On the conventions of the Greek novel, see F. LÉTOUBLON, *Les lieux communs du roman: Stéréotypes grecs d'aventure et d'amour*, Leiden 1993.

3 On the ideal elements of the novelistic tradition, see J. ALVARES, *Ideal Themes in the Greek and Roman Novel*, London 2022.

4 Although this paper deals with issues of characterization and identity, the latter is only analysed through the variable of gender. On identity in Byzantium, see Y. STOURAITIS, *Identities and Ideologies in the Medieval East Roman World*, Edinburgh 2022.

5 C. JOUANNO, Les jeunes filles dans le roman byzantin du XIIe siècle, in: B. Pouderon (dir.), *Les Personnages du roman grec*, (Actes du colloque de Tours, 18-20 novembre 1999), Lyon 2001, 341–344.

of the relative emancipation of women during the Komnenian period and can thus be viewed as anachronistic and as reinforcement of conservative views on women – views that, despite aristocratic women's involvement in the arts as patronesses, were sanctioned in the courtly circles where these works were produced.⁶ A different trend could also be identified during this period, as is the case in the first Ptochoprodromic poem, where one can observe a parody of the traditional gender roles within marriage that could point both to a greater flexibility regarding tradition but also to a mocking attitude regarding female emancipation.⁷ As per *D&C*, the exploration of general attitudes and expectations regarding femininities will provide the basis for understanding *Drosilla* in particular.

The characters of the Komnenian novels – regardless of their nobility or ethnicity – perceive marriage as the objective and as the only outlet for erotic desire. Female characters and male characters, nonetheless, seem to be constructed on the basis of what has been coined 'sexual symmetry', that is, their adventures are alike, they go through the same ordeals and encounter similar obstacles, being on an equal level as for their protagonism in these works.⁸ In *D&C*, some comments by the narrator and by secondary characters explicitly deal with perceptions of womanhood and the expectations held for women. They are portrayed as highly emotional beings, and emotional responses such as weeping (9.220–222: "For womankind is easily moved, and is ready to mourn for the sufferings even of strangers, and is ever inclined to weep")⁹ and jealousy (5.52–53: "I am not unaware, being experienced in passion, that womankind is inclined to jealousy")¹⁰ are heavily gendered.¹¹ This phenome-

6 C. JOUANNO, Women in Byzantine Novels of the Twelfth Century: An Interplay Between Norm and Fantasy, in: L. Garland (ed.), *Byzantine Women: Varieties of Experience 800–1200*, London 2007, 161–162. It should also be noted that some scholars link the composition of *D&C* to the marriage between Stephanos Komnenos and Eudokia Axouchaina, which would further explain its emphasis on marriage. A. KAZHDAN, Bemerkungen zu Niketas Eugenianos, *JÖBG* 16, 1967, 106–108. JEFFREYS, *Four Byzantine Novels*, op. cit., 342–343.

7 K. CHRYSOGELOS, Marriage, comedy, and the patristic tradition in the first Ptochoprodromic poem, *BMGS* 48/2, 2024, 253–268.

8 JOUANNO, Women in Byzantine Novels, op. cit., 141–142.

9 *Nicetas Eugenianos, Drosilla & Charikles*, in: E. Jeffreys (trans.), *Four Byzantine Novels: Theodore Prodromos, "Rhodante and Dosikles." Eumathios Makrembolites, "Hysmine and Hysminias." Constantine Manasses, "Aristandros and Kallithea." Niketas Eugenianos, "Drosilla and Charikles."*, Liverpool 2012, 456. F. Conca (ed.), *Il romanzo bizantino del XII secolo. Teodoro Prodromo – Niceta Eugenio – Eustazio Macrembolita – Costantino Manasse*, Turin 1994, 492: Τὸ γὰρ γυναικῶν συμπαθέστατον φύλον ἔτοιμοπενθές ἐστί καὶ ξένοις πόνοις καὶ φιλόδακρυ γίνεται παραρτικά.

10 *D&C*, Jeffreys (trans.), op. cit., 400. Conca (ed.), *Il romanzo bizantino*, op. cit., 390: οὐκ ἀγνωθὸν δέ, δεινὸς ὢν πρὸς τὸν πόθον, ὡς ζηλότυπον χρῆμα θηλειῶν ἔφυ.

11 On gendered emotions and female sensitivity, see CH. MESSIS – I. NILSSON, Eros as Passion, Affection and Nature: Gendered Perceptions of Erotic Emotion in Byzantium, in: S. Constantinou – M. Meyer (eds.), *Emotions and Gender in Byzantine Culture*, London 2019, 159–190.

non, the assigning of a greater emotionality to female characters, corresponds to the conservative notion of women as subjective and volatile individuals.¹² As a result, women are the focus of these works' emotional dimension, which constitutes an apparent violation of the general sexual symmetry of such texts, as suggested by Jouanno.¹³

Beauty is a prerequisite for the heroine. Drosilla's ekphrasis (1.120–158) constitutes a great example of the physical traits associated with beauty and thus characteristic of the novels' heroines: white skin, red lips and cheeks, black eyes and curly golden hair being the most recurrent.¹⁴ Although idealised and desired, beauty is also portrayed as dangerous, for it gives women a certain power over those who fall in love with them. As such, love – and particularly unreciprocated love – is considered a disease and a danger, upon which Kleandros comments in his song for Kalligone: “In place of fire Zeus provided in this life another terrible fire-brand, in the form of woman. (...) For fire itself (...) can swiftly be extinguished, but a woman is an unquenchable fire in the heart if she brings the fair beauty of a lovely face” (2.347–355).¹⁵ Similarly, a maiden is expected to be a virgin. The ideal of the heroine secluded from male view, unexperienced in matters of love and willing to resist erotic temptation, is maintained in these works.¹⁶ Another common element also visible in *D&C* is the emphasis on reservedness and modesty, as is noticeable for instance when Drosilla does not dare to approach the village on her own and does not want to be seen, or at least she would not benefit from being seen, walking into an inn – respectively, 6.195–196 and 6.259–264.¹⁷ Another explanation for her reluctance to approach the village would be, as suggested by Goldwyn, that she is scared of suffering further sexual trauma.¹⁸ Although such an explanation is tempting,

12 JOUANNO, *Women in Byzantine Novels*, op. cit., 147–150.

13 JOUANNO, *Women in Byzantine Novels*, op. cit., 147–150.

14 This passage seems to have been inspired by the *Anacreontea*. For an analysis of its transtextuality, see E. HUIG, ‘Mixing Roses with Milk’: Recovering the Tradition behind the Ekphrasis of Niketas Eugenianos’ Drosilla and Charikles 1.120–158, *Kleos – Amsterdam Bulletin of Ancient Studies and Archaeology* 4, 2001, 58–75.

