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FROM RIGAS VELESTINLIS TO IVO ANDRIĆ Serbo-Greek Literary Mutualities

Abstract: The author views Serbo-Greek literary coordinates in separate thematic wholes: the poetical and revolutionary figure of Rigas Velestinlis in Serbian literature, the first Serbian teacher of the Greek language Vukašin Radišić during Serbian and Greek enlightenment, Serbian folk poetry on the Battle of Kosovo in Greek literature, literary cooperation between Serbs and Greeks in the 19th and 20th centuries (Branislav Nušić and Dimitrios Kokkos, Vojislav Rašić and Costas Pasagiannis), literary historical studies of Mihail Laskaris, and, finally, the reception of Andrić's novels and Dučić's poems in Greek literature.

We have considered, first of all, to commence our mutual recognition of Serbo-Greek literary coordinates in the past two centuries with the ancient heritage in the works of Dositej Obradović, the greatest educator in the Balkans and the founder of modern Serbian literature and culture, in order to encompass, respecting a certain chronology, recent Greek translations of poems by Vasko Popa and Miodrag Pavlović. Quite an endeavor for a single lecture. So, we will confine our exposition to the period of literary pervasiveness from Rigas Velestinlis, a Greek poet and revolutionary of the late 18th century, to the opus of Ivo Andrić and the reception of his works in Greek literature in the 1960s.

*The poetical and revolutionary character of Rigas Velestinlis
in Serbian literature*

The earliest traces of Rigas Velestinlis among the Serbs are to be found in manuscripts of verses by poets and poetesses of Greek fanariot and

Serbian bourgeois poetry. Thus the pesmarica of Jakov Ilijin, dated 1807, and kept in the Matica Srpska library in Novi Sad, contains thirteen records of mainly Greek folk verses. Among them is Rigas' war cry *O Thourios Hymnos*, dated June 10, 1803. This transcript is four years older than a Bucharest text from 1807, so it may rightfully be considered the oldest known manuscript record of Rigas' poem about the insurrection. Our manuscript truly carries only selected verses, but it is important as a testimony of the spread of Rigas' war cry in the years before the Greek rise for independence in 1821.

The early phil-Hellenism of Jovan Sterija Popović is reflected in translations of battle verses known as marches (*emvatiria*) Rigas Velestinlis, Adamantios Korais and Jakovakis Rizos Neroulos. Their verses, and others, are compiled in the manuscript collection *Sedmostručni cvetak borećim se Grecima posvećen* (Septuple posy dedicated to the fighting Greeks), written in Vršac, in September and October, 1825. Sterija brought three poems ascribed to Rigas Velestinlis on the first pages of the anthology from the Manuscript Department of Matica Srpska. The most well-known is the one titled *O Jelini, ustanite!* (O Hellens, rise!). Such insurgents and revolutionary messages predetermined Rigas' eventual suffering.

The Austrians' delivery of Rigas to the Turks for execution beneath the walls of fort Kalemegdan was described by Ivo Andrić in his historical essay *Predaja* (Surrender) on the 150th anniversary of his death. Andrić writes beneath the subtitle *Riga od Fere (Rigas Velestinlis)*, in a narrative tone.

„A bulky, tarred Austrian ship... put in on the afternoon of May 9, 1789 under the Danube gates of the city of Belgrade... Eight fettered Greek patriots lay in the dark interior of the ship...

The Austrian sergeant was reading out the names of the Greeks with a German accent, the Turks with their own, and the prisoners yelled them out in Greek... The sergeants were collecting acts on the surrender... At that moment, a harsh voice rose above the murky crowd of fettered prisoners,

–Mr. Lieutenant!

It was Rigas Velestinlis, a blond, broad-shouldered, man, with a broad lion face...

He spoke quickly, as if by heart, carried by his speech, as if every word were a sacred formula from which action sprang.

„...We will die a horrific death maybe even tonight, but there is no disgrace in our misfortune, the shame lies with you. Yes, we will die, surren-

dered or sold, while you go, free and happy, to your Vienna, serve your emperor, pray to your God, live your „cultural“ life, but shame on you, before the world, before history...” writes Ivo Andrić, a message topical to this day.

