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ASPECTS OF EROTIC AND BACCHIC POETRY IN
ROUMANIAN AND MODERN-GREEK LITERATURE AT THE
END OF 18th CENTURY

In order to appreciate the valuable contribution of the Balkan area to the modern European culture, new methodological criteria are necessary.

First of all the traditional limits of space and time of the most important movements that took place in West Europe from the Middle Age on must be discussed. In fact an accurate analysis of the relationship between philosophical or spiritual streams and literature shows different characteristics from region to region, from epoch to epoch, even from author to author, but historical reasons always justify the lasting presence of well known ideologies and sensibilities and the co-existence of different spiritual tendencies in South-Eastern Europe, despite any new born phenomena in the rest of the continent.

In the Roumanian and Modern-Greek literature at the end of 18th century Humanism is still existent: it is not denied nor degenerated into erudite forms, but it survives performing a very important socio-educational function. New streams appear through a gradual assimilation of concepts and originate a harmonious combination of traditional and new elements. The idea of "Europeism" and the cultural democratization suggested by the Enlightenment, for instance, do not result surprising at all. In fact, during the late Humanism nobles or people of modest social origin, more or less educated, used to translate from Western literatures, creating an original literary production into a language similar to the people's language.

On the other hand, as many miscellaneous manuscripts confirm, a pre-romantic tendency seems to appear simultaneously in order to explore people's culture.

Historically comparing the two Balkan literatures in object with the other European literatures, different aspects appear: for example, the literary class is socially heterogeneous and even more the audience; Feudalism is still a social reality and Bourgeoisie is quite nonexistent; there is no conflict between religious and laical culture, and the Orthodox Church is similarly involved

in political issues, supporting a spiritual, cultural and national unification.

The present thematic study is especially devoted to the most representative Roumanian pre-modern poets such as Ienăchiță (1740-1798) and Alecu Văcărescu (1762-1800), Costache Conachi (1778-1849), Nicolae Dimache (1776-1836) and Ioan Cantacuzino (1757-1828) and their Greek contemporaries Athanasios Christopoulos (1772-1847), Ioannis Vilaras (1771-1823) and Athanasios Psalidas (1764-1829)¹.

The language used by the mentioned poets, although some times unsteady, is essentially simple and demotic. Being risen to a new literary dignity, it originally models motifs of laic poetry—that had been for a long time in the darkness of churchiness and had been denied by the poets themselves afraid of being accused of heterodoxy—and it is used to express and infuse feelings universally valid. First among all is love, represented at the different stages of its evolution, from the mere desire (pothos) to the extreme expression of suffering (pathos).

In such a spiritual atmosphere plenty of metaphors are found. In fact Ienăchiță Văcărescu's erudite symbols—such as a canary lacerating a heart in love or an eagle fallen in flight with no chance of escaping—appear together with pure folk or fictitious folk motifs, such as a flower or a turtle-dove, to identify a loved woman.

Going beyond polemics provoked by the entire range of symbols mentioned above and discussed—with regard to their originality—by Ariadna Camariano in her book: "Influența poeziei neogrețești asupra celei românești"—București 1935—(Influence of modern-Greek poetry on to Roumanian poetry), we consider significant the turtle-dove symbol of the poem "Amarîță turturea" (Sad turtle-dove) by Ienăchiță Văcărescu and its Greek variant—included in the collection "Erotas Apotelesmata" (Effects of love), ascribed to Athanasios Psalidas and published in Vienna in 1792² for its determining role in expressing solitude, evolving from melancholy and sadness to desparation and delirium. This "crescendo" of tones offers us a rare example of intensity of inspiration hardly found in that epoch, even when in the last two strophes of both poems the lyric tension seems to decrease almost predicting a

1. Most of our poets' birth and death dates are still debatable because of lack of written population register in epoch. With regards to the Roumanian poets we report those dates found in *Istoria literaturii Române*—București, 1968, vol. II. About the Modern-Greek poets, we referred to K. Th. Dimaras, *Istoria tis neoellenikis loghotehnias*, Athini, 1972.

2. Authorship is documented by Ariadna Camariano in: *Influența poeziei grecești asupra celei românești*, București, 1935, p. 9.

tragic epilogue, but we only perceive the tragedy of submission born from the dissent sentiment-mind.

Gând o biată păsărică
Atît inima își strică,
Incât dorește să moară
Pentru a sa soțioară.

