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Dostoevsky in Greece. A Brief History of Reception (1877-1929)

The story of Dostoevsky's reception among Greek readers begins in 1877, a year intertwined with the Russo-Turkish War (1877-1878), which sparked the first commentary on the Russian author. The endpoint of this article is 1929, a pivotal year in modern Greek literary history, marking the emergence of the new literary generation known as the Generation of the '30s. This literary shift, coupled with a decline in Dostoevsky translations, a growing critical engagement with his topics and techniques, and, what is the most important, emerging intertextual dialogue, marked a transformation in the author's reception in Greece.

After the initial reference to Dostoevsky (1877),¹ which is closely tied to the unique historical and cultural relations between Greece and Russia, as well as Greece's immediate interest in a political issue that was also a major concern for Dostoevsky at the time: the Eastern Question, specifically the fate of Constantinople following the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, nearly a decade passed before the Russian author began to attract the attention of critics and translators.² The sparse mentions between 1877 and 1886 are further confirmed

1 ANON., "Ἰδιαιτέρα ἀλληλογραφία Εφημερίδος", *Εφημερίς*, 3,5.1877.

2 Mentions of Dostoevsky began appearing in the Greek press as early as the 1870s. The reception of the author in Greece should not be considered delayed, especially when compared to other European countries, with the exception of Germany, where the first references to Dostoevsky emerged earlier. For details on the author's reception in Germany, see: Виктор В. ДУДКИН и Константин М. АЗАДОВСКИЙ, "Достоевский в Германии (1846-1921)", in Илья С. Зильберштейн *et al.* (под ред.), *Ф. М. Достоевский: Новые материалы и исследования* («Литературное наследство», т. 86) (Москва: ИМЛИ РАН, 1973, с. 659-740). In England, for instance, the first reference to the Russian writer dates to 1875, when *The Athenaeum* published a report by its Russian correspondent, Eugene Schuyler, concerning Dostoevsky's novel *The Adolescent* (See Helen MUCHNIC, *Dostoevsky's English Reputation* [New York: Octagon Books, 1969]). "Dostoevsky [...] remained almost entirely unknown in France until the mid-1880s" (Alexander MCCABE, *Dostoevsky's French Reception from Vogüé, Gide, Shostov, and Berdyaev to Marcel, Sartre, and Camus. 1880-1959* (doctoral dissertation, University of Glasgow, 2013). Interestingly, the first commentary on Dostoevsky appeared even earlier, in 1869, in Italy, see: Стефано АЛОЭ, "Первые этапы знакомства с Ф. М. Достоевским в Италии", in *Достоевский и мировая культура*, № 15 (Санкт-Петербург: Серебряный век, 2000), с. 141-155.

by the news of his death in 1881, which went almost unnoticed in the Greek press.³ Reports of his death appeared in the sections of magazines and newspapers alongside other foreign news, likely sourced from the Russian and European press.⁴ By comparison, the death of Tolstoy prompted numerous texts dedicated to his life and work by prominent figures of Greek intellectual life, such as Kostis Palamas,⁵ Grigorios Xenopoulos,⁶ and Pavlos Nirvanas.⁷ However, towards the end of the 1880s, there was a gradual increase in the public's interest in Dostoevsky's works, particularly after the publication of the translation of *Crime and Punishment* by Alexandros Papadiamantis in 1889.⁸

The most significant factors that encouraged the spread of Dostoevsky's work, and Russian literature in general during the last two decades of 19th century were: 1) the necessity to adapt Greek intellectual and social life to European standards, 2) the distancing from France's exclusive influence, 3) the opening towards the "northern" intellectual horizons of Europe, and 4) the aesthetic pursuits of the Generation of the 1880s, which could no longer be satisfied by the romanticism of previous decades nor by the idyllic depictions of rural Greece. In the last decades of the 19th century, among Russian authors, the dominant figure was Turgenev, who at that time was also highly successful in France. Then, Tolstoy took the lead, but more as a social thinker and philosopher rather than a literary figure. Dostoevsky became a part of the broader reading experience only during the first decade of the interwar period.

The Russian author was presented to the Greek public as a writer of "highly realistic" works, where reality was portrayed objectively and accurately. The image promoted of him aligned with the following aesthetic demands of the time:

