

Six Letters on Andreas Kalvos from Mario Vitti to Antonis Indianos

Kyriakos Ioannou*

RÉSUMÉ

Les six lettres de Mario Vitti à Antonis Intianos (qui proviennent des Archives de ce dernier) constituent des témoignages importants et éloquents pour leur intérêt commun pour des aspects inconnus du personnage d'Andreas Kalvos. Elles couvrent la période pendant laquelle Kalvos a vécu en Angleterre, étudiée par Antonis Intianos aussi bien que par Mario Vitti.

ABSTRACT

The six letters written by Mario Vitti to Antonis Indianos (1960-1962), and found in the latter's archives, bear witness to their common interest in Andreas Kalvos, who was not well known yet at the time. The letters cover the period during which Kalvos was settling in England.

The letters preserved in the archive of Antonis Indianos (1899-1968) shed light on, among other things, facets of the philological engagements of this important critic of the interwar.¹ Of particular interest are 5 letters and a postcard (of the years 1960 – 1962) sent by the Professor of Modern Greek Literature Mario Vitti (Rome) to the very A. Indianos (Nicosia)² himself. For the moment, it is unknown as to whether or not the corresponding letters of A. Indianos are preserved in the archives of Mario Vitti. Dominant in the letters of the latter is the common interest of the two scholars in Andreas Kalvos. Within this brief study an initial attempt is being made to present the contents of the aforementioned letters.

A. Indianos confesses to having begun his search as to the location of A. Kalvos' grave in 1924 (that is, upon completing his studies in London and Oxford)³. Nevertheless, this attempt came into fruition 13 years later, when he returned to Oxford for a year (September 1937-August 1938), in order to study Classical Archaeology on a scholarship from the Carnegie

* Philologist, Ph.D. Candidate University of Cyprus

Foundation. The result of this study is his paper ‘Simvoli stin meleti tou A.Kalvou’ (*Nea Estia*, 1938) [Contribution to the study of A. Kalvos]. Within this study he claims to have discovered the tomb of the Greek poet in October of 1937, specifying that it is found at the cemetery of the Keddington region, on the outskirts of the village Louth in Lincolnshire. The essayist also gives a number of additionally interesting facts on the biography of the poet. His consecutive works on A. Kalvos appear a number of years later, during the period 1960-1961⁴.

A. Indianos’ interest in A. Kalvos is imprinted, also, in a number of letters (of the years 1937-1938 and 1959-1961) found in the archive of the former: In 27 letters from Glafkos Alithersi, George Valetta, George Zora, Timou Malanou, T. Frangoudi, P. Chari, Kosta Hadjipsalti and J.W. White to A. Indianos there is evidence of the critic’s attempt to gather information and archival material relevant to A. Kalvos’ stay in London in addition to there being complimentary comments regarding his Kalvian publications.

The research activities of M. Vitti concerning A. Kalvos begin in 1959, with his discovery of a large number of manuscripts written by the poet, “which had been salvaged on account of the Ferraioli’s (aristocratic Roman family) mania for collecting, and had been acquired by the Vatican library”; henceforth and with “exhilarated agitation” he methodically studies the work of the poet, as is confessed in his many publications⁵. Initially, M. Vitti announces that he found “manuscripts by Kalvos in Rome”⁶. Afterwards, he publishes his article “Merikoi filoi tou Kalvou sto Londino’ [A few of Kalvos’ friends in London]⁷ which brings him closer to the respective publications of A. Indianos. During the same year the book ‘A. Kalvos e I suoi scritti in italiano’ [A. Kalvos and his friends in Italian] is published in Italian. *‘Ippia’, ‘Teramene’, ‘Le stagioni dell’abate Meli’, ‘Le Danaidi’* e pagine sparse, Napoli, Istituto Universitario Orientale, 1960⁸.

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As mentioned earlier, the letters from M. Vitti to A. Indianos are mostly concerned with A. Kalvos and his work, certain additional topics such as Vitti’s preoccupation with *Eugena* and Neophytos Rodinos dealt with to a lesser extent.

