

**EXOTIC REPRESENTATIONS IN THE 19TH CENTURY
ROMANIAN LITERATURE AND ARTS
– DIMITRIE BOLINTINEANU'S BALKAN EXOTICISM –**

**REPRÉSENTATIONS EXOTIQUES AU XIX^{ÈME} SIÈCLE
LITTÉRATURE ET ARTS ROUMAINS
– L'EXOTISME BALKANIQUE DE DIMITRIE BOLINTINEANU –**

**REPREZENTĂRI EXOTICE ÎN LITERATURA ȘI ARTELE
PLASTICE DIN SPAȚIUL ROMÂNESC
AL SECOLULUI AL XIX-LEA
– EXOTISMUL BALCANIC AL LUI DIMITRIE BOLINTINEANU –**

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Abstract

Is there a connection between the way we interpret the common elements of a literary and visual text? More specifically, can we interpret a specific theme, such as Romantic exoticism through the system of symbols common to both arts? The answer is yes, and this can be done through a theoretical system of argumentation, that has at its basis the emotional components of both texts. In poetry and painting, scenes, characters or events are semantically organized, so that the imaginary and the integrative are mixed, so that the secret code could be deciphered, through an iconological approach.

The present article studies exotic manifestations in the Romanian Principalities literature and arts, with a main focus on Dimitrie Bolintineanu's "Flowers of the Bosphorus", which are analyzed in conjunction with Theodor Aman's exotic visual representations, in the hope of placing the Circassian feminine beauty among the geographical borders of the Romanian Principalities.

Résumé

Existe-t-il un lien entre la manière dont nous interprétons les éléments communs du texte littéraire et visuel? Plus précisément, peut être interprété, un certain thème, comme c'est le cas avec l'exotisme à l'ère romantique, à travers le système de symboles commun aux deux arts? La réponse est oui, et cela peut être réalisé à l'aide du système d'argumentation théorique, qui repose sur les composantes émotionnelles des deux textes. En poésie et en peinture, des scènes, des personnages ou même des événements sont organisés sémantiquement, de sorte que l'imaginaire et l'intégrative se mélangent, afin que le code secret puisse être déchiffré, à l'aide d'une approche iconologique.

Cet article étudie les manifestations exotiques de la littérature et des beaux-arts des Principautés Roumaines, avec un accent particulier sur le volume "Fleurs du Bosphore", par Dimitrie Bolintineanu, qui sont analysés par la communion avec des représentations exotiques de la peinture de Theodor Aman dans l'espoir de placer la beauté féminine d'origine circasienne entre les frontières géographiques des Principautés Roumaines.

Rezumat

Mai exact, poate fi interpretată o anumită temă, cum este cazul exotismului în epoca romantică, prin prisma sistemului de simboluri comune celor două arte? Răspunsul este afirmativ, iar acest lucru poate fi realizat cu ajutorul sistemului teoretic de argumetare, care are la bază componentele emoționale ale celor două texte. În poezie și în pictură, scenele, personajele sau chiar evenimentele sunt organizate semantic, astfel încât imaginarul și integrativul să fie amestecate, în așa fel încât codul secret să poată fi descifrat, cu ajutorul unei abordări iconologice.

Prezentul articol studiază manifestările exotice din literatura și artele plastice ale Principatelor Române, cu un accent deosebit pe volumul „Florile Bosforului”, ale lui Dimitrie Bolintineanu, care sunt analizate prin comuniune cu reprezentările exotice ale pictorului Theodor Aman, în speranța plasării frumuseții feminine de origine cercheză, între granițele geografice ale Principatelor Române.

