

MODERN GREEK STUDIES

(AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND)

Volume 13, 2005

A Journal for Greek Letters

Pages on Australian Society

Published by Brandl & Schlesinger Pty Ltd
PO Box 127 Blackheath NSW 2785
Tel (02) 4787 5848 Fax (02) 4787 5672
www.brandl.com.au

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ISSN 1039-2831

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Typeset and design by Andras Berkes

Printed by Griffin Press

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MODERN GREEK STUDIES
(AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND)

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MEMBERSHIP TO MODERN GREEK STUDIES ASSOCIATION

plus ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION for two issues

Individual: AUS \$45 US \$35 UK £25 €35 Institutions: AUS \$70 US \$65 UK £35 €45 (plus postage)

full-time student/pensioners: AUS \$20 US \$30 UK £20

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The periodical welcomes papers in both English and Greek on all aspects of Modern Greek Studies (broadly defined). Prospective contributors should preferably submit their papers on disk and hard copy. All published contributions by academics are refereed (standard process of blind peer assessment). This is a DEST recognised publication.

Το περιοδικό φιλοξενεί άρθρα στα Αγγλικά και τα Ελληνικά αναφερόμενα σε όλες τις απόψεις των Νεοελληνικών Σπουδών (στη γενικότητά τους). Υποψήφιοι συνεργάτες θα πρέπει να υποβάλλουν κατά προτίμηση τις μελέτες των σε δισκέτα και σε έντυπη μορφή. Όλες οι συνεργασίες από πανεπιστημιακούς έχουν υποβληθεί στην κριτική των εκδοτών και επιλέκτων πανεπιστημιακών συναδέλφων.

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SECTION FOUR

BOOK REVIEWS

Edited by Helen Nickas

La Trobe University, Melbourne

Yorgos Chronas

99 Poems

Selected, translated and introduced by Yannis Goumas
Odos Panos Publications, Athens, 2005

Yorgos Chronas' poetry is not very well known outside Greece. However, within the country, it (together with his editorial work) bears the ring of an almost legendary reputation, due to qualities of style and matter that distinguish it from the dominant forms of poetic writing: qualities such as flexible linguistic structures, fluid imaginative articulation and intense reverence towards the minute shades of feeling.

Greek poetry has been usually recognised internationally for either its grand ideological statements (Yannis Ritsos), its luminous solar metaphysics (Odysseus Elytis), or its melancholic fragmented landscapes of a lost classical past (Giorgos Seferis). Other more recent poets, like Nikos Karouzos or Kiki Dimoula, have also articulated a world of 'strong' experimentation with language and form that makes their work emblematic of an existential dysphoria with regards to the art of writing.

Chronas brought to prominence a rather new practice in the art of writing poetry. He started publishing his poems in 1973, when Greek society was changing, from being insular, to becoming almost abruptly open to the challenges and the dilemmas of the modern European world under the intensified pace of rapid modernisation. By 'modernisation' is meant the act of confronting the existential and societal implications of modernity, something that was not done in the country for a combination of political and structural reasons after the war.

Chronas' poetry matured during the period from the Dictatorship of 1967 until after the Restoration of the Republic in 1974, and portrayed a world in transition experiencing

eruptions of a generalised cultural crisis. The crisis was not, as in the past, political or ideological. The great poets of previous decades had essentially assassinated the art of constructing complete mythopoetic forms by bringing them to their ultimate completion: Seferis' world of broken statues and modernist melancholia expired when the restoration of the Republic gave the opportunity to look at reality with a peculiar kind of optimism and a renewed interest in the nuances between ideas, practices and feelings.

Chronas, and a series of poets of the same period, turned towards such self-reflexive modes of writing, by struggling to explore the implications of poetry as another source of moral empowerment for the individual. His poetry is self-reflexive without being introverted; it maps out a whole world made through the kaleidoscopic re-arrangement of the real. He constructs his poetic universe from below upwards rather than the other way around, as modernist poets did before him. In this universe, no consolation in the classical past can be found; no vital euphoria in the sunny beaches of the Aegean; no visionary eschatology of a messianic salvation in a socialist utopia.

On the contrary, the everyday, the ordinary and the trivial become the centrepieces in the imaginative reinvention of a disconcerting and dystopic reality. Chronas depicts his vision of the world through the symbols of contemporary life: cinema, buses, corridors, electrical lamps, sailors, passers-by, migrants, conductors, gas cylinders, anything and anyone that we experience as our reality when we open our eyes every day.

Chronas' world celebrates the immediacy of awakened senses. Marilyn Monroe, Pier Paolo Pasolini and Maria Callas occupy the central positions of a Trinitarian deity in his pantheon. Around them is a whole world of marginal individuals – homosexuals, drug addicts, prostitutes, illegal migrants, manic-depressive women, macho-autistic men – and most of all personified places – suburbs of Athens, Piraeus, Rome, Amsterdam, Berlin, London – which all construct an invisible universe of symbolic relations that make the reader puzzled and somehow unsettled.

