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## CRETAN LITERATURE IN LATE VENETOCRACY A General Review of Literary Procedures

*Abstract.* The end of 16<sup>th</sup> and the first decades of 17<sup>th</sup> centuries mark one of the most significant turning points in the history of Neo-Hellenic literature. Renaissance influences in the regions dominated by Latin rulers, at the island of Crete above all, give rise to the conception of an entirely original linguistic model. Based on the local dialect, it departs not only from the scholarly heritage of the medieval literature, but from Neo-Hellenic *koine* of the late and post-Byzantine period as well. The paper summarizes some of the basic characteristics of this new literary medium, introducing at the same time the largely discussed question of the periodization of this part of Neo-Hellenic literature.

In the interval between 1210 and the final Turkish occupation in 1669 Crete was under the dominion of the Venetian Republic, its spiritual, economic and political centre not being the imperial town on the Golden Horn, but the trading republic in the north part of the Adriatic. This fact gained the additional significance in the decades following the fall of the Byzantine capital. The Greek lands under the Latin rule, first of all the great islands of Rhodes, Chios and Cyprus, which, as well as Crete itself, persisted in giving resistance to Ottoman pressure, were not to confront with the sudden and painful break brought about by the Turkish conquest of the other parts of the Hellenic world: their dependence on Western patrons and orientation towards centres of Romance culture enabled the Greeks inhabiting the islands to achieve, together with other European nations, the natural and gradual transition from the 'autumn of the Middle Ages' to the modern era, and thus, in

their own way, become the participants of the great innovating movement which was about to shape the character of modern man - the Renaissance.<sup>1</sup>

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Here, on the bordering islands of the former Byzantine commonwealth, a completely new kind of literature was about to be flourishing for a while, extraordinary and fresh, the literature whose inspiration was so far unheard-of. This vernacular poetry, based on the local dialect, was free from all the traditional (scholarly and theological) preoccupations of Byzantine poetry, assuming upon itself new literary forms that were to express more complex poetic experience and lyric sensibility of a new style. The anonymous *Rhodian Love Poems* from the 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> centuries, the poetry by Emmanouil Georgillias, a series of Petrarchan sonnets in the Cypriot dialect, written on the eve of the Turkish invasion in 1571,<sup>2</sup> all of these poetic works testified to the supreme virtuosity and skill in mastering the complex metrical and musical technique which has come to represent the original heritage of the Renaissance.

However, it was on Crete that this literature of the Hellenic Renaissance reached its peak, which was the last of the Latin islands where, for almost a century, after relatively rapid successive falls of Rhodes (1522), Chios (1566) and Cyprus (1571),<sup>3</sup> the last vestiges of Hellenic freedom were successfully preserved and cherished in a completely barbarian surroundings.<sup>4</sup> Together with the islands in the Ionian sea, Crete was a stop where learned Byzantines would tarry on their way to Venice, Florence, Rome and other cultural centers of Renaissance Italy, fleeing the occupied capital with scrolls of old manuscripts in their luggage. Most of the classical and Byzantine manuscripts which have been kept in the libraries of Cretan monasteries would on that occasion be either copied or bought off, only to find their new retreat in the libraries of the newly founded universities and academies of the West.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> L. Politis, 1966, 225-26.

<sup>2</sup> Th. Siapkarakas-Pitsillidès, 1952, 1976<sup>2</sup> (Greek).

<sup>3</sup> The island had been in the possession of the French feudal family of Lusignan up to 1470, and from that year on it became the property of Venetian Republic.

<sup>4</sup> In the period of truce between 1648 and 1667 the Turks - since they had not been successful in their first siege of Candia from 1647-8 - strengthened their rule in the remaining territory of the island, but the town itself was not threatened any longer, and it seems to have been free of any problems concerning the food provision from the provincial area.

<sup>5</sup> K. I. Giannakopoulos, 1965, 47f.