Keywords: *Dimitrie Bolintineanu, Circassian woman, exoticism, feminine beauty, décor, orientalism.*

Mots-clés: *Dimitrie Bolintineanu, femme circassienne, exotisme, beauté féminine, décor, orientalism.*

Cuvinte-cheie: *Dimitrie Bolintineanu, femeia cercheză, exotism, frumusețe feminină, decor oriental.*

Introduction

In the evolution of the Romanian Principalities, during the first part of the 19th century, an important shift of perspective can be seen, especially in the relationships with the East, inspired by the European political and social activity. Thus, the East becomes an important point of interest, from a cultural and political perspective. After the French Revolution, Napoleonic campaigns in Egypt or the English-Turkish War (1807-1808), European interest on the East reaches the climax. Champollion starts deciphering the Egyptian hieroglyphs, in Paris the famous *Ecole des Langues Orientales* is founded, and Silvestre de Sacy publishes a grammar of the Arabic language.

In the Romanian space different documents start being published, certifying the relationship between the Romanian Principalities and the Ottoman Empire: in 1826, Dinicu Golescu publishes in Buda a document entitled *Adunare de tractaturi*, regarding the relationship with the Gate, while Asachi and Kogălniceanu publish fragments of Dimitrie Cantemir's *History of the Ottoman Empire*. At the same time, notes about the history of the Ottoman nation and translations of Volney's *Ruins of Palmira* are published in the local journals.

The romantics do not discover the East, as the Romanian researcher Mircea Anghelescu suggested, but adapt it to the need for novelty, in an epoch dominated by exacerbated feelings and contrasts, by a troubled history, filled with wars and revolutions.

When Victor Hugo was publishing his *Les Orientales*, and Lamartine was travelling to Egypt, Syria and Constantinople, the East was already an important subject exploited by literature, not only through travel journals, translations of important Asian works of art, but also through the adaptation and imitation of preexistent texts. The translation of *A Thousand Nights* by Antoine Galland, as well as the opening of Oriental countries' embassies in Europe, bring to the forefront travel notes, information about customs, traditional popular attire and language. We can mention *The Persian Letters*, by Montesquieu (1712), *A Continuation of Letters written by a Turkish Spy* (1718) by Daniel Defoe, Voltaire's *Candide*, etc.

The Romantics manage to render the Oriental specificity, contradicting all theories according to which the Oriental man is “a sort of European dressed in traditional trousers, a fervent advocate of the Encyclopedists” (ANGHELESCU, 1975, 117).

The Romanian reader starts getting familiar with different notions and theories about the East, as a result of the publication in the newspapers, of different political information, from different regions of the East, starting with the Middle East, particularly Turkey, and continuing up to China and Japan. In 1848 Alecsandri and Kogălniceanu become members of *Société Orientale de France*, the last one even publishing an article about the Ruthenians, in *Revue de l'Orient et de l'Algérie*. All these are simple elements of a cultural cadre because the access of the Romanian erudits to information about the East was made on the Western route, especially through the translations from the French language.

Dimitrie Bolintineanu – the exiled traveler

Dimitrie Bolintineanu, joins a relatively large number of Romanian travelers who decide to share their travel impressions under a literary form. Among them we can mention Theodor Codrescu, a modest publicist, editor of a collection of historical documents, entitled *Uricariul*, who in 1844 publishes in Iași the work *O călătorie la Constantinopoli (A Travel to Constantinopoli)*. The work proves to be more of a journal of the Turkish traditions, customs and culture, than a focused rendering of the spectacular landscape of the Bosphorus. In 1845 Vasile Alecsandri accomplishes a trip to Constantinople, which is not finalized with a literary work, but its notes are filled with enchanting images, of a landscape filled with color, that becomes the subject of one of his oriental poems, entitled *Bosforul* (1845).