- 3 News of the author's death was reported by only three Greek publications: ANON., "Χρονικά", *Παρνασσός*, τομ. 2, Φεβρ. 1881, σ. 189; ANON., "Ειδήσεις", *Εφημερίς*, 16.3.1881; ANON., "Φιλολογία, Επιστήμη, Καλλιτεχνία", *Δελτίον της Εστίας*, 1.3.1881, σ. 1.
- 4 Many years later, Kleon Paraschos, referring to Dostoevsky's success in the West, characteristically writes that the author had to die and be deified in his homeland and "there should also happen to be a French ambassador there, a writer, de Vogüé, to begin to become the greatest Russian writer known only in 1890, in France, and from France throughout the world" (να τύχει να είναι και Γάλλος πρέσβης εκεί, ένας λογοτέχνης, ο de Vogüé, για ν' αρχίσει να γίνεται ο μεγαλύτερος ρώσος συγγραφέας γνωστός μόλις κατά το 1890, στη Γαλλία, και απ' τη Γαλλία σε όλο τον κόσμο). Κλέων ΠΑΡΑΣΧΟΣ, "Μας αγνοούν στην Ευρώπη", *Νεοελληνικά Γράμματα*, 21.9.1940, σ. 1-3.
- 5 Κωστής ΠΑΛΑΜΑΣ, "Τύρο στον Τολστόη", *Καλλιτέχνης*, Δεκέμ. 1910, σ. 261-263; Κωστής ΠΑΛΑΜΑΣ, "Τολστόης", *Ο Νουμάς*, 21.11.1910, τομ. 413, σ. 225-227.
- 6 Γρηγόρης ΞΕΝΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ, "Ο μέγας Τολστόϊ", *Αθήναι*, 7.11.1910.
- 7 Παύλος ΝΙΡΒΑΝΑΣ, "Άέων Τολστόϊ. 1828-1910", *Παναθήναια*, τομ. 244, 30.11.1910, σ. 99-103.
- 8 Θεόδωρος ΔΟΣΤΟΓΕΦΕΣΚΗ, *Το Έγκλημα και η Τιμωρία*, μτφρ. Α. Παπαδιαμάντης, *Εφημερίς*, 14.04.1889-01.08.1889.

precision in observation, direct oversight of social injustice and corruption, rejection of excessive imagination in the depiction of people or events, portrayal of the feelings and ideas of society, and description of characters as living witnesses of the era.⁹ On one hand, he was discussed as an author who fostered the cultivation of realistic consciousness, and on the other hand, he was part of a mechanism that rejected romantic works – mostly translated from French – which were labeled as “literary cholera”¹⁰ and harmful to readers. In response to these aesthetic demands, Dostoevsky was compared to Zola, whose work had already reached the Greek public through the translation of *Nana* (1879),¹¹ which caused a “revolution” in Greek literature at the time. Writing about the waves of foreign literature that arrived in Greece during the last decades of the 19th century, Palamas observed that the first wave brought Zola, while the second brought Dostoevsky.¹²

Beyond the points of convergence between the French and Russian writers, Greek critics also identified differences, particularly Dostoevsky’s skill in psychologically dissecting his characters. Emmanuel Rhoides, comparing the Russian author with the French naturalists, remarked that while the latter “stripped their heroes and heroines of their clothes, sometimes even of their undershirts, Dostoevsky strips off their very skin.”¹³ The attention to the psychological depiction of his characters, one of the innovative tendencies of Dostoevsky’s work, did not go unnoticed by other scholars of the time. Recognizing the importance of depicting both the external and internal realities in the Russian writer’s work, Greek intellectuals tended to place it within the framework of subjective realism. Thus, Mihail Mitsakis described him as a writer who is “the most extreme of realists”, but also “the foremost of idealists”.¹⁴ Palamas also referred to Dostoevsky’s prose from the perspective of blending objective and subjective elements in his aesthetically profound literary expression.¹⁵

9 Γρηγόρης Ξενοπούλος, “Το έργο του Παπαδιαμάντη”, *Παναθήναια*, τομ. 248, 31.1.1911, σ. 217.

10 Θεόδωρος Βελλιανίτης, “Σύγχρονος ρωσική φιλολογία”, *Παρνασσός*, τομ. 5, February 1889, σ. 253-274.

11 The publication of the serialized translation of Zola’s novel in *Rambagas* had provoked strong reactions from a segment of the reading community. It provided an opportunity for significant intellectuals of the period – such as Angelos Vlachos – to offer vigorous responses to the issue of naturalism. (Άγγελος Βλάχος, “Η φυσιολογική σχολή και ο Ζολά: επιστολή προς Επαρχιώτην”, *Εστία*, τομ. 207, 16.12.1879, σ. 789-795).

12 Βάρδας Φώκας [=Κ. Παλάμας], “Ένας θάνατος”, *Εστία*, 11.12.1897.

13 Εμμανουήλ Ροΐδης, “Δοστογιέφσκη και το έργο του Έγκλημα και τιμωρία”, *Εφημερίς*, 13.4.1889.

14 Μιχαήλ Μητσακής, “Ολίγα λόγια”, *Τό Άστυ*, 1.2.1895.

15 Παλάμας, “Γύρο στον Τολστόη”, σ. 261-263.