The first Serbian teacher of the Greek language - Vukašin Radišić

When prince Miloš ordered, on August 22, 1836, that Greek be taught in the Kragujevac secondary school, Vukašin Radišić from Zemun applied for the post on September 27. He said in his request that he spoke the Greek language, as he had taught for three years „the Hellenic-Greek language“.

Radišić composed a book for his subject, *Grčka čitaonica (čitanka) za upotrebljenje srpske junosti* (Greek reader), published in Belgrade, in 1837. On the back of the title page is a thought from a moral in Dositej's third fable on the importance of learning Greek: „This language has been dear to me since youth,” says Dositej, adding „I wish it esteemed by many of our youth.” The book is divided into nine chapters marked in majuscule script (A, B, G etc). The first six chapters contain selected thoughts by Socrates and Plato, Demosthenes, Plutarch and other Greek sages. Chapter seven, titled *Bog* (God), contains Radišić's Greek translation of the philosophical diatribes of Jovan Stejić. Chapter eight contains the translation of an article *O ljubavi* (On love), from Dositej's *Sovjeti zdravoga razuma* (Counsels of a sound mind). The final, ninth, chapter, comprises four poems by New-Greek poet Georgios Sakelarios, whose verse belongs to pre-Romanticism and Classicism. Two short poems by the praised Greek fanariot poet Athanasios Christopoulos are worth mentioning as well. We single out five philosophical educational and scientific articles by New-Greek educator Adamantios Korais, disciple of Jeroteos Dendrinos in Smyrna, who is of a younger generation, though at the same time our Obradović studied there. Vladan Djordjević left us a fuller account of this in his academic prologue speech *Grčka i srpska prosveta* (Greek and Serbian education), 1896, under the heading *Dositej i Korais* (Dositej and Korais).

Serbian folk poetry in Greek literature

When the reform work of Vuk Karadžić was paving its way in European literature and culture, Greek newspapers wrote about the habits and customs, the character and folk poetry of Serbs. The earliest information to reach Greek readers was the translation of Ranke's *Srpska revolucija* (Serbian

revolution), published in *Pandora* magazine (1861), then separately, for thirty years, before a full Serbian translation. A Greek translation of *Žene istoka* (Women of the east), by Dora d'Istrija, was published that same year. The sixth book of the work are titled *Srbi* (Serbs). It was written in the form of epistles, of which there are four. The first epistle, subtitled *Kneževina Srbija* (Principality of Serbia), sent from Belgrade, is based largely on a prose translation of the Kosovo cycle of poems: *Ženidba kneza Lazara* (Wedding of Prince Lazar), *Zidanje Ravanice* (Building Ravanica), *Propast carstva srpskog* (Fall of the Serbian empire) and *Car Lazar i carica Milica* (Tsar Lazar and Tsarina Milica). „These verses, a true epic of Serbian medieval women, admirably characterizes the time when the great princess Jelena was able to enter the political life of Tsar Dušan,” wrote Dora d'Istrija, adding, „Though she never attained the high position held by Jelena, Milica enjoyed great respect from Serbian noblemen... Tsarina Milica was a model noble Serbian woman of the past.” Dora d'Istrija concludes.

After the earliest Greek translations of Serbian mainly lyrical folk poetry, translated from Vuk's original writings by Nikola Tomazeo and Stephanos Kumanudis, in 1862, the first Greek dispute opened about Serbian literature, titled *O srpskoj narodnoj poeziji* (On Serbian folk poetry). The chronology of recording Yugoslav folk poems in recent Greek studies about literature list the dispute, by Joanis Pervanoglous, as the first such text to appear by a Greek author. Professor of New Greek literature at the Athens university, a writer and translator, Joanis Pervanoglous himself stated his sources - N. Tomazeo, L. Ranke, A. Dozon, Talfijeva. His said Tomazeo included in his anthology of Corsican, Toscan, Illyrian and Greek poems a considerable number of translations of Serbian poems into the literary Italian and Greek languages, with various notes. We find the framework of the dispute in the notes appended to individual verses, especially in Tomazeo's introduction to the book *Ilirske pesme* (Illyrian poems).