After the 1848 Revolution, many of the young revolutionary writers are forced to leave the country, Dimitrie Bolintineanu being one of them. During his exile, he becomes first active in Transylvania, then continues to Constantinople, to find a new home in Paris, during the fall of 1849. In 1852 he returns to Constantinople, impressed by the beauty of the landscape, the charm of the Bosphorus, by the exotic customs, as well as by the traditional attire. At Babek, as a guest of Ion Ghica's family, where he creates the famous *Rabie*, Sașa Ghica, wife of Ion Ghica, encourages the poet to exploit all the local beauties. Thus, the series of poems entitled *Florile Bosforului (Flowers of the Bosphorus)*. Apart from the encouragement given by Mrs. Ghica, Bolintineanu follows one of the fundamental European romantic coordinates, especially of the French one, targeted at cultivating the East, as a source of inspiration for poetry.

The temptation of the East existed even before Romanticism, but still isolated. Usually, those who decided to choose the oriental charm as a source of inspiration, were further inspired by other literary works, among which we can mention Pierre Martini's *L'Orient dans la littérature française au XVII-e siècle*, or Jean-Marie Carré's *Voyageurs et écrivains français en Egypte*.

During the 18th century French literature is filled with Oriental motifs, once Montesquieu's works are published: *Lettres persanes* (1721), *Zaire* (1732), *Mohamet ou le Fanatisme* (1741). A pre-romantic perspective of the east is brought by Volney, with *Voyage en Egypte et Syrie* (1783) and *Les Ruines* (1791).

Once Romanticism appeared, writers focus more and more upon the East, as a form of revolt against classicism, which was too anchored in Greek and Latin antiquity. At the same time, the need for evasion, the taste for the trip towards far and exotic realms, as well as the eroticism of these territories, become the main focus of this new literature. Chateaubriand published in 1811 *L'Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem*. In 1835 Lamartine publishes *Les Souvenirs, impressions, pensées et paysages pendant un voyage en Orient*, while in 1851 *Voyage en Orient* by Gerard de Nerval appears. However, the most important moment in history of Romantic literature is the appearance of *Les Orientales*, by Victor Hugo, in 1829.

Hugo's *Les Orientales* represent an aesthetic compromise between Neoclassicisms and Orientalism. For him, orientalism is a poetic methodology, an intellectual engagement of the individual, through which the East becomes a literary subject. The result is more of a poetic of dreams, than of the exotic realities, because Hugo was never able to experience the real places described by his poetry, but through the commentaries of the travel journals of the epoch. Hugo's

poetics is a representation of the oriental conventions and an imitation of his own creative processes, where the East is a form of stereotypical evasion – a real muse. As Hugo himself mentions in the preface of his volume:

“que l’Orient, soit comme image, soit comme pensée, est devenu pour les intelligences autant que pour les imaginations une sorte de préoccupation générale à laquelle l’auteur de ce livre a obéi peut-être à son insu”. (HUGO, 1968, 322)

An interesting detail is that Hugo never traveled to the East, as he only transposes on paper the impressions let by a certain painting or an account or rendering about the East. In spite of the fact that *Les Orientales* are filled with natural feelings, richly ornamented in lively colors, similar to the epoch’s paintings “tones of red, yellow, copper, purple, carmine or scarlet invaded, once with Hugo, the neutral palette of the French poetry” (WAKEFIELD, 2007, 199). The researcher appreciates the juxtaposition of color in Hugo’s poetry, the complimentary color matching, *un kiosque rouge et vert*, or the intensity of the image where violet, the first-degree binary spectral color, fills with energy the foggy atmosphere of the poem *Rêverie*:

*Avec les mille tours de ses palais de fées,
Brumeuse, denteler l’horizon violet.*

(HUGO, *Rêverie.Orientales*, XXXVI).

In the German environment, the taste for Oriental reverie is manifest in Goethe’s creation, through the *West-Eastern Diwan*, then the volume entitled *Roses of the Orient*, by Frederich Rukert, while in English literature we can mention Lord Byron’s poems *The Bride of Abydos*, *Childe Harold*, *The Siege of Corinth*.

In the Romanian literature, the first echoes of the Orient appear in Theodor Codrescu’s *Travel to Constantinopoli*. Vasile Alecsandri composes two poems inspired by the beauties of the place, entitled *The Fisherman of the Bosphorus* and *The Bosphorus*, as a preamble of Bolintineanu’s literary cycle.

