

ASSESSMENT OF THE CANDIDATURE OF DR PHOTEINE CHRYSSTAKOUDI FOR THE POSITION OF ASSOCIATE
PROFESSOR IN MODERN GREEK LITERATURE

by Prof. Dr. habil. Kyrill Pavlikianov

The candidature of Dr Photeine Chrystakoudi for the position of Associate Professor in Modern Greek Literature is supported by 14 articles and 2 books. In our opinion the value of each of these studies could be assessed in the following way:

1. The article *Homo ludens in N. Kazantzakis' Novel "Christ Crucified Again"* (Sofia 2000) scrutinizes the role of the drama art that enables the characters of the novel to "choose" a specific role and by playing it to acquire a new identity. The literary analysis in this article is well-balanced and its conclusions sound convincingly.
2. The article *About Some Basic Features of Greek Symbolism* (Sofia 2010) deals with the development of Symbolism and Modernism in Greece. Dr. Christakoudi reasonably argues that Greek modernism was related to the reception of the symbolist movement in Greek literature and opened a broad field for modernistic poetic experiments. According to her, symbolism first appeared in Greece in 1892 and until 1930 it did not cease to dominate the works of Greek poets, such as Kostis Palamas, Ioannis Gryparis, Konstantinos Hadzopoulos, Lambros Porphyras, and Kostas Karyotakis. As the matter of fact, this interpretation also dominates the Greek literary criticism since the 1950s.
3. Quite similar is the third article of the candidate *On the Peculiarities of Greek Symbolism* (Sofia 2011), which scrutinizes the same topic from a slightly different point of view – by analyzing the poetry of M. Malakasis.
4. The fourth article of the candidate offers an analysis of the *Urban Accents in the Greek Cultural Model from the Late 19th and the Early 20th Centuries* (Sofia 2012). The author analyzes the first steps of the Greek society that attempted to introduce European spirit and practices in the Greek administration, local social structures and economy, and to catch up with the development of Western Europe. The article scrutinizes the development of Greek architecture, fine and applied arts at the turn of the 20th century, and how they were influenced by the introduction of symbolism into Greek literature. The establishment of the main cultural institutions of the Greek state, which received economic and legal support from the state, is also discussed.

5. In 2015 Dr Christakoudi published an article entitled *On the Synchronic and Diachronic Features in the Poetry of Odysseas Elytis*. In Chrystakoudi's opinion, Odysseas Elytis has succeeded in intertwining the most complicated elements of the Greek literary tradition and possesses "a hyper-historic sensitivity towards the language". The candidate claims that Elytis had adopted the language of the Greek literary tradition as it is developed from Homer to Kostis Palamas, utilizing also stylistic and lexical citations taken from the Byzantine hymnography. As the matter of fact, this interpretation is a commonplace in the nowadays Greek Literary criticism.
6. In 2016 Photeine Chrystakoudi published an article entitled *On the Diachronic and Synchronic Aspects of the Greek Cultural Bilingualism*, popularizing in Bulgaria the history of the 20 centuries old Greek purism, and discussing the Greek language controversy as a key issue for the Greek educational system, social and political life, which occupied a central place in the Greek political life for 143 years (from 1834, when, after the foundation of the Modern Greek state, the cultivated imitation of Ancient Greek or *katharevousa* was proclaimed official state language, until 1976, when Demotic Greek was adopted as the only language of the Hellenic Republic. According to Chrystakoudi, the Nobel Prize of Odysseas Elytis (1979) terminated the problem for good, while at the beginning of the demotic movement in the last quarter of 19th c. the basic problem was the very right of the spoken form of the Greek language to exist in the shade of the official state language, the *katharevousa*.
7. In 2017 Dr Christakoudi published an article entitled *The Motif of Travelling in Greek Poetry in the Interwar Period (Travelling as an Emanation of Separation and Acquisition)*. According to her, in the spiritual world of the Greek poetry the cosmopolitan travelling was first introduced with the emblematic poem of Constantine Cavafy *Ithaca* (1910). However, Dr Christakoudi also postulates that "the Greek poetic travelling varied its meaning during the next decades and became the turning point for realizing the despair and the irreversible loss of the ideal by the so-called generation of the 1930s, whose sense of tragic doom cemented the motif of the "lost native land" in Greek literature". The author analyzes the interwar Greek poetry (N. Kavvadias, C. Cavafy, and G. Seferis) and interprets the motif of "travelling" as an act equal to a separation, but also as an acquisition of new space and time, as sadness, but also as "an adventure and a quest of infinity and a transcendent immortality". However, all these interpretations are based on well-known ideas developed by the major historians of the Modern Greek Literature such as Mario Vitti, Constantine Dimaras, Henry Tonnet, and Roderick Beaton.