Behind the serene reflection over the destiny of the evanescent, and the fact that all such ephemeral entities will only enjoy a fleeting moment of glorious life, there is a profound and disturbing meditation of how death re-values each and every thing, every experience, moment and individual event.

Chronas is the master of subtlety and innuendo. His poems are replete with references to movies, high school texts books, TV news and, most importantly, scraps of the only authentic Bible of modern humanity, the Newspaper. His verses carry the sharpness, impersonality, immediacy and minimalist succinctness of newspaper reports: just as journalists report on wars, social life, assassinations, deaths, murders, rapes and changes in government with the accuracy of a medical diagnosis and yet with the distracting thought of what is to be included on the next page, so does his poetry deal with the ephemeral

and the trivial. It struggles to salvage them from dis-appearing, from losing their presence and immediate reality in relation to the new event that replaces and dis-places them with an irrational and meaningless emptiness.

His poetry is thus focused around what we would call the 'enchanted objecthood' of beings. Chronas does not try to reduce things and lives to one principle of existential reference. No supreme God, no great idea, no unifying belief regulate the flowing anarchy of his omnivorous sensualism. His gaze moves inside events, lives through them and then breaks them down into their constituent particles; and yet nothing loses its specificity, since all belong to a narrative myth in which fragmentation is the only reality for self-understanding. Every word in his poems points towards a prismatic existence: as in Borges' *Aleph*, the reader can read the whole universe in each simultaneously. Such associative simultaneity is the most striking characteristic of his verses, and we might add of his prose; it gives his poems formal and thematic commonalities with John Ashbery's 'deep image' poetry and, strangely enough, Robert Duncan's 'grand collage' poetics. Chronas is an international poet, in the sense that his work expresses the end of the poetics of traditional high modernism and articulates the global need for a new medium made out of the experience of everyday life, away from the mythologised architectonics of history.

Most of his poems are characterised by a monological, almost theatrical, element of self-dramatisation. Chronas' poems are dramaturgical re-enactments, through visual metaphors, of self-exploration. His poetry is ruled by visuality, by the ability to be seen and to become a phenomenon of immediate attention. His verses avoid intellectualism, abstractions or ideological statements; they are content with the appearance of the real as experienced by the fallible human senses. In this respect, and despite its anti-classical stance, his poetry is Homeric in its core characteristics: it depicts the phenomenology of sight and appearance as the only space in which literature can exist, without losing its expressive value.

From 1973 to this day, Chronas' poetry chronicles the adventure of the changing visual spaces in Greek reality. Yet he never became an aesthete: despite elements of aestheticism and of a somehow exclusivist perception of reality, Chronas' poetry is grounded in the awe and oftentimes the terror of the Real, through the powerful influence of his sensual quest. His sexuality permeates the landscape of his poems, and it subverts all legitimacies and conventions: '*Oh, my sweet fascist, / don't ask me to go with you / into the toilets of Nuremberg. / ... Behind false eyelashes / under powders and lipstick / their's a breath of life / away from alehouses and pork / with wine*' (p. 263). This 'sweet fascist' has lost his aggression, virility and violence. He has been transformed into a plaything, a trinket for a prostitute (or maybe a transvestite) and his phallus has really become a tool

for useless desire: *'Oh my sweet fascist / never before did I have so many hairs / on my chest / nor did my prick reach up / to my navel'* (p. 261). It must definitely have been a transsexual, because only prostitutes, gays and transsexuals can appreciate the femininity and the passivity of a fascist prick.

Chronas' poetry articulates the realm of displaced intentions and charts the territory of the invisible forces that make humanity real. His gods are the weak, the meek and the dispossessed, and they are pagan gods full of passions, desires and needs. Furthermore, they fuse in themselves passion and redemption, because at the most precious moments of their being, at the very moment of the fulfilment of their desires, they vanish into a black hole of personal confusion. And yet they go on living like Epicureans who, after having indulged in sensual excesses, become unexpectedly tormented by moral dilemmas. Such a destiny makes them beautiful, in the classical sense, and at the same time morally pure, from the Christian perspective. They are people, or even things, that have experienced glory but have fallen from grace; people and things that knew that their very triumph would inevitably lead to their demise; people and things that were aware of their victimhood within a world that glorified them.