15 *D&C*, Jeffreys (trans.), op. cit., 372. Conca (ed.), *Il romanzo bizantino*, op. cit., 342: Ζεὺς ἀντὶ πυρὸς ἐμπάρεσχε τῷ βίῳ πῦρ ἄλλο δεινόν, τῆς γυναικὸς τὴν πλάσιν. Ὡς εἶθε μὴ πῦρ, μὴ γυναικεῖον φύλον κατῆλθεν εἰς γῆν καὶ προῆλθεν εἰς βίον. Λαμπᾶς σελήνης, φωταγώγει τὸν ξένον. Τὸ πῦρ γὰρ αὐτό, κἄν ἀναφθείη, πάλιν καὶ συντόμως σχοίη τις ἐγκατασβέσαι γυνὴ δὲ πῦρ ἄσβεστον ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ ἂν κάλλος εὐπρόσωπον ὠραῖον φέρη. This passage seems to allude to *Greek Anthology* 9.167, W. R. Paton (trans., ed.), *The Greek Anthology* (3), London – New York 1917, 86–87: ὁ Ζεὺς ἀντὶ πυρὸς πῦρ ὅπασεν ἄλλο, γυναικας. εἶθε δὲ μῆτε γυνή, μῆτε τὸ πῦρ ἐφάνη: πῦρ μὲν δὴ ταχέως καὶ σβέννυται: ἡ δὲ γυνὴ πῦρ ἄσβεστον, φλογερὸν, πάντοτ’ ἀναπτόμενον. (“Zeus, in place of fire, bestowed another fire, woman. Would that neither woman nor fire had come into being! Fire, it is true, is soon put out, but woman is a fire unquenchable, flaming, ever alight.”)

16 JOUANNO, *Les jeunes filles*, op. cit., 331–334.

17 JOUANNO, *Les jeunes filles*, op. cit., 332.

18 A. J. GOLDWYN, *Byzantine Ecocriticism. Women, Nature, and Power in the Medieval Greek Romance*, London 2018, 115.

by that point in the novel *Drosilla* has only experienced Kleinias' advances, which – at least from what we are told – are not so aggressive or provocative as Kallidemos'. It can certainly be read like that, but at least for a predominantly masculine audience it probably would not have been perceived as such.

Female characterization, according to what has been said, is constructed in Greek erotic fiction through top-down mechanisms and remains quite fixed throughout the novelistic tradition. Female identity is inferred through readerly knowledge of conventional schemas, of other similar characters with which they share a certain set of characteristics.¹⁹ That being said, the main traits associated with the role of the heroine would be the aforementioned: beauty, modesty, and chastity. This division is of course a simplification, but it is nonetheless helpful for understanding how female characters are perceived in these works and their typification.²⁰ The non-compliance with any of those values results in a character being unfit for the role of heroine and, ultimately, in mocking or attacking such character. While *Drosilla* and *Kalligone* maintain these traits, other characters do not and thus fulfil other roles. Age, associated with loss of beauty, makes *Maryllis* the kind helper of the couple instead of a more prominent character. In contrast with the dignity of the heroine, *Maryllis* is overtly mocked, her most famous scene (7.280–289), in which she falls after a dionysiac dance, serving as comic relief.²¹ In the case of *Chrysilla*, the combination of her age and her role attempting to seduce *Charikles* – that is, the lack of chastity, or restraint – makes her a rival and an obstacle to the lovers.²² In the same way that *Chrysilla*'s actions entail social disapproval, so does the transgression of modesty, as is told by one of the men accompanying *Charikles* during the Dionysiac festivities (3.178–184), who scorns a woman who used to be proud of beauty that no longer exists.

Drosilla through the eyes of the suitors

Drosilla's character seems quite static and fixed, with no major departures from her Hellenistic predecessors. Her inner thoughts are not deeply explored, and only in certain moments does she verbalize her motivations. Far from serving as a justification for overlooking the mechanisms behind her character construction, the fact that she represents a somewhat 'neutral' and idealised woman heightens her value as a case study for our understanding of percep-

19 On top-down mechanisms for characterization, see K. de Temmerman – E. van Emde Boas (eds.), *Characterization in Ancient Greek Literature*, Leiden 2018, 556–562.

20 On character typification, see K. DE TEMMERMAN, Where philosophy and rhetoric meet: character typification in the Greek novel, in: M. P. Futre Pinheiro – S. Montiglio (eds.), *Philosophy and the Ancient Novel*, (Ancient Narrative Supplementum, 10), Eelde 2015, 85–110.

21 On the effect of this scene in the narrative, see A. LAGUNA LÓPEZ, Literary Subversion in Niketas Eugenianos' *Drosilla* and *Charikles*, (MA Thesis, Central European University, Vienna 2024), 51–53.

22 JOUANNO, *Women in Byzantine Novels*, op. cit., 151.

tions on womanhood in Byzantium. Apart from the idealised description of her beauty in the ekphrasis in Book 1, which contributes to Drosilla's direct characterization, other factors contribute to the external shaping of her textual identity. Among these is her indirect metaphorical characterization, thanks to her suitors, in relation to nature and to literary and mythological figures, which will be here considered. Generally speaking, the suitors' comparison of Drosilla to both literary characters and natural elements heightens her beauty and praises the power of love. That is the case, for example, with the passages in which Kallidemos and Charikles (respectively 6.622–625 and 8.107–109) state that her beauty is superior to that of Aphrodite, Hera, and Athena, by claiming that if she had been part of the judgement of Paris, she would have been the one awarded with the apple. Interestingly enough, this literary model is also used by Kleandros in his courtship of Kalligone (2.284–288).²³ Drosilla is also compared to other mythological characters, with the heroine always standing out among them. An example is 6.631–634, where the speaker marvels at the fact that Zeus has not paid attention to such a beautiful girl, while he would pursue other beautiful women: “And now I am left to accuse Zeus of lacking love, for not transforming himself before this girl of ours, who is more lovely than Leda, Danae, Ganymedes and Europe.”²⁴ However, sometimes the attributes associated with the heroine are different from those associated with the literary reference. In those cases, male suitors' characterization of Drosilla is built in contrast to past models, and it works as a critique of her actions. A great example of it would be 6.616–619,²⁵ where Kallidemos highlights that Drosilla does not take pity on him, that she is not merciful, by comparing her to Niobe in a way highly reminiscent of *Anth. Gr.* 5.229.²⁶ A certain playfulness in their interaction can be detected in this passage, which is also visible towards the end of Kallidemos' monologue, when he compares himself to a crow resigned to what Drosilla throws away (6.540–543: “I thank you for the recompense, girl, let the poor scavenging crow, as the proverb has it, when need drives, find –

23 LAGUNA LÓPEZ, *Literary Subversion in Niketas Eugenianos' Drosilla and Charikles*, op. cit., 35–36.

24 *D&C*, Jeffreys (trans.), op. cit., 430.

