

Looking for Love in *Werther*, *Jacopo Ortis*, and *Leandros*: A Comparative Analysis of Three Romantic Epistolary Novels from Germany, Italy, and Greece

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The article investigates the concept of love in three epistolary novels that are intertextually linked: Die Leiden des jungen Werthers (1774) by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Le ultime lettere di Jacopo Ortis (1802) by Ugo Foscolo, and O Leandros (1834) by Panagiotis Soutsos. The Greek author situates his text within the tradition of his German and Italian predecessors, at the same time claiming it to be the first novel of modern Greek literary history.

Keywords: romanticism / epistolary novel / love / Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von / Foscolo, Ugo / Soutsos, Panagiotis / literary characters / *Werther* / *Jacopo Ortis* / *Leandros*

Undoubtedly, one could make the claim that the genre of the epistolary novel would not even exist without love. Even before the development of this genre, letters were a prominent medium by means of which matters of love could be described and acted out as, for instance, the history of Abelard and Heloïse clearly reveals (Frenzel 1–3). Traditionally, Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (1740) is considered the first representative of the genre in the narrow sense. In its aftermath, the epistolary novel quickly gained in popularity during the course of the eighteenth century in England, France, and Germany (Sauder 255–257). In some countries, such as Italy, it evolved dramatically at the beginning of the nineteenth

century only, whereas in others, such as Greece, it appeared much later, well towards the middle of the 1800s, mainly as an epigonic expression of Romanticism, thus also bearing witness to the discontinuities of this literary period in Europe (Petropoulou 45–61).

The following study investigates three novels from three different national literatures that lend themselves to comparison because they are closely related, all of them telling the story of a fatal love ending in the suicide of the male protagonist. Special emphasis is placed on the similarities and differences in the plot as well as concerning the main characters. Moreover, it turns out that the “universal” of love, when used in literature, displays proteic qualities insofar as it can be linked to different other (social or political) concepts, even though, at the first level, the respective stories seem to resemble each other closely.

As far as Greece is concerned, it was the author Panagiotis Soutsos (1806, Constantinople – 1868, Athens)¹ that first published an epistolary novel in Greece, a fact that he did not hesitate to underscore himself, proudly using the actual title of his novel as a metonym for the entire genre (“eis tin anagennomenin Ellada, tolmomen imeis protoi na dosomen eis to koino ton *Leandron*” ‘In the reborn Greece, we were the first that dared to give *Leandros* to the public’ Soutsos, 1834 α’). The novel *Leandros* was printed in Nafplio in 1834, the first capital of the newly founded Greek state.² Notably, in the much-discussed preface of *Leandros*, Soutsos predominantly refers to authors such as Rousseau, Goethe, and Foscolo. Although he mentions James Fenimore Cooper and Sir Walter Scott (the latter as the foremost writer of modern English literature), Samuel Richardson is omitted. (Soutsos, 1996 12). This is apparently because he desired to classify *Leandros* in the wake of the brilliant European epistolary novel production. The fact that his reference to European authors is restricted almost exclusively to the creators of epistolary novels is an indication that the genre had already formed an intertextual environment (Moullas 222), which comprised, in addition to Richardson’s *Pamela*, further landmarks of the genre such as the same author’s *Clarissa* (1748) as well as Rousseau’s *Nouvelle Heloise* (1761). The rapid developments of literary history, towards Romanticism, however, did not spare the epistolary novel, which needed some adjustments to ensure its survival (Moullas 217).

¹ For a detailed account of Soutsos’ biography, see Politis.

² *Leandros* is not the only epistolary novel in Greek literature, but is the first and most prominent one. Other titles to be mentioned are: Georgios Rodokanakis, *Megaklis i o atyobis eros*. (Ekd. Polymeris, Ermoupolis, Syros 1840, 177 pages), Epameinondas Phrankoudis, *Thersandros* (Ekd. Nikolaidou, & Philadelphios, Athens 1847, 120 pages), and Epameinondas Phrankoudis, *Thersandros kai alla diigmata* (Epim. L. Papaleontiou, Ekd. Nepheli, Athens 2002, 327 pages).