Marilyn Monroe is probably the most enduring symbol that Chronas has invented in what is probably one of the finest poems ever written in Greek since Sappho; *'Paint on my body my mother Ethel / – wasn't she called Ethel? – my last lover / killed on a motorcycle in Chicago. / Paint on my body the communion of jazz, / of rock'n'roll, of hashish and barbitures. / Paint on my body the wet dreams / of Kinsey's homosexuals and the whores of New York.'* (p. 65). Chronas has created his own middle-earth of contemporary reality; he hasn't escaped into the fantasy world of hobbits, kings and ideotypes. His middle-earth is so common that it becomes a miracle in itself: *'I think everything was just a flash of images / because while the two of us were in the building / his head leaning back, he looked more like / the fallen god of a betrayed people than a priest / and I a sacked commercial traveller than a prodigal son / returning after a life of debauchery asking for his father's pardon'* (p. 127).

These are some of the central symbols of his poetry: together with common names (Nikos, Jenny, Lilika, Stella etc) or names of places (with all their hidden association of sexual secrecy) or names of book heroes (with all the intimacy of the hands that opened the books), Chronas mythologises real people who lived, loved and experienced tragedy. This is an important element of his poetics that differentiates him from other Greek poets – his deep sense of an under-stated tragedy as a central form of self-definition. He finds such tragic dimension in the life of Maria Callas and of Pier Paolo Pasolini; the latter in particular has enacted a powerful influence on him: *'I am not here to teach / film-making, philosophy or poetic art / I seek the heads of Christ's disciples / in these Greeks from Pontus / these lads from Epirus. / They mentioned a waiter / who washes dishes in a tavern and looks like Him.'* (p. 273).

We are all certain that if the second coming happens in any way, Jesus will choose his disciples from these outcasts of society, as he did in his first controversial appearance, and not amongst the pomp and the ceremony of his beloved Church. Drug addicts, prostitutes, transvestites, murderers, they all expect the second Parousia, because they are in need of salvation and redemption. Chronas is essentially a religious poet, or at least a poet with deep religious sensitivity; and he is religious precisely because he talks about such beings as prostitutes and transvestites and not about the mysteries of the trinity, the Mother of God or any ecclesiastical eschatology.

Chronas' poetry is incarnational theology at its best, because it articulates the poetry of the flesh and of its living realities beyond and behind the conventions and the duties of social roles and ecclesiastical coteries. If the word became flesh, then it exists in all flesh and all its actions. Chronas' religious sensitivity is fully expressed in one of the most powerful poems of this selection with the indicative title '*Blessed are they that mourn in courtyards with broken tiles while waiting for the photographer to arrive on Sunday*'. In the first part of the poem we read: '*From age to age, for no good reason, they'll abandon themselves / in the back of a courtyard, behind a well, powerless / bodiless / sorrowful / nocturnal / four saints they / of an unknown, nonexistent religion, / ready to be beheaded in front of closed / blank windows*' (p. 241). This metaphor of a photographer arriving every Sunday is extremely powerful in its straightforward indirectness; it is also so common that we haven't thought of Sunday, the Lord's Day, as the specific time when the light is recorded in remembrance of our momentary existence.

As D.H. Lawrence observed, poetry can only give us a 'morality of living' and not 'a morality of salvation'; and this is precisely what Chronas' poetry has achieved. It portrays a morality of living in the flesh, without abstractions and disembodied truths. His poetry is one of the finest *humanistic* achievements created in contemporary Greece and as such has to be read and appreciated. Chronas' poetry fuses together the Platonic ideal of beauty and the Christian ascesis of ethical empowerment, creating thus a rich synthesis of beauty and morality in a post-Christian and post-Platonic world. It has to be read as a document of 'open sensibility' and of formal experimentation unique in contemporary poetry.

Finally, we must say something about the translation. Yannis Goumas has masterfully recreated the indirect and subtle style of the original through judicious adjustments and sensitive syntax modifications. Chronas' style is subtle and indirect; what is named is a metonymy or a displaced allusion. If we may borrow a musical term from chanting, it is also 'monodrome', in the sense that it develops, through gradual modulations, the potentialities of a single monochord harmony. So his style is highly irregular within the Greek language which, precisely because of its semantically loaded history, is inflexible and opaque. Chronas' idiom is also very 'open', almost translucent, with imperceptible varia-

tions and transitions. Despite its theatricality, it is not theatrical: on the contrary, it uses prosaic elements in order to avoid hyper-performative statements and the usual loudness of Greek language. So English can be the natural habitat of such an idiom: understatements and sub-representations, dry honour and intricately self-referential irony, mixed with the feeling of stoic detachment and dispassionate observation – these are the verbal strategies that construct Chronas' living space. A remarkable poet himself, Goumas has rendered all stylistic intricacies of the original in a functional and poetic manner that does justice to the text and at the same time transfers it into the heart of the conversational poetic idiom, which is employed in the United States mainly by poets following the Black Mountain and New York poets. His translation is an achievement of the highest quality and artistic merit, a model for translators and theorists of translation.

