

Kyriaki PetrakouUniversity of Athens
Athens**THE CONFLICT BETWEEN ROMANTICISM AND CLASSICISM
IN THE GREEK THEATRE OF THE 19TH CENTURY**
**KONFLIKT ROMANTYZMU I KLASYCYZMU W TEATRZE GRECKIM
W XIX WIEKU**

Słowa kluczowe: romantyzm, klasycyzm, teatr w XIX wieku w Grecji, grecki modernizm
Key words: Romanticism, Classicism, theatre of the 19th century in Greece, the Modern Greek

The Modern Greek nation was established in 1828, after a 7-year revolutionary fight against the Ottoman Empire, which had lasted for 4 centuries (since 1453). It was the time of Romanticism in Europe, a movement that supported the spirit of the Revolution. When the first dramas appeared in the small liberated nation, they had the recent Revolution (which was not over yet) as their subject one way or the other. As Lord Byron, the most heroic of the Philehellenes, had recently (1824) died in Messolonghi, having come to Greece to assist the revolution and having sacrificed his life as well as his fortune to the great issue of Greek freedom, he became (and still is) a legend and his poetry and drama a model for Greek poets and playwrights. He was not the only one: Victor Hugo's preface to his *Cromwell* and his romantic plays, especially *Hernani*, were imitated by the Greek writers in prefaces and plays in versions concerning the Greek reality and conditions. For two decades or so, almost all newly appearing plays were romantic in a way. Soon objections were raised, mostly because some European scholars (the most famous or rather notorious being Jakob Philipp Phallmerayer) suggested that contemporary Greeks were no Greeks at all, not descendants of the worshipped ancient Greeks but rather Slavs, because of the intermingling with other races for centuries. The Greek scholars almost for the rest of 19th century made every possible effort to prove the ancient Greek lineage linguistically and culturally. In this spirit, objections to Romanticism were raised as foreign and immoral and, in contrast, scholars supported Classicism, stemming from ancient Greece,

the cradle of Western civilization. The historical poetic plays had mainly Byzantium, the Frankish / Venetian domination era or the Greek Revolution as subject matter. This supported the romantic style, however.

The first European movement to appear even before the Greek Revolution of 1821, was naturally the Enlightenment, as it had provided the ideological material for the French Revolution and other lesser rebellions, and the Greeks were beginning to organize a major one themselves. Enlightenment is generally interpreted as an offspring of Classicism which, as is well known, stemmed from ancient Greek and Roman culture through Humanism in the Renaissance. So it was considered more Greek and worthy of following. Classicism inspired Ioannis Zambelios' first tragedy of 1818, *Timoleon*, with the typical message of the Enlightenment: the murder of a tyrant.

The play *The Wanderer* (Soutsos 1962 [1831]), or "dramatic poem" according to its author, Panayotis Soutsos, written in 1826, when Soutsos was 20 years old, and published in 1831 after a lot of editing and probably a lot of changes (Puchner 2007: 79–117), is generally considered by the historians of modern Greek literature and theatre to have introduced Romanticism to Greece (Dimaras 198: 270; Mastrodimitris 1999 [1976]: 142; Beaton 1996: 68–69, Tsakonas 1999: 172). It was one of the first plays to be staged in Athens, in 1836, when professional theatre made its appearance after centuries of oblivion. It had many subsequent editions up to Mid-war years, being extremely popular as a book. This was no special case: theatrical life struggled to come into existence and establish itself as did the Greek nation historically. Most of the plays written until the last decade of the century, were intended by their authors for reading and also for the drama competitions, which were inaugurated in 1851 and played an important role in the Greek theatre until about 1920.

In the preface of *The Wanderer*, Soutsos stated that his play was influenced by Racine's *Andromache*, but all of its critics agreed that, beyond doubt, its model was Lord Byron's *Manfred*. Despite the derivation, however, it has different solutions and messages, starting with the dramatic space, which is not the fatal Alps but the Greek Holy Mountain, on which there are only monasteries and monks and no woman is permitted to visit. The dramatic time is the real one, that is sometime after the end of the Greek Revolution. The central dramatic person, named Wanderer, has gone there after abandoning his beloved Rallou in Constantinople in order to take part in the Revolution. The Turks slaughtered her family and she is thought to be dead. The Wanderer feels guilty and wonders whether his existential duty was towards his nation or to his beloved. A wise monk instructs him that his sublime duty is towards his soul and to God. The Wanderer cannot decide and dies in the end. He resembles Manfred however in criticizing God for permitting misery and injustice in the world. The priest, unlike Byron's priest almost persuades him that the redemption of afterlife exists. In the preface, Soutsos states his dramatic intentions perhaps as sincerely as he could understand them himself. The reader (or the spectator) should not expect the merry and serene poetry of old Greece (by old perhaps meaning ancient). He states cryptically that his drama "designed in the cloudy horizon of arctic Europe, resembles the mythic ghosts coming out of graves". As for its content, it contains "among human passions redeeming principles of celestial metaphysics. That is the quotations about

God and worldly vanity [...] as newly born contemporary and Christian poetry...”. That is exactly the opposite of Byron’s denouncement of God and the priest’s offer of repentance and redemption. He adds that he himself is very pious and contemplates becoming a monk, which his biography disproves. And Byron is mentioned by name in the dramatic text (p. 14). Manfred’s dealings with demons and witchcraft and on top of all his atheism are expelled from *The Wanderer* though.

