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Homosexual love and hedonism in Nuwas's and Cavafy's poems
A comparative approach

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Contents

Abstract	3
Περίληψη.....	3
1. Introduction	5
2. Literature review	13
2.1. The notion of hedonism.....	13
2.2. The notion of homosexuality.....	14
2.3. Abu Nuwas	17
2.4. Constantinos Cavafy	20
3. Methodology.....	24
3.1. The research scope	24
3.2. Research's worldview.....	25
3.3. Research approach	26
3.4. Research method and tools used	27
3.5. Ethical considerations and limitations.....	29
4. Findings	31
4.1. Contemporary perceptions of both poets	31
4.2. Poems' analysis	35
4.2.1. Analyzing Abu Nuwas' poems.....	35
4.2.2. Analyzing Constantinos Cavafy's poems	48
5. Discussion	61
6. Conclusion	74
References	75
Appendix	83

Abstract

In this essay it is attempted to present comparatively and critically erotic poems of Abu Nuwas and Constantinos Cavafy. The emphasis is put on the homosexual elements of the poems and the notion of hedonism which penetrates these poems. The researcher aims to identify in which way these two poets, who lived in different era and area, manage to depict in their work the homosexual love and hedonism. At first, there are information about the notion of homosexuality and hedonism, in order the reader to be familiarized with these ideas that constitute the core of the whole essay. Then, follows the literature review in which the reader is provided with more detailed information about these notions and the life and the characteristics of each poet's writing so as to get a general idea about their work. After the analysis of the methodology and the tools used, in order to analyze the poems, there is a part of contemporary perceptions of both poets. The researcher is based on these approaches to present later the analysis of five poems of each poet. As result, there is a discussion about the similarities and differences found between the two poets concerning the issue of homosexual love and hedonism and the way these are expressed linguistically in their poems.

Περίληψη

Στην παρούσα εργασία παρουσιάζεται μια συγκριτική ανάλυση και μελέτη ενδεικτικών ποιημάτων των ποιητών Κωνσταντίνου Καβάφη και Abu Nuwas. Ειδικότερα, δίνεται έμφαση στην απόδοση του ομοφυλοφιλικού έρωτα από τους δύο ποιητές και την έννοια του ηδονισμού, θέματα που διαπερνούν την ποιητική γραφή και των δύο. Στόχος είναι να εξεταστεί και να παρουσιαστεί με ποιο τρόπο δύο ποιητές που έζησαν σε διαφορετικό χωροχρονικό πλαίσιο κατορθώνουν να αποδώσουν στο έργο τους τον ηδονισμό και τον ομοφυλοφιλικό έρωτα. Αρχικά, στην εισαγωγή παρέχονται ορισμένες πληροφορίες αναφορικά με τις έννοια της ομοφυλοφιλίας και του ηδονισμού, ώστε ο

αναγνώστης να εξοικειωθεί με τις κυρίαρχες έννοιες που αποτελούν τον πυρήνα της εργασίας. Στη συνέχεια, στο μέρος της βιβλιογραφικής ανασκόπησης, παρουσιάζονται τα βασικότερα σημεία της ζωής, του έργου και της ποιητικής γραφής των δύο ποιητών, καθώς και εκτενέστερες πληροφορίες για την έννοια της ομοφυλοφιλίας και του ηδονισμού που διατρέχουν το έργο και των δύο ποιητών. Ακολουθεί το τμήμα της μεθοδολογίας όπου προσδιορίζεται η μέθοδος που έχει υιοθετηθεί, καθώς και τα εργαλεία που χρησιμοποιήθηκαν για την ανάλυση των ποιημάτων. Πριν την ανάλυση των ποιημάτων παρέχονται πληροφορίες σχετικά με τη σύγχρονη πρόσληψη των ποιητών η οποία αποτέλεσε τη βάση της παρούσας εργασίας αναφορικά με την ερμηνεία των ποιημάτων. Έχουν επιλεγθεί και έχουν αναλυθεί πέντε ποιήματα από κάθε ποιητή, ώστε τέλος να εξαχθούν τα συμπεράσματα αναφορικά με τις ομοιότητες και τις διαφορές που εμφανίζουν οι ποιητές στην απόδοση τους ομοφυλοφιλικού έρωτα και του ηδονισμού όπως και τις γλωσσικές επιλογές που υιοθετούνται για να επιτευχθεί αυτή.

1. Introduction

In our days, a significant progress concerning the protection of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and other communities (LGBTQ+) have been noticed all over the world (Angelo & Bocci, 2021). As Angelo and Bocci (2021) underline, many activists as well as various governments take protective measures and laws, in order to ensure their rights and protect them from marginalization.

In 2006, in response to well documented patterns of abuse, a meeting in Yogyakarta in Indonesia took place with participants distinguished experts of international human rights. The result of this meeting was the Yogyakarta Principles, a set of international principles relating to sexual orientation and gender identity and the recognition of the distinct and intersectional grounds of gender expression and sex characteristics. It is used as a universal guide to human rights which affirm binding international legal standards with which all States must comply (The Yogyakarta Principles, n.d.).

In 2017 these principles concerning the protection of people who suffered of violations due to their sexual orientation were enriched by adding new ones, because since 2006 there have been significant developments both in the field of international human rights law and in the understanding of violations affecting people of diverse sexual orientation and gender identities. The (YP+10) aims to document and elaborate these developments through a set of Additional Principles and State Obligations and it accompanies the original 29 Yogyakarta Principles.

However, homophobia and prejudice towards people with different sexual orientation still exists. Herek (2000) refers to these tendencies either by using the term “sexual prejudice”, when it has to do with personal prejudiced behaviors towards people with homosexual, bisexual orientation, or the term “heterosexism” when it has to do with

social ideologies that perceive inferior, people who are “non – heterosexual” (2000, p.19). Mayer and McHugh (2016) moreover notice in their study that homosexuals suffer more from depression, anxiety, substance abuse and suicide compared to the general population. So, it becomes clear that the defense of all those people and the normalization of their lives remains still a current issue.

By examining how homosexual love is presented in two significant poets, Abu Nuwas and Costantinos Cavafy, who lived in different eras and areas, but are considered to be word – class artists, it is believed that this would be one more proof of the timelessness of homosexuality based on the power of literature to motivate people see things from another aspect and obtain a more expanded perception of the world.

In particular, sexuality is the central force in Cavafy’s poetics. It is critical for understanding Cavafy’s modern sensibility to focus on sexuality and its’ expressions in his work. By foregrounding Cavafy’s erotic poems, the relationship to a modern discourse of sexuality may arouse. In Cavafy’s time, homosexual lives become a popular topic in European literature, in autobiographical accounts, and in medical-judicial discourses on sexuality (Boletsi, 2016). Cavafy’s “angle to the universe” is formed by renegotiating these discourses, thereby yielding a collective “homo-biography” (Papanikolaou, p. 215), to use Papanikolaou’s own term, and addressing a future community of people “made just like me”. The choice of Cavafy’s work was because scholars are often interested in Cavafy’s historic, didactic and even religious poems, and their importance for the totality of his poetry has already been brought to the fore and discussed multiple times. His erotic poems though have been studied less systematically -and often treated less sympathetically. This is due to their ambivalent nature, a nature which had to be as discreet as possible in a period of time where being a homosexual was taboo (Skordi, 2018).

On the other hand, Abu Nuwas was one of the most famous Arab poets, known for his sexual escapades, his magnificent poetry and his love for wine and young men. He lived in an environment where homosexuality was not rare and it was at the same time rejected by some people while others seemed to be more tolerant towards it. Kennedy (2005) mentions that “homosexuality was imported to Abbasid Iraq from Khurasan” (p.18). Until then Arab poets tended to talk about their love for women, but since the oncoming of the Black Banners from the East many men started to practice sodomy due to their contact with adolescent men. However, Kennedy (2005) underlines that for some scholars this is a “physical confusion of heterosexual love” (p.18). Regardless of the approach on the issue of homosexuality it becomes clear that as an aspect of life it made its’ appearance in the whole life and it also noticed in the literature of this period. Abu Nuwas as it is also mentioned by Kennedy (2005) had homoerotic experiences even from a young age. More specifically, Kennedy (2005) refers to his relationship with Waliba who recognized his talent but he was also sexually attracted by Nuwas.

It can be understood that these two poets live their sexuality in very different environments. That is the reason of the choice made to examine their work so as to enlighten how they present homosexuality in their poems and how their homo-biography is understood nowadays.

In every society, Literature constitutes a basic part of it as it provides to its’ readers helpful information concentrating both the society and “the thoughts and feelings of great minds” (Keerthika, 2018). Keerthika (2018) mentions that every writer expresses with the power of language his/her personal beliefs and thoughts, while in the same time literature records the values of every era. Altenbernd and Lewis (1966) also refer to the power of poesy, which in one way constitutes a means to understand some aspects of the history. As it has already been mentioned, sexuality could have various forms

and this is also illustrated in literature. Matthewes (2018) refers to the fact that both children and adult literature mainly deals with the heterosexual aspect of sexuality underlying that there is a growing number of works trying to explore more marginalized sexualities. However, even in the past there were artists, novelists and poets who were depicting in their work their homosexuality. Abu Nuwas and Constantinos Cavafy, as it has already been mentioned, are two characteristic examples of poets who expressed in their poems the homosexual aspect of love. In the time of Abu Nuwas, the association between effeminacy and homosexuality was made for the first time (Almarai& Persichetti, 2023). Cavafy puts desire, “semi-hidden,” in the phrases of his poetry, fully exploiting the dissonance of silences and things unsaid. In some of his poems it can be seen how he translates the closeting of queer desire into a textual practice that produces identification and eroticism (Papanikolaou, 2005).

Especially, in the case of these two poets, homosexuality is being connected with the notion of hedonism. This as a philosophical approach made its’ appearance in ancient Greece and it was expressed by Aristippus in the 4th century B.C. (Oikonomou, 2013). Hedonists were people who were seeking for pleasure in their lives either material or mental. Especially in ancient Greece hedonism was firmly connected to material things and was distinguished from eudaemonism which put more emphasis on mental situations (Oikonomou, 2013). This physical – material aspect of hedonism recalls the hedonism found in Abu Nuwas and Cavafy who seem to feel pleasant and happy after their contact with their lovers. The notion of hedonism in their poems has its’ roots in the beauty that arises from the bodies of their beloved.

Valufi and Astuti (2020) mention that hedonism either in philosophy or in the way of living refers to people who are trying to avoid pain in their lives and are seeking for pleasure and happiness. As Valoufi and Astuti point out hedonists are those who above

all have their personal pleasure and for this, they leave aside other important things. This is pictured in a differentiated way both in Abu Nuwas's and Cavafy's poems. The first one is considered as one of the biggest hedonist poets and his work is combined with wine literature (the *khamriyyat*). In his poems, which are quite controversial he combines issues of drinking, partying and fornicating with both sexes. Abu Nuwas is chosen because he is an artist who, with maximum license, sings the praises of homosexuality (Almarai& Persichetti, 2023). Cavafy's hedonism and homosexuality in the past years was presented by previous scholars as something embarrassing and only after the English intake of his work he started to be seen from a homosexual aspect (Τζιόβας, 2008). On the contrary, it is very interesting to examine the work of Cavafy so as to determine the ways in which he speaks for his sexual identity. Cavafy puts desire, "semi-hidden," in the phrases of his poetry, fully exploiting the dissonance of silences and things unsaid. In key poems we can see how he imprints his feelings and his sentiments in poems that depict his personality and his sexual identity.

So, the main purpose of this thesis is to examine comparatively and with a critical scope five poems of Abu Nuwas and Costantinos Cavafy. At first, it will be attempted to enlighten the ways the work of Abu Nuwas and Constantinos Cavafy are perceived in modern societies. For this reason, the researcher of this thesis presents contemporary perceptions of these two poets, in order to attempt a more modern approach on their work and especially while talking about an intertemporal issue, homosexual love. So, the contemporary interpretation of these poets constitutes the first research question of this dissertation. Then, the researcher aims to answer the second question how homosexual love and hedonism are presented in specific poems of both artists. What this paper intends to find out and are similarities and differences in the way these two poets present love and hedonism in their work. Despite the fact that these two poets are

really important and there are many researches for their work, there isn't a comparative study of their poems even if some scholars mention that Cavafy seems to have been influenced by Abu Nuwas (Κουμούτση, 2022). For this reason, this thesis aims to add to bibliography a comparative presentation of homosexuality and hedonism in their work based on the principles of comparative literature and content analysis. As a third question so, arises the way in which these themes are being presented linguistically. Are these themes presented in a more realistic and raw way or are they presented in a more lyric and literal way? Moreover, it would be attempted to examine in which extent every poet uses figures of speech and what type of them are common to each one, in order to illustrate the hedonistic ambiance and the homosexual love, so as a last question it is attempted to find out which is the tone of each poet. Are they lyric or more raw and realistic?