Three other contributions relevant to our topic were recorded in a span of fifty years. Let us mention first, the poem *Car Lazar i carica Milica*, translated by Achileos Paraschos in 1878, as a kind of mimesis of the Serbian folk poem. The entire poetic rendition was taken over by Anthonios Spiliotopoulos and included in his ethnographic, historical, political and economic study *Serbia* (1912). The author explains in a note that he took over the poem for „its lyricism, suffering of the people, and magnificent verse”.

Let us mention that Spiliotopulos delivered a lecture nearly two decades later, in 1928, in the literary society Parnasos, titled *Usmeno pesništvo*

balkanskih naroda i njegova srodnost sa grčkim (Oral poems of the Balkan peoples and their similarity with Greek). „In a modest prose translation,“ as he himself says, Spiliotopoulos brings us two poems, *Propast carstva srpskog* (Fall of the Serbian empire) and *Zidanje Ravanice* (Building Ravanica). The relics of the martyr-tsar were subsequently transferred to the monastery. The poem itself is „wholly symbolic and presents the revival of Serbian patriotism through the blood of Tsar Lazar; from the memory of his sacrifice, and from the blood of Paleolog with us (Greeks), the tree of the national insurrection grew,“ Spiliotopoulos concludes.

We wish to add to the Kosovo cycle of Serbian folk poems an artistic creation - the poem *Miloš Obilić i Markos Bocaris* (Miloš Obilić and Markos Botsaris). Its author is poet Dimitrios Kokkos, whose sympathy towards Serbs has been expressed in the poem. Namely, he personally visited Kruševac on the occasion of the 500th anniversary of the Prince's dinner and the Battle of Kosovo, on June 28, 1889. He wrote the poem in Kruševac, the city of Lazar, comparing two heroes - the Greek Botsaris and the Serbian Obilić. The poem was translated into the Serbian immediately by none other than Branislav Nušić himself, and the translation was published simultaneously in three local magazines - *Naše doba*, *Nova Zeta*, and *Odjek*, two years before the original Greek poem was published, in 1891.

Literary cooperation between Vojislav Rašić and Costas Pasagiannis

During the First World War there appeared in Greece a series of translations of prose and poetry by Serbian writers. Most of the translations and articles about Serbian writers were published separately, during the war, in magazines and daily newspapers such as the *Kerkyraiki Anthologia*, *Nea Hellas*, *Elephtheros Typos*. On the other side, articles by Greek authors on Serbian literary themes were immediately transposed and published in the *Srpske novine* in Corfu and the *Srpski glasnik* in Salonika.

Mihail Laskaris had already remarked that deserving most credit in this task was writer and journalist Costas Pasagiannis, a fiery friend of the Serbs, who had published a great many texts about Vuk Karadžić, Petar Petrović Njegoš, Branko Radičević, Vojislav Ilić and Vojislav Rašić in the *Nea Hellas* in 1916 and 1918. All the articles and translations were comprised subsequently into his anthology *Servika tragudia* (Serbian poems). Instead of a prologue, Pasagiannis introduced a chapter titled *First acquaintances*, where he describes his first meeting with the Serbian army, in Corfu, in January, 1916. Arriving on the island, with the courageous Serbian fight-

ers. was Voivode Radomir Putnik. Pasagiannis dedicated his welcoming speech to Putnik, endeavoring, as he himself said, to convey his own and the sympathy of his people in a lyrical address. „Welcome, old man, you tireless leader of a heroic nation, to the island of Homer’s kingdom... The Greek people, who in their heritage carry admiration for heroism, offer their dearest sympathies to the suffering Serbian fighters.“ Pasagiannis continues, „Since then I have become more closely acquainted with archimandrite Miron and the Greek-educated Serbian journalist and writer, Vojislav Rašić, who have, the latter especially, helped me enormously in my study of Serbian literature. I owe to their help this small contribution about the Serbian language and poetry.“ The Greek author defines the linguistic renaissance of the Serbs in the early 19th century as follows, „The Serbs, like us Greeks, have had their linguistic question. But... they did not eternalize it as a great educational and national loss of their fatherland. They removed scholastic teachers with their pseudo-Latin and Russo-Slavic and themselves paved the way for linguistic development“. What Vuk Karadžić did for the Serbian popular language, was done for the Greek by Nikos Politis, a folklorist, with Vuk’s energy and persistence, and literary author Aleksis Palis; Djura Daničić confirmed the victory of the Serbian national language with the seal of science, and Joannis Psycharis did so among the Greeks.

