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FORMS OF REFLECTION OF THE ARGONAUT THEME IN THE BYZANTINE ROMANCE NOVEL¹

The whole Byzantine culture, which assumed the role of the successor to and protector of the intellectual treasure of old times, is marked with vigorous interest in ancient world. The age of "the Revival of Comnenos"² devoted special attention to the heritage of ancestors. An essentially new genre – a romance, a story of love and adventure – systematizes the plot, characters and literary images in compliance with ancient Greek literary works and represents the best example of the conservation of ancient culture. For this very reason, some scholars took interest in Byzantine novels as in "the archive of Hellenism".

Ancient world holds a significant place in the works of Byzantine novelists. The Byzantine novel is distinguished by the tradition of quoting many literary works of different genres and by including the reminiscences of ancient authors. Eumathios Makrembolites refers to quite a large number of ancient authors. Theodore Prodromos' *Rodánthe and Dosiklís* is the climax in this regard.³ Niketas Eugenianos is distinguished by an original and creative treatment of ancient works,⁴ while in Constantine Manasses' work ancient reminiscences are remarkably infrequent.

¹ The term 'romance' is rather conventional in this case. It is common knowledge that it came into use in the West to refer to love stories written in the Romance languages and not in Latin.

² The use of the term 'Revival' in connection with the Byzantine literature is rather conventional as interest in ancient world is *among* the whole string of factors characteristic of the Revival, and by no means is *the only one*.

³ It should be stated in general that Theodore Prodromos' works abound of reminiscences.

⁴ Фрейберг Л. А., Попова Т. В., Византийская литература эпохи расцвета IX-XV вв., Москва, 1978, 160.

I will confine myself to showing the forms of the reflection of the Argonaut theme in the Byzantine novel, and in particular in the works by Eumathios Makrembolites⁵ and Theodore Prodromos.

These two writers treat the Argonaut legend in different ways. In my opinion, two types of reflection of the Argonaut legend can be distinguished in Eumathios Makrembolites' work. The writer uses a riddle⁶ and presents the myth as well as his own interpretation of it.

a) An overview of a particular episode of a myth:

4) IV, 22.1

Ἡ δέ μοι γενομένη περὶ τὸ στόμα δάκνει μου τὸ χεῖλος καὶ τοὺς ὀδόντες αὐτῆς ὅλους τοῖς ἐμοῖς κατεφύτευσε χεῖλεσι· καὶ μοι περὶ τὴν ψυχὴν ἐβλάστησαν ἔρωτες καὶ γιγάντων παλαμναιότεροι.⁷

"She [Hysimine – M.K.] meanwhile bites my lip, planting all her teeth in it. And Eroses, more bewildering than giants, grow up in my soul."⁸

Here Hysimine is compared to Jason, who planted dragon's teeth in the earth, and the soul of the narrator is compared to the earth, which gives birth to Eros, i.e. love, instead of ruthless giants.

Out of the literary works composed on the Argonaut theme, only Euripides' *Medea* is reflected in Eumathios' *Hysimine and Hysimines*. Similarly to citing the pieces of classical poetry in general, the author makes slight changes to the quotations from Euripides' work, to which he admits himself. He refers to the above mentioned tragedy three times⁹, all the three cases being precise quotations. The author borrows unaltered not only individual lexical formatives, but whole phrases as well.

⁵ The role of Makrembolites' novel in the history of development of the genre, the extent of its impact and its role in the processes of Greek and world literature are discussed in my doctoral thesis called *Ancient Reminiscences in Byzantine Prose Fiction (Eumathios Makrembolites)*, 2006 (in Georgian) and in my articles *Repetition as a Literary Device in Hysimine and Hysimines by Eumathios Makrembolites*, *Logos*, The Annual Journal of Hellenic and Roman Studies, 3, Tbilisi, 2005 (in Georgian); *Homeric Reminiscences in Hysimine and Hysimines by Eumathios Makrembolites*, *Byzantine Studies in Georgia*, Tbilisi, 2007 (in Georgian).

⁶ A riddle is among symbolic-allegorical devices and is characteristic of the novel. In the times of Eumathios Makrembolites, a literary puzzle was a genre of Byzantine literature.

⁷ Eustathius Macrembolites, *De Hysimines et Hysimniae amoribus*, libri XI, edidit Miroslav Marcovich, *Bibliotheca Scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana*, Monachii, Lipsiae, Saur 2001. All the fragments from Eumathios Mekrembolites' work cited in the paper are taken from this edition.

⁸ Eumathios Makrembolites, *Hysimine and Hysimines*, translated from Greek into Georgian, introduced and commented on by M. Kakashvili, Tbilisi, 2006, 77.

⁹ Eumathios Makrembolites' novel includes reminiscences from Euripides' other tragedies as well. They are: Hecuba (9 cases), Hippolytes (2 cases), Phoenician Women (2 cases).

b) Precise quotation of particular phrases:

1) III, 9. 12-13

ἔσθλ' ἀμηχανώταται,
κανῶν δὲ πάντων τέκτονες σοφώτατοι.