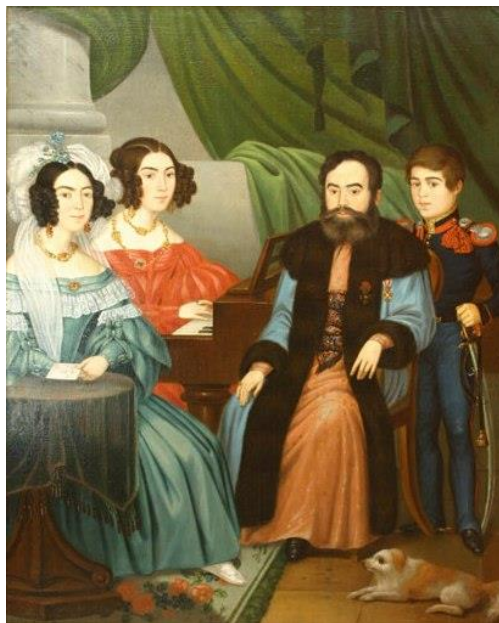


Figure 1. Niccolò Livaditti *The Family of Governor Vasile Alecsandri*, oil on canvas, National Museum of Arts, Bucharest

If we focus our attention on the Romanian Principalities literature, during the period contemporary with the 1948 Revolution, an important painter worth mentioning is Niccolò Livaditti (1804-1860), representative of the Italian school and initiator of the group portrait in the Romanian Principalities. He is the author of the painting entitled *The Family of Governor Vasile Alecsandri*, a plastic composition pretty rudimentary, from the point of view of the work of art’s proportions,

which manages to render the intimate atmosphere of the Moldovan society, by making use of the clothing details, but also through a refined color palette. Obviously, the work of art is rather awkward, if we are to put it in a balance with the visual representations of the French and English contemporaries, but it is able to render the quintessential of the literary and artistic developments of the Principalities, which cannot be compared with the European ones, but represent the beginnings, the evasion, the need to experiment and express, which are in fact Dimitrie Bolintineanu's main aims.

Flowers of the Bosphorus

As a poet, Bolintineanu is attracted by Lamartine's poetry, whose grave melancholies correspond to his personal feeling. Once his talent and life experiences mature, a fervent politically and socially involved young man, the poet is freed from the Lamartine's Romantic influences, his poetry focusing more on a patriotic direction.

A certain period of time, he cultivates the patriotic elegy and song, historical legend and ballad, then, during his exile, the long lyrical poem, like *Sorin*, *Andrei* and later on *Conrad*. The Romantic direction is maintained by the historical legends, through the preference for exoticism, in *Flowers of the Bosphorus*, though novels and travel literature.

Thorough the topic and atmosphere, this collection of poems is very similar to Victor Hugo's *Les Orientales*. Some of the poems such as *The Curse of the Dervish*, *Hial*, *The Wish*, etc., seem inspired directly from the French poet's works: *La malediction*, *La derviche*, *Fantomes*, *Sara la baigneuse*. A proof in this respect is the observation of Dimitrie Păcurariu, a Romanian researcher, who remarks the absence of the poem *The Curse of the Dervish*, from the French translation of the series. It is supposed that, on the recommendation of the French poet Cantel, this poem was excluded, in order not to affect the image of an original poet, that Bolintineanu tried to show to the Western world.

Victor Hugo creates the volume *Les Orientales* at the moment of the outbreaks of the conflicts between France and Algeria. Christine Peltre suggests that initially Hugo wanted to entitle his volume *Les Algériene*. In painting however, Algeria is relatively little represented visually, although along the entire French campaign in Algeria, the military team was backed up by a series of artists, representatives of the French school of painting, such as Antoine-Léon Morel-Fatio, Eugène Isabey, Louis Phillippe Crépin. They focused their attention especially on rendering the military conflict scenes, as well as the marine landscapes, where the main focus was on the play of color.

