

ΒΟΥΛΗ ΤΩΝ ΕΛΛΗΝΩΝ
ΚΕΝΤΡΟ ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗΣ ΓΛΩΣΣΑΣ

GREEK PARLIAMENT
CENTRE OF THE GREEK LANGUAGE

Ο ΥΜΝΟΣ ΕΙΣ ΤΗΝ ΕΛΕΥΘΕΡΙΑΝ
ΤΟΥ ΔΙΟΝΥΣΙΟΥ ΣΟΛΩΜΟΥ
ΚΑΙ ΟΙ ΤΡΕΙΣ ΠΡΩΤΕΣ ΜΕΤΑΦΡΑΣΕΙΣ ΤΟΥ

[1825]

THE *HYMN TO LIBERTY*
BY DIONYSIOS SOLOMOS
AND THE FIRST THREE TRANSLATIONS

Επιμέλεια • Edited by

ΚΑΤΕΡΙΝΑ ΤΙΚΤΟΠΟΥΛΟΥ • CATERINA TIKTOPOULOU

ΑΘΗΝΑ • ATHENS 1999



FOREWORD OF THE SPEAKER OF THE GREEK PARLIAMENT
APOSTOLOS CH. KAKLAMANIS

ALTHOUGH TWO HUNDRED YEARS have now passed since the birth of Dionysios Solomos, both students of modern Greek literature around the world and the Greek people themselves continue to be moved and delighted by the literary mystery of the work of our national poet and the values which he has bequeathed to us. They recognize in his struggle for freedom and for our language the universal ideals of individual freedom and collective self-determination. They are still inspired by the principle of the elevation of the truth to a nationally acknowledged value. They continue to recognize in Solomos' creative struggle an attempt to bridge the abyss which divides the world of lofty intellectual endeavour from the level of popular culture.

Solomos had a strong sense of national and social mission. Identifying the cause of freedom with the struggles of Greece, he fought not only for the conversion of the battle for Greek independence into a global symbol of the fight for freedom. He was fighting at the same time for the cultural self-awareness of the modern Greek people and for the democratization of their education. It is for these reasons that he himself must be recognized as a poet and thinker for all peoples and all times, and his work acknowledged as being of permanent relevance.

The Hymn to Liberty was Solomos' first major poetic composition to place his muse at the service of the nation's struggle for liberation. It was the work, whose swift translation into English, French and Italian offered inspiration to the liberal and Philhellenic sentiments of the rest of Europe, in which Solomos laid down the fundamental principles and patterns which were to give shape to our national ideology. And this is why the first two stanzas of the poem have been, since 1864, our national anthem.

The Greek Parliament has honoured the memory of Dionysios Solomos on the occasion of the 200th anniversary of his birth by organizing a series of events,

publishing the books Solomos and the Greek Cultural Tradition and Dionysios Solomos. Anthology of Themes in the Poetry of Solomos, and by preparing at the same time an edition of the Collected Works of our national poet, making use of the latest multi-media technology.

It has also, in collaboration with the Centre for the Greek Language, prepared the publication of this particular volume, containing the Greek text and the three first translations of the Hymn to Liberty in French, English and Italian.

I am confident that this edition will advance international awareness of the culture of modern Greece and of Greek history and will also highlight the role played by Greek culture on the international stage as a civilizing influence guided by the principles of international law and the values of freedom, democracy and the peaceful coexistence of nations.

Translation Chris Markham

FOREWORD OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE CENTRE FOR THE GREEK LANGUAGE
D. N. MARONITIS

I FEEL I CAN JUSTIFIABLY CLAIM that it was a happy inspiration of the Centre for the Greek Language to compile and publish an anniversary volume containing the Hymn to Liberty of Dionysios Solomos together with its first three translations.