Its first reviewer was very severe, also criticizing the unwanted romantic trend, spread all over Western Europe through *Manfred*, *Faust* and some other works, resulting in steeping the whole world with false and poisonous poetry. This pernicious influence, the critic continues, made Soutsos adopt this morbid melancholy and despair and deviate from the positive, the triumphant character of Hellenism at this moment of national liberation. Byron’s plays more than his poetry are liable to criticism and condemnation. Especially *The Wanderer* is an absurd play, presenting the sacred duty of participation in the liberating struggle as a misfortune and as a dreadful lot of fate, which destroys the pair of lovers (Vlachos 1901, 3–55).

Panagiotis’ brother Alexandros, also a romantic poet and playwright, commented that it was far from Greek life (A. Soutsos n.d., 98; Sideris 1990, 32). The historian of Modern Greek theatre, Giannis Sideris interprets that the Byronic trend was very popular in Greece and he was personally loved because of his philhellenic activity and his recent death in Messolonghi. Soutsos combined it with French tragedy to compose his drama (Sideris 1990, 31–32). It is rather surprising that a play with such ideas was written literally during the Revolution, was soon published and became so popular, a best seller for decades, up to the first half of 20th century. One would expect a typical patriotic drama, written perhaps with special talent, to have such a course. At the time of its writing, Evanthia Kairi wrote *Niceratos* (1926) with subject matter from the Messolonghi exodus and the judge Ioannis Zambelios wrote his successive historical dramas in classicist style and the spirit of Enlightenment, having the heroes of the Revolution and their adventures as subject matter. In the first edition of his plays (1833) he sides with classicism and expresses reserve towards Romanticism. This resulted in a mixture: the form is classicist, but traces of passion indicate the presence of Romanticism in the content. This phenomenon will be stabilized during the next 50 years: Romanticism will be rejected and adopted in turn by the writers of the time (Chatzipantazis 2006).

Leaving out of this paper the general ideological and aesthetic issue of whether Romanticism was really a desideratum in the elementary cultural life of Greece during those first post-revolutionary decades, the question is this: what induced Panagiotis Soutsos to write such a play? Although he states clearly in his preface that the Wanderer (the dramatic person) is not a persona of its author, it is very easy to apply some psychoanalytical thinking to compare them. We can easily detect the similarity of their existential questioning. Like his hero, Soutsos must have asked himself whether or not to participate in the war, like his brother Demetrios, who was killed in it. He came to Greece but decided against fighting, like so many of his compatriots from Constantinople and the Heptanesian poet Dionysios Solomos, whose long poem *Hymn to Freedom*, about the Revolution, was chosen as our national anthem. Perhaps

Soutsos had feelings of guilt, which he appeased by thinking that he should stay alive and benefit his country -and himself- through his high education and his spiritual, governmental, even his social accomplishments, when it would be free. If the Revolution failed, then he would seek his fortune in some European country, perhaps one of those he had visited before coming to Greece. He also had a Rallou in his life. The Wanderer chose differently. He is not crushed by the terrible experiences of the war, but by the remorse for abandoning his beloved and her subsequent destruction, for which he blames himself. The Revolution and the building of the new nation are issues that the monk-advisor does not even take into consideration, equally ignoring the responsibility of love, but he stresses that man has only religious obligations, that is the redemption of his soul and not committing suicide. The Wanderer is very suicidal nevertheless and dies in the end, of melancholy it seems, condemning the Revolution for his misfortune with his last lines. This idea, instead of causing a scandal, moved the public and the play became a model for later playwrights (Moullas 1989: 144, 151, 164; Sideris 1990: 31–34). The proposed dramatic solution could be seen as an alibi for the playwright's feelings of guilt, who manages through his hero to fulfill his patriotic duty and question its value at the same time, in the name of a higher value and duty and not in the name of a general existential/social rebellion, like Byron's heroes. Soutsos could not support the undisguised individualism of the romantic heroes of free and socially advanced Europe. He presented instead the need for subjugation to a sublime Christian duty in the context of Orthodoxy, compatible with the strong religious feeling of Greek people (Chatzipantazis 2002: 192–229), which undoubtedly he shared. But why did it become so popular? Perhaps because unhappy love affairs always move the audiences, despite the fact that both lovers are anything but amiable. Their indifference and irresponsibility for the national fight and the national drama, resembling the attitude of the monks in this matter is really strange – Byron himself sacrificed his life and fortune for this fight, in which he tried to take part in person. Perhaps the demands of the war and the following more complicated and difficult to understand demands of the new nation and the permanent issue of the unliberated areas, worried many young people of the time who had no more endurance for heroic actions and superhuman efforts and would like to be permitted simply to live their lives.