Only with some delay did Cretan literature of the 16<sup>th</sup> and the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries manage to keep abreast of those processes simultaneously taking place in the countries of Western Europe. Whereas the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century marks the climax of the Italian Renaissance and its creative powers, for Crete the whole 15<sup>th</sup> and the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century represent nothing but continuation of the final stage of Byzantine literature. There is nothing new in this period to be identified concerning literary genres, expressive procedures, as well as style. At this moment, poets do not draw their inspiration from the contemporary Italian literature, with which they might not even be familiar with, or which, at least, they do not even think of imitating. Their language does not differ from that of the popular literature of the last centuries of the Byzantine era, nor does their spiritual orientation differ from that of the medieval man of the previous period. The predominant idea of these works is the idea of death and the problem of ethical redemption (Bergadis, Choumnos, Sklavos, Pikatoros). Apart from these religious topics, there is also a motif of expatriation, common in folk literature. Other works (Dellaportas, Sachlikis, Falieros, *The Book on a Donkey*) depict the contemporary life, often in a very straightforward and caustic manner, using satire, which the Middle Ages were also familiar with. The narrative epics, created after a Western model (*Apollonios*), represent yet another offspring of the late Byzantine novel. Nothing but sporadic signs of increasing susceptibility to Western influences are to be noticed, the slow and gradual getting acquainted with the new poetic models springing from the bosom of the Italian Renaissance (the translation of Boccaccio's *Teseida*).

However, since 1550 the Renaissance influences have been quite evident. Both epic as well as lyric style are inspired by Antiquity, united by consistent efforts of deliberate imitations of classical models. In this way, they are transferred from Italian to Cretan literature (e.g. Achelis). Later on, around 1600, there are new literary genres typical of the Renaissance, the genres that are not modeled after Byzantine literature. Herewith a new sensibility came to light, as well as a new linguistic perspective.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> One should bear in mind that Cypriots were the main contributors to this linguistic orientation (it is difficult to assess to which extent Cretans owed to this model, if they did at all). Orientation to vernacular patterns and the original demotic is a typically Renaissance phenomenon. Paradoxically as it may seem, the Renaissance cult of the Antiquity and imitation of its models as a rule goes hand in hand with thorough and systematic cherishing of national modern languages. In Italy itself the process of mingling of the two lines started as far back as the time of

Even a brief glance at the development of Byzantine literature of demotic orientation leads us to the conclusion that at the beginning of this process it implies a kind of mixed and archaic model, but which gradually gets closer to what we could define as pure demotic. The primitive and the 'barbarian' character of these early stages of Neo-Hellenic literature becomes distinct just with this mixed linguistic model: the more primitive a certain stage is, the greater number of archaisms is to be recognized in it. S. Xanthoudidis, a long time ago, pointed out<sup>7</sup> to the fact that the process of gradual purification had been going on as early as the medieval period of Greek literature, and that this course of sophistication kept pace with the increasing dominance of demotic style.

The language of those literary achievements written after the above-mentioned stage turns out to represent a completely new phenomenon: a deliberate change is quite evident and is undoubtedly a matter of just one person, or at least one literary school being responsible for it. S. Alexiou in his superb paper on Kornaros' *Erotokritos*<sup>8</sup> - pointing out the systematic character of Cretan style, developed according to the defined method, along with the simultaneous purification and assimilation of learned elements<sup>9</sup> - has drawn attention to yet another, even more characteristic issue: that the poets that lived around 1600 were the first to use the Cretan dialect deliberately and systematically - primarily Chortatsis, then the anonymous poet of *The Fair Shepherdess* and, finally, Kornaros - while the older ones did not write in the dialect, but the Neo-Hellenic *koine* imbued with just few elements of Cretan.<sup>10</sup> In this way many elements of Ancient and Medieval Greek disap-

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Lorenzo de' Medici and Angelo Poliziano. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century the process gained its theoretician - Pietro Bembo. This phenomenon was evident in other countries of Western Europe: this kind of double role of the French Pléiade and Milton is well known. Cyprian and Cretan demotic revolution of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries should be included in this process, despite its specific particularities. These demotic affinities are even expressed by Patriarchs Cyril Loukaris and Meletios Pigas, both Cretans by origin (the latter being worth mentioning for the perfection of his Italian sonnets). Alexander Palladas is yet another learned Patriarch of Cretan origin, who grieves because of the fall of Candia expressing his sorrow in his perfectly simple demotic verses.

<sup>7</sup> S. Xanthoudidis, 1915, LV.

<sup>8</sup> S. Alexiou, 1952, 400.

<sup>9</sup> N. V. Tomadakis, 1953, 78, points out the fact that the selection of language and the demotic elements taking part in its forming was not carried out at random and without the plan.