Dar eu om de înaltă fire
Decît ea mai cu simțire
Cum poate să-mi fie bine?
Cum poate să-mi fie bine?
Oh! amar si vai de mine.
(Ienachita Vacarescu)

Αὐτὸ ποὺν' ἕνα πουλι
θλίβεται τόσον πολὺ
καὶ δὲν θέλει τὸ νὰ ζήσῃ
οὔτε νὰ καλοκαρδίση.
Μὰ ἐγὼ μὲ λογικὸ
καὶ μὲ τέτοιο ριζικό,
πρέπει πλέον νὰ γελάσω
ὅταν τὴν ἀγάπη μ' χάσω;
(A. Psalidas)

(When a poor little bird / has its heart so spoiled, / it only wishes to die / for its companion. / But me, man of high endowment / more sensitive than it / how can I feel well? / Oh, poor, miserable me! / (I. Văcărescu)³.

As a bird / it grows so sad / that it doesn't want to live any longer / neither to rejoice. / But me / logical man / with a similar fate / Can laugh if I loose my dear? / (Ath. Psalidas).

A different sense of bewilderment exists in the poem "Poulaki" (Little bird) by Ioannis Vilaras: a lonely, unhappy birdy finally finds shelter in a safe, little, golden cage offered to it by a young woman dressed-up as a huntress. Captivity is unquestionably accepted and we perceive that it will become an eternal devotion, despite all the solemn promises of unconditional freedom.

On the other hand, for Athanasios Christopoulos, the canary functions as a messenger. In spite of being just a little creature, it is able to convey a pure and delicate sentiment and asks only to be accepted and protected in the beloved woman's hands as a token of love.

But why does the poet need a messenger? Rather than a stylistic fiction, or a proof of shyness it better is consciousness of inability in expressing his own feelings. In fact in order to express the ineffable, poets need a term of mediation to be able to get over the limits of the words. In this sense the use of the indirect speech and the acrostic, made by most of the mentioned poets, become significant to reveal the lover's name or to describe situations and

3. All translations are my own.

feelings. It will suffice to mention Ienăchiţă Văcărescu with his poem “Zilele ce oi fi viu” (As long as I live); Alecu Văcărescu with his poem “Ele-ncotro m-oi duce” (Where it will take me to); Costache Conachi with his poem “Acest foc” (This fire...) and Ioannis Vilaras with his poem “Erota na boresis” (Love, you should...) from his collection “Erotica” (Erotic poems), all given below:

Zilele ce oi fi viu
vrednic aş vrea ca să fiu,
Oftind ca să te slăvesc,
dar cum poci să îndrăznesc?
Iscusit aş trebui
aş fiu, să poci zugrăvi
Chipul tău care dă rază
soarelui, si-l luminează.
Oi putea oare vreodată

(Ienăchiţă Văcărescu)

ZOICO = woman name

Ele-ncotro m-oi duce
Tot patimi îmi aduce
Norocul cel amar?
S'ale cuprinde toate
O inima nu poate
De fier fie măcar.
Au amorţit simtirea,
Căci s-a-mulţit mîhnirea
Si văz că mă topesc.
A m-îndoi cu firea
Că-mi va lipsi mîhnirea
Nicum nu socotesc

(Alecu Văcărescu)

ELENCO SI ALECU AU AMOR AMINDOI = Elena and Alecu love each other

*Ερωτα, νά ηµπόρεσες...

Acest foc ce dinadins

*Ερωτα, νά ηµπόρεσες ποτέ σου κι άλλον ένα
νά βρῆς, άπ' όσους πλήγωσες, πιστόν ώσάν κ'
έμένα;

In suflet tu mi-ai aprins

*Υπομονή, στά βάσανα όπου τραβάει ή καρδιά μου,
είδες νά έχη κι άλλη μιά, νά ζήσης, *Ερωτά μου;

Nu să va mai potoli

De-acum pîna ce-oi muri.