Goethe's *Werther* (1774) is certainly such an adjustment, if not a complete renewal of the subgenre. In fact, this epistolary novel constitutes one of the key texts of the *Sturm und Drang*, or Storm and Stress, movement, which—at least in the context of a European perspective on German literary history—is often considered an early phase of the Romantic period, or alternatively as pre-Romanticism, and, given the predominance of subject and subjectivity in many of its works, quite justly so. Instead of the “enlightened” celebration of a discursive, communicative society (as, for instance, in Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes* from 1721, which are sometimes also designated the first epistolary novel), in *Werther* one finds precisely the representation of an unbridgeable gap between the individual and society, which, as shall be seen, cannot even be overcome by love. As an early Romantic, Werther strives for something absolute that he is ultimately unable to reach.

In *Jacopo Ortis*, whose hero is a full-blown Romantic, this feeling of unattainability is complemented by the experience of a loss, the loss of his homeland, his *patria* Venice. (In fact, the Treaty of Campo Formio, which was signed on October 18th, 1797, may have definitively ended the War of the First Coalition, but handed Venice over to Austrian administration.)³ Whether and how *Leandros* continues the tradition of *Werther* or *Ortis* defines the very essence of Soutsos' novel because the specter of epigonality is a constant threat to the novel.

We first discuss Goethe's novel because it is the point of departure for both Foscolo and Soutsos. A short outline of the way love is presented in this work suffices here because, in this context, it is impossible to account for all of the exhaustive research inspired by it. *Werther* consists almost completely of letters written by its protagonist to his best friend Wilhelm, but occasionally also to Lotte. At about two-thirds into the novel, an “editor” intervenes, who does not engage in an “epistolary dialogue,” but intersperses Werther's letters with his own narrative, the former now serving as “proof” of the protagonist's progressing pathology. At this point, as it were, Werther loses his voice, and the story is spoken *about* him. From being a subject, he turns into an object. Hence, one can speak of a “monophonic novel” because there are two voices (Lotte is almost completely silent)—which, however, do not result in a dialogue between two equals, symbolizing perhaps the broken bond between himself (the I) and the others. This kind of solipsism holds true for the depiction of love in the novel.

³ Venice, with Byron, was to become the epitome of the Romantic city because precisely its loss of political power became aestheticized.

From its outset, Werther's love for her—which is completely self-centered because Lotte is simply supposed to fill the gap Werther feels in himself (Goethe 115)—is not a “normal” one; it certainly does not correspond to modern imaginations of “healthy adult sexuality,” but neither does it fit in with conventional requirements of being an eighteenth-century *pater familias* (as certainly the responsible Albert does, whom Lotte is about to marry). The couple's first encounter is prefigured—and for *Werther* this is of crucial importance—in the protagonist's imagination, who longs for a childlike existence, innocent, naive, and unspoiled, the key word being *nature* (17f.). When he comes to Lotte's village, Wahlheim, he first bonds with a young boy by joining him in his child's play. (19f., 21–23) At the same time, he elaborates on the nature of love, which has to be absolute, unconditional, and bound by no rules. As a counterexample, he even imagines a “philistine” figure that corresponds to Albert, whom he only meets later, of course (20f.). In this way, “reality” is predetermined by Werther's imagination. Indeed, when he first meets Lotte (26f.), he sees her in a maternal role, acting as the surrogate mother for her younger sisters, a scene that repeats itself over and over again. Werther, the eternal child, is immediately attracted to this image. This first encounter determines the character of Werther's attraction to Lotte, which remains platonic (26f.)⁴ and plays out only in fantasies of symbolic unification as a couple, as in the scene where he dances with her. Another famous scene is the moment when they are metaphysically united after a thunderstorm, which both immediately associate with the famous poem *The Rite of Spring*. Only the poet's name is uttered: *Klopstock*; further words are not necessary (37). It is an erotic “highlight” for Werther when his and Lotte's hands or feet are inadvertently touching; in another scene, Werther envies a little canary that kisses Lotte's lips (110). The final unification between Werther and Lotte is again an indirect one and, as in the *Klopstock* scene, literature becomes the substitute for “real life:” Werther reads to her from his translation of *Ossian*, the Scottish epic poem famous in the eighteenth century, and at the time considered as being of ancient origin (149–159). The ensuing “real” physical contact—Werther touches and tries to hug her—leads to Lotte sending him away (159) and thus to his eventual suicide—which, by the way, is staged with reference to another text about love and death famous at the time: Lessing's *Emilia Galotti*. All in all, Werther thinks about his love and life in pathological terms. In the course of the novel, he stylizes it as an impossible love, making himself almost into a victim of Lotte's “temptation” (57, 120, 167f.), but in a role that he is more than willing to fulfil.