In addition to the comments provoked by Dostoevsky's aesthetic writing characteristics, during the initial phase of his reception, there was also some interest in his political ideas. Specifically, attention was focused on the Russian author's views regarding the fate of Constantinople, which were met with negative responses.¹⁶ The negative reception of these ideas stemmed from fears that Greek national interests would be jeopardized if the Russians laid claim to Constantinople. As a result, these ideas were rarely framed within the context of Dostoevsky's concept of the "universal idea", which, according to him, involved the ultimate union of humanity and the creation of a universal brotherhood. Although this was a notion with positive content, grounded in Christian values of love and self-sacrifice, the "universal idea" elicited negative reactions from the Greek public, with the sole exception of Palamas.¹⁷ Dostoevsky's pan-humanist views were mainly interpreted as narrow nationalism, a Pan-Slavic vision, imperialist ambitions, a fantasy of the Russian soul, and evidence of the author's subjugation to Tsarist autocracy, with even the authenticity of his ideas being questioned.

The cultural activity of two groups of intermediaries played an important role in the reception of Dostoevsky: the Russian-speaking and the Western-oriented.¹⁸ The former, a product of the unique Greek-Russian cultural and historical relations, participated in both cultures and bridged the gap between Greek and Russian literary life with their activities. Their mediatory role was multifaceted. They contributed to the dissemination of Dostoevsky's works through translations, critical essays, news reports, chronicles, articles, and speeches. Notably, their writings were based on Russian sources, which were largely unknown to the Greek public. These intermediaries were mostly minor literary figures (e.g., Nikos Kastrinos or Anna Stamatellatou), who became known primarily due to their mediating role.

The group of Western-oriented intermediaries consisted of prominent figures of Greek intellectual life. Unlike the Russian-speaking intellectuals, they were a product of the longstanding dependence of Greek literary life on the West, especially France. These individuals were typically intellectuals who

16 For the Eastern Question and its relation to Dostoevsky's reception in Greece, see: Зорка Б. ШЛИВАНЧАНИН, "Рецепция Ф. М. Достоевского как политического мыслителя в Греции", *Кафедра византийской и новогреческой филологии*, № 1-2 (3), 2018, с. 159-168.

17 W [= К. ПАЛАМАС], "Και πάλιν προφήται", *Εμπρός*, 17.6.1918. In this specific text, Palamas mentions that Dostoevsky was a "universal humanist to the point of obsession" (πανανθρωπιστής μέχρι μανίας).

18 For more, see: Zorka ŠLJIVANČANIN, "Cultural Mediators' Contribution to the Reception of Russian Literature in Greece", *Akropolis*, том. 1, 2017, σ. 158-168.

maintained frequent contact with Western countries – primarily France and Germany, and less often England and Italy – through their professions or studies. However, even those who did not travel abroad (e.g., Palamas) kept up with developments in the Western intellectual scene because their knowledge of foreign languages gave them access to foreign magazines and newspapers (e.g., *La Revue des Revues*) and foreign books, which were available in Greek bookstores (e.g., Eleftheroudakis in Athens). In contrast to the Russian speaking intellectuals, the mediating role of the Western-oriented intermediaries was one-dimensional, as they primarily operated as critics or translators. Western-oriented intermediaries in Greece engaged with Dostoevsky's work under the influence of French, German, and, to a lesser extent, Italian and English criticism and translation efforts.¹⁹ This is why the most significant translation event of Dostoevsky's first reception phase, the translation of the novel *Crime and Punishment* (1889), arrived in Greece via France, as a product of the cultural relations between the two countries.

The 1889 translation of *Crime and Punishment* into Greek was pivotal for the reception of Dostoevsky, not only during its initial phase but even up to the present day. When the novel was translated in Greece, it encountered a “horizon of expectations” shaped (or distorted) by French romantic novels. From this perspective, it is not surprising that eighteen promotional texts appeared, attempting to familiarize readers with the “high realism” of Dostoevsky's literary world. If the hypothesis that Papadiamantis was the author of these publications holds true,²⁰ it gives us access to a critical reading of *Crime and Punishment* from the perspective of the Skiathos writer. This reveals the levels at which his original work, specifically *The Murderess* (*Η Φόνισσα*, 1903), was influenced by *Crime and Punishment*. In this sense, the way Dostoevsky's novel is presented in these publications is of great interest. It is worth mentioning that their author focuses on the following points: 1) the narrative focus on the perpetrator rather than the victim, 2) the connection of the crime both to social factors and the mental state of the perpetrator, 3) the depiction of characters' actions as logical consequences of their circumstances, 4) the emphasis on in-

19 The influence of Italy is most prominent in the Ionian Islands, whereas the impact of English translations and critical reception of Dostoevsky's works is more evident in Cyprus, which was under British colonial rule from 1878 to 1960. For further details on the reception of Dostoevsky in Cyprus: Zorka SLJIVANCANIN, “Ο Φ. Μ. Ντοστογιέφσκι και η Κύπρος”, *Νέα Εποχή*, τομ. 352, 2022, σ. 65-72.