This thesis is based both on a constructivist and a transformative worldview. A worldview can be defined as “a general philosophical orientation (or beliefs) about the world and the nature of research that guides the researcher's judgment and action” (Creswell, 2014, p.6). The transformative worldview seems to constitute the pillar of this thesis, as it deals with an issue, homosexual love, that over the years has been dealt with stereotypes, suspicion while in the same time many people were led to marginalization and isolation due to their sexual orientation. So, by its' nature the theme seems to be more relevant to the transformative worldview. This one seems to provide to the researcher the opportunity to give prominence to an issue, homosexual love as depicted in the literature, which has been dealt with suspicion and stigma in the past. Simultaneously, the analysis of the poems is also based on the constructivist worldview, as the last one puts emphasis on the circumstances under which someone lives and works. So, from this perspective the researcher tries to find out how two other people,

Nuwas and Cavafy, depict in their work their sexual identity and the notion of pleasure. Based on these two worldviews, a qualitative approach is going to be adopted, in order to carry out this research.

At first, in the literature review there are information about the notion of hedonism and homosexuality, in order the reader to get an idea about the issues that are being examined in both poets' poems. Then, in the same part there are provided biographical information about the two poets, in order to reflect the characteristics of each one. These elements have to do both with their lives as well as with elements of the era in which they lived. Then, it is attempted to present how these poets were interpreted over the years. Both of them, seem to have been construed in a more conservative way in the past, while during the last years there are people who tend to interpret them in a different way based on queer theory and the protection of the rights of all people regardless their sexual orientation (Ryan, 2018; Παπανικολάου, 2014). Many of the homoerotic poems of these artists at first were hidden and not presented to the audience. This proves the suspicion and prejudiced attitude that existed in the past towards homosexuality.

Then, it follows the part of methodology where there are more detailed information concerning the qualitative approach that is followed and the tools that are being used, in order to analyze hedonism and homosexual love by studying these poets critically talking into account that these artists lived in totally different era and area. Abu Nuwas is a poet of the eighth century in the area of Bagdad, whereas Cavafy lived in Alexandria during the twentieth century. So, based on the principles of comparative literature (Μαρμαρινού, 2015) that have to do with elements that at first differentiate and distinguish two artists (the time, area, style of writing in this case) it is attempted to prove that their work shares some common characteristics. This thesis is also based on the principles of intercultural education. According to Chiriac and Panciuc (n.d.)

intercultural education is basic while addressing to issues that have to do with various forms of differences either these have to do with ethnicity, culture, gender, sexual orientation and every aspect of someone's identity. Ellis (2023) refers to the fact that intercultural learning and education could lead to social transformation, as it exposes students to methods that they haven't seen previously and in this way they are being taught to incorporate these concepts in their everyday life. From this perspective, it is believed that this thesis, as it deals with homosexuality, which even in our days is faced with suspicion and prejudice, is based on the principles of intercultural education, because this issue is presented from an open to different values perspective, so as to integrate everyone in a polymorphic world.

Before the analysis of the poems there is a part in which there are presented the contemporary perceptions of these two poets that constitute the basis of the analysis that comes later. In the next part, there is the analysis of the poems and following the technique of collecting data by using the tool of context analysis it is ventured to find out words that present hedonism or homosexual love and categorize these words to everyday and common vocabulary as well as to more literal vocabulary with the use of figures of speech (Bowen, 2009). As a result, then follows the part where there are presented and categorized the findings of the comparison of the five poems of these two artists. The last parts include the conclusion and some remarks and ideas for further research on this field.

2. Literature review

2.1. The notion of hedonism

As it has already been mentioned hedonism is a philosophical approach that made its appearance in ancient Greece. In this part there are given some extra information about this term, in order to help the reader understand how this as a notion is depicted in both poets' poems.

Nash (2023) describes analytically various aspects of hedonism. "Normative hedonism" puts emphasis on pleasure as according to it, this is the primary target of people's lives. Moreover, she talks about "motivational hedonism" according to which people in their lives are motivated by pleasure and try to avoid pain. "Egotistical hedonism" justifies every act made by someone, in order to feel the pleasure he/ she is seeking for in his/ her life. Finally, Nash (2013) cites the "altruistic hedonism" in which the pleasure is found not in a personal level, but more general in the humankind and this "determines the morality of an action".

So, from this theoretical framework it becomes clear that hedonism is a theory about the value of a person's life for the person who lives it, and not for the world or for others. Hedonists are trying to find pleasure, which gives meaning and value to their lives, while at the same time this decreases the pain they experience. According to Feldman (2002) hedonism has been subjected to a number of objections which are based on the claim that hedonism is a form of "mental statism" while others claim that some pleasures are abasing and of lower quality. Finally, others are based on the claim that when a bad person enjoys a pleasure, his receipt of that pleasure doesn't seem to ameliorate the world (Feldman, 2002). Philosophers use the term "hedonism" to imply the pursuit of something lowly, but there are also philosophers who endorse hedonism

because for them it seems that hedonists are destined for a life of reasoning and friendship.

2.2. The notion of homosexuality

In this part, it is attempted to present a brief history of homosexuality and its' acceptance, in order the reader to understand how this issue has been dealt through the centuries.

Homosexuality has been noticed already in ancient Greece. The restriction of women at home and the simultaneous coexistence of men in arm, in political life and all forms of entertainment created an emotional gap among men and women whereas in the same time favored the connection among men (Laios et al., 2017). During these years it was also known the lesbian love of Sappho for her students which tended to be more platonic. However, homosexuality was not perceived as something "normal" and as Laios et al. (2017) mention, doctors of that era were trying to explain it, as those behaviors were considered to be "reprehensible" (2017, p.60).

Smith, Blakeslee and Rosenthal (2008) note that homosexuality has been recorded in every documented culture either by being rejected or accepted. In Europe the systematic study of homosexuality was conducted during the 19th century by Sigmund Freud and Magnus Hirschfield (Smith, Blakeslee, Rosenthal, 2008). They were the first scientists who seemed to show acceptance to homosexual love and didn't consider it as "an illness or a crime" (2008, p. 35). In USA the first organized attempts to support homosexual groups were made after the World War II. However, until 1973 the American Psychiatric Association was characterizing homosexuality as an "illness" in its' diagnostic manuals illustrating people's suspicion towards homosexual people.

For many people being homosexual is perceived either as a genetical characteristic or as a result from the environment and the way in which someone was raised. However, as Mayer and McHugh underline (2016), according to various findings both from epidemiological studies and studies of brains, the answer to “why someone is homosexual?” is not so simple. The association among genetic factors and sexual orientation as well as the influence of hormones on prenatal development is limited and could not explain someone’s sexual preferences. Bever (2019) mentions that a recent study shows that there are specific genes connected with homosexual behavior. Five genetic variants seem to relate with same – sexual behaviors, but they don’t appear to be capable to predict if someone is going to be homosexual as they don’t have a large effect. What is more, the differences found in heterosexuals and homosexuals’ brains could not be attributed clear neither to environmental factors nor to neurobiological characteristics. The only environmental factor that seems to be more related to non – heterosexual orientation is the sexual abuse during childhood.

So, it becomes clear that it is not so easy to define and understand exactly someone’s sexuality, as this doesn’t seem to be fixed and predetermined. Science cannot provide clear answers and explain people’s sexual orientation as it isn’t based on genetics or other elements connected to biology. Perhaps, there is no need trying to understand or answer the question “why someone is homosexual?”.

However, in this point it would be useful to make some remarks concerning the homosexual love and its’ literary depiction as Nuwas and Cavafy they are not the only poets who chose to talk about homosexual love. Bauer (2014) refers to the fact that the Greek poet Straton even since the second century CE wrote epigrams to “apologize for the sprouting bread of his beloved” (p. 113) and this is used as an element to prove how homosexual love seems to be imprinted in literature throughout the ages. Arabic poetry

also dealt with this topic as well as with other aspects of homosexual love. According to Bauer (2014) throughout history Arabic literature broached various aspects of love. Abu Nuwas is perceived as the poet who “enabled the breakthrough of homoerotic love poetry” (p. 109). Cavafy almost ten centuries later composed homoerotic poems in which he declares his love and his sentiments. The poet told about himself talking in third person that “Cavafy is a poet of the future, eternal and super – modern” (Papanikolaou, 2014, p. 42). Papanikolaou (2014) confirms that Cavafy is a poet who broke aesthetic and poetic invariants of his era and puts emphasis on the erotic poems of modernism. So, it becomes clear that two poets who lived in different era and in different region managed to capture in their poems the homosexual love of course with a different manner.

Sexual orientation, like gender, is intimately related to the perception and representation of issues outside love and its physical expression, precisely because, for its’ own purposes, society (or at least Western society) has long used categorization of sexual desire as a means of social control. Consequently, the way in which artists in any medium express their world-view will be formed and colored in part by their relationship with such a defining aspect of the sense of self (Robinson, 2005). Both Abu Nuwas and Constantinos Cavafy in their poems show their sexual orientation with hedonistic elements and it’s interesting to examine the way these expressions are viewed today, in a society that made efforts to protect lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and other communities, but still prejudice and violations against these communities. In the 21st century, Arab Queer representations and explorations slowly migrated into other mediums of aesthetic representation, including and mostly in autobiographical novels. Recognizing this aesthetic migration, representations of homoeroticism in Abu Nuwas’s poetry might offer a site of investigation for a pre-

colonial Arab Queer experience that is separate from Western definitions of Queerness rooted in the Gay Liberation movement of the 1960s and it might also carry forward in modern conceptions of Queerness (Daoud, 2020). In addition, Cavafy's work has recently increased his popularity with the development of queer theory and the growing number of published gay literary anthologies while scholars examine his homosexuality through his poems. His erotic writings are of great interest to queer identity politics—and book-publishing niche markets—as well as those who would resist such readings and agendas (Gegas, 2013).

2.3. Abu Nuwas

Souliotis (2016) gives a picturesque description of Abu Nuwas's life. Abu Nuwas, meaning the father with the curls, was Abu Ali al – Hasan ibn Hani al – Hakami's nickname. He was born around 757 ac in Persia. From a young age he combined work with studying the Arabic language and literature with various mentors. Abu Nuwas appears as a character in the book "The thousand and one nights". He was a court poet who had gained the favor of the caliphs Harun al-Rashid and his son, al-Amin. It seems that he was in love with the caliph al – Amin and it is believed that that the majority of his poems was written during his reign (Souliotis, 2016). However, this period was just four years, as Muhammad al – Amin was murdered by his half – blooded brother, Al – Mamoun, who was homophobic and send Abu Nuwas in prison. Ghazoul and Verlenden (2021) point out that the poet lived in an epoque of cosmopolitanism and a variety of religions and sects and these characteristics provided Abu Nuwas the chance to "venture into controversial issues" (p. 68).

Abu Nuwas stood out in various genres according to which is organized his "diwan" (Kennedy, 2005). Sharlet (2019) presents analytically the poems included in his "diwan" which are, wine poems (Khamriyya), erotic poems (ghazal), provocative ones

(mujun), ascetic (zubdiyya), hunting poems (tardiyya) and poems dedicated to specific people. More popular are his wine and hunting poems. His erotic poems are divided into two categories by the modern scholarship. The first includes female beloveds (“mu’annathat”) and the second refers to male beloveds (“mudhakkarat”) (Bauer, 2014). Kennedy (2005) points out that Abu Nuwas was the poet who left his special poetic marker in his era. For example, while the wine poetry had a dominant position in the Islamic literature (Sharlet, 2019) with Abu Nuwas it acquires more specific characteristics. Noorani (2004) refers to these elements by underlying a tendency to exaggeration and the fact that in order to feel pleasure a person has to dissolve his moral code. Mattock (1987) mentions that Abu Nuwas combines in his work some traditional elements and in the same way he manages to modify others. He underlines that humor and mocking are the basic characteristics of his work. Galer (2017) as well as Souliotis (2016) underline that Abu Nuwas tends to talk in his poetry about issues that are forbidden in his era. These have to do with religion, wine and the love for boys.

As many scholars have noticed in his wine poems he reveals hedonistic and homosexual elements. Hedonism in his work is not related only with homosexual love as he also talks about women, but his references to homosexual love stand out (Ryan, 2018). Bauer (2014) mentions that Abu Nuwas was not the first who wrote homoerotic poems, but he characterizes him as the most “famous” and “influential beyond compare” in this field (p.109) as he was the poet who managed to establish this genre in “high literature” (p. 110). Moss (1951) tries to explain this tendency by referring generally to homoerotic works of this period by underlying that despite the fact that Islam forbids homosexual love, during the ninth century there were the social circumstances for losing the strict separation of sexes. In this way he is attributing Abu Nuwas’s homoerotic elements to this general tendency of many writers to “sing homoerotic lyric poetry” (1951, 136)

and he mentions that he cannot be perceived as an “homosexual” or “gay” in a modern sense.

Souliotis (2016) also gives a similar explanation to Abu Nuwas’s homosexual elements. He refers to the fact that the Quran denounces homosexuality, but in the same time he points out that the society of Islam in some cases had a more tolerant attitude towards the homosexual intercourse among young or adult men as this is presented in Soufi’s poesy. From this point of view Souliotis (2016) comes to the conclusion that Abu Nuwas managed to establish this theme in Islamic literature, despite that fact that he was perceived with suspicion by the most conservative part of his era. It would be also useful to mention in this point that Abu Nuwas admits without shame his preference to men rather than women. He characterizes a man as a continent and the woman as the sea. As he mentions he loves more the stable earth (Σουλιώτης, 2016).