The youngest bearer of Vuk’s standard in the linguistic revolution was the noble and sentimental Branko Radičević. The „first poet with long hair in Serbia,“ as Pasagiannis said, became the greatest lyric poet in the Serbian renaissance. Greek poets Dyonisios Solomos, and especially Julios Typaldos, at times resemble Branko Radičević. Pasagiannis offers merely a few of Branko’s lyrical poems in his free translation - *Devojka na studencu* (Maiden at a spring), *Sretan pastir* (Happy shephard), *Mini Karadžić u spomenicu* (In memory of Mina Karadžić), *Gusla* (actually, the beginning of the poem *Gojko*), then *Ukor* (Reprimand) and *Vragolije* (Pranks).

Pasagiannis singles out Vojislav Ilić as the best representative of the poetic family of Jovan Ilić. In addition to the usual facts of his life, the Greek reader learns that Vojislav wrote lyrical, satirical and patriotic poems. We single out *Glasnik slobode* (Crier of freedom) of his two poems in the alphabetical expression of Pasagiannis’ translations. One has no difficulty discerning that the poem voices a strong poetical feeling inspired by the death of Rigas Velestinlis at the Belgrade Fortress.

Today forgotten as a poet, Vojislav Rašić is known as an exhilarated phil-Hellenic and translator of Greek poems. Rašić’s love for Greece and the

Greek language was inspired by three Serbian phil-Hellenics, his teachers: Stevan Kačanski, the poet of *Panjelinion*, historians Panta Srećković and Jovan Turoman, who taught him the Greek language.

Studying relations in the Balkans, Rašić advocated the opinion that the Greeks, who gave the greatest apostle of the Balkan idea and its first victim - Rigas Velesinlis, could be the Balkan nation most suitable to implement unity in the region. Overwhelmed with enthusiasm, he yielded to the Greco-Serbian idea. He wrote phil-Hellenic contributions and discourses, translated Greek writers, delivered inspiring speeches at the Belgrade High School about Suliotes, the Greek uprising in 1821, and contemporary Hellenism.

Costas Pasagiannis sees a valuable example of Rašić's early phil-Hellenism of in his anthology *Iz grčke slobodijade* (From the Greek liberative), published in Belgrade, 1891. The anthology, with a dedication to the Serbian and Greek youth fraternity, includes his own translations of *Oda Bajronu* by Dyonisios Solomos, *Bekstvo* and *Samuil* by Aristotelis Valaoritis, three poems by Rigas Velesinlis, the earlier mentioned *Ratnička pesma* (War song), then *Napred, grčka deco*, and *Dolazi, braćo, trenutak slobode*. Following are *Kleft* (Kleftis), by Alexandros Rizos Rangavis, *Oda Rigi* by Georgios Zalokostas, *Arcadia* by Panagios Vergotis and an *armatolika tragoudia* by Spiros Lambros.

In the article about his Serbian friend, Pasagiannis says nothing of Rašić's two books published in Novi Sad in 1919. One book is titled *Sa viteških majskih grobova u Solunu* (From the chivalric May graves in Salonika). It contains mainly Rašić's memories of Salonika in 1913. The book's chief message might be concisely conveyed through the moving inscription, „Many a Greek mother, sister or sweetheart come to the grave of their loved ones, and just as soon consider it their duty to do the same for the grave of the Serbian brother, saying, ‘receive this from me and my son, brother, or husband, when your own folks cannot come’“.