20 Manolis Halvatzakis is the first to support this opinion. For more, see: Μανώλης ΧΑΛΒΑΤΖΑΚΗΣ, *Ο Παπαδιαμάντης – μέσα από το έργο του* (Αλεξάνδρεια, [self publishing], 1960).

ternal punishment through guilt, and 5) the emphasis on an episode involving the murder of a child, which never actually occurred in the novel.

This particular translation, as historical evidence of Papadiamantis' relationship with Dostoevsky's work, encouraged discussions regarding the creative meeting between the Greek and Russian authors.²¹ Already in 1894,²² Papadiamantis was characterized as the "Dostoevsky of Greece" in an anonymous publication in *Akropolis*.²³ Starting from this publication and continuing to the present, a significant part of the process of Dostoevsky's reception in Greece has been shaped in the context of a joint examination of him with Papadiamantis. The critical texts written up to the end of the Interwar period highlight the following points of convergence: 1) the emotional power of their writing,²⁴ 2) the vivid realistic depiction, melancholy, religious worldview, psychological affinity, and the incorporation of biographical elements into their literary work,²⁵ 3) the polyphony of their characters and their independence from the author's voice, with characters serving as carriers of specific spiritual states and emotional dispositions, offering emotional power and philosophical stimulation to readers, and²⁶ 4) the affinity – almost identification – of the Slavic and modern Greek soul.²⁷

During the same period, critical texts also circulated that attempted to refute the similarities between Dostoevsky and Papadiamantis, primarily through a comparison of *Crime and Punishment* and *The Murderess*. According to these texts, the points of divergence between the two authors are as follows: 1) the

21 For more information about Papadiamantis' translation, see: Zorka ŠLJIVANČANIN, "Crime and Punishment in Greece, 1889-1912", *Mundo Eslovo*, vol. 16, 2017, pp. 235-244 (access: <https://revistaseug.ugr.es/index.php/meslav/article/view/1700/15425>); I. B. ΡΟΥΖΙΤΣΚΙ, Ζ. ΣΛΙΒΑΤΣΑΝΙΝ, Δ. ΜΑΡΟΥΛΗΣ, "Η απόδοση της ιδιολέκτου του Ντοστογιέφσκι στα ελληνικά", *Στέπα*, τευχ. 14, 2019, σ. 391-396.

22 ANON., "Ένα διήγημα", *Ακρόπολις*, 6.1.1894.

23 According to Sofia Bora, the anonymous editor of the publication under discussion was Vlasis Gavielidis, director of *Acropolis*, with whom Papadiamantis worked closely. For more, see: Σοφία ΜΠΟΡΑ, *Ο Παπαδιαμάντης και οι αναγνώστες του: Ζητήματα ιστορίας της πρόσληψης του έργου του (1879-1961)*, τομ. 2, unpublished doctoral dissertation (Αθήνα: ΕΚ-ΠΑ, 2008).

24 Κωστής ΠΑΛΑΜΑΣ, "Αλέξανδρος Παπαδιαμάντης", *Τέχνη*, τομ. 6, Απρ. 1899, σ. 138-142.

25 See the Philèas LEBESQUE's column in *Mercure de France*, under the title: "Lettres Néo-Grecques" for the following dates: 16.11.1908 (pp. 355-359), 1.7.1911 (pp. 200-205), 16.8.1913 (pp. 866-871), 15.4.1934 (pp. 421-429). The aforementioned texts were translated and published in the Greek press.

26 See: Μιλτιάδης ΜΑΛΑΚΑΚΗΣ "Αλέξανδρος Παπαδιαμάντης", *Νέον Άστυ*, 1911.

27 See: Φάνης ΜΙΧΑΛΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ, "Ο Παπαδιαμάντης. Ένα ψυχομετρικό σημείωμα", *Σήμερα*, 1933, σ. 19.

reasons that drive the protagonists to commit murder – Fragkogiannou is driven by mental delusion, while Raskolnikov by his criminal instincts,²⁸ 2) the portrayal of Fragkogiannou as a native type, in contrast to Raskolnikov, who represents a universal character, and also the way they handle the problem of evil,²⁹ and 3) the absence of a socially educational role in Papadiamantis' existential concerns, in contrast to Dostoevsky, and the difference in the former's "devotional faith" compared to the latter's torturous "Christianity".³⁰