Ryan (2018) provides a more modern interpretation of Abu Nuwas homosexuality. Despite the fact that, as he admits, he hesitates to call Nuwas “gay” or “homosexual” or “bisexual”, he perceives this poet as a reminder for all of us that sexuality “was oriented around a different axis” for hundreds of years. For this reason he sees Abu Nuwas as a proof that there is a natural attraction to members of the same sex whether this is called homosexuality or not. In addition, he believes that this homophobia and tendency to label homosexual love springs from British colonialism. He refers to the fact that the tradition of Islamic – Arabic songs of love between men ended in the 19th century, when Europeans descended upon in Middle East bringing with them stereotypes and homophobia.

2.4. Constantinos Cavafy

Constantinos Cavafy was born in 1863 in Alexandria. Watson (2023) underlines the “cosmopolitan and commercial atmosphere” that was characteristic of the city and influenced the poet as it also provided the setting of many of his poems. In 1892, Cavafy took a position with the British-run Egyptian Ministry of Public Works for thirty years. During his life he didn’t travel a lot neither abroad nor in Egypt. It seems that he had visited Paris, London and Athens where he met various artists of that era (Δασκαλόπουλος, n.d.). During his life other artists that met him, like Nikos Kazantzakis, Costas Ouranis, E.M. Foster, wrote down the conversations that they had with Cavafy or they spread rumors about the poet. In this way, it was shaped the idea that Cavafy was a quirky and lonely person (Δασκαλόπουλος, n. d.). People in Athens learned about Cavafy when Gregory Xenopoulos wrote an article presenting Cavafy in 1903, while in London he became known by his friend E. M. Forster (Souliotis, 1995).

Due to the eccentric characteristics both of his life and his writing as Daskalopoulos points out Cavafy’s work had admirers from one part and many enemies in the same time. Costis Palamas and Cavafy were in feud as the poems of the last one seemed to be quite peculiar for the first one who preferred a more “clear” language. Fiorentinos (2014) refers to the fact that these two poets lived during the same period in different regions while Palamas was the dominant person in Athens as the most important representative of the 1880’s generation. The themes that Cavafy chose to deal with as well as his language, which had elements from the purist Greek that Palamas hated, made the last one to be against Cavafy.

The peculiar and specific characteristics that Cavafy’s poetry has, make it difficult to integrate him in specific literature trends and tendencies. Politou - Marmarinou (2015) attempts to connect him with the French Parnassians. She points out that literature has

underlined the realistic elements of Cavafy's poesy. The Parnassians tend to care a lot about the form of the poem and also their poems have a philosophical and instructional tone. These characteristics can also be found in Cavafy's work and that's the reason why Politou – Marmarinou links him with parnassianism. However, the most important is to keep in mind that, as Politou – Marmarinou (2015) mentions, it is difficult to locate him in a specific literary current as he created a current by himself. This is due to the specific characteristics of his poems that have to do not only the themes with which he deals but also with the peculiar linguistic choices that he makes.

Papanikolaou (2014) provides a really interesting approach on Cavafy's homosexuality. As he underlines many scholars in the past and especially Savvidis, who was the one who edited and published Cavafy's poems, presented the homosexual elements of his poesy as something embarrassing, something perceived as a problem or a characteristic of which we are not so proud. As Papanikolaou mentions this anxiety and shame on Cavafy's homosexuality has to do with the general homophobic tendencies that existed and in some cases still exist in our society. In addition, he refers to the fact that the traditional review tends to identify two types of Cavafy, the first one who was hiding his homosexuality and the second one who revealed it with embarrassment. However, as he mentions this approach is unfair for Cavafy as it doesn't give us the opportunity to understand the power and novelty of his work. For Papanikolaou (2014) Cavafy is the poet who is due to his homosexual identity. This means that this identity and his sexual orientation is the one that leads to the erotic atmosphere that is noticed in his poems and not the opposite. So, from this aspect it becomes clear that for Papanikolaou all these unique characteristics of Cavafy's writing are due to his sexual identity. He also refers to the fact that Cavafy had a great interest to study material of his era

concerning the perception of homosexuality. This for Papanikolaou proves Cavafy's need to achieve the knowledge which will give him an exoneration of homosexuality.

According to Souliotis (1995) Cavafy didn't print a book during his whole life, as he used to print his poems in leaflets that were then joined by the same and given to his friends or people who wanted to know his work. This is also mentioned by Papanikolaou (2014) who underlines that Cavafy was really careful with his work, as the environment of Alexandria was not so supportive with him and was not accepting his homosexuality as was wrongly believed in the past. Of course, things were better in Alexandria than in Athens as Stroebel (2018) cites the perception that his poem "In an old book" had in the two cities. As he mentions when Cavafy printed this poem in 1923 in both cities the acceptance he faced was differentiated. In Alexandria the poet had the chance to present gay desire on public audience while in Athens the newspaper "Orthos" characterized this poem as "stain".

What is more, Papanikolaou provides an interesting approach on the way Cavafy chooses to talk about his homosexuality. As he mentions, Cavafy follows the strategy of "talking and hiding". The poet manages in the same time to hide things and talk about them. His characters are hiding, but in the same time they manage to do things. Papanikolaou (2014) mentions that it is Cavafy's conscious and deliberate action to "talk and hide" simultaneously. This means that the poet chooses to present his identity and in this way he manages to create the "homosexual type of person" (2014, p. 169), but from a secret and hidden place. This secret place, which in most cases constitutes the scene where the erotic poems occur, symbolizes the pressure of the homosexual desire and at the same time "gives space for the undermining of homophobia" (2014, p.170 – 171). Papanikolaou (2014) explains this secret as a tendency of Cavafy to present erotism as a result of sexuality and also an attempt to transform the secret vision

to a vision from a specific perspective. In this way, Cavafy finally manages to talk about homosexuality and “people who are made like him” (2014, p.219).

To sum up, it becomes clear from the literature review above that both Abu Nuwas and Cavafy are poets who have provoked controversial approaches on their work. Both of them are really important poets and they are perceived as word class poets who remained in the history of global literature for their work. Of course, it should be taken into account that they lived in totally different era and conditions while analyzing their poems. However, despite the differences it is obvious that these poets managed to leave their mark in literature and were quite innovative in their era. So, both the homoerotic and hedonistic elements of their work as well as the innovatory way of expressing them lead to an interesting comparison of their work, in order to find out how these are expressed in their poems and how are perceived in our days.

3. Methodology

3.1. The research scope

The aim of this thesis is to examine comparatively the notion of hedonism and homosexuality in Abu Nuwas's and Constantinos Cavafy's poems. For this reason, the researcher has chosen to analyze five poems of each poet. These poems were chosen as they are believed to be characteristic of their hedonistic and homosexual elements. They are analyzed by various scholars, as it is presented in the part where they are approached separately, and they use a variety of linguistic choices, such as metaphors, repetitions, personifications, exaggerations and adjectives, in order to depict these themes. In order to carry out this comparative analysis at first there are presented contemporary perceptions of both poets, in order to find out how these poets are interpreted in our days. This part aims to answer the first question of this thesis that is to find out how are these poets perceived by the contemporary scholars. After this presentation, analysis follows, in order to find the depiction of hedonism and homosexual love. This is also attempted to be achieved through the analysis of the linguistics choices made by each poet, in order to present the themes examined. Each poem is analyzed separately based on previous comments found in the literature and the researcher's personal point of view, so as to identify in which way each poet imprints the notion of hedonism and homosexuality in his poems. This constitutes this thesis's second research question. The linguistic choices made by each poet, in order to illustrate the theme of hedonism and homosexuality are the third question that is attempted to be answered in this dissertation. From this question also arises another one, that has to do with the tone and style that each poet has on his work. More specifically, it is attempted to find out if the poets tend to be realistic or imaginative. In order to answer these questions the researcher's analysis is based on poems' language and its' use. Particularly, from each

poem there are selected the words that are used, in order to depict the use of homosexual love and hedonism. Moreover, the researcher examines the use of language, whether in the poems exist figures of speech and their type, whether the vocabulary is simple and common or more refined and in this way it is expected to find out which are the linguistics choices made by each poet and what type of tone they create. Then, it is attempted to classify and categorize all these findings from each poem to similarities and differences between the two poets.

3.2. Research's worldview

Creswell (2014) underlines that each researcher's worldview influences the approach followed in his/ her research. He defines the worldview as "a general philosophical orientation (or beliefs) about the world and the nature of research" that guides the researcher's judgment and action (Creswell, 2014, p.6). Qualitative researches are usually based on a constructivist or transformative worldview. This one has elements from both philosophical approaches.

Social constructivists believe that social and historical circumstances influence the way in which people understand the world. According to Mogashoa (2014) constructivism is a theory of knowledge that argues that people produce and acquire knowledge from an interaction between their experiences and their ideas. Historical and cultural norms are believed to affect everyone's life. Creswell (2014) also refers to the fact that researchers in these types of researches try to understand and interpret the "meanings others have about the world" (p.8). So, this worldview seems to constitute the base of this research as it is attempted to explore and understand in which way two poets who lived in different era and area depict in their work the homosexual love and the notion of pleasure – hedonism. The circumstances under which they lived are taken into account and presented, in order to interpret their poems. At the same time the researcher

bears in mind that the contemporary situation also affects the way in which the work is being perceived based on Creswell's remark that the researcher's experiences and knowledge also influence the way in which he/ she interpretes the collected data. So, talking this remark into account as well as after studying the circumstances under which the two poets lived and created their work, it is attempted by the researcher to provide a personal analysis of some poems, in order to see how hedonism and homosexual love are presented.

Concurrently, the nature of the study seems to match with the transformative worldview. The transformative worldview seems to constitute another pillar of this thesis, as it deals with an issue, homosexual love, that over the years has been dealt with stereotypes, suspicion while in the same time many people were led to marginalization and isolation due to their sexual orientation. This philosophical worldview focuses on important social issues that have to do with the inequality, oppression and alienation. Bouma et al (2012) underline that the researchers based on this worldview believe that marginalized people in our societies are oppressed by the structural laws and theories. Feminists, minorities, people with disabilities, members of the LGBTQ+ society, indigenous people are perceived as marginalized people and from this perspective it would be useful for someone to be based on the transformative worldview when he/ she deals with issues which have to do with this population. So, in this case this worldview seems to be appropriate, in order to designate the issue of homosexual love – which has been faced with prejudice and fear in many cases- as depicted by Nuwas and Cavafy.

3.3. Research approach

In order to carry out this research it is adopted a qualitative approach. In social studies as Onwuegbuzie & Leech (2005) point out whatever the approach is, the aim is to understand human beings and the social environment in which they live in. Creswell

(2014) mentions that the qualitative approach is appropriate, in order to understand how individuals deal with social issues and problems. As a result, it seems that in this case a qualitative approach seems ideal, in order the researcher to define how homosexual love and hedonism are presented by the poets examined in this essay. Following an inductive analysis, as in many qualitative approaches, the researcher tries from the analysis of specific poems of both poets to come to a more general conclusion of the way homosexual love and hedonism is perceived and presented by Abu Nuwas and Constantinos Cavafy.

3.4. Research method and tools used

This essay is based on the principles of Comparative Literature. According to Politou – Marmarinou (2015) Comparative Literature is based on the comparison that is being conducted among two or more “products of literature” that at first sight seem to be irrelevant as there is a gap among them. The philologist overleaps this gap, that is being created either by the language, the cultural tradition or the genre of work, and manages to find common elements among the compared literary work. In this case the comparison is conducted among Nuwas and Cavafy. There is not only a chronological distance among them, as they lived in different era, but also a linguistic one, as Nuwas wrote in the Arabic language, while Cavafy in the Greek language. From this point of view, it seems that this comparative approach satisfies the requirements of Comparative literature, as despite these differences there are also similarities found between the two poets that have to do with the idea of homosexuality and hedonism. Based on this main thematic similarity the researcher approaches the poems based on previous studies and a personal critical scope, in order to classify more specifically the similarities and differences found in these poets in the way their work responds to each research question.

Content analysis constitutes a research technique used in this essay, in order to explore the similarities and differences found between the two poets. Krippendorff (2004) mentions that this technique is basic in social studies and has its' roots in literary theories. In this case a small amount of text, as mentioned by Krippendorff (2014), five poems more specifically, are being presented and interpreted, in order to find the similarities and differences the poets present in the depiction of homosexual love and hedonism in their work. Stemler (2001) underlines the important role content analysis plays so as to "examine trends and patters in documents". So, it seems that content analysis could be a useful tool in the examination of homosexual love and hedonism among Nuwas and Cavafy. Elo and Kyngäs (2007) analyze the important role of content analysis in various sciences and especially in nursing. They underline the fact that as a technique it is really helpful to deduce a more general and completed conclusion or description of the phenomenon that is being examined. From this aspect, it is useful, in order to help the researcher infer a more general description of the homosexual love and hedonism presented in the work of Abu Nuwas and Constantinos Cavafy.