25 *D&C*, Conca (ed.), *Il romanzo bizantino*, op. cit., 444: Τὴν Νιόβην κλαίουσαν ἰδὼν ποτε βουκόλος ἀνὴρ θάμβειεν, εἰ λείβειν δάκρυον οἶδε λίθος. αὐτὰρ ἐμὲ στενάχοντα τόσης κατὰ νυκτὸς ὀμίχλην ἔμπνοος Εὐδίππης οὐκ ἔλεαιρε λίθος. αἴτιος ἀμφοτέροισιν ἔρωσ, ὄχετηγὸς ἀνίης τῇ Νιόβῃ τεκέων, αὐτὰρ ἐμοὶ παθέων.

26 *Anth. Gr.* 5.229. W. R. Paton (trans., ed.), *The Greek Anthology (I)*, London – New York 1916, 242–243: Τὴν Νιόβην κλαίουσαν ἰδὼν ποτε βουκόλος ἀνὴρ θάμβειεν, εἰ λείβειν δάκρυον οἶδε λίθος. αὐτὰρ ἐμὲ στενάχοντα τόσης κατὰ νυκτὸς ὀμίχλην ἔμπνοος Εὐδίππης οὐκ ἔλεαιρε λίθος. αἴτιος ἀμφοτέροισιν ἔρωσ, ὄχετηγὸς ἀνίης τῇ Νιόβῃ τεκέων, αὐτὰρ ἐμοὶ παθέων. (“A Herdsman, looking on Niobe weeping, wondered how a rock could shed tears. But Euippe's heart, the living stone, takes no pity on me lamenting through the misty darkness of so long a night.”)

the wretch – his food from stinking entrails”).²⁷ Drosilla is, as can be inferred, compared to these mythological and literary figures not only by equating her qualities to theirs but also by reminding her of her faults, of what she lacks, of what she is not providing the men.

Such extratextual allusions used to characterise Drosilla contribute therefore to situate Drosilla in the literary tradition by establishing parallelisms and a relationship between the heroine and past heroines from the Greek erotic tradition. Kallidemos' case, which received considerable scholarly attention, is an example of such a reference to the lovers of past works.²⁸ However, he is unsuccessful in his wooing of Drosilla, as he chooses to reference literary characters that portray unchaste love and violence, among other attributes, values that do not align with Drosilla's, and that betray his bad judgement on women's desires in general and on Drosilla's personality and character in particular.²⁹

The second type of external metaphorical characterization of Drosilla to be explored in this article is the suitors' usage of nature. Nature is a prevalent topic in Komnenian novels, and especially in *D&C*, as its characters find themselves repeatedly surrounded by nature. Our heroine is presented for the first time laying down on a meadow, “sleeping deeply because of her worries, rivalling the white roses' blooms, and seeming to smile as she listened to the honeyed cries of the lovely swallows” (4.333–336).³⁰ Far from just constituting the scene of the story, nature plays a very important role in symbolic characterization, which will be dwelled upon here. As for the inclusion of natural elements in this study, only those associated with Drosilla will be considered.³¹

Drosilla is perceived by the male characters infatuated with her as a beautiful creature made by Nature, who, in a clear reference to the myth of Prometheus and Epimetheus, had run out of other gifts (5.149–157). She is compared to a cluster of grapes, to honey, and to a meadow, among other attributes (4.121–130), which simply accentuate her beauty. The same goes for another *topos* frequent in *D&C* for female beauty, that of the moon, with which Drosilla is equated a few times, and which Kleandros similarly uses for Kalligone

27 *D&C*, Jeffreys (trans.), op. cit., 427. Conca (ed.), *Il romanzo bizantino*, op. cit., 440: Ὡς εὐχαριστῶ τοῦ χάρισματος, κόρη· πένης κόραξ γάρ, ὡς ὁ δημῶδης λόγος, οὔσης ἀνάγκης, συμποριζέτω τάλας κἄν ἐκ δυσόδομων τὴν τροφήν ἐντοσθίων.

28 P. ROULOS, *Amphoteroglossia: A Poetics of the Twelfth-Century Medieval Greek Novel*, (Hellenic Studies Series, 10), Washington, D.C. 2005, 68–76.

29 J. B. BURTON, A Reemergence of Theocritean Poetry in the Byzantine Novel, *Classical Philology* 98/3, 2003, 251–273.

30 *D&C*, Jeffreys (trans.), op. cit., 396. Conca (ed.), *Il romanzo bizantino*, op. cit., 384: κοιωμένην μὲν ἐκ μερμιγῶν βαρέως, ἄνθει δὲ λευκῶν ἀντερίζουσαν ῥόδων καὶ μειδιᾶν δοκοῦσαν ἀκροωμένην φθογγῆς μελιχρᾶς τῶν καλῶν χελιδόνων.

31 More general issues, such as the garden as a *locus amoenus* for love, will not be covered. This *topos* has been explored in detail in existing scholarship; C. BARBER, Reading the garden in Byzantium: nature and sexuality, *BMGS* 16, 1992, 1–19. K. STEWART, Literary Landscapes in the Palaiologan Romances. An Ecocritical Approach, in: A. J. Goldwyn – I. Nilsson (eds.), *Reading the Late Byzantine Romance*, Cambridge 2018, 272–298.

(2.246–251). Such comparison with the moon first appears in 3.333–338, when Charikles first sees her: “I ran forward so that I could find a suitable position from which to see the girls who were at that moment dancing together. There I saw a moon that had come to the earth below, circled about by the stars themselves”,³² and then again it is used by Kallidemos in 6.420–424: “For you are a woman – know your own nature –, a woman lovelier than all those among us, a wondrous creation of extraordinary nature, a superlative example of womankind, as is the moon among the other stars.”³³

On the other hand, certain natural elements do also contribute further to her characterization by establishing power dynamics between male characters and female characters. The two lovers are always, in these metaphors, conceived as complementing each other, as iron and a magnet (4.137–141), as plants that need each other for survival (4.142–144), or as the river and the sea (4.145–147), among others.³⁴ These three examples in particular seem to have been inspired by Achilles Tatios’ novel (respectively in 1.17.2, 1.17.3–4, and 1.18.1–2).³⁵ They

32 D&C, Jeffreys (trans.), op. cit., 384. Conca (ed.), *Il romanzo bizantino*, op. cit., 362: (...) ἔμπροσθεν ἔτρεχον τότε, ὡς ἂν στάσιν σχῶ δεξιῶν πρὸς τὸ βλέπειν τὰς τηλικαῦτα συγχορευούσας κόρας. Ἐκεῖ σελήνην εἶδον ἐν τῇ γῆ κάτω, κύκλω μετ’ αὐτῶν ἀστέρων φορουμένην· τοῦτο Δροσίλλα συγχορευούσας κόραις.