The passing of two hundred years since the birth of our national poet has been marked in many and various ways, both here and—especially—among Hellenophile communities abroad. Yet I feel that this volume, the contribution of the Centre for the Greek Language to the commemorative celebrations, is an effort deserving of special appreciation. The final verdict belongs, of course, to the reader, the reader who will first leaf through and then read with concentration the volume, presented to the public as a collective endeavour.

I should like here to make one—perhaps naïve—remark by way of a preface: the Hymn of Solomos, and its three almost contemporary translations, constituted a milestone in the progress of the Greeks towards self-knowledge and in the degree of fervour for their cause felt by Philhellenes abroad. Since in the years that have intervened there have been many changes both in Greek self-awareness and in European attitudes to Greece it might be beneficial for us to seek a return to the principle underlying the shared hopes and aspirations of those times, for we might perhaps find there a compass to help us find our way out of our current confusion—confusion about our own national identity and about our place in the broader European environment.

Translation Chris Markham

WRITTEN IN MAY 1823, during the first critical years of the Greek Revolution, the *Hymn to Liberty* is generally acknowledged to be a milestone in three ways: in the career of its creator, in our own modern history, and in the development of modern Greek literature. For the twenty-five-year-old Solomos the *Hymn* was his first long composition in Greek, following numerous works in Italian, and the one by virtue of which he would claim his place as a poet of the Greek language—no less, in fact, than the national poet, the “Greek Dante”—not only securing his position in the Greek world of letters but establishing his reputation throughout Europe. The stature which the work so rapidly earned him was due in part, of course, to the fact of the Revolution, which both inspired the poem and which the poem was intended to serve, extolling its ideals and addressing an appeal to Philhellenic sentiments in Europe—an appeal conveyed through the almost simultaneous translations (1824/5) into French, English and Italian. It was for precisely these services that the poem was chosen, in 1864—the year in which the Ionian Islands were united with Greece—as the national anthem of the newly established Greek state. The poem was set to its familiar music by Nikolaos Mantzaros, and its author was recognized as Greece’s national poet par excellence.

Alongside its importance in the poet’s own career the *Hymn*, although a work uneven in quality and less than fully mature, was to mark through its poetic qualities and, most of all, its language, the start of the renewal of our literary tradition, a beginning which Solomos would go on to complete in his later œuvre. This very renewal of the linguistic and expressive powers of our language was, of course, one of the explicit intentions behind the creation of the poem, as is made clear by the extant correspondence touching on this subject, by the final and lengthy note to the poem by Solomos and by the introductory note to the Italian translation by Gaetano Grassetti, whose translation we have every reason to believe would have been supervised by Solomos himself. It was, then, the poet’s intention that the *Hymn* should serve as an irrefutable demonstration of the sublime poetic possibilities inherent in the language of the

people, a language hitherto despised and condemned by those who were blindly devoted to the ancient form of the language. A little later Solomos was to expound these views more fully in the prose *Dialogue*, a work which can be regarded as a supplement to the *Hymn* itself. While the basic theme of the *Dialogue* is the defense of the popular language, against the background of the Greek Revolution, in the *Hymn* the popular language is chosen as the most fitting vehicle in which to convey the feats and publicize the struggle of the Greek people for Freedom, which is, in the case of the poem, the central theme. This is made transparently clear by the motto which Solomos attaches to the poem: "Libertà vo cantando [...]" (It is freedom of which I wish to sing [...]), a variation on the line of Dante "Libertà va cercando [...]" (It is freedom he seeks [...]).