Eur. Med. 408-409

ἔς μὲν ἔσθλ' ἀμηχανώταται,
κακῶν δὲ πάντων τέκτονες σοφώταται.¹⁰

2) H, 20. 18-19

χρηστοῖσι δούλοις συμφορά τὰ δεσποτῶν
κακῶς πίτνοντα.

Eur. Med. 54-55

χρηστοῖσι δούλοις ξυμφορά τὰ δεσποτῶν
κακῶς πίτνοντα, καὶ φρενῶν ἀνθάπτεται.

3) O, 23. 3-4

ὄταν <δ'> ἔς εὐνήν ἠδίκημένη κορῆ,
οὐκ ἔστιν ἄλλη φρῆν μαιφονωτέρα.

Eur. Med. 265-266

ὄταν δ' ες εὐνήν ἠδίκημένη κορῆ,
οὐκ ἔστιν ἄλλη φρῆν μαιφονωτέρα.

It should be noted that Makrembolites uses ancient reminiscences only as embellishment aimed to stir associations, so that the reader could better comprehend the plot and the spiritual sensations it conveys. The novel does not offer the cases of deeper, creative perception.

Theodore Prodromos' work *Rodánthe and Dosiklís* is different in this regard. The author does not precisely quote the words by Euripides and Apollonius Rhodius, as we have it in Eumathios' novel. Theodore uses only partial citation; therefore, the scrupulous eye of a specialist can detect a whole string of receptions. The phrases are not precisely repeated; Theodore borrows individual lexical formatives and phrases from various authors and uses them as tools for composing his own lines. Naturally, the works mentioned in this paper cannot have been the direct source of influence, but their linguistic impact is obvious in the majority of cases. I should also mention here that out of the works composed after the Argonaut legend,

¹⁰ Euripides, *Fabulai*, Recognovit brevique adnotatione critica instruxit Gilbertus Murray, Tomus I, Great Britain 1958. All the fragments from Euripides' *Medea* cited in the paper are taken from this edition.

Makrembolites quotes only Euripides' *Medea*, while Prodromos cites not only the mentioned tragedy, but also Apollonius' *Argonautica*.

Reflection of individual lexical formatives:

Rodánthe and Dosiklís reflects individual lexical formatives and collocations. There are 14 cases of citing Euripides' *Medea* and 3 cases of citing Apollonius' *Argonautica*.

1) 191 b

ὡς ἄφελόν γε· καὶ τί γάρ μοι ζῆν ἔτι;

Eur. Med. 145

διὰ μου κεφαλᾶς φλόξ οὐρανία
βαίη· τί δέ μοι ζῆν ἔτι κέρδος;

2) 476 b

‘σώζοισθε λησταὶ τῶν καλῶν ληστευμάτων
καὶ συντελεσταὶ τῶν ἐμῶν βουλευμάτων’

Eur. Med. 769

οὗτος γὰρ ἀνὴρ ἢ μάλιστ’ ἐκάμνομεν
λιμῆν πέφανται τῶν ἐμῶν βουλευμάτων

3) 372 b

οἷς οἱ τυχόντες ἀρχικῶν κηδευμάτων
ὑπερφέρουσι τῶν χαμαιρριφεστέρων.

Eur. Med. 76

παλαιὰ καινῶν λείπεται κηδευμάτων,
κοῦκ ἔστ’ ἐκείνος τοῖσδε δώμασιν φίλος.

4) 56 b

ἄφες τὸ μακρὸν βρύγμα, τὸν μέγαν χόλον,
μὴ συρραγείσης τῆς μάχης ἀντιστάδην
αἰσchrῶν βρεφῶν γένοιο πικρὸς ἐγκύμων.

Eur. Med. 590

εἰ σοι γάμον κατέϊπον, ἦτις οὐδὲ νῦν
τολμᾶς μεθεῖναι καρδίας μέγαν χόλον.

5) 52 b

Ὡμοὶ Δοσίκλεις, ταῦτα μὲν πολὺς λόγος
καὶ ῥητὰ μωρὰ καρδίας πλανωμένης.

Eur. Med. 1139

ἦσθημεν οἷπερ σοῖς ἐκάμνομεν κακοῖς

*δρῶες· δι' ὧτων δ' εὐθύς ην πολὺς λόγος
σὲ καὶ πόσιν σὸν νεῖκος ἐσπεῖσθαι τὸ πρῖν.*

6) 297 b

*τέως γε μὴν ἔπραττε τὰ πρὸς ἰσχύος,
ἀφ' ὧν ἑαυτὴν γνωριεῖ τῷ φιλτάτῳ·*

Eur. Med. 538

*Πρῶτον μὲν Ελλάδαδ' ἀντὶ βαρβάρου χθονὸς
γαίαν κατοικεῖς καὶ δίκην ἐπίστασαι
νόμοις τε χρῆσθαι μὴ πρὸς ἰσχύος χάριν.*

7) 150 a

θηλυπρεπῆς γὰρ ἡ ῥοὴ τῶν δακρύων.