33 D&C, Jeffreys (trans.), op. cit., 424. Conca (ed.), *Il romanzo bizantino*, op. cit., 434: Γυνὴ γὰρ εἶ σύ —γυνῶθι τὴν σαυτῆς φύσιν—, γυνὴ δὲ πασῶν τῶν καθ’ ἡμᾶς καλλίων, τεράστιόν τι πλάσμα φύσεως ξένης, ὑπερφυῆς τι χρῆμα θήλεος γένους, ὡς ἡ σελήνη τῶν προλοίπων ἀστέρων. The comparison of women with the moon was not atypical, especially as imperial symbolism. For Eugenianos usage of this image in his other works, see ΚΑΖΗΔΑΝ, *Bemerkungen zu Niketas Eugenianos*, op. cit., 110–111.

34 JEFFREYS, *Four Byzantine Novels*, op. cit., 390. Conca (ed.), *Il romanzo bizantino*, op. cit., 374: Καὶ γὰρ σιδήρος εἰς μαγνητὴν ἐκτρέχει, ἐρωτικὸν μοι πῦρ δοκῶν ἔνδον φέρειν· ἔνευσεν, ἦλθεν, ἔδραμε δρόμον ξένον· ἐμοὶ δοκεῖ φίλημα τοῦτο τῶν δύο, ἐρωμένης ἐρῶντος· ὃ ξένη σχέσις. Ἐρᾶ δὲ φυτοῦ φυτὸν ἄλλο πολλακίς· φοῖνιξ δὲ πρὸς γῆν οὐδὲ ρίζουσθαι θέλει, εἰ μὴ τὸ θῆλυ συμφυτεῦσθαι πέλας. Καὶ πόντος οἶδεν Ἀρεθούσης τοὺς γάμους, πρὸς ἣν γλυκὺς πρόεισιν ἀγκυλορροῶς Ἀλφειὸς εὐρύς, οὐ τὸ βεῖθρον ἐν σχέσει ὁ συνδυασμὸς οὐ μετατρέπειν θέλει.

35 Achilles Tatios, *Leucippe and Clitophon*, in: S. Gaselee (trans., ed.), Achilles Tatius, London – New York 1917, 51–55. Respectively: ἐρᾶ γοῦν ἡ Μαγνησία λίθος τοῦ σιδήρου· κἂν μόνον ἴδη καὶ θίγη, πρὸς αὐτὴν εἴλικυεν, ὥσπερ ἐρωτικὸν ἔνδον ἔχουσα πῦρ. καὶ μὴ τι τοῦτο ἐστὶν ἐρώσης λίθου καὶ ἐρωμένου σιδήρου φίλημα; (“at least the loadstone loves the iron, and if it may but see it and touch it, it attracts it towards itself as though possessed of the passion of love. May this not be the kiss of the loving stone and the beloved metal?”), ὃ δὲ λόγος· ἄλλο μὲν ἄλλου φυτὸν ἐρᾶν, τῷ δὲ φοῖνικι τὸν ἔρωτα μᾶλλον ἐνοχλεῖν. λέγουσι δὲ τὸν μὲν ἄρρενα τῶν φοινίκων, τὸν δὲ θῆλυ. ὃ ἄρρη οὖν τοῦ θήλεος ἐρᾶ· κἂν ὁ θῆλυς ἀποκισμένος ἢ τῇ τῆς φυτείας στάσει, ὃ ἐραστής ὁ ἄρρη αὐαίνεται. (“Plants, they say, fall in love with one another, and the palm is particularly susceptible to the passion: there are both male and female palms; the male falls in love with the female; and if the female be planted at any considerable distance, the loving male begins to wither away.”), and διὰ γὰρ τῆς θαλάσσης ὁ ποταμὸς ὡς διὰ πεδίου τρέχει. ἡ δὲ οὐκ ἀφανίζει γλυκὺν ἐραστὴν ἀλμυρῷ κύματι, σχίζεται δὲ αὐτῷ ῥέοντι, καὶ τὸ σχίσμα τῆς θαλάσσης χαράδρα τῷ ποταμῷ γίνεται· καὶ ἐπὶ τὴν Ἀρεθούσαν οὕτω τὸν Ἀλφειὸν νυμφοστολεῖ. (“the river traverses the sea as though it were a plain, and the sea, far from overwhelming the lover’s fresh waters with its

are to be found also in other Komnenian novels, as Jeffreys points out in the critical apparatus of her translations: the interdependence of the two plants to portray the relationship between the lovers appears in Makrembolites' *Hysmine & Hysminias* (10.3.2),³⁶ and the story of Arethousa is visible in fragment 21 of Manasses' *Aristandros & Kallithea*.³⁷ An equally interesting case of vegetal imagery that is maintained throughout the text is the anthomorphic metaphor for the true lovers as ivy and oak, as plants that prosper only when embracing each other (e.g. 1.324–329).³⁸

In the examples before, natural metaphors are applied to both lovers. In other instances, the anthomorphic metaphors are only applied to the female lover. That is certainly the case in 6.62–64 (“Like a wayfarer fleeing the burning sun, I sank into the shade of your embrace, my lovely golden plane tree”)³⁹ and 6.499–502 (“Open the gates of your heart to me while subduing the tempest of passion, and make welcome the sea-tossed wanderer in your embrace, as if in a harbour”),⁴⁰ where the usage of anthomorphic metaphors entails a certain difference in attitude, with the man perceived as the agent while the woman remains an object devoid of agency. Take as an example Charikles' story about the girl he loves in book 4, in which the girl opens the doors of her garden to a man.⁴¹ Although he does not give any names, it is almost certain that he is referring to Drosilla, but his intervention is contrastingly more lustful and direct than any of the ones he addresses to Drosilla. The words that Charikles puts in mouth of his beloved are:

Pass through the doors, admire the garden, behold the couch and regale me with your tales, since you have learned from experience how great an evil is desire. Pluck roses from my rose bush; recline I will join you. Will you eat something, scoundrel? There is no fruit; even if there is no ripe apple in the garden, accept my breast in place of an apple; if it pleases you, miserable one, bend down and eat. If there are no ripe grapes on the vine, squeeze the clusters from my firm breast; take

salt billows, makes an opening for the river's flow and thus becomes a sort of watercourse for it; so that it may fairly be said to be the match-maker between the spring Arethusa and the river Alpheus”).

36 cf. JEFFREYS, *Four Byzantine Novels*, op. cit., 254.

37 cf. JEFFREYS, *Four Byzantine Novels*, op. cit., 288.

38 On the implications of oak and ivy in *D&C* as an anthomorphic metaphor characterizing true lovers, see LAGUNA LÓPEZ, *Literary Subversion*, op. cit., 31. See also GOLDWYN, *Byzantine Ecocriticism*, op. cit., 114–115.

39 *D&C*, Jeffreys (trans.), op. cit., 413. Conca (ed.), *Il romanzo bizantino*, op. cit., 414: Ἐξ ἡλίου φλέγοντος ὡς ὄδοιπóρος ὑπὸ σκιᾶν ἐπιπτον ἐν σαῖς ἀγκάλαις, χρυσοῦ καλῆ πλάτανε.

