
Modern Greek Literary Journals: A Sketch*

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THE FRENCH "JOURNAL DES SCAVANS," DATING FROM 1665, IS considered the oldest publication of its kind. However, turning to Greek periodicals during the early decades of the nineteenth century, the distinction between a journal and a newspaper was quite fluid. They shared features in terms of both their contents and format. A sharper distinction became possible as the size of newspapers increased and their coverage came to focus principally on current political affairs, while, at the same time, the size of journals decreased and their contents became equivalent to a potpourri of items of encyclopedic interest. With items selected from similar non-Greek periodicals, subjects covered by Greek journals during that period ranged from agriculture and health to inventions, curiosities from around the world, sayings of famous men and so on.

Journals which initiated publication a century and a half ago were major sources of information and practical knowledge, but also of entertainment for the Greek bourgeois family within the borders of a modern state just taking shape on the map, as well as in diaspora communities outside Greece. The expansion of education and general knowledge and an increase in the number of available publications were associated with a reorientation and the onset of specialized coverage. Research has confirmed the existence, up until 1900, of 450 Greek journals. This number is tripled in 1900. Among these journals, there were at least twenty-five which can be considered as specializing on philological and literary subjects. By that time, and although coverage is not entirely consistent, one can distinguish — besides literary journals — philological in a scholarly sense, educational or pedagogical, philosophical, and historical journals, as well as those focusing on the fine arts or the theater.

* Adapted from the Greek by Yiorgos Chouliaras.

Few of the journals considered as literary dealt exclusively with literature. We consider as literary journals those periodicals for which literature was a principal focus, while at the same time they might deal with other fields, such as philosophy or history. They are journals which publish poems, fiction, plays, literary and general essays, book reviews, as well as contributions on the fine arts or music and related topics. As to what is considered as a journal, the reference is to reviews, magazines, and in general publications which appear periodically, on a monthly, quarterly etc. basis. Within this overall framework, evaluations offered must be accepted as tentative.

When approaching the subject of modern Greek literary journals, one tempting way to classify these journals is on the basis of their titles. Certain words are very prominent in the christening of journals. These words include "logos" and "logotechnia" (i. e., literature), "techne" (i. e., art: with seventeen journals having been counted in this category), "Hellenikos" (with over ten journals), "grammata" (i. e., letters: with sixteen titles) and their derivatives. The term "neo" or "kainourgio" (new or modern) is a very common appellation, referring to either the revival of a publication or the progressive or avant-garde intentions of its founders. Sometimes, however, a charming oxymoron is involved as conservative publications are billed as "new," with *Nea Estia* a well-known example. Fields from which the name of journals have been drawn range widely from astronomy to zoology, and include geometry, archaeology, mythology, instruments of orientation, means of transport, geography, plants, terms referring to time, and, of course, the practice of writing itself. The German word "Ausblicke" is the only foreign word used as the title of a Greek literary journal. Several titles are translations of the titles of similar non-Greek journals or bring to mind the titles of literary works.

"If you wish to write, you should neither edit a journal nor direct a publishing house." This was Borges's advice to Bioy Casares, and neither of them followed it. Most literary journals in Greece have been edited or directed by writers. Their intention may have been to "offer" to the world the overflow of their learning or to share with others the stages of creation of their work or simply their literary preferences. Through a journal, a circle of people acquire the means of registering their activities, usually very close to the phase of production of creative works. A journal is a collective space, where a new poem will be published or a critical comment will be inserted as an immediate reaction to what is happening at the moment. Moreover, the requirements of a publication schedule may force work to be produced. A book is published much less often and with greater difficulty, indeed creating the impression of something irreversible and fixed. Through a journal,

writing enters a feedback process, views are aired with greater ease, and publication is less final. A journal is like a workshop or laboratory, where the reactions of reader and writer are tested. It is thought, in fact, that publishing in a journal mediates between the reader and a book. It is a stage of preparation in the process of reading. This, however, remains true only in the case of very specialized journals, because there is today a shift in this respect. The average Greek reader of literary journals is satisfied with the superficial "information" he receives by leafing through a journal, even if no pleasure in reading has been aroused.