Vrasidas Karalis

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David Close

Greece since 1945. Politics, Economy and Society

London: Longman, 2002, 307 pp, rrp \$49.95

Many readers of this journal will already be familiar with David Close's very useful books on the history of the Greek civil war. His latest work, *Greece since 1945: Politics, Economy and Society*, extends beyond the lengthy aftermath of that devastating event and, as indicated by the subtitle, engages its subject on a broad disciplinary front. In the process the book reveals the author's versatility as a social scientist and his sophistication as an observer of contemporary Greece.

In summary, this book is a veritable godsend for university teachers and students of Modern Greek and European Studies and it deserves to become the staple of undergraduate bibliographies for years to come. Its endnotes and guide to further reading will also serve as a starting point for research at higher levels.

What follows can give only a glimpse of the immense riches of the book's contents, which are a distillation of decades of personal observation and of expert reading of sources ranging from on-line Athenian newspapers to proclamations of political parties, yearbooks of various organisations, economic reports, surveys, and hundreds of scholarly books and articles. The book is well worth having just as a convenient compendium of data on contemporary Greece. Compilers of trivial pursuit quizzes need look no further – When did Greece's baby boom occur? In which year did migration from Greece go into reverse? How many Greek army officers were trained in the USA from 1950 to 1969?

How many Greek patients sought treatment abroad in 1997? What proportion of married female school-teachers surveyed in 2000 reported satisfaction with their sex lives? What proportion of households in Greece participated in some way in the black economy in 2000? (Answers on pp. 59, 62, 125, 214, 215 and 237 respectively.)

Of course, the documentary purpose served by such data in the book is far from trivial and their accumulation is in no way an end in itself: they sustain a wealth of intelligent insights into Greek politics, economics and society. Close is above all preoccupied with identifying and explaining patterns, connections and causes behind important and peculiar facets of contemporary Greece. Linguistic markers of causation are strongly in evidence from the outset: on p. 8 alone, the phrase 'for this reason' appears three times, 'thus' twice, not to mention 'hence' and several expressions involving 'result' and 'account for'. Whilst in plentiful supply, statistics are not served up gratuitously or cosmetically. Above all, the figures quoted demonstrate the remarkable (albeit uneven) rise of material prosperity in Greece from an extremely low base: it seems incredible today that as late as 1964 only 35 per cent of Greek urban households had running water.

The optimal organisation of the greater welter of quantitative and qualitative data presented in this book was no less challenging a task than its collation and evaluation. The structure of the volume accommodates both analytical and chronological approaches quite adroitly. Within the twelve main chapters, the narrative proceeds along the axes of politics (domestic and international), economy, society in a fixed sequence. 1945 is 'Year Zero' in a rather literal sense (given the immediately preceding devastation of the modest gains of a century of independent statehood), and 1974 is the turning-post for the thematic sequence. Thus domestic politics occupy chapters 1, 2, 5 and 6 (to 1974) and then chapters 8 and 11 (1974–2000). Interposed between these chapters are the corresponding chronological slices of economics (chapters 3 and 9), sociology (chapters 4 and 10) and foreign policy (chapters 7 and 12). This is clearly a more complex structure than the linear progression to which the well-known short histories of Greece have accustomed us, and following through certain sequences of events involves some potentially disconcerting backtracking and forward reference. For instance, the narrative of Greece's involvement in the Cyprus catastrophe of 1974 is briefly commenced on p. 123 in the context of the demise of the Junta, before the account of EOKA rebellion in the 1950s (pp. 128ff.), and is resumed on pp.134ff. The story of the Turkish invasion of Cyprus is then taken up on pp. 266 and 268f. where a long leap forward occurs into Papandreou's use of the EEC as leverage against Turkey in the 1980s and 1990s before the account of the second phase of the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in August 1974 is given. Of course Cyprus is not the primary concern of the book, but this and other instances of desultoriness confirm for me that the structure of this book lends itself less readily to the sequential cover-to-cover

reading required of a reviewer, than to the piecemeal reading to which students and teachers will surely subject it. The book would also function very well as an electronic hypertext with links to adjacent topics. However, resolutely linear readers will find the table of changes of government in Appendix 1 helpful in plotting the chronological progression of political history in the rest of the book.