In the case of Victor Hugo, we are talking about an exceptional artist, author of a series of watercolors and ink, accomplished by a representative of surrealism. Hugo is "the archetypal model of the romantic, both poet and painter, a man without the notion of limit or border". (Wakefield, 2007, p.187)

Christopher W. Thompson has a different perspective, supporting the idea that during the period December 1827 – October 1828, most part of Hugo's poems are inspired by the epoch's engravings, in spite of the explosion of color, which pour from his poems. The researcher offers as an example, the poems entitled *La Ville Prise* and *La Douleur du Pacha*, which are only partially inspired by the two paintings of Eugene Delacroix: *Death of Sardanapalus* and *The Massacre of Chios*. Long before the 1824 Salon, Hugo was mostly interested in the contrast of light and shadow, in spite of the Romantic coloring. (THOMPSON, 1970, 119)



Figure 2. Victor Hugo, *La Ville en pente*, pen and ink was, Paris, Musee Victor Hugo

By comparing Victor Hugo's oriental poems with those created by Bolintineanu, we can observe that the Romanian poet brings more color, a certain musicality and lyrical solemnity – which are very specific for the poet's character, but overall, they are extremely uneven. The drawings of nature, are admirable portraits which alternate with sentimental sweetness, expressed in simple verse, in a language in which we can observe a large number of neologisms, very old-fashioned for the modern reader, some of which don't even have a correspondent in modern English.

The poems in the series abound in stylized images, exotic charm and local picturesque, but the scenes, although organized under the shape of a polyphonic structure, lack content. For the first time, Aron Densușianu, in his study entitled *The Poems of D. Bolintineanu*, included in the second volume of the *Literary researches* remarks this deficiency of Bolintineanu's poems:

“This nature in which the poems take place was both fortunate and unfortunate, until a certain point, for the poet. The poet focuses more on describing the beauties of the Bosphorus, getting over very quickly, easily degrading and even neglecting the action, which is the main point of the poetry. Besides all these, the poet develops in the poems such a pompous language, such a lively torrent of the verse, that all these speak for themselves and steal the reader, that he cannot focus on what is happening, on the action”. (DENSUȘIANU, 1887, 325)

The presentation of the exotic frame, of the conflict in the harem life, sometimes dramatic, some other times bloody, is truly romantic. In the moments of sentimental effusion, the young lover appears as if he is coming out of Lamartine's poem *Le lac (O temps! Suspend ton vol...)*:

“Oh, Gracious night
Suspend your sweet flight”.

What we can observe still, is the slightly frivolous note. The lovers sing sentimental songs, in the style of the court lyrics of the 18th century. Women's breasts are insistently described, while love is perceived as a “delight”, but more in the sense of feasting and rejoicing. We can affirm that Bolintineanu's poetry is like a transposition on the paper of the most daring works of art by Jean Léon Gérôme, where the oriental woman is presented in a provocative way, unveiling her nudity, she lets herself be touched, and can inflame masculine imaginations.

In the series, there are also included some intimate poems, completely unrelated with *Flowers of the Bosphorus*. They are elegies and odes, superficial album poems, such as *To Lady I*, *To Lady Z*.

Nicolae Iorga speaks about three main sources of inspiration for the poems: Victor Hugo, André Chénier and Alfred de Musset. At the same time, he supports the idea that “some of the poems lack the motion and contain too many lyrical effusions and rhetorical discourse” (IORGA, 1892, 6)

Very interesting is the observation made by Dimitrie Popovici about the oriental poetry of Dimitrie Bolintineanu. He observes a little detail, presented in the preface of the poetry volume entitled *The Field and the Salon*, published in 1869, where the poet himself suggests that the volume contains poetry from his early period, unpublished so far. On the other hand, taking into consideration the fact that the poet got in touch with the oriental world only later, we can conclude that some of his poems are directly influenced the creation of the French romantics, among which *Les Orientales*, by Victor Hugo are the first sources to mention.