<sup>10</sup> There are numerous papers dealing with the Cretan dialect that is to be found in the works of 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>-century poets and their relation to the collo-

peared, while a certain number of them were adapted. Some were still used, although to the extent which did not disturb the harmony of pure dialectical model (where archaic shadowing or a tinge of old times was necessary). Learned elements of this kind are certainly evident with Chortatsis' contemporaries as well, and even with the authors of the previous generations. However, the difference between the Cretan classics of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and the older Cretan writers is more than conspicuous: while the archaisms of the earlier works (especially those of lexical character) were easy to notice - since the poet was not being skillful enough in adopting them from some of his models, or adopted them under the influence of the learned language, primarily that of the Church<sup>11</sup> - with the classics these borrowings were not

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quial variant of the dialect, which has been kept up to this moment (at least in the speech of the Cretan country). These are just some of the characteristic remarks on this topic made by D. Vagiakakos, 1972, 38: "Some of the main features of the Cretan dialect were developed as early as the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and its East Cretan variant was accepted not only as a means of communication of all Cretans, but also as an artistic medium of Cretan poetry. The very few of the works of poetry which were written in West Cretan do possess many of the East Cretan elements"; the same, *ibid.*, 12, n. 2: "Although *Erophile* was written in East Cretan, it contains some of the West Cretan forms." G. Chatzidakis, 1927, 21: "I can observe, first of all, that, since the poet's (= Foskolos') time (1668-9) up to present day, some linguistic development, although very little, has been taking place ... so that some meanings have been transformed, while some words have been forgotten, particularly those of foreign origin etc." The same, 1913-4, 47, on Cretan dialect in literary works of that time: "... with the exception of *Erotokritos*, ... not any of the works of poetry written on Crete gives us a genuine picture of the contemporary colloquial Cretan speech neither in the phonetic, nor morphological, nor lexical sense", while N. Kontosopoulos' opinion, 1970, 248, is different: "The conservative character and the slow development of Cretan dialect resulted in the fact that the language of Cretan peasants from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was fairly the same as the language of Cretan texts from the 17<sup>th</sup> century, so that the picture of Cretan dialect created by non-Cretans merely by reading old texts is completely true."

Owing to the fact that soon after the Turkish conquest Chortatsis' Cretan demotic ceased to be a linguistic medium of refined literature, so that it could be traced only on few sites of the Cretan country, today, despite the complicated rhetoric and the learned character of the poet's linguistic expression, it sounds to a certain degree 'rustic'. This is the reason why Chortatsis was disregarded for a long time as being uncultivated and not sufficiently 'literary' a poet.

<sup>11</sup> On archaisms with pre-classical authors of Cretan literature see G. Chatzidakis, 1905, 493f. and 1913-4, 45f, as well as S. Alexiou, 1952, 400; the same author, 1959, 300, also presents another opinion: "In the texts in which linguistic models are distinctly mixed, such as in the case of all the older works of Cretan literature, as well as the subsequent ones from the 17<sup>th</sup> century, written in

that striking. A gifted poet, who uses the Cretan dialect deliberately and systematically, is easier to fit his learnedness in the organic unity of the work and in this way avoid his archaisms to be overtly and directly colliding with the spirit of the vernacular.<sup>12</sup>

A new code was established by mingling of stylistic elements selected from several existing codes: oral demotic of the rural and urban Cretan setting, the folksong, written demotic of the previous period (that only sporadically included Cretan elements as well), and, finally, Italian poetry and rhetoric, as well as the colloquial Italian language (although to a very small degree). In this way the literary medium was being transformed, not because the vernacular itself was changing, as pointed out by Xanthoudidis, but because the radical turning point in the poetics of Cretan authors at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, who for the first time, deliberately and systematically, took up creating a new linguistic medium for the purposes of new artistic forms. It is Chortatzis who contributed to the fact that those tendencies took shape of a distinctly and explicitly articulated literary programme.

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The artificiality of the language of Cretan literature is manifested as a series of lexical, morphological and syntactic traits not common in the original demotic tradition. There is an enormous difference between Kornaros and the older folksong which used to be sung on Crete before *Erotokritos*

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not such meticulous a style, as in the case of *Zenon* and particularly *The Cretan War* by Bunialis, it is quite clear that the principle of uniformity is not evident..." On the same see also S. Xanthoudidis, 1915, LV, and S. Alexiou, 1969<sup>2</sup>, 18.