The unity of the narrative is also enhanced by a steady focus on a selection of recurrent themes in the unfolding political, economic and social history of post-war Greece. Section headings signal some of these themes quite dramatically: 'The parasitical state', 'Social services in crisis' and 'Corruption' (apparently greater in Greece than in Portugal and Spain, but less than Italy, Turkey and the former communist countries of eastern Europe [p. 235]). Other recurrent themes include the constant competition between modernisers and traditionalists and the tension between Greeks' admiration for developed West and their traditional values represented chiefly by the Orthodox Church. Mercifully Close has spared his readers yet another rehearsal of the Romios-Hellene dichotomy, but there is no escaping old chestnuts such as citizens' desire to exploit the institutions of the Hellenic state for private benefit. On the other hand this traditional (and far from unique) proclivity is reported to be increasingly tempered by a realisation that efficiency and the rule of law are essential to national prosperity. I don't remember seeing the hackneyed R-word (*rusfeti*) in this book, but I was much taken with the idea that employment in the rampant public sector might be seen as a form of deliberate social policy and also with the phrase *crony capitalism* to denote the systematic transfer of resources by government from the bulk of the population to large-scale capitalists (again hardly unique to Greece). The overall tendency of economic imperatives to drive social and cultural change is another leitmotif of the book, as is the complicity of Greek educational policy in various endemic socio-economic evils.

Changes in the status of women are also regularly charted throughout the book. The progressive policies of EAM seem to have set back the feminist cause during the long years of right-wing revanchism that followed the civil war, in all but the elite echelons of Greek society (see pp. 71f.). The fact that Greece's rating on the UN Gender Empowerment Measure is still the lowest in Europe (p. 219) may also account for the total absence of women from the series of potted biographies of significant individuals, which Close has integrated into his narrative (from Zachariadis on p. 19 to Simitis on p. 245). Indeed, the only female public figures to make it into the Index of the book are Queen Frederica, Margaret Papandreou and Simone de Beauvoir, none of them fully Greek. It will be hard for a future, updated version of the volume to overlook the two Greek women who recently stole the show as the organisers of Athens 2004 before a global television-audience of 4 billion!

Meanwhile, the present edition cites an increase in crime by women as one of the available measure of their increasingly independent status (p. 222), and this is by no means the most bizarre evidence adduced in support of the numerous generalisations contained in the book. A perceived drop in the incidence of clapping for attention in restaurants serves as a somewhat impressionistic index of the increasing dignity accorded even to the menial workforce, and a report from the army clothing department that the average height of conscripts increased by 3.7 per cent in the 1990s is one of the more ingenious indices of improved physical welfare.

Teachers of Modern Greek Studies will especially value the sections of the book tracing the development of those social institutions which are too mundane to register in Greek history books: e.g. the brief account of the development of social insurance in Greece (p. 72). The generous Index at the end of the book reveals that the coverage of such pedestrian but important aspects of contemporary Greece includes: abortion, crime rates, decentralisation, environment, government inefficiency (several entries), government size (ditto), health, immigration, information technology, NGOs, nutrition, ombudsman, police, stock exchange, suicide rate, taxation, town planning (sub-heading: lack of), and the WWF. Also remarkable in the Index is the size of the entries for Italy, Portugal and Spain, reflecting Close's conviction (p. 14) that it is more fruitful to compare the economy, politics and some social trends in Greece with those countries than with other Balkan countries or with northern Europe. (Even so, the absence of Britain/UK from the Index is odd.) Another indication of the book's foci is to be found in the List of Abbreviations, which contains such signs of the times as SDOE (Corps for the Pursuit of Economic Crime) and TAXIS (Integrated Programme of Tax Information). A notable omission from this list is ELAS (in both its incarnations: E.L.A.S. and EL.AS); instead of the former, the text refers to 'EAM's army' (p. 13).

Readers will doubtless find that much of the mundane information in the book confirms and usefully documents their intuition or prejudice – for example, with regard to the impact of television on traditional village mores (pp. 64 ff.), especially after 1990 when over 220 private and municipal television stations were licensed (p. 252). But they should also prepare for some surprises, such as the argument that public health in general has been a success story in Greece (p. 203), notwithstanding a reported drop in life expectancy among younger adults due to a combination of diet change, the highest smoking rate in the EU, and traffic accidents (twice the EU average), and despite the alarming data provided on obesity, serious tooth-decay, the maldistribution of medical staff, their partiality to 'under the counter and untaxed payments' – the 'F-word' (*fakelaki*) did not appear – and the poor administration of state hospitals by managers appointed on partisan criteria not merit. Arrayed against all this are no less impressive data on improvements in physical

well-being, disease prevention and control, and other forms of welfare, which, together with indices of the overall rise in prosperity of the population, support the unlikely claim of a success story.

Of the other extra-textual appendages to the book, the helpfulness of Appendix 1 to linear reading has already been signalled. (Despite the heading 'Changes of government and head of state', it also includes the ominous replacement of Evert with Karamanlis the Younger as leader of the opposition in 1997.) Appendix 2 usefully lists the results of parliamentary elections from 1946 to 2000 in percentage of votes and number of seats per party. The two maps of Greece are uncluttered and functional – though teachers wishing to overlay transparencies of the physical with the political would have been saved some fumbling at the photocopier if the maps had been of identical size! The Guide to Further Reading is understandably confined to books in English and is arranged under sensible headings and accompanied by useful comments. A separate entry for the Cyprus issue as it affected Greece would have been a bonus.