Rašić's second book, *Uspomene sa Krfa* (Memories from Corfu), says in the subtitle *Srpsko-jelinsko prijateljstvo iz 1916-1918*, (Serbo-Greek friendship between 1916-1918) that the articles composed under the same heading was published „in a separate book in Greek, in Corfu, early 1919, by Mihail V. Landos, and here everything is translated.“ First, Landos' article from the newspaper *Kerkyraiki icho* was taken over, titled *Ite, paides* (Go, children). „There, with those words,“ says Landos, „our glorious forefathers said goodbye to their heroic children when they were heading for glory. Those

same words, more than anywhere else, become you today - noble children, of brave and glorious Serbia!" These words of patriotic blessing were spoken to Serbian soldiers who were leaving Greece and its hospitality after five years of war and combat. „Go, children! All Corfu loves you and follows you to the path of your country's happiness," Landos proudly concludes his inspirational address.

Exalted by these warm words of love toward all Serbs, Rašić responds in a no less inspiring text, titled *Krv i ljubav* (Blood and love). „Your excellent pen and noble thoughts," he says to Landos, „have once again served our common cause... It should be cherished today more than ever, because it comes from our blood and our love. Anyhow, I have been working on it for about thirty years already, which is enough for you to always understand me! Because I never forget the wise principle: 'If we wish to serve our country, let us be sure to show it!'" Thus Rašić leafs through the pages of our common past, seeking a moral and message for future generations of Serbians and Greeks.

Several reports were written in the First World War on the poet and diplomat Jovan Dučić and his presence in Greek literature and culture. Almost all of Dučić's poems in prose were translated in those times, Laskaris noted, in various almanachs and magazines (such as *Hemerologion Skokou*, *Hellenikos Kozmos*, *Phylla*, and others). Several articles were published about Dučić, an official then of the Serbian legation in Athens, of which one deserves to be mentioned. It was published in *Noumas* magazine, 1914, by the notable publicist Mihail Rhodas. Dučić himself left us three highly inspirational travel-logs in epistolary form, from Corfu, Delphi and Athens.

Reception of Andrić's works in Greek literature

Andrić's first short story to be transposed in Greek, as far as we know, is *Most na Žepi* (Bridge over the Žepa). It was published as late as 1954, in the September issue of Athenian magazine *Nea Estia* (New hearth), as the first of a dozen translations of literary works by Serbian writers, titled *Savremena jugoslovenska književnost* (Contemporary Yugoslav literature). The introductory note says that the selection and translation of the writers Ivo Andrić, Branko Ćopić, Mihailo Lalić and others, was done by writer and journalist Jorgos Pratsikas. He translated Andrić's interview to our newspaper *Mladost* (Youth), titled *Moje zanimanje i moja umetnost* (My profession and my art). Signing the article in initials, Pracikas previously noted that

„Youth magazine *Mladost* published an interview with novelist Ivo Andrić in 1958 on the following subject: How I became what I am today and why I like my calling? The reply of the Yugoslav writer who won the Nobel prize for literature in 1961 is exceptional.“

Chronologically, before 1961, the short story *Snopići* (Sheafs) was translated under a different heading - *Dobro iverje* (Good Smithereens), in *Nova epoha* magazine (1959). We know the translator is a M. Katramandos, who used a nom de plume, Kolgias Nisiotis.

Editor of *Nea Estia* Petros Charis carries in full Pracikas' earlier published literary article on Andrić in the November issue, 1961. Several months after, Petros Charis first recalls it was confirmed once again that spiritual authors were the best ambassadors of a nation. „When the plane landed (on Athens airport), an elderly gentleman came out; we knew he was nearing seventy, but we had no idea he would be so simple, modest, so restrainfully cordial, so human,“ said the article, subtitled *Pisac i čovek* (Writer and man).