<sup>12</sup> S. Alexou, 1952, 406, on the deliberate use of Cretan dialect in the works of Cretan classics of the 17<sup>th</sup> century: "There is something completely original in the way the first major Cretan poets treat language: it represents the first deliberate, systematic and complete use of Cretan dialect." R. Browning, 1969, 95, writes: "By the time of Chortatzis and Kornaros a process of purification has taken place, and few specifically non-Cretan forms are to be found, although in the matter of vocabulary borrowings are freely made from the learned language." N. Kontosopoulos, 1969, 14, points out that the language of *Erotokritos* differs very little from the one spoken by elderly peasants in the eastern part of the island. On archaisms in the works of Cretan poets S. Alexiou, 1959, 301, says: "The use of learned elements is evident in the vocabulary of the 17<sup>th</sup>-century classics, but it is always deliberate and it does not derive either from incompetence or tendency to archaic expression: it is a way for the poet to cope with the metrical demands, or, on the other hand, to enrich his linguistic expression. This attitude is not to be mixed with the archaism of the older period."

became widespread and well-known enough to provoke a feedback impact on folk literature. This difference is even more striking when the language of the folksong is compared to the one of Chortatsis': the Cretan dramatist writes in much more elaborate a style than the one of Kornaros'.<sup>13</sup> His sentences are longer, often too long, the natural word order disturbed to a much greater degree,<sup>14</sup> adjectives separated from nouns, objects from verbs,<sup>15</sup> there are not any of Kornaros' asyndeta, while the enjambement is extremely frequent.<sup>16</sup> It is difficult to find an analogous example of syntax in other works of Neo-Hellenic literature. This language, according to Alexiou, "being artistic to the point of being affected",<sup>17</sup> has all the features of manneristic structure, with frequent alliteration and assonance, repetition and pun. Yet another characteristic of this expression is a passive syntax, which demotic usually tends to avoid if possible (though does not ignore altogether). This syntax, according to Politis, makes Chortatsis' style "elaborate, complex, affected and even sometimes maze",<sup>18</sup> and as such could not derive from either Greek folk tradition (which must have been in the back of poet's mind) or Italian poetry. Politis asserts that this syntax is more likely to reflect the poet's dependence on Latin authors.<sup>19</sup> This structure of Chortatsis' language is in close connection with radical innovations in the realm of verse. The inner composition of the fifteen-syllable verse is now much more affected and less vernacular than in the case of *The Sacrifice of Abraham* or

<sup>13</sup> On Chortatsis' style in comparison to the one of Kornaros' see L. Politis, 1964, κε', and E. Kriaras, 1975, 28.

<sup>14</sup> In many cases the inversion is a natural result of metrical needs.

<sup>15</sup> Here we deal with the so-called hyperbaton (ὑπερβατόν σχῆμα), which implies that one word is pushed farther away from the other one with which it is in close syntactical connexion (this figure was common in Ancient literature as well, thus it could be looked upon as a learned archaism).

<sup>16</sup> S. Alexiou, 1954, 30. The author's tendency to learnedness is noticeable throughout the text. He would rather choose the expression which is not frequent enough (being already replaced by a vernacular one). Such is the case of the genitive, usually avoided by the original demotic, using instead of it prepositional construction or a clause. Mrs P. Komnini devoted her doctoral thesis to the learned elements of Chortatsis' language (Ioannina 1977).

<sup>17</sup> μέχρι ἐπιτηδεύσεως ἔντεχνος, S. Alexiou, *ibid*.

<sup>18</sup> L. Politis, 1964, κε'.

<sup>19</sup> Politis, *ibid*, λζ', has collected all the quotations from Chortatsis which could contribute to the thesis that the poet was a connoisseur of Latin. According to him, Chortatsis had a "Western education" and he "did not have anything to do with scholarly tradition".