Bolintineanu follows the oriental life in its different manifestations, some of the most frequent being love, followed by the death of the heroine. It is the case of Almeeah, from the poem *Rabie*, who dies in front of the sultan’s eyes, killed by the shrewdness of her rival. But in spite of the complicated harem life descriptions, with a rather reduced stylistic repertoire, Bolintineanu manages to accomplish a really beautiful feminine portrait.

Dilrubam faces the same tragic death. Exiled, she is presented by the poet in her parties with her favorite slave, but the sentence to death is similar, as in the case of many other poems from the series.

However, the most important element of the series is represented by the color palette, which is extremely rich. Above all things, *Flowers of the Bosphorus* has a special poetic effect, which comes from the total valorization of the exotic names. We have girls’ names such as Gulfar, Leili, Naidé, but who have fair hair and blue eyes, which proves the fact that the poet had little knowledge of the young women’s typology of the oriental harem. Most of the time, these girls were brunette, with dark eyes and darker complexion. Bolintineanu’s beauties are just a projection of the ideal woman of the Romanian Principalities.

“Hugo’s Orient, descriptive and musical, does not have the local color of the Romanian poet, which is the result, above all things, of the pure language effect. (...) we can recognize certain motifs specific for Hugo, such as the odalisques who listen long songs from their windows, or the jealous odalisques, whose rivals are thrown into the Bosphorus. The stylistic invention is marked by the Persian and Arab one. Even if we don’t know what he read from the poetic perspective, we can easily observe a similar codification. The poet could have believed that he changed the mythology, but in fact he changed the stylistic code. The elements of this new stylistic mode are: names (sometimes allegorical), the decorative and the ritualized, the epithets and codified comparison, or repetitions. No other Romanian poet shows such a rich denomination as Bolintineanu”. (MANOLESCU, 2003, 96)

The heroines that Manolescu referred to are called: Esmé, Leilé, Mehrul, Nadine, Rabié sau Almelaïur.

” The Bosphorus is called *Bogaz Bogassi*, the nightingale is *biulbiuli*, while the girl is *hanima*. The lilies are brought from Tabor, Burgaz or Yemen, the rose is *Gul*, the girl’s tower is *Kâz-Culesi*, the dust is *Gun-agarmasi*, the night is *Lial*, the moon is *Ai*, the sky is *Leviger*. This entirely oriental algorithm is fresher than any other European one, used by the previous lyrics” (MANOLESCU, 2003, 97)

We should not forget to mention the French translation of the poems, which was Bolintineanu’s himself accomplishment, entitled *Brisés d’Orient*. The project was part of an attempt to project his name and Romanian Pfrincipalities literature into the European literary frame. The volume, published in Paris in 1866, benefited from a preface realized by the literary historian and

critic called Philarète Chasles, as well as a thorough examination made by the French poet Henri Cantel. The visionary mind of Dimitrie Bolintineanu, the wish to place Romanian culture on the same orbit as the European one, pushed the cultural borders of Europe towards the Romanian Principalities.

The most recent study upon Dimitrie Bolintineanu's poetry belongs to Mihai Dinu and is entitled *Un alt Bolintineanu – gânduri despre natura poeziei* (*A Different Bolintineanu – thoughts about the nature of poetry*). The study is an interesting ludic retrospective of 1848 poetry and presents three versions of the same text: the initial poem, the French translation realized by the poet himself, which suffered certain language correction from the part of a minor French poet, and the last instance, the translation in Romanian, of the French text, which belongs to professor Mihai Dinu. As professor Mihai Zamfir suggests, in the preface of this new study, through the method of effect separation, the author manages to accomplish an unusual experiment, but extremely useful for the present study.