Φθοροποιόν και άσπλαχνον ό κόσμος σ' όνομά-
ζουν,

	ώς και οι ίδιοι σκλάβοι σου σκληρότατο σε κρά, ζουν-
Inima mea s-au primit,	Πρώτα και την καρδούλα μου, την παραφλογισμένη,
Din ceasul ce te-au iubit,	πώς στην πληγή της χαιρείται πολύ εύχαριστημένη.
Ca să rabde orice rău	"Όσο τὰ βάσανα σ' αὐτῆ, τοὺς πόνους ἀβγατίζεις τόσο και πλιότερη ἡδονή στα φύλλα τῆς χαρίζεις.
I-a fi scris pe pieptul tău	Στιγμή μικρῆς ἀνακωχῆς μὴ θέλης νὰ τῆς δώσης, μὴ ἀργῆς, ἂν περισσότερο μπορῆς νὰ τὴν πλη- γώσης!
Avînd lucru hotărît	
A-ți robi pină-n sfîrșit.	Ἐπήκοος ἀσάλευτος θὰ βρίσκωμαι κοντά σου, καὶ θὰ φιλῶ μ' ὑποταγῆ τ' ἀνίκητα δεσμά σου.
(Costache Conachi)	Νὰ καυχηθῆς δὲ γίνεται πῶς τάχα ὁ ἄλυσός σου ὡσάν κ' ἐμένα νὰ κρατᾶ τινὰν στὸν ὀρισμό σου.
ANICA = woman name	Ἡ ἐδική μου ἡ καρδιά ζιῆ μοναχά, κινιέται, καθόσο ὄχ τις σαγίτες σου βαθύτερα κεντιέται! (I. Vilaras) <i>Εὐφροσύνη = Joy</i>

Expressing his love, Alecu Văcărescu uses a different symbol: he imagines that he is a moth attracted by the night-light struggling with darkness and light, heat and cold. Passion, then, is expressed through the metaphor of fire and its state of grace is represented by slavery.

In the poem "In flacăra care mă arz" (In the flame I am burning), in fact, the poet declares:

In flacăra care mă arz
In loc de chinuri și necaz
Găsesc tot mîngîiere,
Dulceață și plăcere.
.....
Așa m-am uotărît să fiu
Cît voi trăi, cît voi fi viu
In piept pertîndu-ți focul
Să-mi fericesc norocul!

(Alecu Văcărescu)

In the flame I am burning / instead of pain and trouble / I find only relief / sweetness and pleasure./

I decided to stay so / as long as I live / Keeping your fire in my soul /
to make my fate lucky. /

Hence Alecu Văcărescu's critics talk about a refined masochism: in order to keep alive the joys of love, man must burn, suffer as a slave. Suffering with pleasure is the ideal condition of his existence, fire being the nourishing element more favourable to sentiment. In such a spiritual condition the lover must show great moral power, firmly accepting to be burned by passion. As Eugen Simion says in his book "Dimineața poezilor" (Poets' morning)—București 1980⁴ it could be possible even to talk about a certain "ponderate heroism" that provides pleasure as a reward. The way of happiness, through suffering takes to the highest manifestation of joy, ecstasy. In view of this sublime spiritual state, the poet continuously looks for suffering. Love begins with a magical, fortunate moment and rapidly turns into a burning passion, without evolving from contemplation to anxiety, from melancholy to sadness and from desperation to delirium. The highest moral expression of such a passion, then, is slavery.

Woman, considered by Alecu Văcărescu as a human being morally stronger than man, being able to subdue and persuade him toward an eternal slavery on oath, is more often considered by the other poets as an object morally and physically insufficiently individualized. Holy and untouchable to Athanasios Christopoulos, for instance, she has goddess rank and lives nonchalantly among Graces, remaining however an impossible dream for her lover. Common objects, such as a comb and a mirror, become sacred as well for being given to women by Afrodite in person. As a token of eternal beauty, these objects are also considered lucky and the poet wants to turn into them in order to stay close to his lover and to be able to contemplate her without being discovered.

The images' refinement especially offered through the musical verse, hides a controlled sensuality, even when the poet wishes to be unmaterialized, turning into air or dream, as we can see in the poem ΠΟΘΟΣ (Wich), from the first part of his "ΛΥΡΙΚΑ" (Lyric poems)⁵.