*Erotokritos*.<sup>20</sup> These are the features that make Choratsis' language less intelligible to an ordinary reader or spectator - even to Cretans themselves. A certain amount of effort is necessary in order to be able to follow the text continuously and at the same time not to drop out anything relevant to its meaning. There are parts whose linguistic meaning was never entirely understandable to an ordinary audience.<sup>21</sup>

The versification of Cretan artistic poetry is something completely different in comparison with the versification of the contemporary popular poetry. Its accent is far more flexible and different in type, although it may seem irregular when compared with the accent of popular poetry. Its metrical stress, enclitic pronunciation of polysyllabic words, frequent and bold synzesis between accented vowels,<sup>22</sup> avoiding caesura which would coincide with the borders of metrical and semantic units,<sup>23</sup> internal punctuation - those are features which make Cretan poetry clearly different from the standard demotic fifteen-syllable line. The wide use of enjambement,<sup>24</sup> which Xanthoudidis considered to be the one artificial trait of Choratsis' poetic expression, is, according to Alexiou, the basic element of a completely new organization of fifteen-syllable line, unknown to the earlier popular poetry.<sup>25</sup> The strict isometry, semantic completeness of the self-contained lines and distichs, the balance of hemistichs, the entire strict system of the traditional prosody inherited from late Byzantine demotic poetry, begins to loosen and dissolve in contact with the flexible and lively prosody of the Italian late Renaissance and pre-baroque mannerism. The ideas do not progress from the first towards the second hemistich, but from the second towards the first hemistich of the following line. The same tendency towards the pregnant expression, strictly articulated in both semantic and formal sense, was what influenced Choratsis' consistent avoidance of hiatus, which here disappears not only within hemistichs, but also in the places of their contact, and even between the very lines (usually beginning with a consonant).

One of the most characteristic traits of Choratsis' is rhetoric developing of long chains of conceits and images grouped according to a strict logi-

<sup>20</sup> L. Politis, *ibid.* loc. cit.

<sup>21</sup> S. Alexiou, 1954, 30.

<sup>22</sup> Contrasted to the more 'learned' elision, which distort the line, making it sometimes rather vague.

<sup>23</sup> By contrast, when popular poetry is in question, each hemistich usually contains a completed thought.

<sup>24</sup> *συχνότατοι διασκελισμοί*, S. Xanthoudidis, 1928, μδ'.

<sup>25</sup> S. Alexiou - M. Aposkiti, 1988, 54; see also L. Politis, 1964, κε'.

cal plan, beginning from some general principles and leading us, by means of series of metaphors, antitheses and hypotheses, to one particular instance which at the same time illustrates the initial principle. This kind of composition of analogous series, some expressing the question and reflection, and other expressing the answer and conclusion; the strict symmetry between the series and its individual items; rhetoric figures (epanalepsis, erotesis etc.) - all the above-mentioned characteristics testify in favour of the poet's being well informed of the contemporary West European rhetoric. If we, however, agree with Politis<sup>26</sup> and Evangelatos<sup>27</sup> hypothesis that the Cretan poet did receive some of his education in Italy, then the stay may have enabled him not only to get familiar with the contemporary theatrical practice, but also to study the poetic and rhetorical expression of the day. He is quite likely to have been attending lectures of rhetoric at the University of Padua at the time of his hypothetical law studies. On the other hand, it is quite certain that a gifted poet of Chortatsis' kind might have acquired this knowledge also through books - those various 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>-century Italian volumes of rhetoric, which were, as we know, available in the library of the poet's learned patron Matteo Calergi.<sup>28</sup>

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By far more significant, but the least studied area of Cretan studies, particularly the studies of Chortatsis' dramatic work, is style. Few papers have been published on this topic.<sup>29</sup> The remarks of the so-far editors considering style are usually repetitions of some general conclusions taken from reference books,<sup>30</sup> or even more often do nothing but present some examples of linguistic and metrical traits, which can hardly be regarded as stylistic appreciation. Chortatsis' work has just recently become subjected to appreciation and assessment in relation to other Cretan and Italian authors of the day. However, we hardly know anything about the techniques which Chortatsis used to achieve certain shades of meaning in his work. An average reader considers a play such as *Erophile* to be nothing but a series of tiresome

<sup>26</sup> L. Politis, 1978<sup>x</sup>, 67.

<sup>27</sup> S. Evangelatos, 1970, 214.

<sup>28</sup> According to Alexiou, 1954, 253, the density (πυκνότης) of the poet's style "refers to Chortatsis' being familiar with the contemporary Italian and Greek rhetoric on one hand, and to his classical education (ἀρχαϊομάθεια) on the other."