In order to answer the research questions as given above and based both on principles of comparative literature and content analysis the researcher also tries to adopt a reflexive thematic analysis, so as to be more specific. Particularly, after the selection of these poems, the researcher studies them carefully and takes notes on the data found. These data have to do with the notion of homosexuality and hedonism and the way these themes are depicted linguistically. So, it is attempted to give the reader the necessary information of each poem to understand in which way these themes are described and for this reason there are tables containing the words that have been selected from each poem to create the hedonistic tone. The same process is attempted when the researcher examines the linguistics choices made in each poem. The

researcher notes down the linguistic choices of each poem and these are provided to the readers both in text and tables. Based on these linguistic choices then follows the attempt to answer the last research question that has to do with the tone of each poet. These elements are also given both in text and tables, in order to be more specific. So, the researcher tries from the specific words and motifs chosen in each poem to come to more general conclusions. This thesis intends to understand how homosexuality and hedonism are depicted in the poems, which are the linguistic choices made by the poems to present these themes and which is the style and tone created by them.

3.5. Ethical considerations and limitations

Mirza et al (2023) provide a detailed analysis on ethical considerations that a researcher of a qualitative research has to take into account while conducting his/ her research. They mention that ethics has to do with moral issues connected to the research. These issues first of all have to do with the participants of the study and then with the research. In this case, as there are no participants, but it is based on the bibliography, the emphasis of ethics is put on the research. So, ethics in this case deals with “norms and values that guide decisions regarding the collection of data” (2023, p. 442). Based on this principle the researcher tries to be based on a variety of approaches and use many and various references so as to come to her own conclusions on the way these two poets talk about homosexual love and hedonism in their work.

What is more, another ethical issue of this study has to do with issues of translation and subjectivity. It should be mentioned that Abu Nuwas’s poems were studied and analyzed by their English translation, as the researcher could not read them in their original form due to the nescience of the language. On the other hand, Cavafy’s poems were studied both in Greek language, which is the original language in which they were written, as well as in their English translation. Perhaps, this may be a factor that may influence the

interpretation of the poets and especially when there are presented and examined the linguistics choices made by them. For this reason the researcher tried to provide the poems in their English translation based however in some cases on Greek words and phrases while analyzing Cavafy's poems. Moreover, it should be underlined that this research is influenced by personal beliefs and attitudes, as it is attempted to provide a personal perception of poet's homosexuality and hedonism. Mirza et al (2023) refer to the fact that qualitative researches cannot be free of bias and for this reason the researcher has tried to be based on various knowledge in order to be led later on her own conclusions.

4. Findings

4.1. Contemporary perceptions of both poets

After having presented the main characteristics of each poet's life and work and the methodology of this essay, it would be interesting to present in few lines the perception that these people have among the scholars and especially in the most recent years. This part aims to answer the first research question that has to do with the contemporary perceptions of both poets and especially about the way their homosexuality is being interpreted and whether divergencies or convergencies are detected in the respective societies, that is Greece and Middle East.

Abu Nuwas as presented by Ghazoul and Verlenden (2021) is an innovative and pioneering poet who managed to take elements and characteristics of his times and converted them to something unique. Moreover, they underline the fact that Abu Nuwas reveals contrasted elements in his poesy. For example, he follows the Arab characteristic of differentiated and mixed motifs, but simultaneously he manages to develop his ideas in his poems in a unique way. Furthermore, in some poems Nuwas seems to be quite pious and religious, while in others he doesn't hesitate to be humorous and sarcastic. He declares without any hesitation his love and passion to both genders and in this way Ghazoul and Verlenden believe that the poet "deconstructs gender binarism" (p.68). From all these elements, it becomes clear that Nuwas is perceived as a poet who left his unique mark in the worldwide poetic production.

Both Ghazoul and Verlenden as well as many other scholars comment on Nuwas's tendency to use the figurative use of language and various metaphors. This constitutes a special characteristic of Abu Nuwas and proves that the poet is perceived as lyric and romantic by most academics. Yahya (2019) in his thesis examines analytically the use

of metaphors in 6 homoerotic poems of Abu Nuwas and he classifies them in categories (anthropomorphic metaphors, from concrete to abstract metaphors and no categorized ones). In this way, he comes to the conclusion that Abu Nuwas is a poet who declares his love not only for women, but also for men and everything pleasant. Rahayu's article (2022) also proves the interest that the Arab world shows for Abu Nuwas. In his paper, he puts emphasis on the tales written by Abu Nuwas and how are presented the ideologies of ordinary people in them. His work is a proof of the interest this poet provokes and how contemporary still is his work. Daoud (2020) is one more researcher who has talked about the important role of figurative language and metaphors in Abu Nuwas's poems confirming the lyric tone of the poet when he talks about love and his beloved one.

Daoud in his thesis (2020) provides also an interesting approach and perception of Nuwas's homosexuality of the way it is depicted in his poems. At first, it should be mentioned that Daoud declares that his approach is based on a perception of Arab Queerness as something totally different from Western queerness. He refers to various Western scholars who had the tendency to analyze Nuwas based on their prejudices about the Arab world and without taking into consideration the uniqueness of Arab Queerness as a "distinct geohistorical formation" and not just as something oppressed and embarrassing. Daoud also underlines that even Arab scholars tend to analyze and perceive Arab Queerness through "the lens of latent orientalism" (p.11). So, from his personal point of view an Arab queer man is someone who desires other men and this feeling "orients" (p.12) to other men. Based on this belief Daoud provides an interesting perception of Nuwas's work. He believes that Nuwas is a poet who speaks without embarrassment about homosexual love, his passion and even the pain he feels, when his beloved is no longer with him. Finally, from the pleas Nuwas requests from God,

Daoud (2020) concludes that this love is not perceived as something totally immoral that goes against the will of God. Based on the remarks made by Daoud, in the next part of the essay there are presented and analyzed five poems of Abu Nuwas, in order to identify the way in which he depicts hedonism and homosexual life.

In the literature review it is presented how Cavafy has been perceived by various scholars throughout the history. Despite the controversial approaches on his work, it is clear that Cavafy is a unique poet with special characteristics and worldwide fame. Watson (2023) underlines that Cavafy is the “most significant poet of the 20th century” and “certainly the best known outside Greece”. From these words it is obvious that Cavafy is a very important contemporary poet, who became known in England and generally in the English spoken world by his friend E.M. Forster, the novelist and lyric critic. Since then he attracts the interest of various scholars who study and comment on his poems.

Especially in Greece, it would be interesting to comment on the position Cavafy has in education. Sotiria Kalasaridou (2019) gives us an analytic presentation of this issue. As she mentions Cavafy made his appearance in the 1930's in the Greek education. However, until the 80's he was a poet quite neglected and mainly known for his historic poems. During the years of dictatorship, Cavafy's poems disappeared from the Greek textbooks and only in the 80's the poet made his comeback, as the whole system had to be modernized. In 2001 Cavafy's poems were included in the textbooks of Grade 1. So, especially since 1998 Cavafy seems to be a poet that possesses an important role in the Greek educational system. He is related with modernism and in the secondary education there are some of the erotic poems of the poet. This fact is really important, because for years Cavafy's erotic poems were excluded from the school books, as his homosexuality was considered to be a taboo. This proves that there is a change in

Cavafy's perception and position inside the Greece, which seemed to had difficulties to accept and embrace a poet who have been recognized in a worldwide level.

However, one of the most interesting approaches on Cavafy's homosexuality and his erotic poems is provided by Dimitris Papanikolaou. The last one provides an approach that is completely different from the traditional one. As he underlines (2014) the traditional literature critique identifies two periods as characteristic of Cavafy. In the first one Cavafy was hiding his identity and every homosexual element. In the second period the poet revealed and talked about his homosexuality. As a result, this approach identifies two types of Cavafy. The first one is someone who feels embarrassed about himself and the second is someone who looks like an "exhibitionist". This means however that both periods seems to interpret Cavafy's homosexuality as something embarrassing, as a "stigma", a taboo.

On the other part, Papanikolaou follows a completely different approach as he mentions (2014) that Cavafy is the poet who is due to his homosexuality. This has been also mentioned in the literature review, in order to describe that Cavafy's homosexuality is an element that led to the hedonistic and erotic atmosphere as depicted in his poems. He underlines the poet's tendency to talk about his sentiments in his personal notes. Meanwhile, in his poems he notes his characteristic to talk about his sentiments and his feelings, while in the same time it seems that he wants to hide some things. Moreover, Papanikolaou (2014) refers to the fact that from his personal point of view the poems and - generally the literature itself - do not have sexual identity, but they express various sexual identities and the procedure under which these are being shaped. From this perspective, the erotic poems of Cavafy are not by themselves homoerotic, but they depict the poet's sexual identity and they describe incidents that shaped his identity. Based on these contemporary perceptions of both poets that remove from them the

stigma due to their sexual identity and recognize to them their unique way to depict their love and sentiments, in the next part it is attempted to analyze five erotic poems of Abu Nuwas and Cavafy, in order to find out how they refer to homosexual love and in which way chooses to imprint it linguistically.

4.2.Poems' analysis

In this part there is a detailed analysis of each poem, in order to answer the other three research questions that follows the contemporary perception of the poets. In each poem it is provided an approach based on the literature review and then it is attempted by the researcher to categorize how hedonism and homosexuality are depicted in each poem (1st question). Then, arises the second question that has to do with the linguistic choices to illustrate these themes, And finally, by commenting on these choices the researcher aims to identify in which extent each poet is realistic or imaginative (third question). Finally, there are tables provided to the reader, in order to categorize the findings as described in the text above them.

4.2.1. Analyzing Abu Nuwas' poems

In the poem **“Christian Boy”** the poet seems to have fallen in love with a Cristian boy. However, it is clear that he cannot live this love and for this reason he feels unhappy and frustrated. It becomes obvious from the text that the person with whom the poet has fallen in love is a boy, not only from the title but also from the pronouns used, in order to refer to him (“his”, “he”). Montgomery (1996) also points out the fact that Abu Nuwas manages to combine elements from Cristian and Islamic religion with erotic poetry known as “ghazal”. Souliotis (2016) underlines Nuwas’s tendency to compare young boys with ghazels. The coexistence of religious and erotic elements seems to be

unbecoming, but does not remove the hedonistic character of the poem. Even from the first line the hedonistic character is clear as the poet seems to be unhappy with the “sickness” and “exhaustion” of his body. The adoration of the body and the following misery as long as someone gets older is characteristic of hedonism. This tone is also obvious when the beloved one is being described in the poem. His face is like full moon while his brow is the sun. This lyric tone attributes the love of the poet for this boy. Then, this love is also rendered by the poet’s wishes. As he cannot live this love, he ends up wishing to be other things that may provide him the chance to be with the boy he loves. In this frame, Abu Nuwas ends up using many elements from the Cristian religion, like the priest, the Gospel, a Eucharist or even the bubbles of the wine so as to be next to his beloved one. Talking into account the fact that Abu Nuwas was not a religious man as well as the fact that Christianity is not tolerant with homosexual love, these references give to the poem a sarcastic and cynical tone. When it comes to the first research question, it becomes clear that hedonism in this poem is connected with beauty and homosexual love, as the poet wishes to be with his beloved one and he depicts his love by describing the Christian Boy.

In a second level, it would be interesting to analyze the linguistic choices Abu Nuwas made, in order to present his love. As it has already been mentioned the poet manages to use in the same time vocabulary from the religion, which provides the cynical tone and a more lyrical vocabulary that gives the pleasant and hedonistic tome. The poet uses metaphors to describe the boy he loves (“The full moon is his face and the sun is his brow. To the gazelle belong his eyes and his breast”). When the poet expresses his wishes the reader can understand that these seem to move from one level to another. Montgomery (1996) refers to these wishes and points out that there is a climax, as the poet seems to be transformed from a man to God so as to be with his beloved one. So,

in order to answer the second question that has to do with the linguistic choices made so as to illustrate hedonism and homosexuality it is clear that Abu Nuwas uses metaphors and in this way he gives a more lyric tone in his poem (3rd question).

Another poem of Abu Nuwas which is characterized by clear hedonistic and homosexual elements is the one with the title **“I die of love for him”**. In this poem, Nuwas describes with details the man that he loves. The beauty of his beloved one is undeniable for the poet and he provides to his readers many elements of his lover without however giving a clear and exact image of him. The reader cannot understand every characteristic of this man, perhaps because Abu Nuwas wants to let the reader create his/ her own images of beauty. But the poet gives the most important elements that create the image of beauty and the idea of hedonism. More specifically, he refers to “the delightful” body and the “beauty” of his beloved inclining the readers towards the notion of attractiveness. His waist is perceived as a “sapling”, his face looks like the “moon” and his cheeks are “rosy”. We do not know the color of his eyes, or his hair, his height or more specific details of his appearance, but we have the idea that this man is handsome and attractive. In this way, every reader could feel the hedonistic tone of the poem without trapping his mind in a specific type of beauty. It would be also interesting to underline the fact that the poet declares frankly and clearly his love. As he mentions he “dies of love for him” and this constitutes the title of the whole poem showing obviously his sentiments. From all these elements and descriptions the reader could understand that one more time the homosexual love is the one that gives pleasure to the poet and the last one gives the hedonistic tone by referring to parts of the human body (1st research question).