4. Eugen Simion, *Dimineața poezilor*, București, 1980, p. 27.

5. "ΛΥΡΙΚΑ" (Lyric poems) is a collection of erotic and bacchic poems divided into 4 different sections: «Ἐρατώ» (Erato); «Ἀφροδίτη» (Aphrodite); «Βάκχος» (Bacchus) and «Βάκχος Τρυγητής» (Bacchus the vintager). It has had 13 editions and a large circulation since it was a manuscript as Nestor Camariano reports in his book *Athanasios Christopoulos*, Thessaloniki, 1981, pp. 163-184. A. N. Sigalas in: *Συλλογή ἑθνικῶν ᾠμάτων*, Athini, 1880 (Folk songs collection) presents 14 Christopoulos' poems with their music as a proof of the poet's fame. It is very hard to confirm, however the poems authorship, because of their

"Ας γένουμουν καθρέφτης, "Ας ήμουν ἀεράκης, [sic]
 νά βλέπεις σ' ἐμένα καὶ ὄλος νά κινήσω,
 κ' ἐγὼ νά βλέπω πάντα στὰ στήθη σου νά πέσω,
 τὸ κάλλος σου κ' ἐσένα! νά σὲ τὰ ἀερίσω!

"Ας γένουμουν χτενάκι, "Ας ήμουν, τέλος, ὕπνος,
 σιγά-σιγά ν' ἀρχίζω νά ἔρχωμαι τὸ βράδυ
 νά σχίζω τὰ μαλλιά σου, νά κλείνω τὰ γλυκά σου
 νά σ' τὰ συχοχτενίζω! ματάκια στὸ σκοτάδι!

(A. Christopoulos)

I wish I was a mirror / to see you with me / and always to see / your
 beauty and you!/
 I wish I was a little comb / to gently start / to cleave your hair, / to
 comb it frequently./

I wish I was a breeze / and I moved all / to fall to your chest / and
 air it./

I wish I was sleeping at last / to come at night / to close your sweet /
 little eyes in the darkness./

Whoever dares to touch the woman loved, even an insolent mosquito,
 is warned and threatened to be killed, as in the poem ΚΩΝΩΠΙΑΣ (Mosqu-
 ito):

Ἐπειδὴ (σὲ βεβαιώνω,
 καὶ φορικτότατα σ' ἀμόνω)
 μὲ τὰ χεῖλη ποὺ δαγκάνεις,
 ἂν σὲ πιάσω, θά πεθάνης!

(A. Christopoulos)

So, I guarantee / and I warn you very severely / about the lips you bite, /
 If I catch you, you will die/

Without any doubts in Athanasios Christopoulos' poems we find a sub-
 tile irony that in the first Roumanian poets is hush up by a more intense in-
 spiration, allowing grace and freshness to dominate.

Costache Conachi's poems, on the other hand, express a continuous oscil-
 lation between sensuality and spiritualism, between sacred and profane love,
 intending to combine physical qualities with sentiment and mind in the wo-

thematic variety as Eleni Tsantsanoglou affirms in her book *Athanasios Christopoulos:
 Lirica*, Athini, 1970, p. 29.

man's portrait. Love is represented as a wandering winged god, attractive, insinuating, vindictive, with arrows that hurt and cure at the same time. It is a result of contrasts, fusion of good and evil, pleasure and bitterness as the poem "Cine-i Amorul" (Who is Love) illustrates

Armele lui nu-s de hură, ci-s de milă, de iubire
 De durere, de suspinuri, de rugii fără contenire.
 Cu dînsale se armează, cu dînsale biruiește,
 Ele sînt a lui dorințe, pentru ele se jertfește.

 Două firi are-ntr-o fire și de om și ingerească,
 Una-i dragostea curată, ceialtă-i- ți trupească.
 Cu una la santimenturi să pleacă și să inchină
 Dorește cele de lipsă, în despărțire suspină
 Cu ceialtă potoale și împaca imbulzirea
 Ce aduce la om fapta care i-au dăruit firea.

(Costache Conachi)

His weapons are not of hatred, but made of compassion, of love / of suffering, of sighs, of irrepressible prayers. / With them he arms himself, with them he wins, / they are his desires, for them he sacrifices himself. /...../ He has two natures, human and angelical, / One is pure love, the other one is physical. / With the first he bends and bows to sentiments / he wishes missed things, at parting he sighs / With the other he calms and tempers that exuberance / That gives man all the Nature's gifts.

Therefore, it is clear, that the two contrasts are going to be identified into one, becoming a new opposite unity (coincidentia oppositorum).

Man, no matter how proud he can be, cannot resist Love, that attracts and seduces him just looking and smiling. Sweet, naive child at a first glance, but very wily, Love torments lovers' hearts and makes them wish death as a liberation:

Moartea fără prelungire
 Să vie să mă ia,
 Căci alt chip de mîntuire
 Nu am la durerea mea.