There are journals which publish contributions drawn only from the narrow and immediate circle of people involved with them, without regard for the very limited impact they may have upon readers. Other journals publish unsolicited contributions or solicit work from well-known authors, whose names on the journal's cover may serve a marketing purpose. Many emotions may be invested in a journal. There is a certain kind of euphoria associated with the preparation of an issue. There may also be an ambition to exercise a particular type of authority by promoting certain literary choices and rejecting others. Those who are younger may find in a journal a means of expressing their indignation or protest. Those who are older may find a medium to vent their complaints. All this can occur in the relative safety offered by a collective forum. It is incorrect to imagine that journals are the outcome of either endless debates or of rational planning. Nevertheless, it must be emphasized that the critical moments in the life of a journal involve the process of preparation of the next issue. Sometimes incredible conflicts and high emotions are possible over just a few pages of printed paper, which, however, for those involved in their preparation represent their "position" on one or another matter. There is also the question of whether an issue will generate enough interest to sustain publication.

There are journals which survive exclusively through the support of those involved in their publication or because through them a corporate sponsor affirms an interest in cultural activities. All other journals depend on their advertising revenues, subscribers, and sales. There are two types of advertising. "Prestige" advertising asserts corporate presence. Commercial advertisements usually involve publishing houses which tap a literary market on rather inexpensive rates. When it comes to circulation, journals are quite secretive about this type of information. They either do not mention it or they refer to number of issues printed. Relevant figures cannot be checked independently. Estimates based on a knowledge of the publishing world indicate that the average circulation of any literary journal in Greece today does not exceed usually the range of 2,000 to 4,000 issues. Special issues may triple that

figure. There are also journals which do not reach even 500 issues in circulation. What must be kept in mind is that these numbers are not necessarily insignificant. *Ta Nea Grammata*, a journal which is considered to have influenced seriously modern Greek literature in the years between 1935 and 1945 did not exceed 200 sales per issue. For comparative purposes, one should also consider that in the 1830-1860 period there were about ten philological and literary journals. One hundred years later (1930-1960) there were about thirty-five literary journals, while since 1960 and up to today there have been approximately sixty such journals. Today's increased circulation corresponds to a higher average level of education and standard of living, the formation of a psychology of an "informed consumer" in literary matters, but also the greater access to printing and a rising international interest in Greek literature.

In the past, the appearance and design of literary journals were determined by the personality of the printer and the practical sense of typographical harmony an editor might have. It was their visual criterion that was imposed upon the readers. Older journals used to reproduce images on printing blocks imported from Europe or color lithographs by usually foreign artists for purposes of illustration. As printing techniques advanced, new possibilities were put into effect especially by painters who were associated with the publication of literary journals. There was what can be called an "age of painters," which gave way later on to photography. Today graphic artists are usually responsible for the layout and are, of course, influenced by accepted standards, propagated mostly through advertising.

There are journals which can be called strictly "personal," as they were written by a single writer (e.g., the hand-written *Palimpsestos* by Nikos Kahtitsis). Other journals came to be identified with the personality of their editor. (We refer, for example, to Christianopoulos' *Diagonios*.) Some have been associated with collectives which shared common views, while others, on the contrary, were forums which hosted the most unrelated contributions. Journals can also be distinguished by how topical they were. From a political perspective, literary journals have represented a full range from the most to the least conservative. There have been very specialized journals, focusing for example, exclusively on poetry (*Hegeso*), translation (*To Prisma*), or the theater (*Theatro*). Annual reviews fall into a separate category. During times of tension, literary journals have made their presence felt in Greece. While in the seven years preceding the dictatorship, one could hardly find four or five literary journals of interest, during the seven-year dictatorship there was a veritable publishing explosion. Among the seventeen journals published during that period were *Lotos*,

Synchronos Kinematographos, *Euthyne*, *Tram*, *Semeioseis*, *He Synecheia* etc. Among the various journals, those sponsored by publishing houses were the most professionally produced. At the same time, there have also been journals which launched their own publishing line.

One must now consider a few of the most characteristic journals in greater detail and within the context of their period. Two clarifications are necessary. In addition to all other difficulties, including very limited research in this field, a principal problem in attempting a sketch of the history of the modern Greek literary journal is the fact that this task amounts to attempting an outline of the entire history of modern Greek literature. The second clarification refers to qualitative distinctions among journals. It is perhaps easy to separate "good" from "bad" or "mediocre" publications. But the better ones could probably not have existed without the context provided by all other journals and within which they distinguished themselves.