⁴ He describes her in terms of a perfect angel.

Whereas Werther remains the eternal child, Lotte on the other hand has become an adult, precisely at the moment when her dying mother, on her deathbed, had entrusted her with the maternal role for her younger siblings. As mentioned above, she is seen in this role repeatedly in the novel; for instance, she gives (maternal) orders to them (29). Another important piece of information is that she used to immerse herself in literature previously, when she was younger (31), but now merely likes it, which signifies that she is able to distinguish between literature and life, between imagination and “reality.” As much as she likes to spend time with Werther, there is no doubt for her that she will eventually marry her responsible and conventional fiancé, Albert. Most notably, this is not really a problem for Werther; he is even on quite friendly terms with Albert, whose major fault, according to Werther, is that his love for Lotte is not an excessive love, like his own. It never really occurs to Werther that he could actually marry Lotte himself.

Albert himself is a fairly average, quite likeable person, with whom even Werther is on friendly terms (58, 62). However, they differ fundamentally from each other, given the latter’s absolute excess and the former’s relative lack of imagination. When the topic of suicide comes up, they disagree (63f., 69), as was to be expected, and Werther is dismayed not so much by the fact that Albert will marry Lotte, but because her fiancé does not love her in the unconditional, absolute manner that Werther has already imagined at the very beginning of the novel.

This is fundamentally different in Ugo Foscolo’s novel *Le ultime lettere di Jacopo Ortis* (The Last Letters of Jacopo Ortis), basically a “diphonic” novel. The number of persons that exchange letters is only two because the central heroic figure mainly corresponds with his alter ego Lorenzo Alderani. Ortis is a student from Venice, leaving his home against the wishes of his mother in order to escape the persecution by the Austrian regime that governed his homeland after The Treaty of Campo Formio. The meeting of Ortis with Teresa, the love of his life, takes place in the idyllic surroundings of the Euganean Hills southwest of Venice, where Ortis has gone into his self-imposed exile. Teresa lives in a rather strict environment. She has to bear all responsibility within the house after the mother has left the family and raises a little sister that follows her everywhere. She is always in company, never allowed to remain alone, and the space in which she acts is her home. “As for Teresa we cannot talk about landscape in every sense of the word: just a room in her father’s house. The area is characterized by eternal standstill and in this place the female figure perceives a fundamental feature of her existence: that of being the balancing factor of all the passions that agitate residents or visitors in the

house. In the ‘sweetness’ of her house we can rediscover the ‘sweetness’ of the woman and the appeasement of passion that does not erupt ... the whole space embodies the female role in the society of the time” (Bonghi 3). Because there has not been a previous encounter, the relationship with Jacopo starts slowly and progresses gradually to its peak⁵ (Foscolo 87). Unlike in *Werther*, love and marriage are very much tied together in Foscolo’s novel. As has been pointed out, this is a trait of the specifically Romantic notion of love: love and marriage have to absolutely coincide! This postulate is of such crucial importance in the novel that it has led to a falling-out between Teresa’s mother and father, even before the former’s first encounter with Ortis. The father, Signor T***, wants the rich and influential Odoardo as his son-in-law, something that is inconceivable for Teresa’s mother: she has indeed left her husband because he intends to forcefully marry off Teresa to Odoardo. There are more significant differences with regard to *Werther* when it comes to the specific notion of love in this novel. If Lotte is, to put it bluntly, the more “active” pole and Werther the more “passive” one, this is the opposite in Foscolo. Teresa remains a rather pale character because Ortis displays a much more active personality. Because he opposes Napoleon in the field of politics, he has to reckon with the opposing forces of Signor T*** and Odoardo as far as his relation to Teresa is concerned. For instance, he is explicitly sent away by Teresa’s father. Whereas Werther feels, in a way, like a passive victim of Lotte, Ortis actively sacrifices himself in order that she and the others may keep on living in an undisturbed manner. In accordance with the tragic heroes of Alfieri, he sees suicide as the ultimate active expression of the freedom of man. This line of thought links the spheres of love and politics in the novel: as Ortis himself points out, one cannot live a free and self-determined life without either the free patria or the fulfilled (in a marriage, one might add) love relationship with the beloved woman (Giudice & Bruni, 62 and 91).