Soon Soutsos' example was followed by his cousin, Alexandros Rizos Ragavis, who published his drama *Frosyni*, in 1837, based on real facts that have inspired poetry, prose, opera and a number of plays. He added a preface, on which almost all critics agree that follows Hugo's preface of *Cromwell* (1827), which was intended to be the manifesto of French Romanticism and was in fact acknowledged as that. In direct comparison, we detect Ragavis' ideas derived from Hugo, but he has his own as well. If he also intended his preface to become similarly such a manifesto, he did not achieve this exactly, but it was studied by later playwrights of the 19th century and they gave their own answers and solutions. It is a dialogue between two persons named "He" and "I", who possibly represent the two egos of the poet, the classicist and the romantic. At first "He" wonders that such an infantile nation should seek to create culture when there are so many other crucial issues. "I" answers that he does not really know where this craving for poetry comes from, but he believes that our

immature society needs it in order to reconcile itself with the bitter truths that the poets tell poetically. That is the reason for the debut of a number of poets in the midst of the sufferings of the war. Revolution was itself poetry, but the people still need the poetical stimulation in order to support the feeling of the Good and the Brave, under the flag of which they fought, and elevate their spirit towards the sky, from which virtue and liberty come. “He” stresses Aristoteles’ demands on pure language for the drama, whereas *Frosyni* is written in a simple language and also has an abnormal verse composition and a distortion of facts and characters, concluding that his interlocutor is romantic. “I” denies knowledge of the meaning of the term. “He” explains: “I” deviated from Aristoteles’ rules in several dimensions. His drama is very long, it contains both tragic and comical scenes, its central hero is a simple peripheral commander instead of a powerful king or prince, the three unities are not kept. There are two rival camps on mount Helicon: the classicists, who are right-minded, their culture obeys Aristotle and they imitate the ancients, and the romantics, the rebels, impudent apostates, renouncing faith in rules and citations. They bolt against boundaries, follow their erratic imagination, ignore the unities, do not create profound dramatic characters, do not respect traditions or follow examples; they falsify art and distort its principles and the taste of the audiences. “I” protests that the ancient world does not exist anymore, and with it its simplicity vanished. Modern drama was born not in imitation of the ancient one but from the medieval plays. The axis of the contemporary world is Christianity and the contemporary demand for drama is the creation of characters and individual passions and feelings (these are really Hugo’s ideas). “I” goes on disputing all classicist rules and aesthetic, until “He” pronounces him undoubtedly a romantic and “I” accepts it. The classicists side with traditions, the romanticists with protest. The classicist is a loyal and law-abiding subject, the romantic a legislator and a reformer. However the rules and traditions are only ideas created in time and place – they are not sacred. They can and must be changed (Ragavis 1874 [1837]).

In the middle of the 19th century, contemporary drama was still under-developed and had not started developing yet. The state officials were rather indifferent to Greek theatre. Between 1858–1862, theatrical life shrank to the point of vanishing. On the other hand, poetry had reached a good level and its prestige was much higher in the public conscience. The poet played an important social role that approached that of the ideological instructor (Dimaras 1985: 167–220). Romanticism was still the dominant aesthetic movement of the time. However, its extreme manifestations were considered dangerous by many: either (mis)leading away from reality or encouraging rebellious and immoral tendencies (Moullas 1989: 370–377 and pass.). The idea that poetry should be encouraged and cultivated within the “right” spirit activated Amvrosios Rallis in 1851, a rich merchant from Trieste, to finance an annual poetry competition, run by the University of Athens (Moullas 1989: 31–45; Petrakou 1999: 19–52). According to its regulations, the prize should be given to poems with a moral content, that is, not contradictory to religion or common morality and written in the puristic language approaching the ancient. Drama made its appearance in Rallis’ competition in 1854 as a poetic genre (according to the antiquity-orientated notions of the time, the poetic genres were epic, lyrical and dramatic poetry). Rallis withdrew in 1860 and