Apart from the translation of the novel *Crime and Punishment*, Dostoevsky's short stories also attracted translational attention until 1918. Just four months after the release of Papadiamantis' translation of *Crime and Punishment*, the newspaper *Akropolis* published another work by the Russian author. On December 16, 1889, in anticipation of the upcoming Christmas celebration, "Δια τα καϋμένα τα παιδάκια. Η γιόλκα του Χριστού" (*The Beggar Boy at Christ's Christmas Tree*) was published, translated by Theodoros Vellianitis.³¹ Nevertheless, this was not his first short story rendered in Greek. In fact, three years earlier, in 1886, the Greek readers had their first opportunity to engage with Dostoevsky's literary style through the translation of the "Το δέντρο των Χριστουγέννων και γάμος" (*A Christmas Tree and a Wedding*) translated again by Vellianitis.³² Most likely, both translations were rendered from Russian, in contrast to "Ο μουζικός Μάρεϋ (Ανάμνησις Σιβηρίας)" (*Peasant Marey*),³³ published in 1888, which was translated from France by unknown translator. Dostoevsky's two Christmas stories were repeatedly republished in subsequent years, largely due to the common practice among Greek publishers of releasing works with festive themes during the holiday season, particularly for Christmas and New Year's. Through these stories, Greek readers were introduced to two key elements of Dostoevsky's artistic thought: social criticism and existential reflection. It is possible that, during this early phase of Dostoevsky's reception, Greek holiday-themed literature was insufficient to meet readers' demands. Under these circumstances, foreign holiday-themed short stories, including

28 See: Κωνσταντίνος ΧΑΤΖΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ, "Παπαδιαμάντης", *Νέα Ζωή*, Νοέμβ. 1912 – Ιαν. 1913, σ. 33-34.

29 ΜΙΧΑΛΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ, σ. 19.

30 See: Αγγέλος ΤΕΡΖΑΚΗΣ, "Το πρόβλημα Παπαδιαμάντη", *Νεοελληνικά Γράμματα*, τομ. 11, 13.2.1937, σ. 2.

31 Θεόδωρος ΔΟΣΤΑΓΙΕΦΣΚΗ, "Δια τα καϋμένα τα παιδάκια. Η γιόλκα του Χριστού", *Ακρόπολις*, Δεκ. 16, 1889.

32 Θεόδωρος ΔΟΣΤΑΓΙΕΦΣΚΗ, "Δένδρον των Χριστουγέννων", *Ακρόπολις Φιλολογική*, Δεκ. 24, 1886.

33 Θεόδωρος ΔΟΣΤΑΓΙΕΦΣΚΗ, "Ο μουζικός Μάρεϋ (Ανάμνησις Σιβηρίας)", *Φιλολογική Ακρόπολις*, 10.4.1888, σ. 63-165.

Dostoevsky's, found fertile ground for dissemination. However, it is noteworthy that the author's short stories, outside the realm of holiday-themed literary production, did not particularly captivate the interest of Greek translators. Of the five collections of Russian short stories published in Greek up to 1923, only one included his short stories.

In the context of Dostoevsky's reception in translation up to 1918, the Greek versions of *White Nights* and *The House of the Dead* hold particular significance. The repeated publications of these works, either in full or as excerpts, confirm their resonance with the interests of the Greek literary scene, whose writers during this period can be categorized into three groups: a) those depicting contemporary urban life without advocating for any reformative agenda; b) those focusing on the individual's inner world and consciously adopting the techniques of symbolic poetry; and c) those portraying society in ways shaped directly or indirectly by a specific vision for its future.³⁴

If we accept that these translations aligned with the literary demands of the time, it becomes evident that *White Nights* reinforced a trend in Greek literature toward prose that was subjective, emotionally charged, and poetically expressive. This work examines the danger of individuals isolating themselves from society and the consequences of excessive imagination, centering on the archetype of the dreamer. Its translation was published a total of four times by 1918: in 1894, 1909, and 1917. On the other hand, *The House of the Dead* stimulated a different trend in Greek prose, fostering works with strong social concerns. This book particularly captivated the interest of critics, translators, and journals aligned with socialist ideological leanings. For instance, the prominent socialist intellectual Pános Tangópoulos praised its vivid descriptions of prisoners' lives.³⁵ Two years after his commentary, excerpts from the same book were translated for the journal *Kerkiraiki Anthologia*, whose editor was Konstantínos Theotókis, a well-known prose writer and advocate of socialist ideals.

At the beginning of the second phase of Dostoevsky's reception in Greece (1918), the number of translations of his works, primely from French and Russian, increased rapidly, and critical texts about him proliferated. The Greek theater scene also began showing heightened interest in dramatizing his works. References to Dostoevsky became more frequent in the writings of Greek intellectuals, while the composition and size of his readership changed and expanded compared to previous decades. His works transitioned from being regarded as the "intellectual property" of a small circle of bourgeois intellectuals to be-

34 Roderick BEATON, *Εισαγωγή στη νεότερη ελληνική λογοτεχνία* (Αθήνα: Νεφέλη, 1996), σ. 138-139.

35 Δημήτριος Π. ΤΑΓΚΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ, "Νέα βιβλία", *Ο Νουμάς*, αρθ. 524, 19.4.1914, σ. 112.

coming a part of a broader reading experience. During the 1920s, although the Greek literary intelligentsia generally preferred foreign translations, a new audience gradually emerged that read Greek translations of Dostoevsky's works. This led to an expansion of his readership, which now included not only intellectuals but also members of the petty bourgeoisie, artists, students, and educated workers. Consequently, the network for receiving his works widened considerably, reflecting a more diverse and inclusive reading public.