The first novel by Andrić to be transposed into Greek is *Na Drini cuprija* (A Bridge over the Drina). We know of two translations: one was by Kosmas Politis (the pen name of writer Paris Taveludis), and the other by Constantin Meraneos, writer of philosophy, translator and publicist. Politis began publishing his translation on November 20, 1961, in Athenian daily *Tahydromos* (Herald). According to explanations from the translations, both Politis and Meraneos departed from the French translation by George Lucien, *Il est un pont sur la Drina* (There is a bridge over the Drina). This translation was literally transposed into the Greek title - *Ine ena jefiri ston Drino*. Many places congruent in both translations, the Greek and French, differ, in philology and style, from the original. Prominent elements of similarity between the French and Greek translations are Lucien's notes to the translation. Namely, not infrequently does Meraneos transpose parts and details from the notes of the French translator into his own context. Such divergences from the original narrative course are found in the Greek translation of *Travnička hronika* (Chronicle of Travnik), which Meraneos translated with Leno Politis, most probably through French mediator Michel Glušević.

The comparatively slight knowledge in Greece of Andrić as a lyricist is characteristic of the reception of his meditative opus. Only two excerpts are known from his lyrical prose *Ex ponto* and the poem *Povratak* (Return). These translations, by Aris Dikteos, published in the *Nea Estia*, have also been taken over from the French, from the *Antologija jugoslovenske književnosti* (Anthology of Yugoslav literature), by Miodrag Ibrovac.

Let us here consider Andrić's meeting with Greek writers in Belgrade, fall 1963. It is interesting to note how the meeting was experienced and noted by author of the novel *Eoliki gi*, Ilias Venezis, in his travel records *Putovanja u Rusiju, Dalmaciju Švajcarsku i Englesku* (Travels to Russia, Dalmatia, Switzerland and England), published in Athens 1973, in the year of the writer's death. We cite the following lines. „The last evening in Yugoslavia. In Belgrade. Ivo Andrić was waiting for us in the garden of the writers' club, surrounded by older and younger fellow writers. Dušan Matić, an imposing personality among Yugoslav writers, was there, too...And Ivo Andrić, the authentic glory of Yugoslav writers, smiled paternally, spoke softly, commenting about events and people with great magnanimity and kindness; he spoke of foreign writers opposing him since his candidacy for the Nobel prize; he told us of the conflict that apparently existed in the Swedish academy regarding primacy (between) poetry and prose in our times. He called to memory days of joy and fatigue in Sweden, Greece and Egypt.“

So, Andrić's work found a place in Greek literature and culture when he became a Nobel laureate in 1961. In addition to the translations and Meraneos' preface to *Travnička hronika*, other critical writings or essays on Andrić's historical prose and any influence it might have had on younger Greek writers is unknown. But, this is a subject for itself, to become topical only when the works of the first Balkan Nobel laureate are translated in Greek from the original.

We are left to conclude with a recollection of what we have said in the introduction that the paper merely set the outlines of literary forms of cooperation and ties between Serbs and Greeks in a particularly rich but also dramatic period of their history. These outlines have left out numerous writings and translations of prose and dramatic works on both sides, and scientific contributions. However, we should strive to keep the centuries of vivid activities on cultural rapprochement between the two peoples a permanent inspiration.

Translated by Dragana Vulićević

ОД РИГЕ ВЕЛЕСТИНЛИСА ДО ИВЕ АНДРИЋА

Резиме

Српско-грчке књижевне узајамности биле су условљене културно-историјским и друштвено-економским токовима у XIX и XX веку. Било је то време јаке грчке дијаспоре на српском тлу, време буђења националне свести и ослободилачких покрета два народа и ратних вихора на балканском поднебљу. Аутор је, стога, своја истраживања усмерио на одређене тематске целине везане за поједине историјске, просветене и књижевне личности од значаја за прожимање култура српског и грчког народа. Тако је најпре осветљен песнички и револуционарни лик Риге Велестинлиса у српској књижевности (В. Илић, И. Андрић, С. Велмар-Јапковић), затим *Први српски учитељ грчког језика код Срба* (В. Радишић, *Грчка чинијанка*, 1837), *Српско народно јесништво у грчкој књижевности* (Н. Томасо, Ст. Куманудис, Ј. Перваноглус), *Књижевна сарадња В. Рашића и К. Пасајаниса* и *Рецепција Андрићевих дела у грчкој књижевности* (*Ex Ponto, На Дрини ћурија, Травничка хроника*).