40 *D&C*, Jeffreys (trans.), op. cit., 426. Conca (ed.), *Il romanzo bizantino*, op. cit., 438: Ἐμοὶ πύλας ἄνοιγε τῆς σῆς καρδίας, καταστοροῦσα τὸν κλύδωνα τοῦ πόθου, καὶ τὸν θαλασσόπλαγκτον ἤδη προσδέχου σαῖς ἀγκάλαις δῆπουθεν, ὡς ἐν λιμένι.

41 This passage and its erotic natural vocabulary are highly reminiscent of the *Song of Songs*, particularly 7.7–9. Similar motifs can be found also in *Hysmine & Hysminias* 5.17. On the garden in Komnenian novels as a symbol of the maiden's chastity, see I. NILSSON, *Erotic Pathos, Rhetorical Pleasure: Narrative Technique and Mimesis in Eustathios Makrembolites' Hysmine & Hysminias*, Uppsala 2001, 98.

a pleasant kiss from me instead of the honeycomb. Instead of the twining around tree and branches, which anyone who wants to gather fruit knows, I am the tree; come, embrace me; you have my arms in place of branches. I am the tree; ascend me, harvest the fruit that is sweeter than honey.

(4.267–288)⁴²

What is telling about this example is the directness of Charikles. The absence of a name or description traceable to Drosilla allows him to fully express his desire towards her without risking harming her honour or reputation. Charikles' fantasy is that of women as passive subjects, as anthomorphic figures who do not act but are instead acted upon, and that of men as able to get what they want from nature. Just before, he has emphasized Drosilla's purity to Kleinias, which suggests a double standard in that modesty and chastity are required from women but they are also an annoying obstacle for a man.⁴³ Already in book 3 (3.163–172 and 3.225–228) some of Charikles' friends voiced similar ideas at the festivity, shunning female modesty and reinterpreting their unresponsiveness and refusal to romantic advances as a sign of love, which weakens any notion of consent and contradicts female expectations of modesty. Later in the book, Kallidemus words his desire for control over Drosilla similarly to Charikles: "And now, you are ripe to be harvested, girl, like the very topmost shoot of the tree's lusty fruit; so open the garden's portals for me and allow yourself to be devoured and consumed to satiety" (6.570–573).⁴⁴

As has been shown, the idea of women as garden and prey, to be tended to, pursued, and attacked by men, is present in *D&C*. However, the opposite scenario, the positive notion by which the heroine is responsible for her own security and able to make decisions, is also somewhat visible in the text.⁴⁵ Portrayed through the same metaphorical language of hunter and prey, in some examples Drosilla's beauty is described as capable of attacking a man, by shooting arrows

42 *D&C*, Jeffreys (trans.), op. cit., 394–395. Conca (ed.), *Il romanzo bizantino*, op. cit., 380–382: Ὡς ἡδυνάς μου τὴν πονοῦσαν καρδίαν. Ἐπωδὸς εἰ πανοῦργος, ὡς ὄρω, τάλαν· ἄθυμίαν τρέπεις γὰρ εἰς εὐθυμίαν. Δεΐλαιε, πῶς φῆς; Βαῖνε τῆς θύρας ἔσω· τὸ κηπίον θαύμαζε· τὴν κλίνην βλέπε καὶ δεξιῶν με τοῖς διηγημασί σου, πείρα διδαχθεὶς ὡς κακὸν πόθος μέγα. Ῥοδωνιάς τρύγησον ἐξ ἐμῆς ρόδα· ἀνακλίθητι· συγκατέρχομαι δέ σοι. Φάγῃς δὲ τί, δεΐλαιε; Καρπὸς οὐκ ἔνι· κἂν μῆλον οὐκ ὄριμον ἐν τῷ κηπίῳ, τὸ στέρνον ἡμῶν ἀντὶ μήλου προσδέχου· εἰ σοι δοκεῖ, δύστηνε, συγκύψας φάγε· κἂν μὴ πέπειρος βότρυς ἀναδενδράδος στέρνου στρυφνοῦ μοι θλίψον αὐτοῦ τὰς ῥάγας· φίλημα τερπνὸν ἀντὶ σίμβλου μοι λάβε· ἀντὶ περιπλοκῆς δὲ δένδρου καὶ κλάδων, ἦν οἶδέ τις δρᾶν καρπὸν ἐκτρυγᾶν θέλων, ἐγὼ τὸ δένδρον· δεῦρο, προσπλάκηθί μοι· ἀντὶ κλάδων ἐμάς γὰρ ὠλένας ἔχεις· ἐγὼ τὸ δένδρον· καὶ προσανάβηθί μοι δρέπου τε καρπὸν τὸν γλυκὺν ὑπὲρ μέλι.

43 L. GARLAND, *Be Amorous, But Be Chaste: Sexual morality in Byzantine learned and vernacular romance*, *BMGS* 14/1, 1990, 76. JOUANNO, *Les jeunes filles*, op. cit., 338–339. JOUANNO, *Women in Byzantine Novels*, op. cit., 156–158.

44 *D&C*, Jeffreys (trans.), op. cit., 428. Conca (ed.), *Il romanzo bizantino*, op. cit., 440: Καὶ νῦν ἱμερτὴ σὺ τρυγᾶσθαι μοι, κόρη, ὡς ἀκροπρέμων ἀδροδενδροκαρπία· ἄνοιξον οὖν μοι τὰς θύρας τοῦ κηπίου καὶ δὸς φαγέσθαι καὶ κορεσθῆναι μόλις.

45 As also explored by M. ALEXIOU, *A Critical Reappraisal of Eustathios Makrembolites' Hysmine and Hysminias*, *BMGS* 3/1, 35–36.

– her eyes – from her bow – eyebrows –, as in 4.193–197 –, an image which is not unusual in the Greek erotic tradition. A girl with such beauty can become the hunter, powerful through Eros: “so inescapable is the net of desire that you have thrown from your eyes over me, your prey.” (6.408–409).⁴⁶ In the same way, the reversal of the role of gardener in book 4 is also worthy of mention, since it grants the power over the garden to the girl, thus recognising her ability to consent. “Greetings, gardener to so many flowers: why do you not open the door to me? (...). The garden is full of joy and tears; it takes pride in the lovely maiden that is its gardener, yet it is laden with lovers’ misfortunes; you seem to be unaware of the strange things you are hearing” (4.246–264).⁴⁷ The latter examples can also be seen as empowering for the female characters, although it should be noted that they are still voiced by a male character.⁴⁸ Despite this, *Drosilla* is giving a certain agency, which could be associated with her location within the garden. As Kirsten Stewart explains in her ecofeminist analysis of Palaiologan romances, the garden constitutes a feminine space in which some freedom from social laws can be achieved, where the heroine is able to express her sexuality and act, as she rules over this space, an idea that can be partially applicable to *D&C*.⁴⁹