Eur. Med. 928

γυνὴ δὲ θῆλυ κἀπὶ δακρύοις ἔφν.

8) 176

*προβάς δὲ πρὸς τοῦμπροσθεν ἤσυχον πόδα
ἔσπευδον ἐλθεῖν ἀμφὶ τὴν χρυσοχρόην.*

Eur. Med. 217

*τοὺς δ' ἐν θυμαίοις· οἱ δ' ἀφ' ἡσύχου ποδὸς
δύσκειαν ἐκτήσαντο καὶ ῥαθυμίαν.*

9) 415

*Ναὶ ναί, συναρήξατε, συγκυνηγέται,
κἀν τῷ παρόντι τῆς κόρης κυνηγίῳ.*

Eur. Med. 1277

*ναί, πρὸς θεῶν, ἀρήξατ'· ἐν δέοντι γάρ.
ὡς ἐγγυὺς ἦδη γ' ἐσμὲν ἀρκύων ξίφους.*

10) 449 a

*μόνος μόνῃ γοῦν ἐντυχὼν τῇ παρθένῳ
καὶ γῆς ἀνηρκῶς καὶ λαβῶν ὑπ' ἀγκάλῃν.*

Eur. Med. 513

*εἰ φεύξομαί γε γαίαν ἐκβεβλημένη,
φίλων ἔρημος, σὺν τέκνοις μόνῃ μόνους.*

11) 228

*ἀλλ' εἰς ἄμυναν τοῦ κακοῦντος ἐτράπου
καὶ πάντα πάντως συγκεκίνηκας κάλων,*

Eur. Med. 278

*ἐχθροὶ γὰρ ἐξιᾶσι πάντα δὴ κάλων,
κούκ ἔστιν ἄτης εὐπρόσοιστος ἔκβασις.*

12) 91 b

*καὶ δεῖγμα τῆς ἔσωθεν εἰς ψυχὴν ζάλης
τὴν ἐκτὸς εἰς πρόσωπον ἐμφαίνων ὄλην.*

Eur. Med. 1285

*Ἰνώ μανεῖσαν ἐκ θεῶν, ὄθ' ἦ Διὸς
δάμαρ νιν ἐξέπεμψε δωμάτων ἄλη.*

13) 181 b

*μὴ τῶν γυναικῶν τὴν ἐπάρατον τύχην
καὶ τοὺς ὑπαλγύνοντας ἐν τόκοις πόνοους
ἀνδρὶ στρατάρχη δυστυχή δώσοι χάριν.*

Eur. Med. 1031

*ἄλλως ἄρ' ὑμᾶς, ὦ τέκν', ἐξεθρεψάμην,
ἄλλως δ' ἐμόχθουν καὶ κατεξάνθην πόνοους.*

14) 373

*τὸ μὲν γὰρ ἐστὶν ἀνδρικῆς εὐτολμίας,
θανεῖν πρὸ τέκνων καὶ πεσεῖν πρὸ πατρίδος.*

Eur. Med. 469

*οὔτοι θράσος τὸδ' ἐστὶν οὐδ' εὐτολμία,
φίλους κακῶς δράσαντ' ἐναντίον βλέπειν.*

Reminiscences from Apollonius' *Argonautica*

1) 144

*βακχῶν προπηδᾶ καὶ κρατῆρα λαμβάνει,
λαρόν δὲ κινῶ τοῖς ξένοις πιεῖν πόμα.*

Apoll. Rhod. 1. 456

2) 215

*ἄρτι χνοῶσαν ἀνατέλλων τὴν γέννην
καὶ τὸ πρόσωπον εὐφυῶς περιστέφω
πρώτοις ἰούλοις τοῖς ἐπιγναθιδίσις.*

Apoll. Rhod. 2. 43

3) 204 b

*τοὺς γὰρ Ἔρως τε Πόθος τε καὶ Αφρογένεια Κυθήρη
δρήσατο θειοδέτοιο ἀλυκτοπέδησι σιδάρου.*

Apoll. Rhod. 2. 1249

Conclusion

I believe that it is not necessary to go deeper into the novels to understand that Eumathios Makrembolites' work is closer to the most traditional text based on the Argonaut myth and in the majority of cases reflects it directly at the level of plot as well as language, i.e. it shows obvious textual encounters with the source. As concerns Theodore Prodromos, his novel reflects ancient sources at the level of lexical formatives and collocations.

The novels *The Story of Hysimine and Hysimines* and *Rodánthe and Dosiklís* imply receptions of all authors included on the list of the so-called 'recommended'. Therefore, reminiscences from Euripides' and Apollonius' works appeared in the Byzantine novels not because of their authors' particular interest in their literary heritage in the Argonaut myth, but because the 'novelists' used a great number of collected works and textbooks composed as a result of increasing community of readers and the marvelous revival of university life in the 11th-12th centuries.

So, the above-mentioned leads to the conclusion that with respect to the reflection of the mythological information, and namely, of the Argonaut myth, this period was distinguished not by the forms of creative reception, but by direct borrowing and citation.