M.Vitti is the first to make contact with A. Indianos: “by coincidence today [17.12.1960] I was given your address by Mr. Zora and I make the most of it by writing to you immediately” (No. 1)⁹. Without doubt, M. Vitti has the first Kalvian publication of A. Indianos in mind and is interested in

seeing whether the latter published additional works of the like: “Apart from the well-known and important article on Kalvos of 1938 do you have any more? Could you possibly send me a reprint of your most recent studies? I would be greatly indebted” (No. 1). Obviously M. Vitti was informed (perhaps by G. Zora) that certain “recent studies” of A. Indianos concerning A. Kalvos (‘Agnostes selides... “Mia italiki chrestomatheia..” [Unknown pages... “An Italian Guidebook...] were currently in circulation.

In his first letter M. Vitti refers to the discovery of A. Kalvos’ manuscripts in the Vatican Library of Rome (“of these [the Italian works of A. Kalvos] I mention nothing in my article, as it was in my own best interests to keep the secret: the discovery of the manuscripts in the Vatican has been costly to me and that experience has proved useful for me”). M. Vitti referred to these manuscripts in a letter to *Nea Estia* (1959): it is about “two handwritten codicils, written in Italian”. “In the one we have the manuscripts of the two Italian tragedies [‘Theramenes’ and ‘Danaides’].” “The second codicil has the hand-written translation [unpublished and unknown till then] from the Sicilian dialect into Italian, the work of art which Kalvos [under the pseudonym Didimo Chietico] created in 1814 as part of Giovanni Meli’s poetry collection, titled ‘Oi epoches’ [The seasons].” “In addition to these two codicils I found, non-catalogued, quite a large number of letters sent to Kalvos by various people: a priceless source of information which will illuminate unknown details regarding the life of Kalvos”. On the other hand, M. Vitti very recently labeled this publication as “infantile” as certain people could have exploited his findings: “An Athenian professor [he notes and implies G. Zoras], who had until then monopolized Kalvos, rushed unhesitatingly to issue statements within the very same magazine columns in his classically misleading manner: “I knew this previously. I should have expected it. That’s when Dimaras told me, in his caustic humor: ‘Serves you right!’”¹⁰. And so, in his article in *Nea Estia* (15th June, 1960), M. Vitti mentioned his new findings (letters addressed to A. Kalvos), without giving further details.

At the same time, M. Vitti sends A. Indianos his article on A. Kalvos (‘Some friends..’), an article which the receiver must have already been aware of, as it was of interest to him. Indeed, the name of the Cypriot scholar is mentioned here in two instances. The writer of the article puts forward his appreciation for A. Indianos’ first Kalvian publication (“an article of unique worth about Kalvos in England”), whilst at the same time expressing through announcements in the *Times* newspaper during those years, his sadness about the fact that regardless of the proclamations of scholars (such

as A. Indianos), “the study of these speeches [which were given by Kalvos at the Argyll Room of London] has not as yet been exhausted.”

M. Vitti repeatedly refers to his letters in his book *The Italian works of Kalvos*...He states that in the ‘Introduction’ of his book he is concerned “with the issue of Kalvos’ harmony in poetry”, supporting that this theory “is taken entirely from Alfieri” and “I rate the Italian texts, relating them with the Greek, putting them in chronological order etc.” (No. 4). Commenting on the reception of his book by the critics, he notes that in Greece it did not create a stir, whilst in Italy “it drew the interest of specialists and journalists” (No. 4). In addition, he tries to explain the reasons for this suppression: “on the one hand an ignorance of the Italian language, on the other, the fear of offending Mr. Zoras made them opt for silence” (No. 4).

The letter-writer makes sure of getting a copy of the book to A. Indianos, urging him repeatedly to write a critique of it: “If you know Italian well enough, and if you are able to write a critique” (No. 2). “If you feel that you are able to work on this 340 (!) page volume and write a few words in print” (No. 4). “Even if you were to write just one line somewhere it would be enough!” (No. 4) As far as I am aware, A. Indianos did not write a critique of this book, regardless of the fact that he knew the Italian language well.