Drosilla’s interaction with other characters and self-representation

Charikles and the rest of *Drosilla*’s suitors have many points in common. They use similar metaphors for describing the girl and, in the end, they all want the same from *Drosilla*: sex, which is only achievable through marriage. Their actions are similarly alike. Already at the beginning of the story, Charikles tells Kleandros that he was willing to abduct the girl and take her with him (3.384–400). Although he finally does not pursue this course of action – for there was no need for it, as *Drosilla* agreed to his plan and they could elope –, he nonetheless considers it. Kleinias does not think about it, but *Drosilla* is already in Parthian hands, so it would be unnecessary. Kallidemos, like Charikles, also plans an abduction, but in his case, it does not take place due to a sudden illness – which could be explained as the action of Dionysos – the couple’s protector.⁵⁰ That being said, intentionality-wise all the men infatuated

46 *D&C*, Jeffreys (trans.), op. cit., 423–424. Conca (ed.), *Il romanzo bizantino*, op. cit., 432: οὕτως ἄφικτον τὴν σαγίνην τοῦ πόθου ἐξ ὀμμάτων σῶν ἔσχες εἰς ἐμὴν ἄγραν.

47 *D&C*, Jeffreys (trans.), op. cit., 393–394. Conca (ed.), *Il romanzo bizantino*, op. cit., 378–380: Χαίροις, φυτουργὲ τῶν τοσοῦτων ἀνθέων· τί καὶ δι’ ἡμᾶς οὐκ ἀνοίγεις τὴν θύραν (...) Πλήρης ὁ κήπος χαρμονῆς καὶ δακρύων· καλὴν μὲν αὐχεῖ τὴν φυτουργὸν παρθένον, ἐρωτικῶν γέμει δὲ δυστυχημάτων σὺ δ’ ἀγνοεῖν ἔοικας ἃ ξένα κλύεις. See also GOLDWYN, *Byzantine Ecocriticism*, op. cit., 111–112.

48 See also NILSSON, *Erotic Pathos, Rhetorical Pleasure*, op. cit., 249–256, where Hysmine’s ability to tell her own story and the role of the heroine in the narrative are explored.

49 STEWART, *Literary Landscapes in the Palaiologan Romances*, op. cit., 283–289.

50 J. B. BURTON, *Abduction and Elopement in the Byzantine Novel*, *GRBS* 4/4, 2000, 390–391. JOUANNO, *Women in Byzantine Novels*, op. cit., 153–156.

with Drosilla consider the same range of options. Their behaviour is not that different, they all act – and plan – without consideration for Drosilla’s wishes – which, if favourable to their will, are appreciated. Despite this, Charikles is the only one portrayed in a good light. Drosilla’s interaction with other men is brief, and she only exchanges a few phrases with Kleandros in the narrative, although her lamenting his death (9.37–107) suggests that they were close.

Drosilla occupies a secondary space in the story. Throughout the novel, she spends most of her time either with Charikles or in captivity. In both cases there is a loss of agency. The only time in which Drosilla is allowed to act according to her wishes is while she is free but separated from her lover, that is, after she falls to the sea and while she is wandering through the desert or with Maryllis. We are told that she is reluctant to approach the village (6.195–196) and to enter the inn (6.259–264), modest and cautious as she is expected to be.⁵¹ While her behaviour is decorous and proper, once she is reunited to Charikles he questions her about the time of their separation, the few moments in which she could fully decide for herself (8.8–16). Fearing what another man could have done to her, Charikles seems to imply that Drosilla cannot be trusted. In her answer, she defends herself and complains of his doubts about her nature and faithfulness (8.17–28), emphasizing that she was not interested at all in what Kallidemos had to say: “What speeches he made in vain, how many promises he recited, it is impossible to recount, Charikles, even if I wanted to; and how could I, since I paid not the slightest attention” (8.59–62).⁵² Charikles’ doubts and insecurities about his lover’s behaviour reflect certain social attitudes towards women. He perceives sexual relationships as a strong moral temptation, for which it is easy to fall, and thus does not trust Drosilla, for he has not been there to watch over her. Male characters seem to be heavily affected by women’s choices, and thus they can develop a certain resentment and vengeful feelings towards women, as can be seen in one of the epigrams of book 3 (3.185–195). Such attitudes stem from a lack of control over them, as was mentioned before. Once the two lovers are back together, Charikles tries to get intimate with Drosilla and employs a zoomorphic metaphor for their relationship, comparing their love to that of the birds mating in their nest (8.84–94 and 8.127–130). Despite his efforts, Drosilla defends her virtue from Charikles just as much as she does from the other suitors. She maintains her values and refuses his advances, highlighting the importance of chastity and propriety, refusing to give in to Charikles’s erotic desire and anticipating the end to their story.⁵³

51 Another explanation for her reluctance to enter the village is that Drosilla is afraid of the danger, which it can posit to her chastity, as suggested by GOLDWYN, *Byzantine Ecocriticism*, op. cit., 115.

52 D&C, Jeffreys (trans.), op. cit., 442. Conca (ed.), *Il romanzo bizantino*, op. cit., 466: Οἶους μὲν οὖν προεῖπεν εἰς μάτην λόγους, ὅσας δὲ κατέλεξε τὰς ὑποσχέσεις, οὐκ ἔστιν εἰπεῖν, ᾧ Χαρίκλεις, κἄν θέλω· καὶ πῶς γάρ, οἷς προσέσχον οὐδὲ μετρίως.

53 GOLDWYN, *Byzantine Ecocriticism*, op. cit., 112–113.

O Charikles, my heart, you are not going to achieve union with *Drosilla*. Do not struggle, do not force me, do not make pointless efforts; it is not right for a girl who is chaste to behave in an unseemly manner. (...) I love Charikles and I desire him more than anything else, but I will not betray my virgin state like a courtesan without the consent of my kin, my mother and my father. (8.139–146)⁵⁴

Despite the ideological constraints on *Drosilla*'s agency, she is not a completely passive character in the story, and works towards their reunion, thus advancing the plot.⁵⁵ For example, *Drosilla* does go to the inn in search of Charikles. However, her character is static in that the adventures they go through don't change her opinions or objectives, with marriage and chastity remaining her main objects.