What is more, Abu Nuwas compares his relation with this man with “an unbreakable rope”, which certifies their connection. However, it seems that at the same time he

wants to keep this connection secret (“but keep this secret”) which is a paradox as he writes a whole poem, in order to talk about his beloved one and his sentiments. In this point he remind us Cavafy who has the tendency to hide and say things in tandem. Nevertheless, one more time Nuwas seems to be more clear to his homosexual identity as he doesn’t hesitate to show it by the gender that he uses in his poem (“him”, “his”).

The most impressive linguistic choice made in this poem is the excessive use of adjectives (“delightful”, “rosy”, “unbreakable”), so as to describe the beauty of the man and their connection. With the aid of the adjectives and the simple nouns referring to parts of man’s body (“body”, “waist”, “face”, “cheeks”), the poet manages to describe his lover and activate his readers’ fantasy. The metaphors that are furthermore used in his description (“his waist is a sipling”, “his face is a moon”) create a vivid and theatrical tone in the poem helping at the same time the reader to create the image he wants for the beauty described. Remarkable is also the use of the repetition (“I die of love for him”), in order the poet to show his sentiments and declare his love. This phrase, found twice in the poem, constitutes also an exaggeration so as to prove the magnitude of poet’s sentiments for this man. Finally, the rhetoric question made by the poet (“How much time did your creation take, O angel?”) proves how impressed he is by the beauty of the other man. Meanwhile, with this questioning tone the reader perceives poet’s sentiments and the question itself, as well as the answer given (“sing your praises”) contains religious vocabulary which constitutes a Nuaws’s characteristic in many poems referring to love. As a result the linguistic choices made include figures of speech and emotionally charged vocabulary (2nd research question) that again provide to the poem an expressive tone (3rd question). Bauer (2014) underlines the importance of “ghazal poems” in the Arabic poetry and he provides a characteristic example of Abu Nuwas (168, no 32) which contains homoerotic elements in a lyric and

descriptive way. In this poem, Abu Nuwas one more time describes lyrically a handsome young boy who appears to be attractive to him. Hamori (1969) characterizes Nuwas's descriptions "poetic" rather than "realistic" and this is obvious one more time in this poem. The gender of the person described becomes clear with the use of masculine personal pronouns ("he", "him"). The image provided by the poet is this of an impeccable man ("bare of blemish") who appeals the poet due to his uniqueness ("unique on beauty") and attractiveness ("clothes of seduction"). Elements from the nature and especially the landscape of desert, familiar to Abu Nuwas, have been chosen, in order to construct the image of this man. He is presented as a "moon and a sand dune at the base of a twig" so as to illustrate vividly how handsome he is. In order to answer the first question that concerns the depiction of hedonism and homosexuality it becomes clear that one more that these elements are firmly connected and the poet feels pleasant due to his beloved beauty.

The linguistic choices made in this poem prove Nuwas's motives as underlined by Hamori (1996). The last one (1996) refers to the poet's tendency to contrast past and present tenses in his poems giving to the reader the impression that he is playing with his memories. So, this is obvious in this short ghazal as the poet refers to his beloved with past tenses ("brought up", "appeared", "was" etc.), whereas present tenses ("is", "sways on") are used to comment on his present situation. Moreover, Hamori (1996) mentions Nuwas's tendency to use the power of repetition in his poems, in order to emphasize certain aspects of the theme. In this case repetition is used to refer to the creation of the handsome man who is being described in the poem ("created him", "twig"). In this way the emphasis is put on the perfection of this man's creation. What is more, the simile of this man's appearance with a "moon and a sand dune at the base of a twig" concretizes in a graphic tone his beauty so as to capture the reader's interest

and the fantasy. It would be also interesting to comment on the poet's tendency to refer to the God one more time, while Nuwas wasn't a religious man as it has already been mentioned. In this case this reference could be interpreted ironically as he was not famous of his religious beliefs, but in the same time it could be used as a proof of his admiration and love for the other man. Finally, the vocabulary is highly charged ("naked", "seduction", "pleasures") giving to the poem a lyric and hedonistic tone along with the use of figures of speech as they were presented above (2nd and 3rd research question)

Kennedy (2012) underlines Abu Nuwas's tendency to use in his poems the motif of master and servant. Below is presented and analyzed a really eccentric poem of Nuwas in which he is being maltreated and deserted in a "brutal narrative" (Kennedy, 2012, p.22) by his lover (D. iv, 299). In this poem the hedonistic elements are also present, but at the same time there are savage elements that prove an imbalanced relationship between these lovers. Cissie (2019) points out that this type of relationship has its' roots in the patriarchy, as the woman in this case may feel seduction even from the seduction of her male master. In this case of course, the relationship is homosexual and perhaps is comes from a differentiated approach of hedonism. According to Bloom (2022) in many cases hedonists seek for unpleasant situations, in order to obtain greater pleasures in the future. From this perspective, the pain someone feels may be the cost so as to gain pleasure and happiness later on. So, trying to answer the 1st research question the reader can understand that in this case there is a different approach of hedonism, as the poet seems to seek it after the maltreatment and the pain he takes from his lover.

The poet more specifically "is ignored by his lover", his eyes are covered with a blindfold ("He covered my eyes with a blindfold") and his legs are bounded with a tethering rope ("Bound my legs with a tethering rope"). However, the poet declares that

this could be the most anticipated death of his love (“– I had never anticipated such a death!”). It seems that this behavior may offer to the poet a more intense tone of pleasure later. In this way, it becomes clear that despite the cruel treatment the poet feels a deep and delirious love for the other man. Kennedy (2012) mentions that the image with the rope reminds to the readers elements from of pre-Islamic Bedouin burial practice according to which the camel was bound to his owner grave. In this way the poem apart from the erotic – hedonistic tone, that derives from poet’s love which could lead him even to death, has in the same tone a sarcastic tone usual in Nuwas’s poems. All this scene takes place in the dessert, a common place in Nuwas’s poems (Hamori, 1969). Hamori (1969) refers to the fact that Nuwas uses to begin his poems by bringing up memories while he is located in an isolated place of Bedouins. The dessert is presented to be “empty” and “wasteland” and in this way the atmosphere makes more intense the notion of maltreatment. On the contrary according to Kennedy (2012) the urban environment doesn’t seem to be better as it is presents as the place of “gossip” and perhaps in this way the poet manages to cauterize this tendency that exists in urban renewal.

Despite the empty dessert, in the same time Nuwas manages with his lyric tone to create clear images to the readers of the place where he is located with his beloved. The wasteland is described as “bathed in mirages” and in this way the reader shapes the image of the place where the scene happens. A linguistic choice that makes the poem more vivid and provides to the reader the idea that the whole scene takes place in front of his eyes is the use of direct speech (“Do not quit this spot – I will protect you against any gossip.” “If this happened in my home town, Dwelling of maternal uncles and paternal, They would be witnessing my own demise – I had never anticipated such a death!”). In this way, the dialogue between the two lovers gives to the poem a more

vivid tone and the reader could understand more directly the love and sentiments of the poet who declares his anticipation of his death provoked by his lover (2nd and third research question)

The last poem of Abu Nuwas chosen to be analyzed in this part is a more provocative one with the title **“In the Bath House”**. In this poem, Nuwas describes the beauty that someone could meet in the bath house. Trying to answer the first research question it is clear that the hedonistic element is one more time related to the notion of the man naked body, which in this poem is described in more raw way. The poet declares that all the beauty becomes clear when the trousers are taken off. After that, the “mysteries” appear and the poet seems to enjoy the “handsome buttocks” and the “shapely trim torsos”. That’s why the bath house is perceived to be a “palace of pleasure”. Another common characteristic found in Nuwas’s most poems is the use of religious vocabulary (“God is Great!” “Praise be to God!”). These phrases are presented by the poet as the “pious formulas” whispered by the guys in the bath house. The atheist Nuwas has chosen one more time to use in a sarcastic and ironic way religious vocabulary while describing the handsome men that he meets in the bath house.

The coexistence of religious vocabulary and colloquial words creates a big antithesis in the poem that provides it a cynical tone about religion. At the same time, this antithesis puts emphasis on the hedonistic tone of the poem. Nuwas seems to enjoy the view of the naked body (“Feast your eyes without restraint!”) and he doesn’t hesitate to describe the bodies with conversational words. Another linguistic choice that seems interesting to be commented on is the double use of exclamation mark (“Feast your eyes without restraint!” and “, “God is Great!” “Praise be to God!”), Ah, what a palace of pleasure is the bath-house!). In the first case its’ use shows Nuwas’s admiration and passion concerning the view of the naked bodies. In the second case, the exclamation mark

proves the sarcastic tone of the poet about religion and in the last case the use is like the first case as it becomes clear from the simultaneous use of the interjection “Ah”. So, the use of various punctuation flags and the emotionally charged vocabulary (“handsome”, “beauty”, “palace of pleasure”) depict the homosexual love and hedonism with a lyric and emotional tone.

Table 1

Christian Boy

Homosexual love and hedonism	Linguistic choices made	Tone
My body is racked with sickness	the water of my eye(s) bursting forth in streams (metaphor)	Lyrical and emotional due to the use of metaphors
face	The full moon is his face (metaphor)	
brow	the sun his brow (metaphor)	
Eyes	To the gazelle belong his eye(s) and his breast (metaphor)	
breast		

Table 2

I die of love for him

Homosexual love and hedonism	Linguistic choices made	Tone
body	Delightful (adjective)	Lyrical and emotional due to the use of metaphors, the repetition, the exaggeration, the question and the use of adjectives
beauty		
waist	his waist is a sapling (metaphor)	
face	his face a moon (metaphor)	
cheek	rosy (adjective) loveliness rolls off his rosy cheek (metaphor)	
tie that binds us	an unbreakable rope (adjective)	

I die of love for him

(repetition and
exaggeration)

How much time did your
creation take, O angel?

(question)

Table 3

No title (168, no 32)

Homosexual love and hedonism	Linguistic choices made	Tone
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face	naked (adjective)	Lyrical and emotional due to the use of metaphor, adjective and the repetition
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clothes of seduction

beauty

him as a moon and a sand dune
at the base of a twig
(metaphor)

Created (repetition)

pleasures

Table 4

No title (D. iv, 299)

Homosexual love and hedonism	Linguistic choices made	Tone
blindfold		Savage tone
		Lyric the description of the place where the incident takes place
rope	tethering (adjective)	
I had never anticipated such a death		
wasteland	empty (adjective)	
	bathed in mirages (metaphor)	

Table 5

In The Bathhouse

Homosexual love and hedonism	Linguistic choices made	Tone
beauty		Raw tone due to the vocabulary chosen
		Cynical
		Lyric only in the characterization of the bath house
buttocks	handsome (adjective)	
torsos	shapely trim (adjective)	
bath house	palace of pleasure (metaphor)	
	Ah	
trousers	taken off	

4.2.2. Analyzing Constantinos Cavafy's poems

The poem “**December, 1903**” («Δεκέμβρης του 1903») published by Savvidis (1993) in the collection of Hidden Poems shows Cavafy's need to talk about love and express his hedonism, while in the same time he is trying to keep it secret. Papanikolaou (2014) mentions Cavafy's tendency to talk about love and meanwhile hide his sentiments and thoughts. As he underlines Cavafy manages to “hide and say” in the same time, while the “characters are hidden and are acting simultaneously” (2014, p.203). This characteristic is obvious in this hedonistic poem as it proves Cavafy's tendency to talk and hide his sentiments at the same time. As he admits he “cannot speak about his love”, but the poem constitutes a proof that he talks about it. It seems that Cavafy wants to mention with this poem that his love is something that he wants to hide or something that may be perceived not acceptable, but meanwhile by creating this poem he talks about his love, he expresses his sentiments and the way he feels. So, Cavafy gives the impression that he manages to express and talk about his secret.

This poetic phenomenon has hedonistic elements as he admits that he keeps in his mind and in his heart the characteristics of his beloved. Cavafy doesn't define or specify the gender of the person about whom he is talking. It becomes clear from the poem itself that the poet lived notable moments with his beloved (“the sound of your voice that I keep within my mind, the days of September that rise in my dreams”) and his remembrance of these moments appears to empower his present (“give shape and color to my words, my sentences, whatever theme I touch, whatever thought I utter.”). The hedonism, in order to answer the 1st research question is obvious as the poet mentions every part of the other person's body (hair, lips, eyes, face, voice) as something that values to keep in mind. Moreover, this recollection gives him the power to talk and it

also seems that it makes his life better and more beautiful (“color my words”). It is like poet’s life gaining value from the remembrance of this person.

