

GEORGE ANDREIOMENOS

GREEK NATIONAL POETS AND ACADEMIC CRITICS (1926-1960)*

The aim of this short paper is to show the way in which two Greek national poets, Andreas Kalvos and Dionisios Solomos, were received by academic critics of Athens and Salonica Universities respectively. I do not intend to give you all bibliographical references relating to this matter or to analyse them thoroughly for I have already done it in the eighth chapter of my Ph.D. thesis which deals with the response of academic criticism to Kalvos's poetry¹. On the other hand, the space and time I have at my disposal do not allow me to go into a detailed examination of the very extensive literature on these two poets, produced by scholars of these Universities. At the same time, I shall try to connect the reception of both Solomos and Kalvos by academics, who were members of staff either in Athens or in Salonica Universities, with the long controversy between these two academic institutions, and especially between their Faculties of Arts (Φιλοσοφικὲς Σχολές).

First of all, I feel that I have to explain in brief why I use the term «national» poets for both Solomos and Kalvos as well as to justify the chronological limits of my exposé. The word «national» has regularly been attached to a number of towering Greek literary figures: Apart from Solomos and Kalvos, Aristotelis Valaoritis, Kostis Palamas, Rigas Fereos and others have been given this honourable title, each one for different reasons. I have come to believe that this title primarily belongs to Solomos and Kalvos because they both praised, in a most outstanding poetical way,

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1. George Andreiomenos, *The reception of Kalvos by modern Greek criticism: An account of the bibliography (1818-1960)*, The University Birmingham: Centre for Byzantine, Ottoman and Modern Greek Studies 1991, vols. I, II.

the heroic feats of the Greeks against the Ottomans during the Greek War of Independence, at the time of the events. And this is the major reason for which a considerable number of critics and intellectuals have also proclaimed both of them as «national» poets. As to the chronological limits of this study, one can observe the following: α) 1926 constitutes a boundary mark in intellectual and academic life of contemporary Greece, because the monopoly of Athens University in higher education of this country comes to an end. The new University which is established in Salonica in this year was to cultivate the study of Modern Greek Literature and other scholarly disciplines in a different context and way to that employed by Athens University. Moreover, in 1926, Yiannis Apostolakis becomes the first professor of Modern Greek Literature in Salonica University while Nikolaos Veis, a well known Byzantinist in Athens University, offers, for the first time, some courses in modern Greek literary production as well. β) 1960 is the year in which I have stopped the examination in my thesis. I believe that after the 1960s intellectual and social life, the financial situation and political orientation of the Greeks have been altered considerably. Studies on Kalvos and Solomos were also produced by scholars of these Universities in post-1960 years but they do not change significantly any conclusions drawn in my paper. However, any chronological limits suggested above must be considered as something artificial which simply serves as a chronological framework in such a study.

Yiannis Apostolakis was the first academic from these Universities to study both Solomos and Kalvos in an analytical way². His attempt to prove Kalvos's poetry to be a «rhetorical utterance» did not have any impact on other scholars. However, his appreciation and praise of Solomos and the Folk Song created a kind of scholarly tradition in the study especially of the former by academics of Salonica University. Emmanuel Kriaras and Linos Politis greatly contributed to the development of Solomian Studies. On the other hand Yeorgios Zoras, Nikolaos Tomadakis and Nikolaos Veis spent time and effort to study Kalvos's life and work. This does not mean that scholars of Salonica University did not produce anything on Kalvos or that academics of Athens University did not focus on Solomos's work. Kriaras, for instance, provided us with a most interesting study on Kalvos's Italian literary sources³, and Politis referred to

2. See Yiannis Apostolakis, *Ἡ ποίηση στὴ ζωὴ μας*, Athens 1923 and *Τὰ τραγούδια μας*, Athens: «Pirsos» 1934.

3. See Emmanuel Kriaras, «Μελετήματα στὸν Ἀνδρέα Κάλβο», *Γράμματα*, vol. 8 (1945), pp. 194-208.

Kalvos in a number of cases⁴. At the same time Tomadakis did his doctorate on Solomos's editions and manuscripts⁵ and dealt with the poet of the Greek national anthem on many occasions⁶ as did Zoras⁷ and Veis⁸. One has also to mention the «philological quarrel» between Nikolaos Andriotis and Yeorgios Kurmulis on Kalvos's language⁹ in which they both viewed each other as an opponent; Kurmulis tried to show that Andriotis's negative assessment of Kalvos's linguistic form was quite unfair and erroneous while Andriotis thought him to be a major representative of the last fervent supporters of *katharevusa*.