Characters in *D&C* have, as recent studies suggested, a remarkable metanarrative awareness of the literary tradition and their place in it, which aligns with the suitors' usage of literary models.⁵⁶ Thus, they know the traditional narrative structure of the genre as well as their role in the story, which informs their actions and further configures their identity. *Drosilla*'s literary self-awareness contributes to her characterization, for the reader may discover that the heroine, knowing the prospective perils she may face, sometimes ponders how to act and what to do. Her awareness is combined with the weight of what she suffered, to the point that she reflects on what happened (6.221–231) and even regrets going with Charikles, unwillingly embarking on such an adventure. It would have been easier for her, she implies, to die than to put up with what was to come:

Why did the sea's expanse not swallow me up? Why did the barbarian sword not slaughter me? Since you wish me to continue living unhappily, why did you not turn me to stone? Why did you not give me wings, like the grandchildren of Attic Pandion? Why did not some savage and bold-hearted lion rush out from a thicket and swiftly tear me to pieces, when I was in flight to the marshes and ravines away from the robbers' insolence? (5.111–120)⁵⁷

54 *D&C*, Jeffreys (trans.), op. cit., 445. Conca (ed.), *Il romanzo bizantino*, op. cit., 470: ὦ Χαρίκλεις, καρδιά, τοῦ συνδυασμοῦ τῆς Δροσίλλας οὐ τύχης. Μὴ κάμνε, μὴ βιάζε, μὴ μάτην πόνει· ἀσχημονεῖν γάρ σοφρονοῦσαν οὐ θέμις. Φιλῶ μὲν οὖν σε· πῶς γὰρ οὐ; Ποῖος λόγος; Φιλῶ Χαρικλήην καὶ ποθῶ πάντων πλέον· πλὴν ὡς ἑταιρίς οὐ προδῶ τὸ παρθένον γνώμης τε χωρὶς μητροπατρώου γένους.

55 A more explicit case of female agency developing the plot is that of the heroine in *H&H*, particularly in her initial amorous advances (1.12.1–2). NILSSON, *Erotic Pathos, Rhetorical Pleasure*, op. cit., 227–231.

56 P. CORTEZ, Personajes secundarios y su vínculo con la tradición literaria en *Drosila y Caricles* de Nicetas Eugenio (s. XII), *Anales de Filología Clásica* 35/1, 2022, 37–48. P. CORTEZ, Generic self-awareness in a Komnenian novel: the hero in *Drosilla and Charikles*, *BMGS* 47/2, 2023, 1–14.

57 *D&C*, Jeffreys (trans.), op. cit., 402. Conca (ed.), *Il romanzo bizantino*, op. cit., 394: Τί μὴ θάλασσης ὑπεδέξατο στόμα; Τί βάρβαρόν με μὴ κατέκτεινε ξίφος; Ἐπει δέ με ζῆν δυστυχῶς θέλεις ἔτι, τί πρὸς λιθόδη μὴ μετατρέπεις φύσιν; Τί μὴ πτέρυγας ἀντιδίδως καὶ πάλιν,

Drosilla positions herself, aware of her role in the story, in contrast to other women. Such a contrast can also help us understand who Drosilla is and who she is not. As was advanced before, Drosilla is constructed in opposition to Chrysilla, as is evidenced in their competition for Charikles' attention. Chrysilla does not observe the attributes of beauty, chastity and modesty, for she is portrayed as an old, Eros-driven and straightforward character. She knows that she desires Charikles and acts upon this desire, aiming to achieve union with the hero.⁵⁸ Drosilla, perceiving her as a threat, asks Charikles not to fall for her advances, describing their own love in anthomorphic terms and, similarly, associating Chrysilla's predatory behaviour with that of a serpent: "Put a nest on a branch which can be easily reached by neither a winged bird nor slithering serpent. Be ashamed when you listen to her who loved you first; do not put me in second place to Chrysilla, do not prefer the hag to the girl" (5.38–43).⁵⁹ Charikles certainly favours Drosilla and refuses to accept Chrysilla as a lover. He denies having feelings for the latter, and ensures Drosilla that it is her whom he loves, that she has everything that Chrysilla could promise him and more, thus confronting and comparing the two women:

Away with silver and brilliant gems and gold that mocks hearts; perdition on all those things, wealth, infinite happiness, which was once pledged by Chrysilla; you are all these things to me, chaste maiden. You pride yourself on your fair hair; away with the weight of gold; you have a white complexion; farewell, the charm of pearls; your embrace ornaments a neck, a gleaming ruby is enfolded in your lips. (8.116–124)⁶⁰

The story of Drosilla is also reminiscent of the stories of previous heroines and, most importantly, maintains intratextual parallelisms with the story of Kalligone. Both have all required attributes for the role of heroine. However, Kalligone does not appear in the story, and is only disclosed through flashback with Kleandros as the speaker, so she does not have a voice in *D&C*. In the beginning of the story, Kleandros and Kalligone have already been separated for a while. Exchanging stories, Kleandros tells Charikles, how he met Kalli-

ώς Πανδίωνος Ἀττικοῦ ταῖς ἐγγόνοις. Τί μὴ βριαρὸς καὶ θρασύπλαγχνος λέων λόχημης προκύψας θᾶπτον ἐσπάραξέ με, ὅτε πρὸς ἄλση καὶ φαραγγώδεις τόπους τὴν ληστρικήν ἔφευγον ἀγερωχίαν;

58 Precedents for this behaviour would be Arsake in Heliodoros' novel and Myrilla's attempt at poisoning Rhodanthe in Prodromos' *Rhodanthe & Dosikles*, barbarians who actively pursue their desires despite the main characters' negative.

59 *D&C*, Jeffreys (trans.), op. cit., 399. Conca (ed.), *Il romanzo bizantino*, op. cit., 390: Μίαν καλιὰν πῆξον εἰς ἓνα κλάδον, οὐ μὴ προβαίνειν εὐχερῶς ἂν ἰσχύοι ἢ πτηνὸς ὄρνις ἢ προσερπύζων ὄφις. Πρώτην δὲ σε στέρξασαν αἰσχύνου κλύων· ἐν δευτέρῳ με τῆς Χρυσίλλας μὴ τίθει, μὴ τῆς κόρης πρόκρινε τὴν γηραλέαν.

60 *D&C*, Jeffreys (trans.), op. cit., 444. Conca (ed.), *Il romanzo bizantino*, op. cit., 470: Ἐρροῖεν ἄργυρός τε καὶ λαμπρὸς λίθος, καὶ χρυσὸς αὐτὸς κατασκώπτων καρδίας· φθείριοντο ταῦτα, πλοῦτος, ὄλβος μυρίος, ὁ πρὸς Χρυσίλλας ἐγγυώμενος πάλαι· σύ μοι τὰ πάντα ταῦτα, σῶφρον παρθένε. Τὸ ξανθὸν αὐχεῖς· ἔρρε, χρυσοῦ βάρος· ἔχεις τὸ λευκόν· χαῖρε, μαργάρων χάρις· περιπλοκὴ σὴ κόσμος ἐστὶν αὐχένος, ἐπὶ πτυχί σῶν χειλέων ἄνθραξ λίθος.