8. Once again in 2017 Dr Chrystakoudi published an article entitled *Nikos Kavvadias – the maritime wanderings of a poet*. Adopting some views of the contemporary Greek literary criticism, the author describes Kavvadias's verses as innovative and the tone of his poetry as corresponding to the requirements of the epoch, a statement which we would disagree with. Characterizing Kavvadias as a poet of the sea, as a loved and read cosmopolitan author whose name has been omitted in the "official" histories of the Modern Greek Literature by Linos Politis and Mario Vitti, is not exact. In the Italian version of M. Vitti's "History of the Modern Greek Literature" published in 1971 there is no mention of Kavvadias, but the latter is extensively commented in the Greek version of the History, which Vitti wrote anew in Greek, especially for the Greek public, in 2003.
9. The next two articles of Dr Chrystakoudi (2017 and 2018) are written in Greek and present to the Greek-speaking scholarly community a group of Bulgarian writers and poets, who were active in the 1930s, the 1940s and the 1950s. The author describes the poetry and the literary works of N. Vaptsarov, Georgi Karaslavov, Christo Radevski, Orlin Vasilev, Mladen Isaev, Voumitski, Aleksandar Gerov, Valeri Petrov, and Bogomil Rainov, and attempts to analyze for the Greek readers the basic features of the socialist state control which was imposed on poets and writers and was known as "socialist realism". Once again, this is a popularizing text introducing the Greek literary to the poetic trends of their northern neighbours.
10. The next article of Dr Christakoudi is important, for it deals with the problem what makes a certain national literary tradition influential and important. The author compares two very different poets – the Greek Esta Tsinganou (1960) and the Swedish Tomas Gosta Tranströmer (1931-2015) and states that, regardless of the differences in their age, geographical and gender affinity, in their popularity and literary status, they illustrate well the fact that "in the tensions between the stereotypes for the North and the South we can discover more proximity than discrepancies". We shall abstain from commenting further this literary comparison due to our ignorance as far as the Swedish literature is concerned.
11. In 2018 Dr Christakoudi published an article on the *Formalistic Markers of the "Modern" in Greek Poetry: a Retrospective from the Point of View of Literary History*. The author analyzes the techniques of verse building, attempting to give a formal answer to the question what is "modern" for the Neo-Hellenic literature and how a specific poetical tradition could become "modern". Scrutinizing the poetry of K. Hadzopoulos, C. Cavafy, K. Karyotakis, G. Seferis, O. Elytis and I. Ritsos, the candidate concludes that changes in the structure of the verse could not be

viewed as an exclusive indicator of modernity, because Greek poetry remained firmly rooted in its metric traditions and artistic conventions. In this article the level of originality is considerably higher than in the aforementioned publications.

12. In 2018 Dr Christakoudi published an article entitled *Translated Bulgarian Poetry on the Pages of Contemporary Greek Editions*. This work pretends to be a complement to M. Nihoriti's study "Bulgarian-Greek Literary Relationships after the Second World War until the year of 2000", and a contribution to the bibliography on this subject.
13. Once again in 2018, Dr Christakoudi published an article entitled *Greek Wedding Folk Songs in Claude Charles Fauriel's Collection*. The Greek bibliography on Fauriel publications is huge, so finding or saying something new about his works would be extremely difficult, if not impossible. It would have been interesting for us if Dr Christakoudi had included in this article (which is incorporated in her book of 2020 *Problems of Greek Literary Development 1880-1930 (Studies on Modern Greek Poetry)*, p. 7-15) a comparison with another important collection of Greek folk songs – that of Wilhelm Passow (Leipzig 1850), in which the texts of some wedding songs are quite obscene.

The candidature of Dr Photeine Chrystakoudi for the position of Associate Professor in Modern Greek Literature is also backed by two books:

1. *Symbolism and Modern Greek Poetry from the End of the XIX and the Beginning of the XX Century*, Sofia 2020, 186 pages. This book explores the language of Greek poetry in the late 19th and the first decades of the 20th century, underscoring that "the introduction to the work of the main poets and writers on the literary scene of Greece from the end of the XIX and the beginning of the XX century undoubtedly fills empty niches in modern Balkan studies". This research also claims to present "the specific socio-political conditions in Greece, the cultural climate and the achievements of the demotic movement for laying the foundations of a new spiritual life, enabling the spread and establishment of modern literary and aesthetic movements". The study is focused on the symbolist poetry which existed "under the heavy shadow of Kostis Palamas", i.e. on the so-called generation of the 1890s, whose representatives (K. Hadzopoulos, J. Gryparis, L. Porfyra, M. Malakasis) had adopted the European symbolist canon, and on the literary magazines, "Techni" and "Dionysos" (1901-1902). These literary topics can be found fully developed in the principal histories of the Modern Greek Literature by L. Politis, Mario Vitti, Constantine Dimaras, Henry Tonnet, and Roderick Beaton. As scrutinized

by Dr Christakoudi they offer almost nothing new to the Greek public, but would be very useful to the Bulgarian public and especially to the students of Modern Greek language and culture.

2. *Problems of Greek Literary Development 1880-1930 (Studies on Modern Greek Poetry)*, Sofia 2020, 255 pages. This work intends not only to illustrate “the development of the Greek poetry from 1880 to 1930, but also to analyze its impact on the formation of the Greek identity in recent times”. Dr Christakoudi believes “that the period 1880-1930 possesses a particular homogeneity related to modernism and symbolism”. In our opinion, this book is a good course of lectures on the Modern Greek poetry from 1880 to 1930. The text of Dr Christakoudi’s article on Claude Fauriel, which is incorporated in this book (p. 7-15) was not necessary, it simply added bulk to the text. The same is true about the descriptions of the so-called *Evangelika* (the social unrest and murders triggered by the translation of the New Testament into Modern Greek, 1901) and the so-called *Orestika* (the social unrest triggered by the playing of the ancient Greek tragedy *Orestes* in Modern Greek, 1903), which pertain to the history the Greek language controversy and bilingualism, but not to the development of the Modern Greek poetry.

In conclusion, we must emphasize that the scholarly production of Dr. Photeine Christakoudi does not contain a plethora of absolute philological novelties and a high level of originality. Nevertheless, its scientific value is great, for it offers one very important contribution, namely the creating of a new knowledge. In Greek this phenomenon is described with the term *metalampadeusis*, which means transfer of a knowledge from one culture to another. Dr. Christakoudi writes about Bulgarian literature in Greek and about Greek literature in Bulgarian and English, providing in this way the students with texts necessary for competently accessing the Modern Literature. For this reason I have no doubts that Dr. Photeine Christakoudi must be unanimously elected Associate Professor in Modern Greek Literature and this is exactly my proposal to the members of the jury.

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