<sup>29</sup> R. Bancroft-Marcus, 1980, 39.

<sup>30</sup> Apart from (to some extent) S. Alexiou, 1988, 51f.

soliloquies, seasoned here and there with a vivid image or a high-sounding accent. The study of the 16<sup>th</sup>-century rhetoric, its poetic images and figures, particularly the art of literary conceit, which was thoroughly appreciated in poetic compositions of Chortatsis' West-European contemporaries (Shakespeare, first of all), was hardly ever been considered seriously in the case of the Cretan playwright, although, according to Mrs R. Bancroft-Marcus, it is essential to any modern study of Chortatsis' work.<sup>31</sup>

Together with the exhaustive analysis of the meter and its stylistic variants, a special area of research has recently come up as the result of considering the issue of determining literary period to which Chortatsis' dramatic work belongs. Neither C. Bursian nor K. Sathas, although familiar with those close ties between *Erophile* and the 16<sup>th</sup>-century Italian literature, found this issue worth being dealt with. That is why Sathas reached a rather arbitrary conclusion which regards *Erophile* as a representative of the "medieval theatre".<sup>32</sup> The identical characterization is repeated some decades later with the N. Veis' edition from 1926 and its subtitle "A Medieval Tragedy".<sup>33</sup> Veis, as well as the previous publishers, does not take up into consideration the problem of classification of *Erophile* in any of the stylistic periods of European literature. Xanthoudidis did nothing more either.<sup>34</sup> L. Politis, however, was the first one to speak competently and systematically of the Renaissance character of Cretan literature in its final stage (with direct references to *Erophile*).<sup>35</sup> Somewhat later, this time starting from the fact that completely new literary forms are in question, the forms unknown to Byzan-

<sup>31</sup> R. Bancroft-Marcus, 1980, 40.

<sup>32</sup> K. Sathas, 1879, vζ'.

<sup>33</sup> Μεσαιωνική τραγωδία. Veis' *Erophile* was published in *Μεσαιωνικά* ('Medieval literature') edition of the "Stochastis" publishing house.

<sup>34</sup> To which degree the question of literary and historical periodization of Neo-Hellenic literature was not so long ago the subject of the most controversial speculations (and in some details it is still the case) is clearly testified by the example of E. Kriaras, 1951, 14, who suggested that the year of 1700 should be seen as *terminus ante quem* of the medieval stage of Neo-Hellenic literature(!). Several years later the same author, 1953, 309, modified his attitude by replacing the above-mentioned *terminus* to the year of 1600, thus admitting the futility of his own effort to prove the medieval character of the late Cretan literature. The validity of Kriaras' use of the term 'Renaissance' referring to the Greek 18<sup>th</sup>-century Enlightenment is also rather questionable (the only justification for such an arbitrary use of this term the author finds in recognizing the *renaissance* character of the above-mentioned epoch).

<sup>35</sup> L. Politis, 1949, 90f.

tine literature. S. Alexiou placed the Cretan playwright into “late Renaissance”.<sup>36</sup> M. Vitti goes even a step farther by tracing the elements of mannerism and even baroque in late Cretan literature, the tendencies born in the Renaissance Italy at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> and throughout the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Vitti pointed out that it is not just a matter of mere imitation of Western models, because Cretan authors themselves, Chortatsis in particular, take part in developing processes of the contemporary European spirituality. Cretan plays, especially tragedies, reflect the same obscure world of pathological passion and violence which is to become the very historical reality of the turbulent years of the Counterreformation.<sup>37</sup>

Doubts about points of view of this kind (which were even in Greece considered to be too bold when originally presented) are expressed by A. Gemert,<sup>38</sup> whose basic argument is that “it is impossible to speak of Greek baroque because there was no Greek Renaissance to precede it”. Seen in this light, the Cretan theatre plays are nothing but “translations and adaptations of Italian prototypes”, therefore baroque elements cannot be spoken of for, after all, G. B. Giraldi himself, who was Chortatsis’ model, does not belong to the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, so that both he and his imitators cannot be regarded as baroque writers. The above-mentioned S. Alexiou is to take part in this interesting dispute, opposing Gemert’s radicalism with a simple remark that the transfer of stylistic schools from one cultural setting to another is basically not necessarily conditioned by the existence of any previous historical stage on the part of the recipient.<sup>39</sup> According to Alexiou, Cretan plays are creative adaptations, so that the entire ideological ‘stock’ of their Western models came along with the plays themselves, and thus it is quite reasonable to speak of Cretan baroque as a specific offspring of Italian baroque (in its Hellenic apparel).

