



H.F.R.I.
Hellenic Foundation for
Research & Innovation

Description of the funded research project
2nd Call for H.F.R.I. Research Projects
to Support Post-Doctoral Researchers

Title of the research project: Religion in literary criticism during the Greek interwar period (1922-1940)

Principal Investigator: Vassilis Makridimas

Reader-friendly title: Religion and Greek literary criticism (1922-1940)

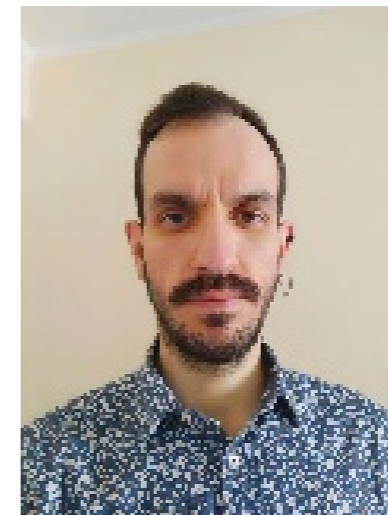
Scientific Area: Modern Greek Studies

Institution and Country:

Host Institution: University of Ioannina, Greece

Collaborating Institution(s):

Project webpage (if applicable):



Budget: 129.240 €

Duration: 24 months

Research Project Synopsis

Current studies have shown that religion was never cut off from human thought, either through godliness or, on the contrary, through the expansion of agnosticism and atheism. As far as foreign bibliography of resources is concerned, religious thinking, both as attraction and repulsion, has gained the proper attention of scholars who examined its presence in the European and American literature of 19th and 20th century. However, the same does not apply to the Greek case. Therefore, the main goal of the research project is to examine the ways in which religion was interlaced with literary criticism during Greek interwar period (1922-1940). Assuming that faith issues are factors that affect literary criticism, our research team will be involved with diverse issues along four sections: a) history and ideology (Christianity and Byzantium as parameters for the development of cultural ideas), b) philosophy (the reception of existentialism), c) language and stylistics (the presence and function of religious language throughout literary criticism), and d) the press and the critics (religion's impact on intellectual life). The proposed post-doctoral research will focus on the detection, analysis and interpretation both of the critics' concern about religious issues and of critics' judgements about literature with religious background. Because of the fundamental significance of Christianity throughout Greece's religious culture, our research team will test works with a Christian background, but investigating as well when needed aspects of other religious dogmas. The interdisciplinary nature of the research demands the inclusion, in our examination, of various non-literary texts concerning theological matters discussed throughout the two interwar decades.

Project originality

The project will emphasize the role of religion through literary criticism as a social practice. Besides the investigation of the profound meanings of the critical texts about religious literature and current religious issues during the Greek interwar period, our team aims to treat literary criticism as a discourse of social practice. Taking as a fact the deliberate use of language, it should be proved that a critic's drawing from the basic religious vocabulary, innate to Greeks who have such a deep religious conscience, is not something accidental but suggests a deeper intention. Every social community employs a code with concealed approvals and exclusions. In a religious critical context such a use of a specific kind of language clearly allows particular people to understand the meaning of the texts intensifying their common social bonds. For the critic himself/herself this is a way to gain social prestige since he/she is being presented as a kind of spiritual master. In other words, the new and interesting aspect this research attempts to bring to the fore is the social impact of religion in the literary field. Michel Foucault demonstrated that language indicates a specific practice with social effect for each group that makes use of it. For the first time, a philological research will define the beneficial or degrading role of religion throughout its linguistic data as they were deployed by critics between 1922 and 1940.

Expected results & Research Project Impact

The research team shares the belief that religion is a significant factor in the forging of a region's cultural identity, while literary criticism is a suitable field for the study of how these ideas were spread. The results of the proposed research are expected to:

- a) offer a sober assessment of religion's, especially Christianity's, impact on the configuration of Greece's interwar cultural interface, evaluating the attraction and repulsion of critics to religion according to the general sociopolitical ideas of that time,
- b) draw specific conclusions about literary criticism. Recently, scholars in Greece have shown an increasing interest in the function of criticism. Our team wants to focus on a neglected aspect of criticism, involving religion in the study. In no way one should expect a theological interpretation of the texts. Staying close to the linguistic structure of the critical texts, we want to understand the way that criticism with religious background worked within the general literary context.

By the time the proposed research is completed, a list of all the critical texts concerning the relation between religion and literature throughout the Greek interwar years will have been compiled and uploaded to a web data base. This will enhance the significance of the research since more scholars will have access to the studied material and will have the opportunity to flesh our conclusions out. In this way our team hopes to encourage more students to engage with the examination of the ways that religion interacted with literature throughout modern Greek years, giving them at the same time the opportunity to present their findings at the International Conference that will be held in the end of the program.

The importance of this funding

A funding research program is a very strong motivation for academic jobs in Greece, especially if we take into account the fact that nothing other than permanent job titles are being paid at Greek Universities, which during the financial crisis have been cut down. The indisputable benefit for all members of the research team is the acquisition of experience to a large scale research program. This is very important, since when the program is over all of the members could contest a research post in non academic institutions.



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