(Costache Conachi)

Let Death without agony / come and take me away / because no other form of redemption / existis to my pain.

Death, then, is considered an instrument of spiritual elevation and fused with the Supernatural.

Eros represented by Costache Conachi is not really different from Cupidon as demonstrated in the poem "Fantasma" (Ghost) by Athanasios Christopoulos. Looking as an impertinent child surrounded by divine light, armed with bow and quiver, he sends his darts wherever he wants:

ΦΑΝΤΑΣΜΑ

Ἐπὸ τὰ δεξιὰ του
κι ἀπὸ τ' ἀριστερά του
φτερά ἔχεν ἀναμμένα
στοὺς ὤμους τ' ἀπλωμένα.

Βαστοῦσε καὶ κοντάρι,
σαῖτες καὶ δοξάρι,
καὶ στή γυμνή του ράχη
φαρέτρα μιά μονάχη.

Καὶ τοῦτα τὰ φρικτὰ του
καὶ τρομερ' ἄρματά του
παντοῦ (ἀνάθεμά τα!)
φωτιές ἦταν γεμάτα.

(A. Christopoulos)

On his right/and on his left/he had lighted wings / unfolded on his shoulders. / He also carried a lance / arrows and a little bow / and on his naked back / only a quiver. / And all these horrible and terrible arms (Curse it!) / were full of fire all over.

Although sometimes reproached and punished by Aphrodite and Graces, becoming almost harmless, he is still a dangerous enemy to fight with and to whom it is only possible to cry for mercy, as in the poem "Saitevmata" (Arrow-shots):

ΣΑΙΤΕΥΜΑΤΑ

Ἔρωτα, παῦσε,
ἂν μ' ἀγαπᾷς,
δεύτερο πλέον
μὴ μὲ χτυπᾷς.

Μὴ δά, σὲ λέγω,
μ' εἶσαι λωλός!
Φρόνιμα κάθου,
γένου καλός.

Ἄφσ' τῆ σαῖτα,
ρίξ' τη στή γῆ·
μὲ σὼν' ἢ μιά μου
τούτη πληγῆ.

᾽Ωχ ὁ καημένος,
πάλε χτυπᾷς;
Αὐτό ἔναι στηῆθος
τί τὸ τρυπᾷς;

Μὴ ρίξης τρίτη·
φθάνει, φονιά!
Φθάν' ἢ σκληρῆ σου
ἢ ἀπονιά!

Πάλε ματιάξεις;
Ἄχ, ὁ πικρός,
χάθηκα! νά με,
πέφτω νεκρός!

(A. Christopoulos)

Eros, stop it / if you love me / don't hit me / for the second time /
 you must be crazy /, I can tell. / Set your mind and be good to me. / Let
 go the arrow, / Throw it down on the ground. / Put an end to such a
 plague of mine / Oh, poor me / do you hit me again? / Is this the chest
 you pierce? / Don't throw the third one, / stop it killer! / Stop your horrible
 cruelty! / Do you take aim once again? / Oh, the die-hard child disappeared! /
 Here I am, / fallen dead./

Among all the poets objects of our attention, Costache Conachi shows
 in his poems a clear analytic character, applied not to the indefinible, but to
 the evident. He doesn't suggest the evolution of an evident state, but through
 the expression given to the lyrical content he shows, analyzes and follows it
 in details. In an entire suite of poems he describes eyes depending on their
 colour, eyelashes and eyebrows, differently from the others. Alecu Văcărescu,
 for instance, gives a very negative role to the lover's eyes. They in fact can
 even cause blindness or wither as in the poem "A ochilor tăi rază (The rays
 of your eyes):

.....
 A ochilor tăi rază
 Imi place să mă arză

Ochi tai arme nu poartă,
 Mă mir dar cu ce sageată?
 Imi dau trudă, nevoie,
 Si pedeapsa peste fire.

(Alecu Văcărescu)

I like to be burned by / the rays of your eyes /

Your eyes have no arms, / I am surprised, but now can they dart? /
 they cause me fatigue and suffering / and punishment beyond measure.