We now discuss the Greek epistolary novel and the notion of love there, looking at the same time at possible reasons why it did not have the success its author had wished for.⁶ Essentially, Soutsos’ novel, like Goethe’s and Foscolo’s, deals with the unfulfilled love that “by clashing with the conventions of society ultimately leads to suicide” (Bonghi 4).

Leandros and Koralia are two young people that have loved each other from their childhood. Both are from noble families of Constantinople that

⁵ The kiss is described in the letter of May 14th, 1798.

⁶ For an interpretation of this novel in German, cf. Karakassi, Katerina. “Politische Romantik in Neu-Griechenland: Panagiotis Soutsos und sein Briefroman *Leandros*.” *Vormärz und Philhellenismus* (= Forum Vormärz Forschung, Jahrbuch 2012). Ed. Anne-Rose Meyer. Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 2013. 267–286.

are enemies. The beginning of the Greek Revolution in 1821 as well as their families' hatred tore them apart. At their first accidental meeting in Athens in 1833, they discover that their youthful love has remained intact. The circumstances, however, have changed, because Koralia is now a loyal wife and mother of a child. Leandros, torn between love and morality, wandered around Greece for two months, starting his trip from Nafplio, where he faced the misery, corruption, and intrigues of political life at the capital of Greece at the time. He returned to Athens with his feelings for Koralia more intense than ever and he found her dying "from struggle between obligation and feelings" (Soutsos, 1996 10–11). This summary of the novel itself proves the obvious convergences with *Werther* and *Ortis*. However, after a careful reading one can easily understand that *Leandros* is inferior to its prototypes *Werther* and *Ortis*. Because the particularities of *Werther's* plot and characters have been outlined above, one can concentrate in the following on the distance that separates the two romantic heroes *Ortis* and *Leandros*. First of all, a larger number of persons involved in the exchange of letters weaken, in a way, their immediate impact. In addition to *Leandros* and *Koralia*, the pair of tragic lovers, there are also *Charilaos*, a fraternal friend of the protagonist, and *Euphrosyne*, the best friend of the heroine, both of whom constitute a distraction from the main couple. Moreover, the falling-in-love of *Leandros* and *Koralia*—complete with its unhappy ending due to a family feud, a time-honored plot element—had happened years before. Now, *Koralia* is a married mother and *Leandros* not so young anymore, a mature man of thirty, representative of the Athenian bourgeoisie that is not persecuted in any way, and, unlike *Jacopo Ortis* (letter of November 10th, 1797; Foscolo 17), lives in a free country. He is not at all deprived of liberty, neither at a national level nor a personal one. Even though he suffers from the corruption of the political system, he is still loyal to his monarch, King *Othon* of Greece (letter of December 13th, 1833; Soutsos, 1996 49–50). On the other hand, *Koralia* in nineteenth-century Greece, although married, enjoys far greater freedom than *Teresa*. Very few times is she depicted inside her home. She acts with absolute freedom outside of the house and meets *Leandros* on a daily basis in private, enjoying the countryside and admiring the sunrise (letter of January 1st, 1834; Soutsos, 1996 63). It is noteworthy that, despite the free time *Leandros* and *Koralia* spend alone together, unhindered by both *Koralia's* father and her sister-in-law, the "representative" of her husband, no sexual contact occurs—not even a single kiss, as in the case of the Italian novel. In the preface, Soutsos presents *Koralia* as a virtuous and pious woman that upholds the values of society, and *Leandros* as absolutely respecting the sanctity of the matrimonial vow (Soutsos, 1996 44).

The final act of Leandros' suicide is somewhat overdetermined because it is not only the impossibility of the love relationship but also Koralia's death (from tuberculosis) that drives him to kill himself.