Moreover, it would be interesting to examine all the linguistic elements that help Cavafy to create this hedonic ambiance. He chooses to use various metaphors, in order to figure vividly the way in which the recollection of his beloved invests his life with meaning. The poet mentions in a picturesque way that the “days of September” which were perhaps spent with his lover “rise in his dreams”, “give shape and color to his words”. So, from these metaphors it becomes obvious how important those moments were for the poet’s life and this linguistic choice (2nd research question) gives to the poem an emotional and lyric tone (3rd research question) Furthermore, the use of second person in the personal pronouns (“you”) indicates his need to talk to the person with whom he spent those unforgettable moments. This proves Papanikolaou’s remark concerning Cavafy’s tendency to be hidden and talk in the same time. With the use of “you” it is obvious that the poet tries to create a bridge of communication with his beloved.

The poem **“And I lounged and lay on their beds”** («Κι ακούμπησα και πλάγιασα στες κλίνες των») written on September 1915 constitutes a characteristic example of Cavafy’s hedonistic poems proving how his poesy is driven by his sexuality (Papanikolaou, 2014). This poem is included in Savvidis’s book with the title “Hidden poems” (2000) declaring in this way that those are poems which were hidden by Cavafy in his effort to hide in this way his sexual preference. However, in this analysis it is adopted a different approach as proposed by modern scholars, like Papanikolaou, who believe that this sexuality was a factor leading in this poesy and expression and not an attempt to hide it.

At first, there is an attempt to understand one more time how pleasure is presented in Cavafy's poetry. As it becomes clear, pleasure («ηδονή» in the Greek poem) is connected with the "secret rooms" and the "beds" that exist there. This means that this love and pleasure is connected with poet's private life and in this way it is something secret. Meanwhile by talking about "secret rooms" the poet is clearly differentiated by those who stay in the "front rooms" where "accepted modes of love" "are celebrated". The poet declares with certainty and self – confidence that in these beds on the secret rooms he can feel pleasure and delight instead of the "commonplace rooms". The sentiment of self – confidence could be understood from the rhetoric question that he poses to himself and his readers that he doesn't feel any sense of shame, as he is "a poet, a kind of artist". From this declaration, as it is also underlined by Papanikolaou, it is created the impression that this man who "lays on the hidden rooms" is somebody who "knows who he is, knows how to move, to talk, how to define himself" (2014, p.307) and from this perspective it is perceived as a self-confident and sure person. One more time it becomes obvious Cavafy's tendency to talk and hide at the same time. From one part, he gives the tone of secret and hidden while he differentiates the private from social life, but on the other hand he composes a whole poem to present the pleasure he felt in these "secret rooms". This pleasure, in order to answer the 1st research question, has to do again with homosexual love and the hedonism that arises from the body and the love he felt in these secret rooms.

In a second level, it is attempted to explore and present the linguistic choices made to depict the notion of pleasure in this poem. One really interesting choice is the use of antithesis. More specifically, he chooses opposite adjectives, in order to show how he differentiates from other people. From one part there are the "front and commonplace rooms" where there are the "accepted modes of love" while at the same there the

“hidden rooms”. The lovers that exist in these rooms are not named by the poet, but as he says they are not at all “shameful” to him contrary to the others. So, the use of adjectives as well as the antithesis help to concretize the notion of pleasure (2nd research question) These elements also prove that one more time Cavafy seems to be an expressive and passionate poet.(3rd research question) One more choice that also leads in this perception is the change in the verb persons. The use of the third person (“they celebrate” “considered shameful to them”) removes the poet from the accepted modes of love and leads him to the “hidden rooms” with no shame. The first person (“I went, launched and lay”) makes this contradiction clear and gives to the whole poem a confessional and personal tone while at the same time the use of indicative confirms the certainty of the poet as given above. Moreover, the repetition of the phrase “I went into the secret rooms” confirms his willingness to find the pleasure in the secret rooms.

The poem “**Come back**” («Επέστρεφε») is the Greek title containing a grammatical mistake that would be analyzed later) published in 1912 seems to be a clear hedonistic poem as Cavafy gives the impression that he is trying to honor the notion of pleasure (ηδονή). In this poem, it seems that the poet lived beautiful moments with his beloved. However, Cavafy doesn’t talk about these moments, he doesn’t give the reader a clear, realistic image of what exactly he lived. It seems that he doesn’t want to stay perhaps in this superficial description or he wants to offer to the readers the opportunity to create their own images and feel this sentiment and the ambiance that he is trying to create with his poem. This sentiment of course is this of pleasure («ηδονή») that is firmly connected with the body and its parts. Cavafy refers generally to the recollection of this pleasure and he is talking about the awakening of his “body memory”. Cavafy mentions parts of the body, the lips, the skin and the hands and in this way he manages to give to his poem this clear hedonistic tone and this gives the answer to the first research

question that hedonism and homosexuality are firmly connected to the notion of the beloved's body. Despite the fact that he doesn't provide a specific image of what he lived, he manages to create this hedonistic ambiance and the reader feels the poet's need to feel this sentiment.

The linguistic choices that Cavafy made in this poem confirm this need. To begin with, the use of the imperative form in the main verb of the poem "come" or «επέστρεφε» in the Greek version shows that it is a matter of urgent need to him to feel even with his memory the pleasure of this amorous and erotic contact that he had in the past. In this type «επέστρεφε» there is a grammatical error, as the appropriate type of the imperative would be «επίστρεφε». It is like saying for example "came back" instead of "come back". Tzerevelakis (2005) refers to this error as a Cavafy's attempt to hide the main meaning of the poem with it. He mentions that the constant repetition of this mistake ("Come back often and take me" – «Επέστρεφε συχνά και παίρνε με») shows that finally the main source of inspiration should be found somewhere else instead of the title, perhaps in the memory of all this story. However, the researcher of this thesis can identify a linguistic play with this error. As this type «επέστρεφε» is also used as the third person of past continuous it could give to the reader even at first sight the impression of someone's return. Of course, when the reader moves to the second verb ("take me" – «παίρνε με») it becomes clear that the first is imperative, but I find that the same sounding word «επέστρεφε» may provide to the reader the chance to create a kinetic image of the beloved one whose return or remembrance creates all this hedonistic ambiance in the poem. Moreover, the personification of lips and skin ("when the lips and the skin remember") intensify the elements of hedonism and imprint in a lively way to the reader the importance of physical contact, in order the poet to feel pleased and integrated. So, in this poem it is impressive how simply and plainly, in few

lyrics and with ordinary words, the poet creates a powerful hedonistic ambiance. The end of the poem with the use of ellipsis (...) gives finally to the reader the opportunity to feel the sentiment of the poet and create his own images. Trying to answer the second question and explain which linguistic choices illustrate hedonism the researcher comes to the conclusion that in this case there is no extend use of figurative speech and the poet manages to create an emotional tone (3rd question) by using simple vocabulary (“lips”, “skin”, “hands”, “come back”) and this grammatical error of imperative (“επέστρεφε”) that show his need to feel again through his memory those unforgettable moments with his beloved.

The poem **“One night”** («Μια νύχτα»), written in 1915, was published in 1963 by Savvidis in the first volume of the book “The poems”. It provides to its readers clear hedonistic images of two lovers without revealing however their gender. It has already been mentioned that this is underlined by Papanikolaou (2014) as Cavafy’s characteristic, to reveal and hide things in the same time. Cavafy’s tendency to hide things is obvious even from the second line of the poem, where the poet underlines that the room in which the two lovers meet each other is hidden. Furthermore, the whole scene takes place during the night. The last one constitutes the title of the whole poem and creates the sense of something mysterious and hidden. However, despite this secret and mystical sensation Cavafy chooses to provide later to the readers clear images of the moments that the lovers live. Papanikolaou has underlined a very interesting point, its interior perspective (2014). Even from the beginning the reader understands that the whole experience is testified by the poet himself. He reveals to the readers the moments that he lived with his beloved and his transmits the nostalgic tone that he feels when he remembers these moments. It is obvious that the poet gives these images from the perspective of this “cheap and sordid room” («πτωχική και πρόστυχη κάμαρα»).

However, despite these characteristics this room seems to bring back wonderful memories that reveal the hedonistic tone of the poem.

This hedonistic tone is revealed from the description of the memories he has from the moments that he lived in this room and more specifically in this “common, humble bed” (1st research question). In this place Cavafy had the chance to feel pleasure and in the Greek text this is obvious from the words chosen. He characterizes the lips of his beloved “sensual” which in the Greek text is given as “hedonistic («ηδονικά») unveiling the tone of hedonism. Pleasure one more time in Cavafy’s poems seems to be pumped by the carnal contact of the two lovers. He doesn’t provide to the readers very specific images, but he manages to create a sensual atmosphere in which the reader could let his fantasy to imagine more clear images. This sensual tone is created by the carnal contact in the bed, where the poet remembers “love’s body” and “those intoxicating lips, red and sensual”. And as he points out even the remembrance of these images makes him to feel “drunk with passion again”. The beloved’s body and the moments the poet had with him provide the hedonistic tone of the poem so as to declare how this is depicted.

The linguistic choices of this poem make the hedonistic tone of the poem more intense. At first, this atmosphere is created by the intense use of adjectives that are positively charged and manage to convey this erotic atmosphere. These adjectives (“intoxicating, red and sensual”) describe in an abstract way the body of the lover. At the same time these adjectives seem to make contrast with other adjectives that are chosen, in order to describe the whole place where the scene took place. More specifically, the poet chooses to reflect these moments in a “cheap and sordid room” which is located above a “suspect taverna” found in a “dirty and narrow alley” as seen by the window that exists is the scenic. All these characteristics of the place are created by the extensive use of adjectives and contrast with the sensation that leaves the description of the lovers. As

Stroebe (2018) mentions this antithesis has its' role in the whole poem, as it is declared that this window and those voices who are being heard, give something special to the poem and their absence would remove something from the love scene. This contradiction may put more emphasis on the scene of the lovers. As the reader moves on the reading of the poem, he/ she is transferred from negative sentiments provided in the first stanza to more positive sentiments created in the second stanza by the images of the two lovers. Moreover, one more element that strengthens the hedonistic tone is the repetition of the phrase “red and intoxicating lips” as it puts emphasis on the sentiment that the poet left and describe the beauty of his beloved one. Actually this feeling comes again to the poet when he brings back to his memory the scenes of this night. Once more trying to answer the second and third research question that have to do with the linguistic choices made to illustrate the issue and the tone created by them, it is evident that this poem contains the figure speech of antithesis and emotional vocabular that lead to a deeply felt and poetic tone.

The last poem of Cavafy chosen to be analyzed in this paper is the one with the title “**To stay**” («Να μείνει»). It was published by the poet himself in 1919 as he paid for it and as a result it was pinned to the body of all of his published poems (Papanikolaou, 2014). This poem was also published in the front cover of the Alexandrian magazine Argo and later it was also published in New York as well as in newspapers of Athens. Papanikolaou (2014) mentions that Cavafy since 1910 has managed to talk about homosexuality with realism and honesty, without referring only to personal experiences.

One more time the scene that Cavafy describes takes place during the night. This choice gives a mystical and more sensual tone in the images described in the poem. From one part, there is quiet as it is too late (“one o'clock at night, or half past”) and the guard

servant of the chapel is sleeping. So, the place is dark and the circumstances seem to favor their contact. On the other part these two people seem to be so sexually stimulated that actually they do not take care about taking any precaution (“ we became incapable of precaution”). The hedonistic tone becomes clear from the time that the poet begins to describe the images of their bodies. He declares directly the pleasure («απόλαυσις») that he draws from the body of the other person. He describes how the few clothes get half – open and then comes to him this intense sentiment of pleasure. The scene seems to hide and reveal things simultaneously as the darkness and the half open clothes reveal his tendency to hide things, but at the same time Cavafy doesn’t hesitate to reveal the pleasure he feels from the nakedness of their bodies. In this way, he manages to let readers’ fantasy to create images of the moments that these two people lived, while in the same breath the sentiment of pleasure is clearly stated and transferred to each reader. It would be interesting to underline that Cavafy, as in many other poems, feels again this sentiment and lives these moments with the power of his memory. The remembrance of these moments that took place before twenty six years seems to be the inspiration of the poet and as a result a chance to feel one more time pleasure and nostalgia about these moments. So, both by nostalgia and remembrance the hedonistic tone has to do with the homosexual love and the pleasure that feels the body itself so as to give the answer to the first research question.

The linguistic choices made in this poem manage to create an overwhelming atmosphere in the poem. The poet has chosen to repeat twice the “half – open clothes” leading the reader to create clearly in his mind the image of these two lovers who live their love and passion. The description of the place as given above makes more intense the hedonistic tone and it is impressive that Cavafy has managed to provide this image without any exaggeration in his language or by using excessive figures of speech. He

conveys to its' readers the intense passion through the use of contrast mentioning that "no one would see" them while referring to their passion which made them incapable to take care of any precaution ("But already we were so afire, that we became incapable of precaution."). It would be also interesting to underline the role of the dash used twice in this poem. On both cases Cavafy seems to use the dash, in order to make a personal comment, to give his personal point of view and clarify what was previously mentioned. In the first case ("there weren't many because divine July was ablaze.") he declares that the clothes weren't many giving to the reader the sentiment of relief as he could feel earlier the pleasure and passion with his beloved one. In the second case the dash is used (- to his adored body twenty-six years have passed;) so as to comment on the fact that this memory has survived for twenty six years and now has passed in his poem to live through the ages. In this way Cavafy manages to personalize the notion of remembrance and he provides to the readers in a vivid and clear tone how powerful is poetry as it manages to maintain those unforgettable moments.