the financing of the competition was undertaken by Ioannis Voutsinas, a merchant from Odessa. This change of patron was combined with a slight change of ideology in the matter of language (Moullas 1989: 167). The new competition was called Voutsinas' competition and lasted until 1877. During this time, the Greek theatre developed considerably both in the artistic life of the country and in the conscience of the mentors in cultural matters. There was a growing interest in it as a section of national culture. Besides Voutsinas' long-lived competition, there were others, conducted once or twice, exclusively dramatic or mixed (Petrakou 1999). These two first poetry competitions (Rallis' and Voutsinas') included drama which should necessarily be "poetic", that is verse-drama. Most of the plays were (unofficially) considered as closet-dramas. As actual theatrical life was poor, this attitude was not restricted to the austere circles of university critique. The conflict was conducted between the two rival ideological/aesthetical movements: Romanticism in style with Byzantium or the Revolution as subject matter or Classicism and Antiquity? Or perhaps a blending of the two trends in a species "mixed but legal" as Solomos instructed about the language. In Voutsinas' competition more and more plays were submitted as years went by. It was obvious that its judges wanted to turn the interest of the poets to drama and perhaps away from romantic poetry, as their expressed intention was to do away with the extreme manifestations of Romanticism, like the love for death, incest and the excessive spleen and lamenting, traits which were plaguing all lyric poetry but could not be so easily canalized into drama. The judges censured them severely: they were imported from abroad, alien to and incompatible with the positive and optimistic character of the Greek people; they considered them factors of decadence. The university critique in the two first competitions tried to direct towards Classicism. One of the main objectives of the existence and function of these competitions was to prove that contemporary Greeks were genuine descendants and heirs of the ancient ones, that is they were seeking answers to this identity problem which had arisen from Fallmerayer's theory (Moullas 1989: pass., Moullas 1993: 298).

Since its debut in Rallis' competition in 1854, drama had a progressively more intensive presence. The first really interesting play was *Maria Doxapatri* by Demetrios Vernardakis, submitted in 1857. The university committee did not rise to the occasion. Strangely, the professors were not impressed by *Maria*, which, when staged in 1865, was the first Greek play in the professional theater to attract such a large audience, had many revivals, served as a model for other plays and is considered a landmark in modern Greek theater. The university professors, without saying it explicitly, rejected it as immoral (Petrakou 2007a; Petrakou 2015). Vernardakis, who soon became himself a professor of Philology in the University of Athens and a prominent scholar and playwright, wrote a prologue-manifesto for the edition of his *Maria Doxapatri* (1858), somehow answering Alexandros Ragavis after twenty years, agreeing with him that the developing Greek theatre should be romantic, giving Shakespeare as a model, strangely rejecting Goethe, Schiller, Hugo and Byron. He believed that the tendency to reject Romanticism and adopt Classicism both in the free theatre and in the circles of the University poetic competitions was fruitless, as the ancient tragedy cannot be resurrected for several reasons, chief among which is that it is based on Fate, whereas

in modern drama the axis is character and psychology. Modern art depicts violent passions and contemporary drama must contain them in the romantic way in order to move the audiences. He arbitrarily claims that like Antiquity, the recent Revolution is unsuitable as subject matter for dramatization, so there is only the Byzantium. However, the playwright must be a true poet and a true Greek, his work must be purely Greek and his morals must coincide with the morals of the Greek people. The Greeks are no cosmopolitans, they are firm and even stubborn in their nationalism. Hellas has a sacred mission: to perform great deeds and superhuman achievements. The values of modern drama must be: Nation and Faith, Religion and Freedom. We can see that he goes beyond Ragavis in his dramatic targets, giving a more ambitious scope to contemporary Greek drama: it has to be national drama (Petraou 2007). That is, the playwright must use the romantic form and characterization, perhaps the aesthetic as well of Romanticism, with mysterious mountains, ghosts, suicides et al. but the ideology must be nationally positive, social, religious, that is classicist. Needless to say that his next play, of the following year, *Kypselidai*, and his next, *Meropi* (1866), had ancient Greek subject matter and were more classicist than romantic. In the meantime he had been appointed a professor in the University of Athens (1861), took part as a judge in the poetical competitions of the University and condemned Romanticism in the submitted poetical works, dramatic or not.

In the decade 1850–1860, the historians Spyridon Zambelios and Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos created the contemporary concept of Greek history since Antiquity, including Byzantium as part of the uninterrupted historical course of Hellenism, stressing its role as an enlightened Greek Middle Ages which should be respected. So Romanticism had found a Greek subject matter. Zambelios and Nikolaos Politis published collections of folk-songs, and, like Herder, gave drama a direction to draw material from this source. We shall mention here the inflammatory *Julian the Apostate* by Cleon Ragavis (1865), attacking Christianity in the Byronic-romantic way. When it was published, in 1877, it caused a public scandal (Petraou 2016) more by its prologue in which he expressed his contempt of Christianity and his admiration for Antiquity together with Charles Darwin's theory, which was recently published (1859) (Petraou 2016).