Euterpe, named after a muse, was the first Greek illustrated journal and it was published every fortnight in Athens between 1847 and 1855. As an encyclopedic family magazine, it followed European, and especially French, prototypes and it was the first journal to abandon the potpourri character of other publications of that period. *Euterpe* published translations of historical novels (e.g., by Scott or Dumas), along with the work of Greek scholars, such as Paparregopoulos. Its demise came with the publication of *Pandora*, a journal to which many of its contributors moved. *Pandora* had a publishing run of about 1500 issues between 1850 and 1872. Beginning in 1876, and for almost twenty years, *Hestia* was published in Athens every Sunday in 3000 issues. It was associated with important writers and it opened its pages to the younger generation of the 1880s, people like Palamas, Karkavitsas, and Xenopoulos. Its association with the demoticist movement severely cut its circulation and its then editor, the poet Drosinis, was forced to change the journal into an evening paper by the same name, which is still in publication. One of the most important journals being published outside Greece at that time was *Hesperos* (1881-89) in Leipzig. It was a beautifully illustrated journal in which Cavafy published his early poems. At the turn of the century, *Techne*, edited by the main representative of Greek symbolism, K. Hatzopoulos, became associated with a moderate demoticist stand and the translation into Greek of Northern European literary works, as well as Nietzsche. Papadiamandis' *Fonissa*, and translations of Dostoevski, Gogol and Hamsun, as well as contributions by Roidis, Sikelianos and others were first published in *Panathenaia* (1901-1913), edited by Kimon Michaelides. In 1903, *Noumas*, edited by D. R. Tangopoulos, made its appearance. In 805

issues over almost thirty years it published the best known writers of its period. It is the journal which cast the demoticist movement into the shape of a fixed ideology. As a result, it displayed a negative attitude toward poets like Cavafy and Sikelianos. In the meantime, in 1927, and thirty-two years after *Hestia* had ceased publication as a journal, Xenopoulos founded *Nea Hestia* as a fortnightly journal which continues its publication to this day. This journal, which today is the proverbial conservative literary publication, is particularly notable for the over one hundred special thematic issues it has published. Other notable journals of the interwar period include *Hellenika Grammata*, *O Kyklos*, and *Makedonikes Hemeres* (1932-39). The latter journal, which was published in Thessaloniki, cultivated in its pages the fictional technique of the "internal monologue."

In 1935, George Katsimbalis, also known, thanks to Henry Miller, as the "Colossus of Maroussi," initiated the publication of the journal *Ta Nea Grammata*, under the direction of the critic Andreas Karandonis. This bimonthly journal, which was published for ten years in Athens, became very influential as the major vehicle of what was later called the "generation of the '30s." Seferis, Elytis, Engonopoulos, and Embeirikos were published in its pages along with older poets, like Palamas or Sikelianos. The subversive literary journal *To 3^o Mati* also came out in 1935. *Nea Hestia* and *Nea Grammata* continued publication during the war and the Nazi occupation. Since 1945, and for the next decade, *Anglohellenike Epitheorese*, edited originally by Katsimbalis and later by G.P. Savidis, was published under the auspices of the British Council. Three other journals came out in 1945. *Eleuthera Grammata* (in publication until 1951) became the journal of left-leaning writers and intellectuals, from older ones, like Varnalis, to much younger ones, like Alexandrou and Axioti, as well as Ritsos, Tsirkas and others. In Thessaloniki, N.G. Pentzikis was the prime mover behind the journal *Kochlias*, where an interest in the medieval tradition was combined with translations of Sartre, Proust, and Dos Passos. *To Tetradio* was published for two years in Athens as the journal of a small circle of people, including some of the best known names of the generation of the '30s.

In 1954, the monthly *Epitheorese Technes* initiated publication, continuing for twenty-three years until it was forced to close down after the military coup in 1967. This journal is considered the most notable postwar publication of the left-wing intelligentsia, although its contributors were writers of all political persuasions. In addition to original literary works and translations, it also published animated commentaries on the ideological and political controversies of the period. In the mid- and late 50s three literary journals appeared in Thessalonike. *Nea Poreia*,

edited to this day by the writer T. Alaveras, came out in 1955, with an emphasis on essays and reviews. The poet Dinos Christianopoulos initiated the publication of *Diagonios* in 1958, and the journal *Kritiki* for three years, starting in 1959, with its pages devoted exclusively to criticism.