Most references to A. Kalvos relate to information relevant to the biography of the poet. The letters addressed to A. Kalvos (those which M. Vitti is preparing for publication)¹¹, in conjunction with the then recent research papers of A. Indianos (mainly the studies *Unknown pages*...), comprise topics for discussion between the letter-writer and the receiver¹². The quotations below are quite eloquent:

“I have also prepared for publishing the letters received by Kalvos in London during his first stay. As for the English letters, of which there are many (mainly those of Ridout), I was assisted by the couple Edmund Keeley¹³. There is a possibility that these letters will be published in one volume as an appendix in the magazine ‘Ellinika’ [Greek] however I am not as yet sure whether the money will be found, which would mean that I’d have to look elsewhere. As for the English people, I did the best I could from afar. With the letters I possess however, you, or another scholar may later be able to find more information in varying archives in London. Mr. Zoras has informed me that you intend to go there. If the book has not been published by then, I would like to give you some information which may prove fruitful. You will not be obliged to me in any way if I were to prove useful to you. You would be at liberty to make

your announcement, and I, would later refer to it. It would be a blessing if, on your way to England, you were able to interrupt your trip for a while in Rome so that we could chat in person” (No. 1)¹⁴.

“Yesterday I also received your reprints. I paid particular attention to ‘*Unknown pages...*’. Finally we know the name of his first wife. In a wealth of letters- of those which I am preparing – I have information both indirect and in passing about Thomas, but her Christian name always eluded me! Carolina Naldi is the daughter of Giuseppe Naldi. I am under the impression that Thomas is an actor. She also knew the daughter of Charles Kemble (actor). The newlywed Kalvos chose to reside in Hammersmith. Since his separation from Foskolo, he had resided in Soho, 19 Lenad Sr. A letter sent to Kalvos just after the wedding is addressed 5 Brook Green Ter[r]ace-Hammersmith. In November of 1819 he resides at 16 Peter Hill – Doctor’s Commons. In December 1819 at 10 Sermon Lane- St Paul’s Yard (Doctor’s Commons). In January of 1820 he was still at the same address. It is the last that I have.

You must now, if you can, investigate these addresses in Hammersmith and Doctor’s Commons by mail. They are suburbs; it is in one of these where Thomas and her child died.

Of interest is that as soon as his wife died¹⁵ Kalvos was already discussing marriage with Susan Ridout. I send you some of their correspondence so that you can observe their relationship first hand¹⁶. It is possible that Kalvos married Thomas when she was already pregnant. No sense can be made of it otherwise. This suspicion is confirmed to me by Maria Naldi, wife of Naldi, who writes approximately the following words to Kalvos: “kiss your wife for me, now that you may do so freely.”

I mention all of the above so that you are also aware of the other consideration, the time at which Kalvos’ wife died (prior to November of 1819).

I ask that you use these letters addressed to Kalvos only for the purposes of your research: as they are to be included in the volume I am preparing for the *Ellinika*, so they are not destined and they must not become public prior to the circulation of this volume. I send them to you in confidence” (No. 2).

In his reply, A. Indianos informs M.Vitti that he is preparing a critique of S.A. Sofroniou’s study on A. Kalvos¹⁷. As such, M. Vitti replies: “I await in

the meanwhile your article on the study of Mr. Sofroniou” (No. 3) and: “I thank you dearly for your letter dated 13. IV as well as for the *Kypriaka Chronika*” [Cyprus Chronicles] (No. 4). Here the letter-writer does not comment at all on this substantial critique¹⁸, restricting himself to an initial positive review of the magazine: “It is, in truth, a nice magazine” (No. 4).