However, the difference in the perspective between scholars of Salonica University and their «Athenian» colleagues becomes obvious on occasions such as the following:

Ἄλλὰ ὁ λόγιος Κάλβος λίγο μᾶς ἐνδιαφέρει· μᾶς ἐνδιαφέρει ὁ Κάλβος ὁ ποιητής. Καὶ πάλι ὅχι ὁ ἱταλόγλωσσος ποιητὴς τῶν νεανικῶν του ἔργων, τῶν δύο τραγωδιῶν καὶ τῆς Ὁδῆς εἰς Ἰονίους, ἀλλὰ ὁ ὦρμος ποιητὴς τῶν Ὁδῶν, ποὺ στέκουν μοναχὲς καὶ σὰν μετέωρες μέσσα στὴν ποιητικὴ μας ἱστορία, δίχως ἀπογόνους καὶ δίχως προγόνους, ὅπως μοναχὸς ἦταν κι' ὅταν τίς ἔγραφε ὁ ξενιτεμένος ποιητής. Τὰ ἴδια ἀκριβῶς χρόνια, μόνος καὶ ὁ Σολωμὸς προσπαθεῖ νὰ δημιουργήσῃ ποιήσῃ ἐλληνικὴ, ἀφοῦ εἶχε κι' αὐτὸς δοκιμάσει τὰ πρῶτα του βήματα στὸν ἱταλικὸ Παρνασσό¹⁰.

In the passage, mentioned above, Politis's concentration solely on Kalvos's odes rather than on his early Italian work or his other literary activity deserves a mention here, since the academic criticism of Athens University also focused its research on these. In contrast, in his work on

4. See, for example, Linos Politis, «Ὁ ποιητὴς τῶν Ὁδῶν. Ἀντιθέσεις στὸν Ἀνδρέα Κάλβον», *Ἡ Καθημερινή*, 5 June 1960, pp. 1, 4 and «Ἀνδρέας Κάλβος. Στὴ μετακομιδὴ τῶν ὁστῶν του» in *Θέματα τῆς Λογοτεχνίας μας. Δεύτερη σειρά*, Thessaloniki: Konstantinidis [1977], pp. 193-197.

5. See Nikol. B. Tomadakis, *Ἐκδόσεις καὶ χειρόγραφα τοῦ ποιητοῦ Διονυσίου Σολωμοῦ. Διατριβὴ ἐπὶ διδακτορίᾳ*, Athens: tipogr. «Estia» 1935.

6. See *Πόρφυρας*, *op. cit.* (note*), pp. 341-342 (note 9).

7. See *ibid.*, p. 342 (note 10).

8. See *ibid.*, p. 342 (note 11).

9. See N. P. Andriotis, «Ἡ γλώσσα τοῦ Κάλβου», *Νέα Ἑστία*, vol. 40 (Christmas 1946), pp. 157-167; G. I. Kurmulis, *Ἡ γλώσσα τοῦ Κάλβου*, Athens 1947; N. P. Andriotis, «Ἡ γλώσσα τοῦ Κάλβου. Ἀπάντησις», *Νέα Ἑστία*, vol. 43 (1948), pp. 689-696.

10. Linos Politis, «Ὁ ποιητὴς τῶν Ὁδῶν. Ἀντιθέσεις στὸν Ἀνδρέα Κάλβον», *op. cit.* (note 4), pp. 1, 4.

Solomos, Politis repeatedly dealt with a range of his scholarly activities including his early poems in Italian¹¹, even though they were of a much lower quality than his literary output in Greek.

The reason for his limited concentration on Kalvos was that the scholars who taught at Salonica University dedicated, as shown previously, most of their time and effort to the investigation of the other great modern Greek poet, Dionisios Solomos. Yiannis Dallas writes on this:

‘Η επαναλειτουργία του καθιερώθηκε και γενικεύτηκε με την επίσημη από καθέδρας προβολή του [of Kalvos]. ‘Αλλά και έδω δέν έλειψε ή αντιδιαστολή: ‘Από τις δύο έδρες τής νεοελληνικής φιλολογίας στά πανεπιστήμιά μας μεταπολεμικά ή νεωτερική Θεσσαλονίκη συντήρησε και πλούτισε την κληρονομημένη παράδοση του ‘ίερου τέρατος’ των γραμμάτων μας, του Σολωμού. ‘Ενώ ή άκαδημαϊκή ‘Αθήνα σταδιοδρόμησε με την επιφάνεια και την επαναπροβολή του «μεγάλου άγνωστου» τής γραμματείας μας, του Κάλβου. ‘Ας υποθέσουμε υπερβάλλοντας: ένας άριστοκράτης ιδεαλιστής μέσα στά πλούτη του και ένας πληβεΐος θετικιστής μέσα στη φτώχεια και τη δυστυχία του, πονήματα και σπουδές —άντίστροφα!— μιās φιλο-πρόοδης και μιās συντηρητικής σχολής. ‘Ακόμη μιá αντίνομία, που πολλά μπορεί νά μās διδάξει για τη σύγχυση που εξακολουθεί νά επικρατεί στη διχασμένη νεοελληνική μας σκέψη. ‘Ο Κάλβος έτσι, μονόπλευρα καθιερωμένος άπ’ την έπιστήμη, μπορεί νά αποκαταστάθηκε συμβολικά μές στην άρχαία πατρίδα του, αλλά εξακολουθεί νά στέκει διχασμένος μές στον νοΰ των νέων φιλόλογων και στη διψασμένη σχολική πραγματικότητα. Χωρίς νά λείπει, μοιάζει πάντως με την έκλειψη φεγγαριού¹².