A series of violent contrasts, typical of the anacreontic genre, is offered
 by Nicolae Dimache and Ioannis Vilaras's poems. The two poets present
 different characteristics from the others for their sentiment of loneliness
 accentuated by the rising moon, in opposition to the soul's solitude. In a
 state of spiritual abandonment, as in the poem "Lună, lună, te văz lună..."
 (Moon, moon, I see you) Nicolae Dimache chooses the indifferent moon as
 his confident:

Lună, lună, te văz lună,
 Si-nforcată cu lumină,

Revarsă a rale rază
 O dulceață, de viață.
 Pe samne nu poți simțire
 La a me nenorocire,
 De privești făr-de-ndurare
 A lacrimilor vărsare,
 Si privești cu o răpire
 Jalnica me tinguire

(Nicolae Dimache)

Moon, moon, I see you / and burning of light, / send your rays, / sweetness of life. / You cannot really feel my misfortune, / reason why without compassion / you watch me shedding tears / and you get a glimpse / of my sad moaning.

Ioannis Vilaras, instead, expresses the theme of night solitude—received by Young through Sachellarios⁶—as in the poem 'Ο ήλιος βασιλεύει... (The sunshine downs):

Ἄναμερᾶν τὰ ζῶα, κουρνιάζουν τὰ πουλιά,
 πᾶς ἄνθρωπος τραβιέται καὶ παύει ἀπὸ δουλεία.

Καθόλου δέ γροικιέται φωνή οὐδὲ καμμιά,
 τὰ πάντα ἡσυχάζουν· μεγάλη ἔρημιά.

Στὸ μέγα τοῦτο βάθος ὁ Ἔρωσ ἀντηχάει,
 ὁ ἔρωτάς μου μόνον καθόλου δὲ σιγάει.

Κ' ἐγὼ μαζί με τοῦτον ἀκοίμητος πονῶ,
 βογγῶ μαζί του, κλαίω, ἀνήσυχος θρηνηῶ.

(I. Vilaras)

Animals retire, birds go to roost / Everyone goes to bed and stops working /...../ you cannot even hear a whisper / everything gets quiet; big solitude. /...../ In such a deep immensity, Eros re-echoes / Only my love isn't quiet. / And I suffer with him awake / I groan in pain with him, I cry troubled I moan./

We cannot neglect, moreover, the woman's absence theme. As Nicolae Dimache observes, she turns everything into desert, even the soul:

6. As K. O. Dimaras reports in: *Istoria tis neoellenikis loghotehnias*, Athini, 1972, p. 188.

Cit imi pari zaoa care petrec fără tine
Nici o frumusață, a firii nu mingie pe mine.

(Nicolae Dimache)

How long it looks to me the day I spent without you / neither a spiritual beauty can console me/.

In such a contest nature has different functions, depending on the authors: sometimes it is just a spectator, other times it becomes part of the artist's spiritual world, allowing the most strange emotions. There is no doubt however that nature is always an indulgent presence, both when it appears accomplice of love intrigue or when it looks like a compassionate mother who hugs and consoles her own children, miserable and needy of love.

Changing from season to season, nature can efficiently show its presence and through a wide range of nuances, from time to time, in its periodic becoming, it invites us to meditate on human friality, as in the poem ΧΕΙΜΩΝΑΣ (Winter) by Athanasios Christopoulos:

Τὸ κάλλος τῆς ἐσθήσθη,
στὸ χάος ἐβυθίσθη,
στὴν πρώτη του πηγῆ.

Ταλαίπωρη νεότητα,
ιδὲ τὴ ματαιότητα.
Τὸ κάλλος μας περνάει
καὶ τ' ἄνθος τῆς καλῆς μας
ὀλιγοστῆς ζωῆς μας
μονόφορα γερνάει

(Ath. Christopoulos)

Its beauty is over / it sank into chaos / into its first origin. // Poor youthness, / see the uselessness. / Our beauty downs / and the flower of our loved, / limited life / gets old.

Beauty, similarly identified by Ioannis Vilaras with Spring, as expression of womanliness is destined to down as well. It must be enjoyed in the magic moment of its splendour to be immortalized and devoutly saved in the lover's soul until death. Being at the same time motive of joy, through the mere contemplation, it obtains a redemptive role that ends with the lover's catharsis. At times beauty causes suffering, or it can make lovers peaceful and soothe suffering.

With regard to the bacchic poetry, models are offered only by Athana-

sios Christopoulos and Ioan Cantacuzino, this genre being resumed at the beginning of 19th century by Iancu Văcărescu (?1791-1863), Barbu Paris Mumuleanu (1794-1836) and Anton Pann (?1797-1854) with an evident moral aspect.