Along the history of romantic literature, all over Europe we can observe an abundance of Circassian women, both in literature and arts. We should admit that Romanian literature does not make an exception in this respect. The poem entitled *Esme*, by Dimitrie Bolintineanu, an extremely plastic poem, filled with colorful images contains elements such as: *cerkez*, *kiahul*, *șalvari de geanfez*, *dalga de selemie*. In the context, the term *cerchez* (Circassian) makes reference to the official attire of Turkish women, originating in the Circassian attire, as it is known in the Western world. Thus, we can deduce that the poet had knowledge about the Circassian feminine beauty, so much admired by the Western man. There are two logical explanations for that: on the one hand, we know that Bolintineanu studied in Paris, so he had access to the literary and artistic salons of the French bourgeoisie, where he probably learnt about these things. On the other hand, he traveled to Istanbul, where the beauty of the Circassian slaves was more than known.

The confirmation that *Esme* could have been of Circassian origin comes from the reference, made by the poet, about the color of her skin and hair. As the German anthropologist Johann Friederich Blumenbach mentions in his study, Circassian women, especially slaves, were considered the perfect companions in the Turkish harem, as they were considered, according to the Western standards of the 19th century.

Although they lack the stylistic depth, Bolintineanu's verses offer us details upon the ideal feminine typology. However, the deeper layers of the poem reveal a set of intense constructions, filled with imagination, eroticism and delicacy, which ultimately brought the success of the poems in the epoch.

I will mirror the three variants of the seventh stanza of the poem *Esme*, which was previously mentioned in relation to the structure and eroticism of the verse. The first two stanzas belong to the poet himself, one in Romanian and the other one in French, as well as Mihai Dinu's variant, which represents a modern translation of the French version.

*Feregeaua-i se mlădie
Pe kiahul, bogat cerchez,
Cu dalga de selemie,
Cu șalvari largi de geanfez.*

*Sur son kiahul, riche tzérkèz,
Son anteri d'or et de soie,
Son large schalvar de geanfez
Son férédjé flotte avec joie.*

*Tunica ei de mare preț
Și haina lungă de mătase
Acoperă șalvarii creți*

Și trupul tinerei frumoase

We can observe an obvious difference between the first version and the last one, both in Romanian. A first explanation is related to the taste of the epoch for the exotic elements, and thus, the abundance of Turkish terminology: *kiahiiu*, *cerchez*, *dalga de selemie*, *șalvari de geanfez*. But, as professor Mihai Dinu mentioned, the translation-retroversion process leads to “an initial deconstruction of the prosodic structure, followed by a reconstruction, according to a different set of coordinates” (DINU, 2010, 50).

The new coordinates of the poem, do not take into consideration a rhythmical restructuring and are not related to structural differences between the Romanian language verse and the French one, but are connected more with the general atmosphere of the poem.

Modern audience, as Mihai Dinu suggests, does not resonate anymore to Turkish origin neologisms, they do not let themselves lured by the mirage of exoticism, is not impressed by exotic beauty, dressed in the pompous attire of the Sultan’s harem, but is more interested in the successive plastic deformations suffered by the initial text, as a result of a natural wish to break the linguistic barriers and to probe a virgin territory of the old literature, in a new mode of expression.

As the translator himself suggested, the translation says something that is a little different from the original text, and thus, the key element is the core of the text, so that we can still talk about a translation and not a new independent poetic creation. (DINU, 2010, 75)

Dinu suggests the fact that he only tried to paraphrase the original text, and that is why his translation does not include any of the original Turkish words used by Bolintineanu, and which created the exotic atmosphere to the entire volume of poems.

About Romanian romanticism, many critics suggest that it has always been under the powerful impression of the French one, which cannot be denied, but we have to admit the existence of a series of elements of originality, under the pressure of the Balkan temperament, always looking for a change, and which constantly wants to prove that a previous Western trend can be successfully replicated here.