gone and describes the courtship, how Kalligone rejected him at first, and how they fell in love (2.57–3.46). After that, the reader is told that they have been separated, and Kalligone's fate is not revealed until book 8 (8.183–189). Meanwhile, Kleandros apparently looked for her, but not much attention is given to this subplot in the narrative. Just as Kleandros, having an ongoing love story of his own, serves as a mirror for Charikles, so Kalligone and Drosilla interact.⁶¹ However, in the case of the women, this interaction is more subtle. Kalligone and Drosilla never get to exchange words and never see each other. Despite this, Drosilla can see herself through Kalligone, for the two maidens have a comparable background, are part of similar social circles and hold the same values. Drosilla knows Kalligone's story and, having experienced similar adventures, she can empathise with Kalligone's fate. Already in her lament for Kleandros, Drosilla mourns him by putting herself in Kalligone's shoes, exploring how it would be for Charikles if she were to die (9.82–96), and thus shows her understanding. Drosilla employs the same approach later mourning Kalligone's death and processing the trauma via her own experiences:

So I mourn for you, Kalligone, fellow maiden; it is I who weep for you, buried in the earth, instead of Kleandros who has departed, who shared our exile in foreign lands; I weep for you who are deprived of your mother and father, and who, alas, died far from your homeland; yet I never saw you, never entered into conversation with you, did not greet you and embrace you in time of joy, nor have you as a consolation in time of disaster. Would that I had never seen Kleandros and shared food and tears with him. But receive my lamentation, which I have now poured out for you like a mourning libation. (9.244–256)⁶²

In her lament for Kalligone, Drosilla highlights that Kleandros is not able to mourn her anymore, and thus the responsibility to do so has befallen her. Among the things that have happened to Kalligone, she highlights some of her own fears: dying far from home and deprived of her parents. This fragment is an example of female solidarity, for Drosilla feels sorry for Kalligone and laments not having been able to meet her and befriend her.⁶³ Drosilla's way of coping with the misfortunes that surround her thus reinforces the interrelation between Kalligone's story and her own. They are very similar, but differ in one key aspect, its ending. Drosilla's story ends with the lovers' much anticipated marriage. Kalligone's story ends in tragedy, with both lovers' dead. Even if

61 On this doubling of the plot, see LAGUNA LÓPEZ, *Literary Subversion*, op. cit., 54–58.

62 D&C, Jeffreys (trans.), op. cit., 456–457. Conca (ed.), *Il romanzo bizantino*, op. cit., 492–494: Ἐθρηνώ σε λοιπόν, ὦ κόρη Καλλιγόνῃ, συμπαρθένε, κλαΐω σε γῆ κεχωσμένην ἀντὶ Κλεάνδρου τοῦ προεξωχηκότος, τοῦ συγζενιτεύσαντος ἡμῖν ἐν ξένοις· Ἐθρηνώ σε μητρὸς καὶ πατρὸς στερουμένην, καὶ φεῦ θανοῦσαν ἀλλὰ μακρὰν πατρίδος, ἣν οὐ κατεῖδον, οὐ συνῆλθον εἰς λόγους, οὐκ εἰς χαρὰν ἔστερξα καὶ προσεπλάκην, ἐν συμφοραῖς οὐκ ἔσχον εἰς λύπης ἄκος. Ὡς εἶθε καὶ Κλεάνδρον οὐκ εἶδον πάλαι καὶ συμμετέσχον καὶ τροφῶν καὶ δακρῶν. Σὺ δ' ἀλλὰ δέξαι τὴν ἐμὴν ἠθρηνωδίαν, ἣν ὡς χοᾶς νῦν πενθικὰς ἔσπεισά σοι.

63 On female solidarity and friendship in twelfth-century novels, see JOUANNO, *Women in Byzantine Novels*, op. cit., 150.

Drosilla already knows how her story is going to end – she will enjoy a happy ending just like every other heroine in the novelistic tradition before –, she feels scared of what could happen. The two outcomes are completely opposite, but Drosilla still feels connected to Kalligone, for it could have easily happened to her.

Conclusion

Womanhood in *D&C* is, like in the other twelfth-century novels, associated with emotionality and jealousy, but it is Charikles – and not Drosilla – who shows greater jealousy when Drosilla is separated from him, as he questions her implying she is not trustworthy. Beauty, modesty and chastity seem to be the main attributes of the heroine, and women's actions must be guided by these principles or else they will face criticism or rejection from their male counterparts. The portrayal of femininity is two-sided. On the one hand, women – and especially the heroine – are faced with considerable social pressure concerning their behaviour, which can be explained as the result of the conservative trend favoured by male authors. However, male characters seem to desire an idealised woman who – paradoxically – can be controlled and gives in to their advances while still maintaining her virtue and values intact, which suggests a clash between the conservative portrayal of women visible in twelfth-century novels and the relative openness and improvement of women's social status in the Komnenian period. The characterization of Drosilla in *D&C* seems ambiguous in this regard. Drosilla's suitors all follow similar patterns and act alike, their goal being the same: marriage, and only then sexual intercourse. All three of them, Charikles included, are willing to overlook Drosilla's desires and perform an abduction, thus denying Drosilla the ability to consent and her agency.

Overall, Drosilla is built through top-down characterization, that is, she follows the traditional schemas of the novelistic genre, which accounts for the narrative's alleged predictability. Using these *exempla*, Drosilla's suitors do not only describe her, but they also praise her virtues by creating extratextual associations with mythological characters from the Greek erotic tradition. However, these instances sometimes also serve as criticism and as a reminder of what Drosilla lacks, for she is held up to the unrealistic expectations set by these models. Natural elements similarly help perpetuate ideology, thus reinforcing gender dynamics between the lovers. Drosilla, however, is not explored in detail and seems to serve the author as a mere vessel for discussing women in general. Her characterization is mainly a result of the male gaze, which can also be seen in the natural elements used for her *ekphraseis*. Far from only applying to Drosilla's appearance, nature works as a dynamic framework within which the lovers can be situated, and their interaction can be represented. In twelfth-century novels, gender dynamics visible through ecocritical analysis are either established as an equal relationship or are biased towards the male partner, with the woman undergoing a relative depersonalization. Nonetheless,

it has been shown that while sometimes anthomorphic metaphors are only applied to women – with male characters maintaining their humanity and female characters becoming a passive and powerless object –, there are also a few examples of positive portrayal of femininity, such as Drosilla being both garden and gardener and therefore ruling over her own bodily autonomy.

Drosilla's voice is only heard through Eugenianos' words, and sometimes also through those of her suitors. Her characterization stems from a masculine perspective, and she is best understood through an analysis of the dynamics between her and other characters. Drosilla lacks individuality, since she represents a long tradition of heroines with which she shares traits and experiences that inform her behaviour. Knowledge of her characterization is thus dependent on readerly knowledge of other women, and her identity is constructed against that of other female characters in the novel. Chrysilla is her opposite, their competitiveness is encouraged, while Drosilla's mirroring of Kalligone, whom she would have liked to befriend, stands as an example of female solidarity.

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