Table 6

December, 1903

Homosexual love and Linguistic choices made	Tone
hedonism	Lyric and emotional due to the excessive use of metaphors Nostalgic due to memory
love	

voice keep in my mind
(metaphor)

days of September rise in my dreams
(metaphor)

give shape and color to
my words (metaphor)

hair, lips, eyes => face

Table 7

And I Lounged and Lay On Their Beds

Homosexual love and hedonism	Linguistic choices made	Tone
pleasure	Antithesis among the rooms and the recognition they have	Lyric but also in a more secret way
Secret rooms and beds	shameful	
Front rooms	front and commonplace rooms” where there are the “accepted modes of love”	

Table 8

Come Back

Homosexual love and hedonism	Linguistic choices made	Tone
body memory		Lyric and nostalgic due to the memory
lips	when the lips remember (personification)	
skin	when the skin remember (personification)	
hands		

Table 9

One Night

Homosexual love and hedonism	Linguistic choices made	Tone
room	cheap and sordid (adjectives)	Lyric and nostalgic due to the memory
bed	common and humble (adjectives)	
lips	sensual (hedonistic)	

intoxicating

red (adjectives)

Antithesis among the
adjectives used above

Table 10

To Stay

Homosexual love and hedonism	Linguistic choices made	Tone
afire	incapable of precaution (adjectives)	Lyric, emotional and nostalgic due to the remembrance
clothes	half – opened (adjective)	
body	adored	

5. Discussion

In this part of the essay it is attempted to commentate on the poems analyzed above, in order to identify both similarities and differences on the way both poets depict hedonism and homosexual love focusing simultaneously on the linguistics choices as examined previously and the tone that created by them in each poet.

While trying to answer the question how homosexual love and hedonism are presented in both poets' poems, it becomes clear that among all the poems presented above the hedonistic tone becomes obvious by the references and the description of human body. Both poets refer to it by mentioning various parts of their beloved body as well as underlying the beauty that they remember or they see. More specifically, Abu Nuwas brings up the subject of body, in order to create the hedonistic atmosphere in his poems, as four out of the five poems presented above have these references. More accurately, in the poem "Christian Boy" he mentions that his lover "face is like full moon while his brow is the sun" and he compares this man with a gazelle, as it is a common place in this type of Arabic poetry. Furthermore, the poem "I die for love of him" contains references to his beloved body and parts of it ("delightful body", "his beauty", "His waist is a sapling", "his face a moon", "And loveliness rolls off his rosy cheek"), in order to show poet's love. The next poem presented radiates the hedonistic tone one more time by mentioning the beauty that characterized the other man ("his face was naked, bare of blemish, while he was clad in clothes of seduction. He was unique in beauty"). Finally, in the poem "In the Bath-house" the idea of human body and in this case with more detailed description is again present offering pleasure to the poet who have chosen to describe it ("You see handsome buttocks, shapely trim torsos"). Cavafy also mentions parts of his beloved body or of his own body in four poems. In "December 1903" he points out various parts of his lover such as hair, lips, eyes, his

face and his voice as elements that give meaning to his life. In the poem “Come back” he refers to the remembrance of his own body as he declares “ when lips and skin remember and hands feel as though they touch again” creating in this way the hedonistic tone of the poem. In the poem “One night” the pleasure and hedonic tone comes out by references to the body and the lips of his lover (“ I had love’s body, had those intoxicating lips, red and sensual, red lips of such intoxication”). In the last poem presented, “To stay” the poet mentions “bodies pleasure” that comes from the connection of these two men as they “half – opened” their clothes and they came closer to each other. So, the way these poets illustrate the notions of homosexuality and hedonism in their poems as question leads to the first main similarity between Cavafy and Abu Nuwas. This is the fact that they talk about homosexual love and they create a hedonistic tone in their poems by referring to human body and its’ parts. At the same time both poets, choose to provide to their readers a more general description of their lovers. They do not give a precise image of their beloved one and they give the impression that they want to let the reader imagine the beauty of the described person and give the characteristics he/ she wants. In this way, body’s parts and their description as provided by both poets concretize homosexual love and give to their poems the hedonistic tone (see Table 11). From this aspect, it feels like identifying a bidirectional relation between hedonism and homosexual love.

The next similarity observed between Abu Nuwas and Constantinos Cavafy has to do with the notion of memory and remembrance of the beloved one as well as the moments spent with him. This as a remark is important to be mentioned, because this notion is also connected with homosexuality and hedonism and adds to the research question that searches to find out how hedonism is being created. The memory seems to be one factor that provides the sentiment of pleasure to both poets (hedonism) and this memory is

connected with body and moments spent with the poets' lovers. Of course this is found in different extent as Cavafy uses this motif in all of his poems presented above while Nuwas utilizes it in two out of the five poems. In the first he seems to remember the appearance of his beloved and he provides to its' readers a lyric description of his beauty using past tenses as it is something that has passed and has the tone of remembrance ("When he brought up in luxury, appeared, his face was naked, bare of blemish, while he was clad in clothes of seduction."). In the other poem, he also uses past tenses and has this tone of remembrance, but in this case the situation is a little bit different as the poem has more savage elements and gives another perspective, this of the maltreatment of the poet. On the other hand, the three other poems of Abu Nuwas are differentiated as they reflect the beauty that the poet admires using present tenses and without the notion of memory. Many scholars such as Beaton (1987) and Papanikolaou (2014) mention Cavafy's characteristic to use memory in his poems. In particular, Beaton (1987) refers to the fact that in many cases Cavafy is based on his personal experiences and then some of them are recorded in his poems and in this way they manage to survive over the centuries. From this aspect, for Beaton Cavafy seems to look like Proust and he provides an interesting comparative essay on their work. Papanikolaou (2014) also underlines Cavafy's special relationship with memory. He states that the poet uses memory in a dynamic way, as it is not only a nostalgic tone, but it constitutes a way to express the participation in historic and personal time. From this point of view, Papanikolaou (2014) declares that Cavafy's reports to past are like a technique to configurate present and future. Those elements are obvious in the poems analyzed before. For example, in the poem "December, 1903" the remembrance of the days of September that the poet lived come to his mind and constitute the inspiration, in order to write this poem. Similar is the function of memory in the poem "Come back" in

which the poet asks from his memory to come back and recall him the moments he lived as well as the poem “One night” where Cavafy mentions that through the writing of this poem he remembers and he feels again the passion he lived twenty six years ago. The other two poems “And I lounged and lay on their beds” and “To stay” also emit the notion of remembrance as the poet uses past tenses, in order to testify his memories, the moments he had in the past with his beloved one either in the “secret rooms” (And I lounged and lay on their beds) or “on that common, humble bed” (To stay). In Cavafy’s poesy the notion of memory penetrates all of his poems either by using past tenses, in order to describe the moments he left in the past or by referring to words and phrases that create this nostalgic tone (see Table 11).

So, homosexual love and the experiences both poets had are the elements that create the hedonistic tone of their work. Hedonism in both poets is firmly connected to human body and the pleasure it provides and at the same time this could be also felt in both poets with the power of memory and remembrance.

However, the notion of remembrance seems to connect and differentiate poets simultaneously. It is found in both poets, but not in the same extent. In Cavafy’s poesy it seems to constitute a characteristic of his writing, while Nuwas tends to use it without being the most important characteristic of his poesy. This means that memory and remembrance should be perceived as Cavafy’s basic characteristic, as it motivates him to write and through this procedure he feels again pleasure, while in Nuwas it can be found, but without the same extent and power. It gives the reader the idea that in Nuwas’s case memory and remembrance are not a source of pleasure, as this poet doesn’t hesitate to declare his pleasure and love even in the present.

The way these two poets try to reveal their love as described above analytically in every poem, in the researcher's attempt to find out how the main themes are presented linguistically and how these choices influence the poems's tone, lead to one more similarity between Nuwas and Cavafy. The first one uses metaphors, but mainly in order to describe the beauty he sees and admires ("His waist is a sapling, his face a moon, And loveliness rolls off his rosy cheek", "The full moon is his face and the sun is his brow. To the gazelle belong his eyes and his breast", "created him as a moon and a sand dune at the base of a twig"). Hamori (1969) refers to the fact that Abu Nuwas, as other Arab poets, uses metaphors and descriptions so as to create a lyric tone in their work and not in order to give precise details. On the other hand, many scholars as well as Politou - Marmarinou (2015) refer to the fact that Cavafy's poesy is simple and plain. However, as it is found from the previous analysis Cavafy uses metaphors in four out of the five poems presented above and these have to do with the impact of the lovely moments he lived and the notion of memory ("the days of September that rise in my dreams, give shape and color to my words, my sentences", "when the body's memory awakens", "twenty-six years have passed; and now he has come to stay in these lines). This proves that Cavafy manages to create a sensual and lyric tone, in order to express his sentiments and the remembrance he holds from the delightful moments he lived. In this way, he seems to match with Abu Nuwas in the tendency to use metaphors and create a lyric tone in his poems showing moreover that as a poet Cavafy could not be classified in a specific school as he created his own style (Politou – Marmarinou, 2015). So, the lyric and emotional tone created by the linguistic choices made and the figurative use of language found in both poets constitute another similarity and reply to the researcher's question to understand each poet's tone (see Table 12).

Finally, it would be interesting to present the basic difference found among the poets that has to do with the language they use in their poems. In order to answer the research question that concerns the linguistic choices made and the entailed tone created the researcher was led to find out one basic difference between the two poets. Abu Nuwas is characterized by a more provocative language used in his poems comparing to Cavafy who chooses to be more lyric and puts emphasis on the language chosen. More specifically, Nuwas uses a more inciting vocabulary in his poems as he doesn't hesitate to talk about "buttocks" and above is also presented a case in which he is being maltreated and deserted in a "brutal narrative" (Kennedy, 2012, p.22) by his lover (D. iv, 299). Furthermore, impressive is the mention to God and generally the use of religious vocabulary in Nuwas's poems as in four out of the five presented above the use of religious terms is obvious ("Christian Boy", "I die of love for him" => "How much time did your creation take, O angel?", "And God, when he created him(...), "God is Great!" "Praise be to God!"). Hannun (2015) comments on this tendency as Nuwas's tendency to satirize and "subvert the authority of the caliph and mock the excesses of the court". So, the swearing used in his poems and the offensive vocabulary is perceived as a way to fight the establishment. These linguistic choices create to his poems a more sarcastic tone that differentiate him from Cavafy's poems that seem to be more emotional. Van Gelder (1997) moreover mentions Abu Nuwas's tendency to disregard both literal and religious – moral rules as his willingness to "unsettle" (p. 282), to create trouble in the whole political system and to criticize Caliph's decision despite the fact that with his poetry he seems to serve the system. However, these irregular provocative mentions are interpreted as a way to expose his opposition to it. His tension to use religious terms is commented by Montgomery (1994) as a paradox, because these terms are used in a completely irreligious context, as observed above

where the terms are used while the poet declares his love and describes his beloved people (see Table 13). On the other hand, Cavafy's language is different and unique. He doesn't use insulting vocabulary in his poems and his language is "unique", as he utilizes an amalgam of demotic and "katharevousa". In English it is not easy to understand the difference and the specific tone created by the mixture of these two types of the Greek language, but one reading the prototype could understand "this pure and inclusive poetic language" (Pinsky, 2009, p.6). Every poem that has been analyzed above combines types more "literary" and "purist" ("απόλαυσις", "ενδύματα", "αγαπημένη αίσθησις", "Στες κάμαρες επήγα τες κρυφές", "τες λέξεις και τες φράσεις μου πλάττουν") with more "demotic" and "colloquial" language ("αν δεν μιλώ για τα μαλλιά σου, για τα χείλη, για τα μάτια.", "Μα όχι ντροπή για μένα — γιατί τότε τί ποιητής και τί τεχνίτης θα 'μουν;", "όταν ξυπνά του σώματος η μνήμη") creating "a fluent, sensitive idiom" (Pinsky, 2009, p.6). Chiasso (2009) also underlines this characteristic of Cavafy underlying that the poet had the idea to take "words and forms out of their museum cases, polish them, and put them back into general use". So, in this way it becomes clear that Cavafy uses a unique type of the Greek language which is also difficult to be depicted by the translations of the text (see Table 13). This means that the same theme is given with different style and choices as Cavafy seems to be more lyric and doesn't make any references to religious terms. This may lead to another remark. Cavafy, in his erotic poems wants just to talk about his love and his sentiments, while Nuwas seems to combine the declaration of his love with some sarcastic comments on the sociopolitical system (see Table 13)