These new tendencies still cannot fit in the fixed definition since they are inconsistent in many details because of their continuous flowing and

<sup>36</sup> S. Alexiou, 1954, 77.

<sup>37</sup> M. Vitti, 1971, 80f, where the author refers to the relations to the contemporary rhetoric and church sermons. In 1965, 17 Vitti employs the term *maniera barocca o prebarocca* to mark the literary character of the late stage of Cretan literature. Cf. also W. Puchner, 1980, 85f.

<sup>38</sup> A. Gemert, 1974, 205.

<sup>39</sup> To support this statement Alexiou points out that e.g. French surrealism had considerable echo in Greece, although it was not in the least the case with symbolism, which barely had any representatives in Neo-Hellenic literature, S. Alexiou – M. Aposkiti, 1988, 61, n. 79.

growing into one another. There is at least one thing that is quite certain: *Erophile* marks a step beyond the Renaissance and stands at the threshold of the baroque. According to V. Pecoraro, we are not dealing here with those sumptuous and fantastic creations of poetic imagination characteristic of the baroque in the real sense of the word: it is a mature manneristic treatment of the Renaissance Petrarchism, which beat the track for *concettismo* and *secentismo* - that is to say, the kind of artistic, highly rhetorical and cerebral poetry of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, which is entirely based on complex conceptual play, as well as the lavish use of figures of speech.<sup>40</sup>

*Translated by Aleksandra Todorović*

## КРИТСКА КЊИЖЕВНОСТ У ПОЗНОЈ ВЕНЕТОКРАТИЈИ

Општи преглед књижевних поступака

### Резиме

Последње столеће критске венетократије, вишевековне млетачке управе над највећим од егејских острва (1210-1669), поклапа се са једним од најзначајнијих периода у развоју новогрчке књижевности на народном језику. Крај XVI и највећи део XVII в. - до 1669, када острво пада под турску власт - раздобље је које новогрчке књижевне историје обично називају златним веком критске књижевности, посебно драмске (Хортацис) и епске (Корнарос). Тесне везе са новом културном матицом, Венецијом, омогућиће острву да не застане за савременим културним и књижевним процесима у Европи, управо, у Италији тога доба. Насупрот критској књижевности старије фазе (крај XV - прва половина XVI в.), која ни избором жанрова, ни песничким поступком, а ни принципијелним ставом према језику не показује неки значајнији помак у односу на последњу етапу византијске књижевности - критски златни век сасвим је у знаку модерних позноренесансних и предбарокних утицаја, који се најизразитије манифестују у области језика и поетске стилизације. Новогрчки народни језик први пут у својој историји пролази кроз процес свесне и доследне пурификације - и то не у смислу архаизовања, већ напротив, у смислу потпуне превласти димотичког стила. Дијалектални језички модел (критски идиом) уздиже се до изражајног медија једне необично сложене, брижљиво реторизоване поезије стилизоване у "барокном" маниру. У овом наизглед парадоксалном споју димотикизма и реторске учености, придошле овај пут не из византијске школе већ са западних универзитета, треба видети основно обележје критског стила златног века (посебно изражено код Хортациса, а у много мањој мери код Корнароса).

<sup>40</sup> V. Pecoraro, 1986, 53, 61. The same author, 1972, 386, n. 33, even suggests the term 'Seicento cretese'. Cf. also M. Vitti, 1971, 79f.

Πιτταње књижевноисторијске периодизације критске књижевности XVI/XVII в. још увек заокупа пажњу научног света. Став да је овде реч о природном наставку, односно завршници средњовековне етапе у развоју новогрчке књижевности - на снази све до половине нашега века - у новије време доживљава радикалну ревизију (као и сама периодизација новогрчке књижевности у целини). Сада се, с правом, све чешће говори о критској ренесанси (термин који је нашао своје место и у модерним историјама новогрчке књижевности), па и о критском бароку, односно предбароком маниризму, дакако у његовом "хеленском лику".

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