In the decade of 1870, Romanticism was enhanced by the debut of a young poet – dramatist, Spyridon Vassiliadis (Dimaki Zora 2002; Petraou 2002). He appeared in 1865 with lyric-romantic poetry, but as has already been mentioned, Romanticism was under persecution by the official intelligentsia. In 1868 he wrote and published two romantic historical dramas: *The Kallergeses* and *Loukas Notaras*, both having Greek medieval subjects. He also wrote a preface about the creation of national drama, in some points agreeing with Ragavis and Vernardakis and in others deviating. It concerns mostly the ideas – the unities are set aside provisionally. The dilemma is still the same: Classicism or Romanticism. He is for Classicism. He despises Byzantium. The model is the wonderful ancient Greek civilization. Christianity made humanity melancholic and dark. Contemporary drama, like Byron's, is inspired by worms. The romantics are temporary, the ancient Greeks are eternal. Ancient plays are perfect, whereas *Faust* is chaos, confusion and conflict of feelings, knowledge and ideas.

The Greeks managed to liberate themselves through the ideals of French Enlightenment, which modernized ancient Greek ideals. There are no great foreign dramatists except Shakespeare, who is a god. But he was a butcher's son, used to blood, and a Christian, prone to Christian spleen, which the English people decorate with humor. *Hamlet* is the *Oresteia* of modern history, though. He admires him excessively, but he is no proper model for Greek dramatists. His imitation has led to unacceptable extremes. For the Greeks there are their ancient ancestors and the spark of their spirit surviving in the folksongs. Through the four centuries of enslavement, the real national positive character was preserved in them (Vasiliadis 1858: 38). The Greeks do not love incest, brother murderers, illicit passions, Hamlet-like characters, love-maniacs. Greek Romanticism is unavoidable, but it will have a Platonic version (Vasiliadis 1858: 38). It is obvious that he considers drama as a "school for the people". At the time of writing, there are many national liberating issues, like the recent (1866) Cretan Revolution against the Turks, which was drowned in blood. If there is a romantic wrapping, the content must be classicist. Such was the preface of two dramas which were romantic not only in their subject-matter. His dramatic persons are given to passions, hysteria and tears, with scenes referring directly to Shakespeare's plays. He wonders himself how this happened: it was against his intentions. He aimed at the creation of a national drama, which would praise the heroism and patriotism of Hellenism. In his next play, *Galateia*, he experimented mixing both styles with great success. He combined an ancient myth with the plot of a folk song, with Shakespearean motives as well. In the prologue he explained that he wanted to reveal the true Greek moral character, in which brotherly love transcends erotic passion. It was considered the masterpiece of 19th century. Together with *Maria Doxapatri*, it was the greatest success of its time and a model for subsequent playwrights. Vasiliadis also wrote another romantic drama which he tried to make classicist (*Skylla* 1872) and almost succeeded. He died young, only 29 years old, in 1874, the same year as his best friend of the same age and a romantic poet as well, Dimitrios Paparrigopoulos. It is quite common for romantic poets to die young. It was estimated that he revived the dying Romanticism with his talent (Petraku 2007a).

There was also another romantic dramatist, who wrote some Byzantine tragedies. We have already met him: it was Cleon Ragavis, the author of the heretic *Julian the Apostate*. In 1884, he wrote his *Theodora* (C. Ragavis 1884). In the preface, as was the habit, he stated that his tragedy had a national flag, that Byzantium is "our own" medieval life. Rather inaccurately, he informs that many writers tried to write dramas about classical time, but, as far as he knows no one has attempted to depict the Byzantine grandeur, although this historical period is as integral a part of our history as Pericles' era. That is the reason why in his drama he used a language approaching the ancient one. In the next year he wrote another, *Herakleios* (Ragavis 1885). Its subject is more romantic, as it contains some degree of incest: the emperor married his niece and was lost in his passion for her for many years, whereas the Persians and the Avars invaded his empire. The author's message was that the Greeks were intended by Destiny to correct historical injustice. He estimated that the stage was too small for his works, which had a universal perspective, so he rather intended them as

closet-dramas. He wrote some more, all Byzantine, but as the Greek theatrical life was progressing, he gave them for staging, with some success.