The year 1963 marks the publication of the journal *Epoches*, which was sponsored by the Lambrakis Press organization and followed prototypes established by journals such as *Encounter* or *Esprit*. Scholars like Linos Politis and Manolis Andronikos, as well as authors like Tachtsis and Vassilikos were among the contributors. *Epoches* was attentive to political events, and also to new developments in the arts in Greece and abroad and its respected image has provided an unattainable model for subsequent journals (e.g., *Epopiteia*, *Tomes*). While *Epitheorese Technes* and *Epoches* were flourishing, the journal *Pali* made its appearance in 1965. In a short-lived run of six issues it became the vehicle of a revived Greek surrealism, with a special interest in the beat generation of American writers.

With the establishment of the dictatorship, most literary journals shut down, with the exception of *Nea Estia*, *Nea Poreia* and *Diagonios* (up to 1969). However, as it has already been noted, there was a large number of new journals which came out following the initial period of "silence" observed by the majority of writers. The journal *Synecheia* was associated with the nucleus of authors who collectively published *Eighteen Texts*, the first book to break the "silence."

Following the fall of the dictatorship, there were new journals which joined the ranks of publications initiated earlier. In 1976, *Diavazo*, patterned after the French *Lire*, established a forum for reviews of new publications in the enlarged book market. During that same year, *Epopiteia* and *Tomes* came out, as well as *Sema* — which was representative of avant-garde tendencies in the visual arts — and *Speira* with a theoretical focus on the relation between poetry and language. *Tram*, which was initially published in Thessaloniki in 1971 and was forced to interrupt its publication after five issues, was now revived, bringing together many of the younger writers, while also presenting the recent work of already established ones. After two years *Tram* chose to cease publication.

1978 was a fruitful year for literary journals which continue publication to this day. *To Dentro* began publication in Athens, with high-quality contributions in fiction, poetry, and criticism. *Hekevolos* made its appearance with a focus on classical texts and carefully prepared translations. The short-lived *Parallax* followed the style established by *Tram*, as it also happened later with *He Lexe*, a monthly journal which publishes interesting contributions.

There are today in Athens about twenty journals with relatively frequent publication and literature as their main focus. The principally literary journals, which publish original and translated literary works, essays, reviews, and related commentaries, are the following, in alphabetical order (in Greek): *Aiolika Grammata*, *Anakyklese*, *Grammata kai Technes*, *To Dentro*, *To Doma*, *Hekevolos*, *Euthyne*, *Kainourgia Epoche*, *He Lexe*, *Nea Estia*, *Nees Tomes*, *Hodos Panos*, *Ombrella*, *Periodiko*, *Planodion*, *Poliorkia*, *Semeioseis*, *Speira*, and *Hartis*. There is a separate category consisting of *Vivliophilia*, *Diavazo*, *Ihneutes*, and *To Tetarto* with an emphasis on informational aspects. There are also a few political reviews, like *Anti*, *Scholiastes*, and, especially *Politis*, which often devote their pages to literary and related subjects.

Outside Athens, the largest number of literary journals is published in the following cities, in descending order: Thessaloniki, Ioannina, (*Endohora*), Zakynthos (*Periplous*), Kerkyra (*Porphyras*), and Patra (*Hydria*). Outside Greece, there was a large number of journals in earlier decades, especially in Alexandria, as there are today in Cyprus and elsewhere. There are several English-language journals which deal with Greek literature. Well-known among them in the United States are *The Charioteer*, *The Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora*, *The Coffeehouse*, and the *Aegean Review*.

The total number of periodicals of all types in Greece today exceeds seven hundred. Among popular magazines those considered to have a large circulation average weekly sales of about 30,000 issues in the Greater Attiki area, which has a total population of nearly four million people.

Therefore, in comparative terms, the circulation of literary journals is not out of proportion. The conditions of cultural intervention through a literary journal have, however, been degraded, following the adoption of the tabloid format by most newspapers and the appearance of pages with "cultural news" in newspapers and in popular magazines, even when they only involve the publication of relevant press releases. There is no way literary journals can compete in terms of commentaries on current issues. They can only publish creative works and broader overviews of issues of interest.