The *Hymn to Liberty* had a twofold purpose and was addressed to two audiences: firstly the Greek people themselves, in the throes of revolution, whom the poet wished both to hearten and to fortify with advice; secondly the Philhellenes of Europe, to whom he wished to demonstrate the legitimate and sacred character of the Greek cause (freedom and religion) and whose support and solidarity he wished to secure. It was, moreover, his explicitly declared intention that the *Hymn* be translated and printed not only at Mesolongi but in the capitals of Europe. Towards this end he himself undertook the initiative of seeking out no ordinary translators, but poets of the calibre of Byron. His efforts in this direction, together with his expressed desire to send a copy of the *Hymn* to no less a figure than Goethe, both reveal his personal ambition to communicate with his fellow European writers. However, these aspirations remained unfulfilled, and Solomos was finally disappointed in both the first translations, the French prose version by Stanislas Julien (Paris 1825) and the metrical English version by Charles Brinsley Sheridan (London 1825). Nevertheless, thanks to these translations, to which we must add at least one other, the Italian prose version by Grassetti, approved by the poet himself (Mesolongi 1825), the *Hymn* did succeed in its objectives as a work of propaganda. The Greek cause was assisted and Solomos' own career as a poet made a triumphant beginning to the idiosyncratic course it was to follow.

The fate of the *Hymn* in translation was by no means circumscribed by the chronological boundaries of the Greek revolutionary movement. Known translations of the poem now number more than 80 and are to be found in no less than 16 languages over a period of nearly two centuries—from the very first, fragmentary English version of 1824 up to the most recent French version published only last year.

A whole variety of reasons has prompted these translations. Many of them were written at the time of the revolution or in its aftermath, on its anniversaries and during periods when the revolutionary spirit has been revived (as for example in the war of 1897). Others are inspired by admiration for the poet and his work or are associated with the elevation of the poem to the rank of national anthem and the consequent desire to make the work better known internationally and the need to have it translated into the languages of those countries with which Greece had diplomatic relations. The majority of the translations, however, are a manifestation of a more general interest in modern Greek literature and a desire to provide it with a wider audience. As for the translators themselves, the overwhelming majority of them are foreigners: Philhellenes raised on the classics, scholars, historians, lawyers, diplomats and poets, but mainly academics teaching both ancient and modern Greek literature in universities all around the world.

This volume, the fruit of collaboration between the Centre for the Greek Language and the Greek Parliament, concentrates on the revolutionary period and, in particular, on the key year in which the poem *Hymn to Liberty* began its long career in translation, 1825. The volume contains the original poem together with the first three, full translations. In other words: the poet's original passionate call to revolution, accompanied by the immediate European response. The notes accompanying the translations, by Chryssa Prokopaki and Marios Byron Raizis, attempt to depict the atmosphere and mood in which they were written and to assess their value as translations. Readers interested to learn more of the wealth of translations inspired by the *Hymn* will find much valuable information in the summary tables at the end of the volume. The illustrations have been selected, at the suggestion of Nikos Hatzinikolaou, to emphasize the importance of the historical juncture at which the works were produced: the Greek Revolution and the European reactions it provoked. They are as follows: *The Fall of Mesolongi* by Pierre Roch Vigneron, oil on canvas, 1827 (p. 7); the *Study for the Massacre at Chios* by Eugène Delacroix, water-colour and pencil, 1824 (p. 23); the *Greek Heroine* by Jean-Pierre-Marie Jazet, an engraving of the painting of the same name by Nicolas Gosse, 1829 (pp. 72, 110, 140); the *Study for a figure from the Souliot Women* by Ary Scheffer, black chalk, 1827 (p. 149).

The Greek text of the *Hymn* is reprinted from the scholarly edition by Linos Politis (*Διονυσίου Σολωμού, Άπαντα*, vol. 1: *Ποήματα*. Athens: Ikaros 1948). For the three

translations the texts of the original editions (Paris, London, Mesolongi) have been used, by kind permission of the Gennadeio Library. No alterations have been made to the texts, beyond the correction of obvious errors. The Tables listing the translations of the *Hymn to Liberty* were compiled on the basis of information provided in the article by Dinos Christianopoulos, *Ο Ύμνος εις την Ελευθερίαν και 79 μεταφράσεις του σε 16 γλώσσες* (1824-1998), included in the volume *Ο Ύμνος εις την Ελευθερίαν του Διονυσίου Σολωμού και οι ξενόγλωσσες μεταφράσεις του*. Thessaloniki: Centre for the Greek Language, 1998.

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