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Aside from the references to A. Kalvos, M.Vitti gives information on various other studies and activities. On two occasions he reports that he is preparing an article on Neofytos Rodinos: “At the moment I am studying a populist Cypriot, Neofytos Rodinos, and I am preparing an article based on his manuscripts which are salvaged here [in Rome]. Others are found at the Kikkos Monastery. Yet more are found in Athens and at Ayion Oros” (No. 1). N. Rodinos (1570?-1669), a clergyman, a learned man and a writer, most probably became of interest to M. Vitti upon the latter’s discovery of the manuscripts of the former in the Library of Rome. It is here, in any case that the Cypriot writer studied (1607-1611). In his second letter he states that: “I have submitted my study on his manuscripts to the magazine *Kryptoferris*. I will send it to you”.¹⁹ On his part, A. Indianos reveals information about N.Rodinos which is unknown to the letter-writer. “The information you note about Rodinos is precious and unknown to me. I must get a hold of the books of Phillipou and Peristianis”²⁰ (No. 6). Moreover, M. Vitti expresses the desire to study Cypriot grammatology. “With pleasure I shall also collaborate [with the *Cyprus Chronicles*], if I am able to find a subject which concerns Cyprus directly. It is a shame that I gave something similar to *Parnassos* which was published in last year’s final issue²¹. Both the magazine as well as various other Cypriot issues I have read of late have strengthened my desire to come and visit Cyprus” (No. 4). He would accept an invitation to visit the island with pleasure: in order “to give two lectures” and “study your libraries a little, whilst also writing one or two articles for my paper on Cyprus, which has been silenced here of late” (No. 6).

On the other hand, A. Indianos is interested in finding out whether there exists a manuscript by T.J. Chaubulegne in the Vatican Library and he asks M. Vitti to help him locate it. M. Vitti expresses an interest regardless of the difficulties which arise initially: “The results of the search for the manuscript of Chaubulegne are unfortunately, negative: the relevant librarian stated that nothing under his name has been admitted during our century. – Could he have perhaps have left it elsewhere? Perhaps you should ask for more precise information. Perhaps the manuscripts were found somewhere else, again in

Rome” (No. 5). Finally he locates the codicil and reports: “In this letter I spoke to you of a codicil of the Vatican [library] (cod. Vatic. gr. 2313) which carries the signature of T. J. Chaubulegne on the final page. It is entitled “Narration of the sacred icon of our Holy Lady Theotokos and the Virgin Mary. How these sacred icons were depicted and where each was given and where the icon of the Holy Theotokos, now on mount Kokkos [=Kykkos] was found and for which reason”. I have not found anything else by Chaubulegne” (No. 6).

M. Vitti also refers to the publication of the tragedy *Eugena* by Theodoros Montselez²². “I have also recently sent a reprint regarding *Eugena*, the tragedy I discovered and which has been of interest to me for the last year” (No. 6).

In closing this brief presentation it must be noted that in the letters of M. Vitti to A. Indianos, and more specifically in the quotations which follow, the former’s appreciation of the latter’s research regarding A. Kalvos is most apparent: “I ask that you excuse my indiscretion and accept the expression of the great respect I have for you” (No. 1). “I believe that our correspondence will prove useful to Kalvos. I am saddened that my book on his letters will come out before I am able to make use of your research” (No. 2). “In Geneva Mr. A. Vlachos spoke very highly of you to me” (No. 3). “I would like to know your plans from now so that I may be at your disposal” (No. 3). “Of late, I greatly neglect Kalvos and his correspondence. I don’t know whether it would be wiser to wait for your studies before submitting to the publisher. What do you think? What do you foresee?” (No. 3).

A future publication of the entire correspondence between A. Indianos and M. Vitti, including systematic annotation, could more adequately illuminate this valuable archival material.

NOTES

1. See the work of L. Papaleontiou & K. Ioannou «Epistoles apo to arxeio tou Antoni K. Indianou» [Letters from the archive of Antony K. Indianos] in print, *Epetirida Kentrou Epistimonikon Erevnon*, Nicosia 2007 [Center for Scientific Research Journal].
2. Concerning 5 hand-written letters and a postcard: 17.12.1960 (henceforth No. 1), 30.1.1961 (henceforth No. 2), 10.4.1961 (henceforth No. 3), 8.5.1961 (henceforth No. 4), 18.5.1961 (henceforth No. 5) and 14.3.1962 (henceforth No. 6)