The success of Dostoevsky's work during the first decade of the Interwar period is due to a wide range of factors, with the October Revolution holding a central position. This socio-historical event marks the dividing line between the first period of Greek readers' acquaintance with Dostoevsky's works (1877-1918) and the subsequent period of his establishment as part of broader reading experiences (1918-1929). The impact of the October Revolution, whether seen as negative or positive, invigorated the reception network for Dostoevsky and Russian literature more generally. After this event, Greek readers increasingly sought to explore the ideological and spiritual expressions of Russian life. Dostoevsky's works successfully met this curiosity. His examination of the external and internal life of modern Russians allowed his works to serve as "windows" into the post-revolutionary life of Russia. The reception of *The Brothers Karamazov* during the Interwar period is indicative of this communicative power. During this period, the novel was received on five levels: critical, translational, theatrical, cinematic, and in original literary production. Its impact was owed to its ideological content as well as its portrayal of an entire gallery of human types within Russian society.

Aside from the October Revolution, other internal factors also contributed to the success of Dostoevsky's works during the 1920s: 1) the strengthening of socialist awareness, 2) changes in book production and the book market, 3) demographic shifts in the country with the arrival of émigrés from Russia and refugees from Asia Minor, 4) the spirit of disintegration, pessimism, and reevaluation of values that prevailed after the Asia Minor Disaster and World War I, and 5) the publishing success of Dostoevsky in Europe. The combination of these factors encouraged the widespread dissemination of Dostoevsky's work, but also contributed to the phenomenon of translation overproduction.

The high demand for Dostoevsky's works, which became part of the reading "fashion" of the 1920s, negatively affected the quality of Greek translations.³⁶

36 The publisher Kostas Govostis, in the Preface of the *History of Russian Literature*, writes about the "snobbish mania" of Greek readers to "stuff their pockets with books" written by Russian authors: ΕΚΔΟΤΗΣ [= Κ. ΓΚΟΒΟΣΤΗΣ], "Η έκδοσις της ρωσικής φιλολογίας", in Louis LEGER, *Ιστορία της ρωσικής φιλολογίας* (Αθήνα: Γκοβόστης, 1929), σ. 7-10.

The release of low-quality translations in the Greek book market shows that translation production was not immune to external factors. Testimonies from intellectuals of the time assure us that the circulation of “butchered” translations,³⁷ including some Greek versions of Dostoevsky’s works, was due to the following factors: first, the merging of roles – publisher, bookseller, and merchant – into one person, who sought quick profit and controlled the book distribution industry; second, the lack of a systematic state policy regarding the translation of foreign books into the domestic market; third, the shortcomings and weaknesses of the source text (in cases of mediated translation); and fourth, the untranslatability of the words used in the source text.

Apart from translations, the reception of Dostoevsky during the 1920s was also shaped by critical texts that viewed him as an ideologue, psychologist, criminologist-psychiatrist, and playwright. Among these aspects, most commentary focused on the ideological dimension found in his literary works. The fluidity of ideological life in Greece and the plurality in Dostoevsky’s ideological views allowed for the coexistence of at least two opposing approaches. One segment of Greek intellectuals portrayed Dostoevsky as a critic of socialist-revolutionary movements, basing their arguments primarily on *The Demons*.³⁸ From this same group, he was also presented as an opponent of anti-democratic methods in achieving social prosperity and as a prophet of the tragic events that followed the rise of socialist-revolutionary movements to power.

At the same time, another segment of Greek intellectuals saw Dostoevsky as an inspirer and precursor of the October Revolution. A characteristic example is Petros Pikros, a renowned writer of the first interwar generation, a socialist intellectual, and a translator of Dostoevsky. In 1921, he wrote an extensive preface for the translation of the book *The House of the Dead*, in which he emphasized, among other things, that Dostoevsky’s works were written with a “revolutionary intent”. The circle of the intellectuals that promoted the image of Dostoevsky as an inspirer of revolutionists based their arguments on his youthful enthusiasm for utopian socialism, his imprisonment for political beliefs, and the social concerns that permeated his works throughout his career. In discussions about socialist art in Greece, opinions often emerged regarding the relation-

37 The term was borrowed from an anonymous article published in *Βραδυνή* under the title “The Russian writers and their translators” (ANON., “Οι Ρώσοι συγγραφείς και οι μεταφρασταί των”, *Η Βραδυνή*, 23.3.1924).