The decade 1880–1890 was a turning point in the orientation of modern Greek intellectual life. Through the Eighties' Generation, the tendency towards investigation of reality appeared, with the linguistic problem as the most crucial and controversial issue of the new movement. The modern realistic trend was considered as some kind of revolution and of course there should be a counterbalancing influence. Theatre did not belong to the avant-garde of this revolution; it was rather a rear-guard, a tentative rear-guard. However, the "right-minded" intellectuals thought it wiser to launch a counter-attack through the university, as usual, which always acted as the guardian of national ideals. Since 1865 there had been a legacy, left to the university by Georgios Lassanis, a veteran of the Greek Revolution of 1821 and a minister later, in order to establish a purely dramatic competition giving two prizes: one for the best tragedy, the other for the best comedy. The tragedy should derive its subject-matter from the Byzantine era or the Turkish Domination era. Its style should be like Shakespeare's or Hugo's plays, that is, it should follow the romantic and not the classicist model. In 1865 Romanticism was the dominant aesthetic trend, but, as we have seen, it was interwoven with Classicism. In 1887, a university professor unearthed Lassanis' legacy in order to have another university competition with the view of enhancing the poor dramatic production of the time and perhaps counterbalance the bold tendencies and ideas that the magic of the theater might render dangerously attractive. It started in 1889. The playwriting models, as defined in Lassanis' will, were all right for the sixties, but in 1889 they were outmoded. The result was that the competition revived the stale romantic tendencies and, as this competition lasted for many years, it instigated the production of a great number of pompous iambic tragedies and tasteless comedies. To tell the truth, its criteria got gradually informally modernized. Most of the newly appearing dramatic genres however, vaudeville, revue, the dramatic idyll, and the bourgeois drama, were expelled – the two last not so fanatically. The competition was conducted irregularly in the last decade of the 19th century (1889, 1891, 1896, 1898, 1899), annually between 1900–1905 and one last time in 1910. In the 20th century, the new tendencies in drama and theatre practice made its plays strike the audiences as hopelessly obsolete, but they were compatible with the –partly– conservative spirit of the newly founded Royal Theater (1901) and some prize-winning plays were staged there. To win the prize was profitable, gave publicity and was a good opportunity for a playwright making his debut to have his play staged, usually by a good theater company. On every account it was an honor, but not unconditionally so. During the decade 1890–1900, two female stars dominated the Greek theater (Evangelia Paraskevopoulou and Ekaterini Veroni), both compared by their fans to Sarah Bernhardt. The high tone of the Lassanis' competition tragedies suited their strong talents well and they played quite a few. So the competition managed to contribute to the repertory, but the intellectuals did not appreciate it very much. They chose rather to condemn or attack or satirize the competition through reviews in the press from the beginning to the end, in the 20th century more intensely. At the beginning of the 20th century Romanticism was pronounced dead.

But why had the 19th century playwrights such a schizoid attitude towards Romanticism? Why did they intend to write classically but the result was romantic? They wondered themselves as we have seen, without being able to explain it. We might try to explain it with psychological and sociological criteria. It might be as it happened with the “Sturm und Drang” poets and intellectuals, who wanted to manifest themselves in the world, but the clinging feudal establishment put strong social barriers. Most of them were bourgeois, with special talents and education, who, however, found it very difficult and exhausting to rise to eminence and affluence. They fell in love with delicate aristocratic girls who did not marry them, as their families did not like *mésalliances* with poor poets and artists. Vasiliadis explained this in one of the last writings of his short life: he wrote that this general contemporary discontent and spleen was caused by materialism, which had persuaded people that happiness belonged to this world and not the other. The romantics are melancholic and death lovers because they are really materialists, who desire the best for themselves, but, as they are weak and fail to get it, they lament. He realizes that this romantic pessimism and mourning is really an introverted social and political *Angst*, which seeks a way of expression and not something purely existential, or at least not exclusively (Vasiliadis IV: 203–204).

The next literary generation, of the ‘80s, started out full of vitality and discovered or invented new forms of the previous movements: Classicism developed into Realism and Naturalism. They investigated fearlessly the dark sides of reality but they also enjoyed its prosaic and sensuous pleasures. They married bourgeois girls with humble dowries, they had families and love affairs. They endured the national bankruptcy of 1893, the defeat of the war of 1897, digested the bitter lesson and recruited their strength in order to dominate in cultural life playing something like a Messianic role during Venizelos’ era (1910–1922).

But Romanticism never dies. It gets repeatedly resurrected or reincarnated. The example of Nikos Kazantzakis is characteristic: after experimenting with modern trends like Realism, Naturalism, Symbolism etc. in the first decade of the 20th, he turned again to tragedy, verse or prose or mixed and wrote 14 tragedies on ancient, Byzantine and several subjects. His example was followed in the Mid-war years by other writers, who refreshed it through contemporary (demotic) language, modern scenes and dialogue, psychological to psychoanalytic composition of characters and relations.