Table 11

Homosexuality – Hedonism

Parts of human body		Memory and remembrance	
Constantinos	Abu Nuwas	Constantinos	Abu Nuwas
Cavafy		Cavafy	
Lips (x3)	Face (x3)	Use of past tenses	Use of past tenses
Eyes	Delightful body	Went	Brought up
Face	Beauty	Didn't stay	Appeared
Voice	Waist	Went into	Was (x2)
Skin	Rosy cheek	Lounged and lay	
Love's Body	Handsome buttocks	Was/ were	
Bodies pleasure	Shapely trim torsos	Could see	
Half – opened clothes		Came	
		Had	
		Would be	
		became	
		Other expressions leading to the notion of memory	

	Keep within my mind The days of September that rise in my dreams Body's memory Come back often and take me When the lips and skin remember
--	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Table 12

Linguistic Choices and Lyric Tone in Both Poets

Figures of speech		Adjectives	
Constantinos Cavafy	Abu Nuwas	Constantinos Cavafy	Abu Nuwas
keep in my mind (metaphor)	the water of my eye(s) bursting forth in streams (metaphor)	Negatively charged	unbreakable
rise in my dreams (metaphor)	The full moon is his face (metaphor)	Shameful	Rosy

give shape and color to my words (metaphor)	the sun his brow (metaphor)	Cheap	delightful
Antithesis: front rooms and accepted modes of love ≠secret rooms and shameful	To the gazelle belong his eye(s) and his breast (metaphor)	Sordid	Unique
when the lips remember (personification)	his waist is a sapling (metaphor)	hidden	Clad
When the skin remember (personification)	his face a moon (metaphor)	dirty	Naked
	rosy (adjective) loveliness rolls off his rosy cheek (metaphor)	Narrow	Shapely trim
	I die of love for him (repetition and exaggeration)	humble	Handsome
	How much time did your creation	Neutral or positively charged	empty

	take, O angel? (question)		
	as a moon and a sand dune at the base of a twig (metaphor)	Intoxicating	
	Created (repetition)	Red	
	palace of pleasure (metaphor)	Sensual	
		Lonely	
		Half - opened	

Table 13

Linguistic Differences

Cavafy's special language "katharevousa"	Abu Nuwas's special characteristics	
τες λέξεις και τες φράσεις	Sarcastic mentions to God	Provocative language
εις όποιο θέμα	Wearing the zunnar, he walks to his church; his God is the Son, so he said, and the Cross.	buttocks

	<p>O I wish I were the priest or the metropolitan of this Church! No, I wish that I were the Gospel and the Scriptures for him!</p> <p>No, I wish that I were a Eucharist which he is given or the chalice from which he drinks the wine!</p> <p>No, I wish I were the very bubbles <of the wine>!</p>	
τάξιιν	How much time did your creation take, O angel?	
στες κλίνας των	And God, when he created him,	
την ποιήσί	You hear the guys whispering pious formulas to one another ("God is Great!" "Praise be to God!")	
αγαπημένη αίσθησις		
ενθυμούνται,		

ήρχονταν	
Εκτός ημών των δυο το μαγαζί όλως διόλου άδειο.	
είχαμεν εξαφθεί	
Σάρκας απόλαυσις	

6. Conclusion

To sum up, it becomes clear that homosexuality is a timeliness characteristic found in every epoque and in every part of the world. Living in the 21st century, in an era that human rights have been established and protected by laws, it seems unacceptable and obsolete to deal with this issue with fear and prejudice. The literary depiction of homosexual love connected with hedonism by two poets of global fame constitutes a way to familiarize people with this issue, in order to get rid of stereotypes and prejudiced behavior. It would be really useful in this way to present people with different sexual orientation as equal members of our societies. The normalization of artists who present homosexual elements in their work may help to achieve this goal.

This thesis aimed to add to bibliography a comparative study of two poets which hasn't been attempted previously so as to help readers deal with the issue of homosexuality with tolerance and acceptance. It would be really useful to remove this stigma and especially when these poets are being taught and studied. Especially, in Cavafy's case, who is a poet that is being taught in the Greek educational system, it would be helpful to let this stain away and face him with respect of his sexual identity, as this was a factor that led to the magnificence of his poesy. In this way, the tuition of such poems and a comparative approach on this issue would help people to understand the similarities that human beings have despite their nationality, their religion, their sexual orientation or every differentiated characteristic of their identities.

It would be interesting in the future to examine perhaps comparatively another poet, who talks about homosexual love and depicts this with hedonistic elements in his work, with these two artists, in order to conduct a broader comparatively study. Based on the principles of comparative approach it may be interesting to examine these two poets with artists from other arts, like painting, so as to see the way these theme are presented.

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Appendix

Poems analyzed in this thesis

Constantinos Cavafy

Ο Δεκέμβρης του 1903

Κι αν για τον έρωτά μου δεν μπορώ να πω —
αν δεν μιλώ για τα μαλλιά σου, για τα χείλη, για τα μάτια·
όμως το πρόσωπό σου που κρατώ μες στην ψυχή μου,
ο ήχος της φωνής σου που κρατώ μες στο μυαλό μου,
οι μέρες του Σεπτέμβρη που ανατέλλουν στα όνειρά μου,
τες λέξεις και τες φράσεις μου πλάττουν και χρωματίζουν
εις όποιο θέμα κι αν περνώ, όποιαν ιδέα κι αν λέγω.

Επιμέλεια Γ. Π. Σαββίδης, Από τα Κρυμμένα Ποιήματα 1877;-1923, Ίκαρος 1993.

December, 1903

And if I cannot speak about my love—
if I do not talk about your hair, your lips, your eyes,
still your face that I keep within my heart,
the sound of your voice that I keep within my mind,
the days of September that rise in my dreams,
give shape and color to my words, my sentences,
whatever theme I touch, whatever thought I utter.

Κι ακούμπησα και πλάγιασα στες κλίνες των

Στης ηδονής το σπίτι όταν μπήκα,
δεν έμεινα στην αίθουσαν όπου γιορτάζουν

με κάποια τάξιν αναγνωρισμένοι έρωτες.

Στες κάμαρες επήγα τες κρυφές

κι ακούμπησα και πλάγιασα στες κλίνες των.

Στες κάμαρες επήγα τες κρυφές

που το 'χουν για ντροπή και να τες ονομάσουν.

Μα όχι ντροπή για μένα — γιατί τότε

τί ποιητής και τί τεχνίτης θα 'μουν;

Καλύτερα ν' ασκήτευα. Θα 'ταν πιο σύμφωνο,

πολύ πιο σύμφωνο με την ποίησί μου·

παρά μες στην κοινότοπην αίθουσα να χαρώ.

[1915]

And I lounged and lay on their beds

When I went to that house of pleasure

I didn't stay in the front rooms where they celebrate,

with some decorum, the accepted modes of love.

I went into the secret rooms

and lounged and lay on their beds.

I went into the secret rooms
considered shameful even to name.
But not shameful to me—because if they were,
what kind of poet, what kind of artist would I be?
I'd rather be an ascetic. That would be more in keeping,
much more in keeping with my poetry,
than for me to find pleasure in the commonplace rooms.

Επέστρεφε

Επέστρεφε συχνά και παίρνε με,
αγαπημένη αίσθησις επέστρεφε και παίρνε με –
όταν ξυπνά του σώματος η μνήμη,
κ' επιθυμία παληά ξαναπερνά στο αίμα·
όταν τα χείλη και το δέρμα ενθουμούνται,
κ' αισθάνονται τα χέρια σαν ν' αγγίζουν πάλι.

Επέστρεφε συχνά και παίρνε με την νύχτα,
όταν τα χείλη και το δέρμα ενθουμούνται....

Κ. Π. Καβάφη, Τα Ποιήματα (1897-1918), Εκδόσεις Ίκαρος

Come back

Come back often and take hold of me,
sensation that I love come back and take hold of me—

when the body's memory awakens
and an old longing again moves into the blood,
when lips and skin remember
and hands feel as though they touch again.

Come back often, take hold of me in the night
when lips and skin remember...

Μια νύχτα

Η κάμαρα ήταν πτωχική και πρόστυχη,
κρυμμένη επάνω από την ύποπτη ταβέρνα.
Απ' το παράθυρο φαίνονταν το σοκάκι,
το ακάθαρτο και το στενό. Από κάτω
ήρχονταν η φωνές κάτι εργατών
που έπαιζαν χαρτιά και που γλεντούσαν.
Κ' εκεί στο λαϊκό, το ταπεινό κρεββάτι
είχα το σώμα του έρωτος, είχα τα χείλη
τα ηδονικά και ρόδινα της μέθης —
τα ρόδινα μιας τέτοιας μέθης, που και τώρα
που γράφω, έπειτ' από τόσα χρόνια!,
μες στο μονήρες σπίτι μου, μεθώ ξανά.

Επιμέλεια Γ. Π. Σαββίδη. Τα Ποιήματα, Τ. Α' 1897 - 1918, Ίκαρος 1963

One night

The room was cheap and sordid,
hidden above the suspect taverna.

From the window you could see the alley,
dirty and narrow. From below
came the voices of workmen
playing cards, enjoying themselves.

And there on that common, humble bed
I had love's body, had those intoxicating lips,
red and sensual,
red lips of such intoxication
that now as I write, after so many years,
in my lonely house, I'm drunk with passion again.

from [Collected Poems](#), translated by Keeley and Sherrard

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Να μείνει

Η ώρα μια την νύχτα θάτανε,

ή μιάμισυ.

Σε μια γωνιά του καπηλειού·

πίσω απ' το ξύλινο το χώρισμα.

Εκτός ημών των δυο το μαγαζί όλως διόλου άδειο.

Μια λάμπα πετρελαίου μόλις το φώτιζε.

Κοιμούντανε, στην πόρτα, ο αγρυπνισμένος υπηρέτης.

Δεν θα μας έβλεπε κανείς. Μα κιόλας

είχαμεν εξαφθεί τόσο πολύ,

που γίναμε ακατάλληλοι για προφυλάξεις.

Τα ενδύματα μισοανοίχθηκαν — πολλά δεν ήσαν

γιατί επύρωνε θείος Ιούλιος μήνας.

Σάρκας απόλαυσις ανάμεσα

στα μισοανοιγμένα ενδύματα·

γρήγορο σάρκας γύμνωμα — που το ίνδαλμά του

είκοσι έξι χρόνους διάβηκε· και τώρα ήλθε

να μείνει μες στην ποίησιν αυτή.

To stay

It would be one o'clock at night,

or half past.

In a corner of the chapel;

behind the wooden partition.

Except for the two of us, the store room is absolutely empty.

Barely lit by an oil lamp.

The guard servant sleeping in the doorway.

No one would see us. But already

we were so afire,

that we became incapable of precaution.

The clothes were half open – there weren't many

because divine July was ablaze.

Bodies' pleasure among

half-open clothes;

quickly stripping to bare – to his adored body

twenty-six years have passed; and now he has come

to stay in these lines.

Abu Nuwas

Christian Boy

My body is racked with sickness, worn out by exhaustion: my heart smarts with a pain
searing like a blazing fire!

For I have fallen in love with a darling whom I cannot mention without the water of
my eye(s) bursting forth in streams.

The full moon is his face and the sun his brow. To the gazelle belong his eye(s) and
his breast.

Wearing the zunnar, he walks to his church; his God is the Son, so he said, and the Cross.

O I wish I were the priest or the metropolitan of this Church! No, I wish that I were the Gospel and the Scriptures for him!

No, I wish that I were a Eucharist which he is given or the chalice from which he drinks the wine! No, I wish I were the very bubbles <of the wine>!

So that I might obtain the benefit of being close to him and my sickness, grief and cares be dispelled!

I die of love for him

I die of love for him, perfect in every way,

Lost in the strains of wafting music.

My eyes are fixed upon his delightful body

And I do not wonder at his beauty.

His waist is a sapling, his face a moon,

And loveliness rolls off his rosy cheek

I die of love for you, but keep this secret:

The tie that binds us is an unbreakable rope.

How much time did your creation take, O angel?

So what! All I want is to sing your praises.

(Love in Bloom; after Monteil, p. 95)

No title

When he brought up in luxury, appeared, his face was naked,

bare of blemish, while he was clad in clothes of seduction.

He was unique in beauty and said: This is my share of this

world and its pleasures.

And God, when he created him, created him as a

moon and a sand dune at the base of a twig.

Now the moon sways on top of a twig, and the

twig on top of a sand- hill.

No title

My lover ignored me until, after I had

Crossed the flatlands between some mountains

And had started into an empty desert

Wasteland that was bathed in mirages,

He covered my eyes with a blindfold,

Bound my legs with a tethering rope

And said, “Do not quit this spot –

I will protect you against any gossip.”

I replied, “If this happened in my home town,

Dwelling of maternal uncles and paternal,
They would be witnessing my own demise –
I had never anticipated such a death!” (D. iv, 299)

In the Bath-house

In the bath-house, the mysteries hidden by trousers
Are revealed to you.
All becomes radiantly manifest.
Feast your eyes without restraint!
You see handsome buttocks, shapely trim torsos,
You hear the guys whispering pious formulas
to one another
(“God is Great!” “Praise be to God!”)
Ah, what a palace of pleasure is the bath-house!
Even when the towel-bearers come in
And spoil the fun a bit.