38 For more, see indicatively: SER [Γ. ΣΕΡΟΥΪΟΣ], “Οι Δαιμονισμένοι. Το προφητικόν πνεῦμα του Δοστογιέφσκυ”, in *Φιλολογικό παράρτημα της Μεγάλης Ελληνικής Εγκυκλοπαιδείας*, τομ. 14, 30.5.1926, σ. 6. Σπύρος ΜΕΛΑΣ, “Δαιμονισμένοι”, *Εστία*, 9.3.1938. Φώτος ΠΟΛΙΤΗΣ, “Συγχρονισμός”, *Πειθαρχία*, τομ. 28, 27.4.1930, σ. 18.

ship between Dostoevsky's ideological commitment and the social critique in his works. Thus, the contradictory image of the Russian writer as both a prophet-critic of the Revolution and a prophet-inspirer of it was highlighted.

In contrast to Dostoevsky as a political thinker, which generated limited critical commentary during the first phase, Dostoevsky as a psychologist drew attention from the beginning of his reception in Greece.³⁹ The commentary on the psychological dissection in his works holds a dual significance. On the one hand, it distinguishes him from other pre-revolutionary Russian authors who were crossing Greek linguistic boundaries during the same period. On the other hand, it highlights the superiority of his writing compared to French authors, who were also achieving notable success in translation at the time. However, critical texts that focused on the psychological analysis in his works became more prevalent during the interwar period. Interest in the psychological depth of Dostoevsky's characters aligned with the renewal trends in Greek prose. Dostoevsky's focus on human interiority, which reflects the aesthetic demands for introspection and the exploration of the unconscious, made his works particularly relevant to the new artistic goals. In this context, comments on the superiority of his psychological analysis, and his contribution to the development of the psychological novel, were of great interest. For Nikos Kazantzakis, Dostoevsky is one of the "patriarchs of the modern soul"⁴⁰ and a great psychologist who, with unparalleled precision, subtle analysis, and empathy, delves deeply into the realms of human injustice, sin, and mysticism. Moreover, according to Thrasos Kastanakis, Dostoevsky's creative process allows us to describe him as "a kind of Christopher Columbus of our inner geography".⁴¹

39 During the initial phase of Dostoevsky's reception, the psychological analysis in his work is discussed in the following texts: Θεόδωρος ΒΕΛΛΙΑΝΙΤΗΣ, "Δένδρο των Χριστουγέννων", *Ακρόπολις*, 24.12.1886; ANON., "Αλληλογραφία της Εστίας", *Δελτίον της Εστίας*, 19.4.1887, σ. 3; ANON., "Ειδήσεις εκ Ρωσίας", *Ακρόπολις*, 30.22.1886; ΒΕΛΛΙΑΝΙΤΗΣ, "Σύγχρονος ρωσική φιλολογία", ό.π., σ. 253-274; ...Κ., "Θεόδωρος Δοστογέβσκη", *Κλειώ*, τομ. 5, 1889, σ. 145-147; ΡΟΪΔΗΣ, "Δοστογέβσκη και το έργον του Έγκλημα και τιμωρία", ό.π.; Π. ΜΟΔΙΝΟΣ, "Το ψυχολογικόν μυθιστόρημα", *Η φωνή της Κύπρου*, 5.4.1995; Νίκος ΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ, "Το μυθιστόρημα και το διήγημα κατά τον 19ου αιώνα", *Τό Άστυ*, 8.1.1901; Ν. Επ. [=Νίκος ΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ], "Γαβριήλ Δ' Αννούντσιο", *Τό Άστυ*, 3.6.1895; Νίκος ΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ, "Το μυθιστόρημα και το διήγημα κατά τον 19ου αιώνα", *Τό Άστυ*, 8.1.1901.

40 Νίκος ΚΑΖΑΝΤΖΑΚΗΣ, "Τι γίνεται στη Ρωσία", *Αναγέννηση*, τεύχ. 5, Ιαν. 1928, σ. 190-198.

41 See Kastanakis' unpublished lecture on Dostoevsky, the text of which is preserved in the author's archive at the Hellenic Literary and Historical Archive (E.L.I.A.), in the folder numbered Ζ17.

During the same period, his criminological and psychiatric observations also captivated critical attention. Interest in crime as part of Dostoevsky's literary agenda was influenced by the Italian school of criminal anthropology, particularly Cesare Lombroso. Dostoevsky's criminal studies were discussed alongside the broader literary interest in social marginalization issues such as crime and prostitution. It should also be noted that Dostoevsky's focus on criminal behavior is closely linked to his existential concerns. His characters are often placed in extreme situations before or after committing crimes, creating the perfect "laboratory" conditions for examining the limits of human nature.