3. See A. Indianos 'Simvoli stin meleti tou A. Kalvou' [Contribution to the study of A. Kalvos] reprint by *Nea Estia*, Athens 1938, p. 5, note 19.
4. 'Agnostes selides apo tin zoi kai to ergo tou Andrea Kalvou' [Unknown pages from the life and works of Andreas Kalvos], Nicosia 1960 'Mia italiki chrestomatheia tou Antrea Kalvou' [An Italian Guidebook of Antreas Kalvos], Nicosia 1960, reprint by *Kypriaka Chronika* [Cyprus Chronicles] 2 (Dec. 1960) 64-68 'Andrea Kalvou: *Apanta*', [Andreas Kalvos: Complete Works], *Kypriaka Chronika* 4 (Feb. 1961) 175-177 "S.A. Sofroniou: *Andreas Kalvos*", *Kypriaka Chronika* 6 (Apr. 1961) 277-279 'I Kipros s'ena stixo mias odis tou Kalvou' [Cyprus in a verse of an Ode by Kalvos] *Kypriaka Chronika* 7 (May 1961) 303-304. Also, within his archive is found an unknown completed article with the title 'Andrea Kalvou: Mia diaitisia' [Andreas Kalvos: an umpirage], which refers to the intervention of Kalvos in a philological dispute between Fr. Nolan and Th. Falconer.
5. See M. Vitti, '*Grafeio me thea*' [An office with a view], Athens 2006, pp. 315-317, 320-321, 342-343.
6. *Nea Estia* 778 (1st Dec. 1959) 1636. Henceforth: 'Heiroygrafa tou Kalvou...' [Manuscripts by Kalvos].
7. *Nea Estia* 791 (15th June. 1960) 784-786. Henceforth: "Merikoi filoi..." [Some friends...].
8. Henceforth: '*Ta italika erga tou Kalvou*' [The Italian works of Kalvos].
9. The spelling of the letter-writer is maintained in the quotations.
10. M. Vitti, *Grafeio me thea* [Room with a view], as above, p. 316
11. "Piges yia ti viografia tou Kalvou (Epistoles 1813-1820)" [Sources on the biography of Kalvos (Letters 1813-1820)], *Ellinika* [Greek], Appendix 15, 1963.
12. For such issues see also L. Zafeiriou, *O vios kai to ergo tou Andrea Kalvou* [The life and work of Andreas Kalvos], Athens, Metaichmio, 2006.
13. "If the Italian of this poet has submerged me within Italian literature of the declining enlightenment and the post-Napoleonic period, his correspondence led me to the philhellenic homes of London. Here I had the company of Mary Keeley, who helped me with the comprehension of the English letters, as well as Mike [=Edmund], who searched London in vain to find a publisher for Kalvos' flirtations. During that period, the Keeleys resided next door to us, at the American Academy of Rome": *Room with a view* as above, p. 318.
14. As is clear in a consecutive letter, this meeting never eventuated.
15. According to L. Zafeiriou (as above p. 57), Thomas died in September (?) of 1819.
16. Three type-written letters (1919) from Susan Ridout to A. Kalvos are salvaged within A. Indianos' archive.

17. A. Indianos, "S.A. Sofroniou: *Andreas Kalvos*, Critical Study, Prologue R.J. Jenkins, Athens, 1960", *Kypriaka Chronika* [Cyprus Chronicles] 6 (April 1961) 277-279.
18. To be noted is that A. Indianos announces here two Kalvian studies of his, which are never published: the first relates to A. Kalvos' intervention in the dispute between Fr. Nolan and Th. Falconer, and the second to the collaboration developed between A. Kalvos and Fr. Nolan.
19. Mario Vitti, «Alcune osservazioni sulla bibliografia di Neofito Rodino», *Bollettino della Badia Greca di Grottaferrata* XV, 1-2 (1961) 83-90.
20. The books of I. Peristianis and L. Phillipou are concerned with the history of Cyprus.
21. An obvious reference to his article "Stichoi tou Hiou Rafael Vernatza yia tin Kypro (1751)" [Verses of Hugh Rafael Vernatza on Cyprus (1751)], *Parnassos* 2 (1960) 577-580.
22. See *Kretika Chronika* [Chronicles of Crete] 14 (Jan-Apr. 1960) 435-451.