Chapter 13 is an excursus titled 'Whither now?' and consists of five pages of prudent augury. Inter alia it sees significant fragility in the economy and the burden of militarism as unsustainable; the implications for foreign policy are clear. It identifies some grounds for optimism in internal political and social developments, notably in the strengthening of counter-forces to authoritarian government and in signs of increasing civil consciousness, public spiritedness and collective responsibility. This portends better days for civil society in Greece, another preoccupation of the preceding analysis, which like the women's movement, had to live down the legacy of EAM, but also to overcome traditional primary loyalties to family or a political party in a spoils system more deeply entrenched than in other southern European countries. For the present, however, respect for civil liberties remains still 'sadly' underdeveloped, interpersonal trust is low by European standards (though higher than Italy), and Greece is poorly regarded internationally for tolerance of minorities (pp. 257f.) The extraordinarily high rate of traffic accidents, the ubiquitous litter and the lowest proportion of waste recycled in EU are all further signs of a residual shortage of social capital in Greece (p. 258).

The last phrase marks a rare departure from the author's commendable avoidance of sociological jargon – he even helpfully glosses social exclusion as poverty for normal English-speakers. Furthermore, Close occasionally rewards his readers with some very nice turns of phrase (e.g. on p. 116 where he describes the anti-communism of the right-wing establishment as 'a fixed mentality, impervious to the facts') and some eloquent invective – the Greek Centre of Cinematography, established by the Junta in 1970, is singled out for a memorable verbal mauling: 'Assured of state finances regardless of the public reception of its products [...] for a long time it produced films many of which were

dismally bad. [...] relatively few films made in Greek have provoked debate about social issues or been artistically original' (p. 252). This is a rare foray into discussion of artistic and intellectual culture in post-war Greece, and there is clearly scope for a companion volume in English (perhaps a collective undertaking) on that very topic.

In view of the immense service that the author has rendered to English-speaking students of Modern Greece, I am reluctant to labour my few and rather trivial gripes about the book, such as the transliteration of the digraph epsilon-ypsilon as 'ev' (instead of 'ef') before unvoiced consonants (thus Elevation, Elevation, Evthymiou and Elevis), and the aggregation of references, which impedes the pinpointing of sources of some intriguing pieces of information (such as that on p. 215 that the majority of Greek graduates studied the same subjects and at the same universities as their fathers). However, one linguistic infelicity definitely worth correcting prior to reprinting is the rendering of Greek names in authorship attributions, notably in the endnotes, where the case wavers waywardly between the Greek genitive and nominative forms in both genders, sometimes within a single attribution (e.g. p. 259 'Panayiotis Bitsika and Machis Tratsa' and p. 264 'Dimitra Kroustali and Nikou Karagianni' – the phrase 'the mayor of Kalamarias' on p. 247 may be due to the same linguistic blind-spot). These minor lapses will be all the easier to correct by cross-checking with the Greek version of the book soon to be published by 'Epilogi' press of Thessaloniki.

Publication in Greece in Greek translation is a practical form of recognition of the value of this book to all students of contemporary Greece. The implicit commendation is richly deserved.

Stathis Gauntlett

La Trobe University, Melbourne

Marie Gaulis

Une Littérature De L'Exil:

Vasso Kalamara et Antigone Kefala, deux écrivains grecs d'Australie

[A Literature of Exile:

Vasso Kalamaras and Antigone Kefala, two Greek writers of Australia]

Geneva: Editions Slatkine, 2001 (hard cover, 380 pp)

Marie Gaulis, a former student of the Modern Greek Studies Program at the University of Geneva, has now published *Une littérature de l'exil, Vasso Kalamara et Antigone Kefala, deux écrivains grecs de l'Australie*, a book based on her doctoral dissertation. This work is in fact an enlarged edition of her thesis, which was published in 2001.

Much to the pleasure of the organisers of the XIV international symposium hosted by the Modern Greek section of the Multilanguage Department at the University of Upper Brittany in 1995, the conference participants had an opportunity to discuss with the author herself the relevance of the subject and the interest for such a work to both academic circles and the general public. This book is the result.

There is much to admire in Marie Gaulis. She has a keen perception and ability in harmonising scholarship with an artistic flair and sensitivity, as well as a talent for writing. Such qualities are a great asset in her presentation of these two Greek writers and their place in Modern Greek literature. It is indeed both an honour and a privilege for me to have been asked to review this work.

The book is divided into three main chapters, and these, in turn, are subdivided into various subchapters according to their content. After providing the reader with a brief introduction expounding several terms including *journey* and *terra incognita* she continues with an overview of the subject explaining her motivations, the difficulties encountered, her working environment, and finally her meeting with the two writers, Vasso Kalamara and Antigone Kefala.