When Dostoevsky explored crime, his primary interest lay in the moral and existential questions it raised, as religious-philosophical reflection was the central axis of his literary production. However, during the period under review, these dimensions of his work received limited recognition in Greece. Early exceptions, such as Roidis, acknowledged Dostoevsky's infusion of Christian ideas,⁴² but broader systematic commentary was largely absent. From the very beginning of Dostoevsky's reception in Greece, some critical attention was drawn to his metaphysical exploration of suffering and his treatment of the problem of evil. Nevertheless, these remarks were sporadic, lacked factual support, originality, or substantial argumentation. Instead, they were predominantly shaped by the views of Melchior de Vogüé and his *Le Roman russe* (*The Russian Novel*), a work that garnered significant readership in Greece from its publication (1886) up until the 1930s. Over time, however, greater critical attention began to focus on Dostoevsky's existential and moral reflections. This growing interest, particularly during the 1930s and 1940s, coincided with the influence of Russian existentialist philosopher Nicolas Berdyaev. His works were not only translated into Greek during interwar period but also widely read by Greek literary figures such as Angelos Terzakis. Thus, it is important to note that Berdyaev's focus on existential and metaphysical questions likely shaped the Greek perception of Dostoevsky's philosophical and religious reflections during the second interwar decade.

The reception of Dostoevsky in Greece is shaped also by efforts to adapt his works to the needs of the theater. The adaptations of his works are connected to attempts to renew and modernize Greek theatrical life and are initially incorporated into the development of realistic, psychological drama, which focuses on social issues. However, as Dostoevsky became a part of the broader reading experience, those involved in Greek theater began staging his works, driven also by financial motives. Regardless of the purpose they served, these

42 ΡΟΪΔΗΣ, "Δοστογιέφσκη και το έργον"...

stage adaptations of Dostoevsky's novels encouraged discussions about his life and work. They provided Greek intellectuals with an opportunity to express opinions about his literary output, focusing on aspects such as psychological analysis, the authenticity of his portrayal of the Russian soul, and his profound philosophical thinking.

To summarize, the article reveals two distinct phases of Dostoevsky's reception from 1877 to 1929, differing in both the volume of material and the nature of the evidence documenting his presence. The first, the *Introductory Phase* (1877-1918), marked a cautious acquaintance by Greek readers with his works. His writings were rarely translated, primarily from French or Russian, and were mostly short pieces published in newspapers. Regarding critical reception, this phase was characterized by insufficient recognition of the philosophical and religious significance of his work, as well as early associations with Alexandros Papadiamantis, who translated *Crime and Punishment*, the first of Dostoevsky's novels rendered into Greek. The second, the *Establishment Phase*, was shaped by the October Revolution, during which Dostoevsky transitioned from being a name known mainly in intellectual circles to a widespread literary phenomenon. This period saw an abundance of Greek translations of his works, often issued as inexpensive editions alongside those of other Russian authors, making them more accessible to a broader audience. It could be argued that this proliferation of translations and their widespread consumption during the 1920s laid the groundwork for the evolution of interwar prose in the following decade.

By the end of the first interwar decade, however, the publication of Dostoevsky translations began to decline, while critical engagement with his works deepened. His prose also increasingly served as a source of intertextual references for authors from the Generation of the '30s, such as Angelos Terzakis, Yiorgos Theotokas, and M. Karagatsis. These writers engaged in a creative dialogue with Dostoevsky's works, demonstrating a level of systematic engagement not observed in earlier generations, except perhaps in the case of Petros Pikros. What's more, Dostoevskian narrative techniques, such as the internal monologue, did not provoke significant discussion among Greek critics and writers before 1929. It was only in the following decade that critics such as Petros Spandonidis and Andreas Karandonis began analyzing the works of Stelios Xefloudas, Lazaros Pigiatoglou, and Konstantinos Theotokis through the lens of Dostoevskian literary methods. These discussions, published in the literary journal *Makedonikes Imeres* (*Macedonian Days*),⁴³ particularly focused on character de-

43 Πέτρος ΣΠΑΝΔΩΝΙΔΗΣ, „Καθρεφτίσματα”, *Μακεδονικές Ημέρες*, τεύχ. 1, Μάρτ. 1932, σ. 29-31; Πέτρος ΣΠΑΝΔΩΝΙΔΗΣ, “Η πέζογραφία των νέων (1929-1933)”, *Μακεδονικές Ημέρες*, τεύχ. 1, Ιαν. 1934, σ. 13-28.

velopment and the inner monologue technique, highlighting the growing influence of Dostoevsky on Greek prose, especially within the novel.

However, several questions remain open for further exploration, and one of them is: how did the third phase of Dostoevsky's reception unfold, and which aspects of his literary production were most assimilated by Greek prose writers? Ultimately, this brief overview of Dostoevsky's reception in Greece does not aim to exhaustively account for the entire phenomenon of the Russian author's influence within the Greek intellectual sphere during the examined period. Instead, it emphasizes key milestones in the translation and critical response to his work from 1877 to 1929, illustrating the unique nature of his reception in Greece.⁴⁴

44 For more details on the reception of Dostoevsky in Greece, please refer to the doctoral dissertation of Zorka ŠLJIVANČANIN, under the title: "F. M. Dostoevsky in Greece (1877-1929): Critical Reception and Translations" (*Ο Φ. Μ. Ντοστογιέφσκι στην Ελλάδα (1877-1929). Κριτική πρόσληψη και μεταφράσεις* [Nicosia: University of Cyprus, 2020]).