Looking closer at what has already been sketched out above, one finds further possible reasons for the qualitative inequalities between these two specific works by Foscolo and Soutsos. In *Leandros*, the number of persons that exchange letters are four in total; in addition to the two main heroes Leandros and Koralia (the pair of tragic lovers), there are also Charilaos, a fraternal friend of the protagonist, and Euphrosyne, the best friend of the heroine. They exchange seventy-seven letters in total over a brief period of about three and a half months (December 13th, 1833 to April 4th, 1834). In the *Ultime lettere di Jacopo Ortis* the number of persons that exchange letters are only two. They exchange sixty-six out of the sixty-eight letters comprising the larger part of the novel (from October 11th, 1797 to March 25th, 1799). The remaining two letters were sent to Teresa. Thus, the time-frame is more extensive, stretching over eighteen months. In addition, *Jacopo Ortis* is characterized by "diphonia" (letters exchanged by only two persons, usually lovers or friends), whereas Leandros actually constitutes a polyphonic epistolary novel because the correspondence involves more than two people acting at a given moment as recipients as well (Moullas 246). Certainly, both the timeframe in which the love story grows, develops, and comes to its completion, as well as the number of letters and persons, have a negative impact on the quality of this epistolary novel. Similarly, the language in which the novel is written (known as *katharevousa* 'pure language', an artificial mixture of ancient and modern Greek) does make the reception of Soutsos' novel difficult, but this quality alone does not suffice to explain its relative failure. Details regarding the form and content of the novel such as the characters and the way they are outlined as well as the prevailing conditions should be considered. As mentioned above, Ortis is a twenty-two-year-old student from Venice, leaving his home while his beloved mother is imploring him to stay, with the purpose of escaping the persecution by the tyrannical absolutist regime (Foscolo 17). In contrast, Leandros is a mature thirty-year-old, a representative of the Athenian bourgeoisie that is not persecuted in any way and, unlike Jacopo Ortis, lives in a free country. He is not deprived of liberty at a national or personal level, although he suffers from the corruption of the political system; (Soutsos, 1996 49–50); he is loyal to King Othon of Greece, "in whose person he sees ... the concentrating power of national forces, the imposition of order upon anarchy and the constant progression of the Nation" (Soutsos, 1996 45). Moreover, whereas for Jacopo his suicide was already preannounced in the very first letter sent on October 11th, 1797

(Foscolo 17), and Werther also ponders over the act of suicide quite early in the novel, for Leandros this was not the case: despite his romantic tendency toward exaggeration and the clearly pessimistic character of the prevailing atmosphere, he does not intend to commit suicide. In spite of the emotional impact that the recollection of one's past potentially provides, there is only one single reference to the family of Leandros (which still resides in Constantinople or no longer exists). Jacopo's nostalgia for his mother, on the other hand, is continuous and intense because the young exiled man mentions her frequently all throughout the novel. It is noteworthy that there is no similarity between Koralia and Teresa. Although in neither of the novels is there an explicit description of the two women, it can be assumed that Koralia would be at least ten years older than the "divine daughter" of the *Ultime lettere di Jacopo Ortis* (Foscolo 22–23).

Love invades the lives of both Leandros and Jacopo in an unexpected manner. However, in the case of Jacopo Ortis (like Werther), the contact with the woman that was to prove fatal for his life happened within the framework of a formal social visit, whereas for Leandros the conditions were quite different: the past is revived as he accidentally meets the woman from whom he had previously separated due to the pressure of the families. Obviously, Ortis' "love at first sight" is much more dramatic than the "revival" of Leandros's feelings. Moreover, Koralia has already formed her own family, and her commitments are much more prevalent when compared with those of Teresa, who is merely betrothed. The lack of freedom for Teresa and the abundance thereof for Koralia has already been mentioned above. Finally, regarding the comparison of the supporting characters of the Greek novel and the corresponding Italian novel, the following issues become clear: a) Koralia's husband's sister is almost never present, she does not prevent her from seeing Leandros, and she probably covers her absence from home. There is generally neither a proactive nor assertive character, unlike Foscolo's Odoardo, who is the opposite of the romantic hero and is therefore hostile to the protagonist. Odoardo is Teresa's fiancé (and later husband) and has a strong position throughout all of the story, vigorously defending his rights, without compromise: "A blank, empty young man whose face does not say anything" (Bonghi 2). b) An oppressive father is present in the *Ultime lettere di Jacopo Ortis*, whereas such a figure is absent in *Leandros*. c) In the Italian novel, Teresa has no friends to share her feelings, whereas Euphrosyne is close to Koralia. d) Charilaos has a completely different relationship to Leandros than Jacopo has to Lorenzo: Leandros sent him fifty letters and Charilaos responded only to two of them: "Leandros writes to Charilaos incessantly and almost daily ... regardless of reciprocity ... Charilaos is a decorative person whose role is

limited to being a silent witness or even a silent psychoanalyst” (Moullas 224). Being emotionally distant during the course of the novel, at the end he became “non-existent” and his role was taken over by Euphrosyne.