In the first chapter, 'Australia, a multicultural society', the author provides her readership with background information about Australia and the history of both Greek and Cypriot immigration to the island continent. A casual glance at the titles of the eight sub-headings is enough to entice the reader: Australia from colonisation to immigration; the tyranny of distance; the geographic aspects of the unconscious; Botany Bay, the penitentiary colony; from deportation to free immigration; Utopia or 'Dystopia', the felicitous land; the immigration in the nineteenth century of white Australia to the policy of integration. These facts are presented clearly in a factual and well-documented fashion. In a masterful way, Ms. Gaulis plunges her public through a passionate journey of the history of this island continent, which remains a *terra incognita* for many Europeans, most particularly the general French public.

The second part of the first chapter presents multiculturalism and deals with the historical background of this term, the on-going debates and the literary and critical production that stem from it. It is quite interesting to see how the inhabitants of a 'young' nation like Australia apprehend and elaborate such notions. Gaulis confronts the issue of terminology, which is not always innocuous, the debates of a society in mutation and both literary criticism and literary production which exist simultaneously, with sensitivity and a lucid critical eye.

The third part of the first chapter deals with the passage from multiculturalism to a contemporary 'home-grown' Australian literary production. Going beyond the issues of multiculturalism, this part deals with contemporary Australian literature in general and

women's literature in particular. The discussion proves extremely interesting as it entails not only the problems of literary definitions, but also the social, cultural, economic and political consequences; issues underlying many literary productions. Having elaborated on the background of her work, Gaulis also lays the foundation for the core of her research upon which she will expound in the second chapter.

The second chapter concerns the presence of the Greek and Cypriot communities in Australia. In the first part, Gaulis provides us with an overview of this immigration from the first group of seven Greeks abandoned by an English ship transporting three hundred convicts in 1817, to the case of the island of Kastellorizo, through the Second World War, and finally the massive influx of Greeks during the 1950s and 1960s. The author evokes the hardships endured during the struggle to recognition as a minority, including the different problems relative to an economic and political immigration on the part of a mainly rural population not sufficiently armed to face a hostile environment, both physically and intellectually. In addition to these hardships, other challenges are evoked such as the language barrier, the harsh climate, the relationship between Australians of Anglo-Saxon origins and those of their own Greek community, and discrimination, which many newcomers had to bear.

This transition – from the painful separation from the fatherland and the mother tongue, to the ever-present notion of *xenitia* – also forms the basis of the discussion in this part of the second chapter. More recently, a delicate equilibrium seems to have been struck between an 'accepted' schizophrenia and a community, which has a largely Australian identity since nowadays Australians of Greek and Cypriot background seem to be integrated into the mainstream of Australian life.

The third part of the second chapter gives the general outlines of contemporary literary production from 1985 to 1996. The publications of the younger generation and more particularly those of Vasso Kalamara and Antigone Kefala are the main themes at this juncture. This presentation is well documented and highly valuable, adding a page to Greek literature studies of a chapter little known even to a Greek-speaking public in Europe. The issues raised by the choice of language to write in, the general interest of such a literature, the dangers of *ethnic* writing, all of these questions are dealt with remarkable clarity and insight. More than a researcher in the meanders of the Australian *terra incognita* or the Greek labyrinth, Gaulis is a writer and a scholar, and in many respects is even better qualified than most to explore these issues since she herself has first-hand knowledge of the notions of exile as well as the language barrier and the sense of loneliness and exclusion that come in their wake.

As Theseus who, thanks to Ariadne, was able to find his way both in and out of the labyrinth, so Gaulis succeeds in guiding her public through the maze of the motivations

of two contemporary writers, Vasso Kalamara and Antigone Kefala. She expounds the reason for her choice of these two writers by explaining these women's manner of discussing the notion of exile; the idea of integration and the sense of belonging in contemporary Australian society; the choice each woman had to make as to which language to write in, and finally the role that women characters play in these writers' works. All these are elements, which intrigued her.

In the first part Gaulis chooses to comment on the first writer, Vasso Kalamara. Vasso Kalamara was born in Greece but immigrated to Australia with her husband just after the Second World War. Unlike many immigrants, including Greeks, who were concentrated in the urban centres, she lived and worked for many years on a tobacco farm in Western Australia. She had started writing while still in Greece, and continued to do so once she was established in Australia. Although she has become known as one of the most influential writers of her generation, she has made a conscious choice to write in Greek so as not to lose the tie between her writing and her origins. However, she translates her own work and even gives great importance to studying and discussing the process of translation. In addition, some of her works have been written directly in English. She is a versatile writer and has already written short stories, travelogues, poetry and theatre. Her literary universe reflects many of the questions facing women in a forbidding country and society. The significance of being a member of two minority groups that of being a woman and that of being a foreigner, the process of integration and the ever painful memory of being wretched away from the fatherland. She also tackles the issues inherent to the condition of being a minority writer in a fast changing society.