Bibliography

- Beaton R., Εισαγωγή στη νεότερη ελληνική λογοτεχνία [Introduction to the history of modern Greek literature], tr. E. Zourgou, M. Spanaki, Nefeli, Athens 1996.
- Chatzipantazis Th., Από του Νείλου μέχρι του Δουνάβεως [From Nile to Danube], vols A1, A2, Panepistimiakes Ekdosis Kritis, Heraklio 2002.
- Chatzipantazis Th., Το ελληνικό ιστορικό δράμα. Από τον 19^ο στον 20^ο αιώνα [Greek historical drama. From 19th to 20th century], Panepistimiakes Ekdosis Kritis, Heraklio 2006.
- Dimaki-Zora M., Σ.Ν. Βασιλειάδης. Η ζωή και το έργο του [S.N. Vasiliadis. His life and work], Kostas and Eleni Ouranis Foundation, Athens 2002.

- Dimaras Konstantinos Th., *Ελληνικός Ρωμαντισμός* [Greek Romanticism], Ermis, Athens 1985.
- Dimaras C.Th., *Ιστορία της νεοελληνικής λογοτεχνίας* [History of modern Greek literature], Ikaros, Athens 1987 (8th ed.).
- Mastrodimitris P., *Ιστορία της νεοελληνικής λογοτεχνίας* [History of modern Greek literature], Domos, Athens 1990 (1976).
- Moullas P., *Les concours poétiques de l'université d'Athènes, 1851–1877*, Archives Historiques de la Jeunesse Greque, Secrétariat Général à la Jeunesse, Athènes 1989.
- Moullas P., *Ρήξεις και συνέχειες. Μελέτες για τον 19^ο αιώνα* [Ruptures and continuities. Papers on 19th century], Sokolis, Athens 1993.
- Petrakou K., *Οι θεατρικοί διαγωνισμοί 1870–1925* [Theatrical competitions 1870–1925], Ellinika Grammata, Athens 1999.
- Petrakou., “Οι κλασικο-ρομαντικές αντιφάσεις του Σπυρίδωνος Βασιλειάδη” [Classical-romantic contradictions of Spyridon Vasiliadis] in *Θεατρικές (σ)τάσεις και πορείες* [Theatrical attitudes and courses], Papazisis, Athens 2007, 15–50.
- Petrakou K., “Drama Competitions in Greece from 1851 to 1950”, *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*, The John Hopkins University Press, vol. 25, No 2, October 2007, σ. 225–242.
- Petrakou K., “Έρωτας και εθνική προδοσία σε δύο έργα του Βερναρδάκη: Μαρία Δοξαπατρή και Ευφροσύνη” [Love and national treason in two plays by Demetrios Vernardakis: *Maria Doxapatri* and *Efrosyni*], *Σχήματα και εικόνες: από τον ρομαντισμό στον μεταμοντερνισμό* [Shapes and images. From Romanticism to Postmodernism], Papazisis. Athens 2015, 15–56.
- Petrakou K., «Ένα ιδιαίζόντως ανατρεπτικό έργο του 19^{ου} αιώνα: Ιουλιανός ο Παραβάτης του Κλέωνος Ραγκαβή» [A peculiarly subversive play of 19th century: Julian the Apostate by Cleon Ragavis], in *Επιστημονικό Συμπόσιο: Ελληνικότητα και ετερότητα: Πολιτισμικές διαμεσολαβήσεις και ‘εθνικός χαρακτήρας’ στον 19^ο αιώνα* [Greekness and otherness: cultural mediations and ‘national character’ in 19th century. Eds Anna Tabaki – Ourania Polikandrioti. Athens 2016, 2nd vol., 435–450.
- Politis L., *Ιστορία της νεοελληνικής λογοτεχνίας* [History of modern Greek literature]. M.I.E.T. Athens 1995 (1978).
- Puchner W. *Τα Σούτσεια* [About Soutsos brothers], Papazisis, Athens 2007.
- Ragavis A.R., *Άπαντα τα φιλολογικά* [Works – Literature], 3rd vol.: Dramatic poetry. Athens 1874.
- Ragavis Cleon 1884. *Θεοδώρα* [Theodora]. Leipzig 1884.
- Ragavis Cleon 1885. *Ηράκλειος* [Heraklios]. Leipzig 1885.
- Sideris Yannis 1990. *Ιστορία του νέου ελληνικού θεάτρου* [History of modern Greek theatre]. Kastaniotis, Athens 1990, 31–32.
- Soutsos A. n.d. *Άπαντα* [Works], Athens, Fexis n.d.
- Tsakonas D., *Επίτομη ιστορία της νεοελληνικής λογοτεχνίας* [Epitome of a History of modern Greek literature], Kactos, Athens 1999.
- Vasiliadis S., *Αττικά νύκτες* [Works – Attica Nights], Athens 1884.
- Vernardakis D., «Προλεγόμενα περί εθνικού ελληνικού δράματος και ιδίως του παρόντος» (1858) [Prologue on Greek drama end especially the present one]. In: *Δράματα* [Dramas], Athens 1903, 48–51, second publication.
- Vlachos A., «Παναγιώτης Σούτσος» [Panagiotis Soutsos]. In: *Ανάλεκτα* [Analects], second vol., Athens 1901, 5–35.