It is important to highlight the fact that Ortis lives, moves, and acts in a fragmented Italy under foreign rule. The Italian people had to endure great sufferings. A great struggle for national sovereignty and the assertion of self-determination of the nation still lay far ahead. In *Leandros*, the liberation war against the Ottoman Empire is over, being no more than a glorious past. Leandros is a citizen of a new small but free country. Thus, not only with regard to love, but accordingly also with regard to the political situation, the emotional narrative impact in *Leandros* is of a much lesser degree than the one in *Jacopo Ortis*.

To sum things up, Werther’s love for Lotte distinguishes itself by its desire for non-physical but immediate unification with the other, a sort of amalgamation, which leads to the dissolution of his own self. This characteristic trait of Werther’s love is fundamentally echoed in his stance towards all other aspects of life: in nature, he wants to become one with a green meadow, being like one of the little insects crawling around in it; when reading, he strives to become one with the Homeric or Ossianic heroes of the past. In eighteenth-century terms, he suffers from an extensive and therefore pathological excess of imagination (e.g., 115, 118), causing the equilibrium of the different faculties of the mind to be out of balance. In German, this was called *Schwärmerei*; that is, a deformation of enthusiasm, failing to discern boundaries of any sort, which, as a definition in a dictionary of the time states, can be found in all aspects of life. In this way, the problematic character of Werther’s love reflects the precarious state of German society towards the end of the Ancien Régime, a situation that is treated amply in Werther’s ill-fated stay at one of the many courts in Germany (83–99). The enthusiast’s futile striving for the unreachable absolute ultimately ends in melancholy, despair, and, in Werther’s case, in suicide. It has been shown that melancholy is precisely the state of mind that corresponds to the situation of the German bourgeoisie in the second half of the eighteenth century, in a time dominated by the Enlightenment, leading to economic success without any hope of participation in the politics of the German states.⁷ In this way, the unattainability of the object of Werther’s love, Lotte, is also an apt symbol for the bourgeois reaching something like a (frustrating) glass ceiling—before the French Revolution, that is.

This has fundamentally changed for Foscolo and Jacopo Ortis. Now, it is also national and political differences, or rather antagonisms, that domi-

⁷ This is the essence of the influential study by Lepenies, modified in Schings.

nate this Italian epistolary novel. In the same way, Napoleon becomes the enemy for many Italian patriots (an active resistance struggle was going on at the time that the novel both describes and when it was written in 1801), and conflicts in *Ultime lettere* are not merely internal, as in *Werther*, but external. There is “real” opposition to Jacopo’s love, for instance, as stated above, by Odoardo, a very rich man and future husband of Teresa, or by Signor T***, the father of Teresa, who will only accept a wealthy and powerful man such as Odoardo as a son-in-law. Unlike Goethe, who ultimately writes against the confusion of art and life, Foscolo, as a true Romantic second perhaps only to Lord Byron, celebrates precisely this, by not only taking cues from his own previous love affairs, but by stylizing future ones according to his own novel when he signs real-life love letters with “il tuo Ortis” (Carlesi 50, 116, 128, 131).

Finally, Leandros’ love for Koralia, as stated above, is a mere revival of old feelings, which manifests itself at a later time in their lives when compared to the couples from the other two novels. Although this may weaken the aesthetic quality of the text, it inadvertently also points towards the specific conditions of Greek literary history. Whereas there was continuous development, which might be called organic, of both a German and an Italian national literature before the actual foundation of the respective national states, in the case of Greece this happened only after the establishment of the first Greek state, and after the capital was transferred from Nafplion to Athens (1834). Only then, many Greeks that had lived in other European countries returned to a free Greece. In addition to them, there were also a few scholars, the Phanariots, that had resided in Constantinople and the Danubian Principalities, holding high positions in the administration of the Ottoman State, and who now came to Greece in order to further the intellectual and political construction of the new state. The Phanariots, being highly experienced in matters of administrative and diplomatic bureaucracy, moved into responsible official positions in the newly established state. At the same time, being highly educated, they also played a leading role in intellectual reconstruction by creating the Athenian School, the first literary school of the first independent Greek state. Common characteristics of the Phanariots were that they spoke French, they wrote in a scholarly *katharevousa*, and they were greatly influenced by Europeans, especially French romanticist writers. For this reason, the Athenian School was named the Romanticist Athenian School by literary critics. The characteristics of the Athenian School writers were the following: usage of *katharevousa*, pretentious style, melancholic mood, escape from reality, pessimism, persistence in the idea of death, lack of originality, and a turn towards the glorious past. These aspects are eminent