At first sight this passage seems to contain some truth. However, this is open to question. More specifically, I agree that the School of Philosophy of Thessaloniki University continues the inherited literary and scholarly tradition of Solomian studies. But I would have some reservations about Dallas’s hint that the professors at the University of Athens based their career upon the systematic presentation of Kalvos’s work alone. That is unfair to such scholarly personalities as Zoras, Tomadakis and Veis, who systematically studied and successfully discussed, for in-

11. See, inter alia, *Δημοσιεύματα Λίνου Πολίτη ως τὸ 1969*, Thessaloniki 1969.

12. Yiannis Dallas, «‘Ο Κάλβος από την προοπτική του χρόνου: ή νεκροφάνεια και ή επαναλειτουργία των ‘Ωδών», *‘Ο Πολίτης*, n. 43 (June 1981), pp. 59-60.

stance, various problems and topics concerning the poet of «*Ῥυμος εἰς τὴν Ἑλευθερίαν*». Neither is it credible in our days to accept the view that a rigid «political» —or any other— division between «progressive» and «conservative» Universities might exist in Greece.

The reasons for the particular interests of each of these Schools in these two different poets are more practical and down to earth: In Thessaloniki Yiannis Apostolakis had established a thorough and systematic appreciation of Solomos's life and poetry as far back as the mid-1920s; in Athens, Zoras gave priority to the investigation of Kalvos's biography. During these years Thessaloniki was a bastion of the demotic language, Athens a bastion of *katharevusa*; but, if Solomos wrote in the panhellenic demotic language and was the idol of the Demoticists, who considered him as the starting-point of contemporary Greek Literature, Kalvos's linguistic form did not offer analogous arguments for the supporters of *katharevusa*.

I would at this point suggest firmer reasons: The University of Athens continues a scholarly tradition which is the direct result of their admiration for the unity of Hellenic Studies, for the unbroken continuity of Hellenism, and, unquestionably, of a systematic attachment to the grandeur of the classical world. Most of the «Athenian» scholars did not view Modern Greek Literature as a particular academic discipline; they systematically related and subordinated it to the previous periods of the Greek Literature, and they studied it in the context of the continuity of Greek Letters. All «Athenian» scholars were distinguished for their involvement in almost every period of Greek Letters. Kalvos's case therefore, offered them a unique opportunity to relate their personal literary beliefs with particular parts of his biography and poetry, as well as to make use of well known methods of classical philology in the interpretation of the texts; for instance, they preferred to stay very close to the interpretation of the text itself, simply analysing its content and not paying attention to its stylistic or aesthetic aspects. They placed special emphasis on the biography of the literary figure with notable results. But they did not apply contemporary theoretical frameworks. This is, up to a point, in accord with the views of Dallas, presented earlier.

On the other hand, the University of Thessaloniki started to cultivate Modern Greek Letters as a separate academic discipline somewhat earlier and did not simply follow the principles of the older philological tradition. For instance, they did not give priority to biographical research, when dealing with the stylistic and aesthetic aspects of literary products. At the same time, they produced critical editions of texts, adopting the

role of philologists on many occasions. The combination of Thessaloniki's attachment to Demoticism, as well as the critical views of Apostolakis, E. Kriaras and Linos Politis created a corresponding interest in Solomian studies. The perspective of each literary and scholarly phenomenon is basically diachronic for the Athenian scholars, and synchronic for the intellectuals of Thessaloniki University. Where the Athenian philologists saw Kalvos as the connecting bridge between the glorious ancient past and contemporary literary reality, the scholars of Salonica University viewed Solomos as the starting point for Modern Greek Literature. Whereas Tomadakis and Zoras made use of their knowledge of the Italian language in order to comment on Kalvos's life and work, Politis and Kriaras used their knowledge of that language principally to interpret Solomos's poetry. The preference of the former to study Kalvos's—or even Solomos's—work in relation to the past contrasts with the tendency of the latter to interpret the two bards in the context of Modern Greek Literature.