Streszczenie

Współczesny naród grecki został założony w 1828 r., po 7-letniej rewolucyjnej walce z jarzmem osmańskim, która trwała 4 stulecia (od 1453 r.). Był to czas romantyzmu w Europie, prąd, który wspierał ducha rewolucji. Kiedy pierwsze dramaty pojawiły się w małym, wyzwolonym narodzie, Grecy mieli ostatnią rewolucję (która jeszcze się nie skończyła) jako swój przedmiot. Gdy Lord Byron, najbardziej bohaterski z Philhellenes, zmarł niedawno (1824) w Messolonghi, przybył do Grecji, aby pomóc rewolucji i poświęcił życie, a także fortunę dla wielkiego problemu greckiej wolności, stał się legendą (wciąż trwa), a jego poezja i dramaty są wzorem dla greckich poetów i dramaturgów. Nie tylko: przedmowę Victora Hugo do *Cromwella* i jego romantycznych dramatów, greccy pisarze – zwłaszcza *Hernani*, naśladowali w wersjach dotyczących greckich danych i warunków. Przez około dwie dekady prawie wszystkie nowo pojawiające się sztuki były romantyczne. Wkrótce pojawiły się zastrzeżenia, głównie dlatego, że niektórzy europejscy uczeni (najsłynniejszy lub raczej notoryczny Jakob Philipp Fallmerayer) sugerowali, że współcześni Grecy wcale nie byli Grekami ani potomkami czczonych starożytnych Greków, ale Słowian, z powodu mieszania się z innymi rasami przez stulecia. Naukowcy greccy niemal do końca XIX wieku dokładali wszelkich starań, aby udowodnić rodowód językowy i kulturowy. Podnieśli więc sprzeciw wobec romantyzmu (z Bizancjum, epoki dominacji franko-weneckiej lub rewolucji greckiej jako przedmiotu w historycznych sztukach poetyckich) jako obcego i niemoralnego oraz wspierali klasycyzm, wywodzący się ze starożytnej Grecji, kolebki cywilizacji zachodniej. Było takie zakwestionowanie w dramatycznych konkursach prowadzonych przez Uniwersytet Ateński, w których dramat grecki i jego krytyka zostały w dużym stopniu sformułowane. Niektórzy z najważniejszych dramaturgów pisali przedmowy, w których popierali najpierw romantyzm, potem klasycyzm (ale potem pisali sztuki romantyczne, zastanawiając się, jak mogliby pisać wbrew swoim zamiarom). W tym artykule trendy te zostały przeanalizowane z próbą interpretacji kilku wybranych aspektów.

Summary

The modern Greek nation was established in 1828, after a 7-year revolutionary fight against the Ottoman yoke, which had lasted for 4 centuries (since 1453). It was the time of Romanticism in Europe, a current that supported the spirit of the Revolution. When the first dramas appeared in the small liberated nation, they had the recent Revolution (which was not over yet) as their subject one way or the other. As Lord Byron, the most heroic of the Philhellenes, had recently (1824) died in Messolonghi, having come to Greece to assist the revolution and having sacrificed life as well as his fortune to the great issue of Greek freedom, he became a legend (still holding) and his poetry and drama a model for Greek poets and playwrights. Not the only one: Victor Hugo's preface to his *Cromwell* and his romantic plays, especially *Hernani*, were imitated by the Greek writers in prefaces and plays in versions applied to the Greek data and conditions. For two decades or so almost all newly appearing plays were romantic one way or the other. Soon objections were raised, mostly because some European scholars (the most famous or rather notorious being Jakob Philipp Fallmerayer) suggested that modern Greeks were no Greeks at all, not descendant of the worshipped ancient Greeks but rather Slavs, because of intermingling with other races for centuries. The Greek scholars almost for the rest of 19th century made every effort to prove the lineage linguistically and culturally. So they raised objections to Romanticism (with Byzantium, Frankish / Venetian domination era or the Greek Revolution as subject matter in historical poetic plays) as foreign and immoral and supported

Classicism, stemming from ancient Greece, the cradle of Western civilization. There was such a contestation in the dramatic competitions run by the University of Athens, in which the Greek drama and its critique were to a great degree formulated. Some of the most important dramatists wrote prefaces in which they supported first Romanticism, then Classicism (but then they wrote Romantic plays wondering themselves how they could write against their intentions). In this paper these trends is being analyzed with an effort of interpretation from several aspects.

Biography

Kyriaki Petrakou – professor of Theatrology, Department of Theatre Studies National and Kapodistrian University of Athens; Tel. / Fax: 210-9322925; 1 Avriilianis St., Athens 17121

kypetra@theatre.uoa.gr