in all of the literary production of the Athenian School, in poetry, prose, and theater alike.⁸ The Athenian School was basically imported and failed to produce high-level literature production exactly because of the exaggeration as well as its dependence on foreign models that were by now at least partly outdated. *Leandros* is a characteristic example of this Romanticist Athenian School. In contrast, on the Ionian islands, the origins of literature date back to the fifteenth century, when the island poets were popular for their poems, prose, and the translation of texts from ancient Greek into the spoken language. Moreover, being part of the Venetian Republic, the Ionian islands came into close contact with Italian artistic production. Therefore this rich heritage produced important personalities that stand out in literature, such as Ugo Foscolo (who was actually an Italophone Venetian born on Zakynthos), Andreas Kalvos, Dionysios Solomos, and many other important members of the Eptanesian School—that is, the school of the seven Ionian islands.⁹

Leandros is basically conservative, despite the critique of the excesses of the court bureaucracy. The same holds true for this epistolary novel's position in literary history: in the preface, Soutsos may claim that it is a "first" for Greece, but ultimately he is unable to overcome the intertextual burden it carries around and to add something substantially new. And the treatment of love in the novel is perhaps the best example of its epigonality.

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⁸ Greek Romanticism was mainly expressed in poetry. Its main representatives were Alexandros and Panagiotis Soutsos, Alexandros Rizos Ragkavis, Georgios Zalokostas, Dimitrios Papatigopoulos, Ioannis Karasoutsas, Dimosthenis Valavanis, Spyridon Vasileiadis, and Achilleas Parashos.

⁹ Such as Antonios Matesis, Georgios Tertsetis, Ioulios Tipaldos, Gerasimos Markoras, Aristotelis Valaoritis, Spiridon Zambelios, and Stefanos and Andreas Martzokis.

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Iskanje ljubezni v *Wertherju*, *Jacopu Ortisu* in *Leandru*: primerjalna analiza treh romantičnih pisemskih romanov iz Nemčije, Italije in Grčije

Ključne besede: romantika / pisemski roman / ljubezen / Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von / Foscolo, Ugo / Soutsos, Panagiotis / literarni liki / *Werther* / *Jacopo Ortis* / *Leandros*

Tematika ljubezni je v literaturi tesno povezana s pisemskim romanom. To drži tudi za tri romane, ki jih obravnava ta članek. Vsi trije romani – Goethejev *Werther*, Foscolov *Jacopo Ortis* in Soutsosov *Leandros* – obravnavajo usodno ljubezen, ki moškega protagonista požene v samomor. Uvrščajo se sicer v tri različne nacionalne literature, povezani pa so medbesedilno. V vseh treh pisemskih romanih se v zgodbi ljubezen kot »univerzalija« povezuje z drugim elementom. Tako se ljubezen in drugi element zgodbe lahko vzajemno reflektirata in na novo ovrednotita. V Wertherjevem primeru je to »degenerirani« značaj njegove zaljubljenosti v Lotte, saj Werther ne prevzame aktivne, dominantne vloge, ki jo literarna tradicija pripisuje moškemu snubcu, temveč izkazuje »ženstveno« ali »otroško« pasivnost, svojo usodo pa stilizira po zgledu Kristusovega trpljenja. Ta temeljna pasivnost ustreza socialno-psihološki situaciji intelektualnega meščanstva v Nemčiji v drugi polovici 18. stoletja, ki ni imelo skoraj nobenega političnega vpliva in je zato razvilo, kakor kažejo raziskave, kolektivno melanholijo. To ponazarja kratek odlomek iz romana, v katerem se Werther zaman poskuša prilagoditi življenju na dvoru majhne

nemške prestolnice. V *Jacopu Ortisu* protagonistov konflikt, povezan s tematiko ljubezni (tu je upodobljena bolj aktivna oblika), ni socialnega značaja, temveč je političen. Ljubezen Benečana Ortisa do Terese se vzporeja z njegovo ljubeznijo do domovine, do združene Italije. Zaradi osovraženega Napoleona se njegovi upi v zvezi s svobodno nacionalno državo izjalovijo. V grškem romanu sta ljubimca Leandros in Koralia starejša kot para v prej omenjenih romanih. V njunem razmerju ni svežine in neposrednosti, kar se ujema z zapoznelostjo ustanovitve grške nacionalne države in literature, vsaj glede na kratkoživo Atensko romantično šolo.