However, certain questions arise. Did the enormous number of studies by academic critics contribute to the development of Kalvian and Solomian studies and to the final appreciation of Kalvos's and Solomos's life and poetry? Why did academic criticism focus so much on Solomos and Kalvos? How great was the concern of these scholars for the *poetic* or *aesthetic* evaluation of their work? Which was the real contribution of each of the two major Greek Universities to the study of Kalvos and Solomos?

Before these questions can be answered, a distinction has to be made between academic philological study and literary criticism. These two fields seem to have been two distinct disciplines in the minds of some intellectuals, even though they are very often taken as a single one by others. In fact, a philological study is somewhat different from a piece of literary criticism, in the sense that the first aims at the formulation of conclusions as objectively as possible and normally employs established philological methodologies, whilst the second has more to do with the subjective views of the author on a literary issue. This does not mean, of course, that a piece of literary criticism cannot follow a certain theoretical framework; in other words, there is an obvious distinction but at the same time a clear interrelation between these two fields. On certain occasions gifted philologists and scholars can be gifted critics. Who can deny, let us say, that Tomadakis's essay on the political liberty of Kalvos's

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cept on very few occasions. Perhaps, for most of them, the limits between their own research and literary criticism were clearly defined; it is no accident that those articles which were closer to literary critique than academic study were written in demotic for a wider public, or were delivered as speeches on public occasions. At times too, they even published studies in demotic (when they addressed them to a wider readership), whilst most of their purely «philological» treatises were written in *katharevusa*; even Veis is no exception to this rule¹⁶. It is also worth noting that the scholars of Salonica University wrote their studies on Kalvos and Solomos only in demotic, a clear indication of the different spirit and linguistic tradition of that University.

There is a great difference between the contributions of Athens University and Salonica University to the development of Kalvian and Solomian studies. This is confirmed not only by the contrasting number of studies on Kalvos and Solomos from each University, but also by the different scholarly and literary traditions that they followed.

In conclusion, it can be said that the arduous and persistent attempts of academic critics, coupled with their scholarly authority, gave a strong new impetus to the investigation of Kalvos's and Solomos's life and work, clarified a lot of unclear points in their biography, and revealed unknown and unpublished texts of them. Together with the valuable studies on both of them by other intellectuals and literary movements after 1930, they made their own invaluable contribution to the final recognition and appreciation especially of the poet of the *Odes*. And it was left wing criticism after World War II that gave a further impetus to the evolution of Kalvian and Solomian studies, under a different perspective and theoretical framework¹⁷. But this is a subject outside the scope of this short paper.

16. Nikolaos Veis was highly regarded by left wing and liberal scholars; in 1950, he was elected a member of the Greek Parliament, with Alexander Svolos's Socialist Party.

17. See G. J. B. Andreiomenos, «The politics of reception: Kalvos and the Greek Left», *Balkan Studies*, vol. 31₂ (1990), pp. 239-257 and *Λογοτεχνικά περιοδικά της ἀριστεράς και Διονύσιος Σολωμός (1924-1967)*, Athens: «Silloges» 1998.

ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Γιῶργος Ἀνδρειωμένος, «Οἱ πανεπιστημιακοὶ κριτικοὶ καὶ οἱ νεοέλληνες “ἐθνικοὶ” ποιητὲς (1926-1960)».

Στὴν παρούσα εἰσήγηση ἐξετάζεται ἡ πρόσληψη τοῦ Ἀνδρέα Κάλβου καὶ τοῦ Διονυσίου Σολωμοῦ ἀπὸ τοὺς πανεπιστημιακοὺς κριτικούς τῶν Φιλοσοφικῶν Σχολῶν Ἀθήνας καὶ Θεσσαλονίκης, προκειμένου νὰ καταδειχθοῦν οἱ διαφορετικὲς σχολαστικὲς παραδόσεις ποὺ οἱ τελευταῖοι ἀκολούθησαν καὶ ἡ οὐσιαστικὴ συμβολή τους στὴν προώθηση τῶν καλβικῶν καὶ σολωμικῶν σπουδῶν. Ἐπίσης, ἀναλύονται οἱ λόγοι γιὰ τοὺς ὁποίους οἱ νεοελληνιστὲς τῶν πρὶν πάνω σχολῶν ἐπικέντρωσαν τὸ ἐνδιαφέρον τους στὴ μελέτη διαφορετικῶν ὕψων τῆς ζωῆς καὶ τοῦ ἔργου τῶν συγκεκριμένων νεοελλήνων «ἐθνικῶν» ποιητῶν, στὸ διάστημα 1926-1960.