Appendix

Manuscript Letter of Mario Vitti to Antonis Indianos

ISTITUTO UNIVERSITARIO ORIENTALE

Ρώμη, 17 Δεκεμβρίου 1960
1^a via Guerrazzi

Στις 17 Δεκεμβρίου 1960

Κατά σύμπτωση σήμερα έγραφα την δική μου επιστολή στο κύριο ζήτημα και έσυμφωνήσα να εσύ γράψω γρήγορα. Δεν ξέρω αν έπρεπε να διαλέξω ένα άρθρο που ποτέ έγραφε ως "Νέα εθικά" την έννοια, και γ' αυτό εσύ το είπες. Αλλά να συγγιχθεί πρόκειται να κυκλοφορήσει ο τόμος με τα γλωσσικά έργα του Καίτη που όλα κατέχει στην Βαλκανική, βιβλιοθήκη και στην βιβλιοθήκη dell'Archipressario di Bologna (γ' αλτά δεν δόξα γίνεται ως άρθρο που, γιατί με έσύμφωνη να κρατήσει το ρωσικό: η αποκάλυψη των χρεών ή άλλων του Βαλκανίου που είχε ερωτική αντίθεση και που φαίνεται χρεώση έκαιε η έρπικη).

Έχω έτοιμάσει για έκδοση και να έταξοι τον έδακτ ο Καίτη ως Λουδο, ^{κατά} την πρώτη διαφορά του. Για τα αγγλικά ή άλλους, που είναι πολλή (πρόσφατα τον Ridout) με βοήθησε το γρήγορο Edmund Keeley. Υπάρχει κάποια ταξινόμηση να παρουσιάζει όλα τα ή άλλα εθικά εθικά εθικά, παράφορα ως περιόδους "Εθικά", δεν δέχομαι αν εν γένει έρθουν τα ή άλλα, όποια τα ή άλλα να έταξοι ή άλλου. - Για τα αγγλικά πρόσωπα έκανα την παρουσία στα ή άλλα. Με τα ή άλλα ή άλλου του

διαδέξω, αργότερα ή έστω ή άλλω περίπτωσης θα μπορούσα
 να έχω πολλά ποιητικά σε διάφορα γένη του λουσίλου.
 Ο κύριος Ζωρζ με πληροφορεί ότι σκοπεύει να πάει
 εκεί. Ήν ως τότε σ'έν έχω βγει το βιβλίο, θα είναι δυ-
 ποίτα να σ'έν έδωα αρκετά ποιητικά, που ίσως φερουν δια-
 τικηματα. Δεν θα δωρατω με καμια φράση πρὸς
 τον, αν σ'έν φανη χροσικος. Θα προσέχει να παύει
 την διακοιμαή σου, και ήμ, αργότερα, θα παραπέμφω σε
 αλβιν. Θα ήλας ήχως έργο αν υπαίτιος κατα την
 Αγγλία, παράειτα και δικόφωτα με διο το ρήσι εν Ρητη
 και γα ποσμε από κοντά.

Έκτι το μυστο σου και σημαντικο έργο του 1938 ^{του Κωδιν} έχει
 ήλλα; Θα προσέχει να μου σ'ήδωτα διαίτιο των προ-
 φητων πελατων σου; Θα σ'έν ήρα υπόχρωμενος.

Ασχοδοίρα ήρα γενηται με ήνα διηγορως κ'αποιο,
 τον Νόβελος Ροδινσ και έτοιμ'ω ήνα έργο με λατα γα
 Αηρογμφα του του σ'ήματα ε'δω. Αλλα διαφχαν ενιν
 μουι κ'ικκον. και ήλλα ενιν Αθινα και εν Αγγλ "δρος.

Σ'έν παρακατω να συμπρετα εν διαχεοια εν
 και να δωχωτα εν έρεση εν ηγατης εκ'εουση
 ποι έχω να σ'έν.

Μετα υιτη