Orientalism in Romanian Arts

Theodor Aman is in the Romanian environment a real romantic, but with a Balkan spirit, although perfectly integrated in the French society of the year 1850. As we may say, he was lucky or unlucky to have been born at the gates of the Orient, his career and life being influenced by the social and political unfolding of the Romanian Principalities events, during the 19th century.

His exotic scenes differ from those of Delacroix or Dominique Ingres, although in a certain way the artist is inspired by the works of art of the great French painters. Aman’s Orient is a purely experimental one, as he lived under the Turkish ruling, and not simply as a visitor, or guest of the Turkish Sultan. His exoticism is one of the traditional attires, of the streets and markets, of the picturesque, but of the local one, contrasting opulence to poverty, which he decided to homogenously express, under the form of a hypnotic décor of oriental interiors.

He experimented exoticism on his travels to Istanbul, where he has access to the Sultan Abdul Medjid Palace. He is a careful observer of the details related to the traditional oriental suit, which makes me consider him a character similar to Bolintineanu’s, as both of them offered detailed descriptions of the traditional attire. This preoccupation is doubled by a passion for collecting oriental objects, such as: guns, clothing garments, small furniture, interior decorations, which later on will be used in his workshop to recreate the exotic atmosphere, being thus compared to the English artist John Frederick Lewis.

His extreme preoccupation with traditional attire, the detailed knowledge of the components of the Turkish soldiers’ uniforms, as well as the fact that he had access into the Sultan’s palace, makes me believe that he also had knowledge about the clothes used by oriental women, behind the walls of the Sultan’s Palace. Thus, we can recognize Ingres’ *Turkish bath* or Delacroix’s *Algerian*

Women in their Apartments in some of Aman's paintings, such as: *Turkish Bath*, *The Bath*, *After Bath* or *Odalisque with a Mandolin*, which can be seen at the Theodor Aman museum in Bucharest.



Figure 3. Theodor Aman *Odaliscă cu mandolină*, oil on canvas, *Muzeul Municipiului București*

The feminine character in this painting is seen frontally, in a semi-relaxed position, playing the mandolin, one of the traditional instruments, that the harem slaves were initiated into. The background of the painting is accomplished in different shades of ochre, which proves the fact that the portrait is placed in an artificial environment, the décor being turned into an oriental one with the help of the suit worn by the young woman and completed with the help of the small pieces of furniture – the little mother-of-pearl table.

Researchers believe that Aman was probably inspired by Delacroix or Ingres' masterpieces, as he shows the same interest in the study of light, light and shadow effects, making use of *contrejour* and the use of interior décor, as the placement of an exotic portrait.

However, it is extremely difficult to draw a temporal line of Aman's works of art inspired by exotic themes. Sometimes they were fashionable works, ordered by certain people that posed in the respective portraits in exotic attire, but most of the times they are interior decors, reconstructed by the painter in his own atelier, which render a lascivious atmosphere of the exotic Eastern feminine beauty, on a Western path.

Conclusion

Thus, we can conclude that the feminine characters represented by Theodor Aman could have been those of Circassian women, whom the painter discovered on the one hand, behind the closed doors of the Sultan's palace, and on the other hand, in Jean Leon Gérôme, Dominique Ingres or Eugene Delacroix' works of art.

To conclude this study on the artistic and literary representations of exotic influence, we can support the idea that the interest of the artists from the Romanian Principalities upon the realms filled with visual and olfactive sensations was really important, but of an East that is reduced strictly to the sides of the Bosphorus, Constantinople being one of the few exotic spaces accessible to Romanians in the epoch.

The poems of Dimitrie Bolintineanu, from the cycle entitled *Flowers of the Bosphorus*, as well as the artistic representations of certain painters, such as Theodor Aman represent an ensemble characterized by thematic unity, offering different perspectives upon the same problem, of the light

and shadow show, flavors, consolation and comforting, placed in an environment where music, dance and painting, intermingle with each other, in order to create the perfect harmony.

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