Athanasios Christopoulos must be considered the innovator and divulger of this genre, known in classic epoch and appeared in this period in a new exigence of a total liberation of the thought from any kind of conventionalism. The hymn to joy, through drunkenness has a persistent echo in this century when medieval darkness and falsity in all fields, included the cultural one, seem to survive. The scholar is the one who riots against pedantry, and proclaims the necessity of a care-free life as in the poem "Varelthichi" (Tavern):

ΒΑΡΕΛΟΘΗΚΗ

Ἐξω, ἔξω τὰ βιβλία!

σιὴ φωτιά ἢ φλυαρία.

Λέξεις, λόγοι, δλα κάτω!

τί τοῦ κάκου τὰ φυλάττω;

Βάλε Βάκχον καὶ Μαινάδες

καὶ βαρέλια μυριάδες,

νὰ γενῆ βαρελοθήκη

ἢ χρυσὴ βιβλιοθήκη!

Θέλω, θέλω νὰ καθήσω,

νὰ χαρῶ, νὰ εὐθυμήσω

μὲ τὸν Βάκχον μου τὸν φίλον

στῆς βαρέλας μου τὸν τύλον.

(A. Christopoulos)

Let me throw away books / To fire idle talks / Words, speeches, all down with! / Why do I save these awful things? // Here Bacchus and Mainades / with plenty of barrels come / to turn the golden library / into a tavern // I do want to idle, / to rejoice and have fun / Keeping drinking / with my friend Bacchus.

When Bacchus doesn't show up, life becomes an everlasting tyranny, as we can see in the poem ΚΑΤΑΡΑ (Curse):

Νὰ μὴ φθάσω, νὰ μὴ ζήσω,

ἂν μιὰ μέρα δὲν μεθῆσω!

Κι ἂν πεθάνω, νὰ πεθάνω

στό ποτήρι μου ἀπάνω.

Τὴν ἀμέθυστη ζωὴ μου

νὰ τὴν ἔχουν οἱ ἔχθροί μου!

μόν' ἐκεῖνοι, ὅσο ζήσουν,

νὰ μὴ φθάσουν νὰ μεθῆσουν.

ἽΟπ' ὁ Βάκχος δὲν σφυρίζει

κ' ἡ ποτήρα δὲν γυρίζει,

ἡ ζωὴ 'ν' τῇ ἀληθείᾳ

αἰώνια τυραννία.

(A. Christopoulos)

Don't let me stop / Don't let me live / If one day I won't get drunk!/
And if I die let me die / over my glass. // Let my enemies have / my teetotal
life / Let only those ones not stop regretting it / as long as they live. // Where
Bacchus doesn't play his flute / and no glass goes around / life is truly / an
everlasting tyranny.

Also Ioan Cantacuzino invites everyone to fully live the present, each
one giving himself to drunkenness, because the future will unexpectedly come
with its uncertainty. In "Nimic nu-i ca vinul" (Nothing is like wine) he says:

Suge măi firtate
Cît ai sănătate
Că nu ştim prea bine
De-om fi vii şi mîine
Cli, cli, cli, cli...

(I. Cantacuzino)

Drink my friend / As long as you are healthy / Because we don't know
very well / Whether we are alive tomorrow / Cli, cli, cli, cli...

As soon as old age comes, everything is lost and only the memory of a
wasted life will survive, as it is illustrated in the poem ΦΡΟΝΤΙΑΔΕΣ (Thoughts) by
Athanasios Christopoulos:

Νέος είμαι; θά γεράσω,
τήν ζωήν μου θά τήν χάσω
καί σάν ίσκιος θά σβησθῶ.
Όσα κάμω καί πασχίω,
εις τόν κόσμον θά τ' άφήσω
καί γυμνός θ' άφανισθῶ.

(A. Christopoulos)

Am I young? I will get old. / I will lose my life and vanish as a shadow /
Everything I do and try / I will leave on earth / and bare I will pass away.

Through the examples offered above, we caş certainly conclude that the
late 18th century poetic production in Roumanian and Modern-Greek lan-
guage only apparently accepts the sophisticated canons of the arcadian and
neoclassic poetry, more seriously intending to point to new socio-political
and cultural objectives.

Looks, sights, kissing and hugging, conventionally considered just as
symptoms of love and drinking as a choral hymn to joy, become manifestation
of political passion, expressing anxiety, fear, frustration and even desperation,
due to the peculiar spiritual and historical circumstances in the Balkan area.

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