Gaulis provides a complete and extremely sensitive portrait of Vasso Kalamara whom she has had the fortune of meeting in order to discuss different aspects of her work. This analysis gives a very clear insight into the world of this particular writer and has the merit of being both very well documented and extremely personal. Through her clear writing style, Gaulis succeeds in letting the reader feel the bitter years of exile, the hardships, the *bitter bread* of exile, and the problems of minorities. One yearns to learn more about such writers and Gaulis has opened up new horizons for Modern Greek scholars as well as for the general public. This excellent research so far turns out to be just an appetizer for the second part of this chapter, in which Gaulis presents another writer, Antigone Kefala. In almost the same style as the first portrait, the author gives a personal account of this second writer who is quite different from Vasso Kalamara.

Antigone Kefala, was born in Romania after the Second World War, and then fled with her parents who were ethnic Greeks, to Greece where they found terrible economic conditions due to the tribulations of both the Second World War and the Greek Civil War. Fortunately, due to a relaxed immigration policy, the family was allowed to immi-

grate to New Zealand. After having finished her studies in New Zealand, Antigone Kefala immigrated to Australia and settled in Sydney. Her choice to write in English seems the logical result of a multilingual and multicultural environment. Indeed, English was but another wheel added to her other vehicles of communication including Romanian, Greek, and French. Her tie to the mother tongue, Greek, is loose as is her pain of exile. Yet, one finds intimate ties with her fatherland in the themes of her work, which oscillate between Greek culture and Greek characters. She has written short stories, and a story for children or rather a philosophical fable. However, in Australia she is primarily known as a poet and highly appreciated as such.

Both Vasso Kalamara and Antigone Kefala, despite apparent differences in language or themes, are obsessed by the issue of language, the raw material of every writer, the question of their place in society both as writers and as women, the concept of marginal versus integrated, and finally their contribution in a dynamic society and its place in an ever-shrinking world due to globalisation. These are the kinds of questions that everyone wonders about, yet it is poets and writers who are often in the vanguard. Finally, Gaulis gives her own account and appreciation of this literature and this *floating* world.

The fact that Gaulis has chosen to study two representatives of the old guard and in two languages shows her precision concerning this ephemeral world and her attempt to record it before it disappears. She believes that the first and second-generation Greek-Australian writers will slowly be replaced by younger generations who are entirely integrated and who will write exclusively in English, their mother tongue. If the Greek language survives in a world of globalisation, it will be like a fading fingerprint upon old family portraits of the grandparents and the *xenitia* that links the Greek community in Australia with her fatherland. These generations will no longer feel the pain of separation as they will be perfectly integrated and their Australian identity will no longer need to be proven. Like Greek immigrants in other countries, the Greek-Australians will have become active members of their adopted homeland and will have made an impact on their new surroundings. That this event will not go unnoticed is attested to by the fact that Melbourne has the largest Greek and Cypriot community outside of Greece. One shares Ms. Gaulis' mixed feelings about how long the literary production in Greek and the existence of the Greek language as a vital instrument of creation and inspiration will endure since despite the open-mindedness of Australian society from the 1970s to the middle of the 1990s, the stagnating multi-cultural policy of the present government does not leave much hope. Yet in spite of all these negative aspects, one must bear in mind that writers have never ceased to surprise us.

That is why Gaulis' work is a timely addition to the domain of Modern Greek Studies, as it brings an air of spring into a dusty room. It reflects both the beauty and the

elegance of its author, combining the precision of her Swiss origins with the wit of her French culture.

Just in case the reader thought the book ends after the portraits of the two writers, its author surprises her French reading public with a marvellous gift: the French translations of two of their works, 'Topio kai Psychi' [Landscape and Soul] by Vasso Kalamara, and 'The Island' by Antigone Kefala. Therefore, it is truly a pleasure to recommend this unique pearl, a first in this domain which will be greatly appreciated not only by scholars who will, one hopes, find it useful, but also to a more general public.

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Vasso Kalamaras

Olympias: Mother of Alexander the Great

Melbourne: Owl Publishing [Series: Writing the Greek Diaspora], 2001

Greek, 102 pp; English, 93 pp

Many female writers since the 1960s have seen women's writing as an act of re-vision, i.e., looking back into the past, challenging and correcting gender stereotypes, discovering historical, mythical or other female figures in male texts and re-telling their stories from a female perspective. Writing as re-vision has aimed at redefining woman and culture. Kalamaras undertakes such a task in her play *Olympias*. As she states on the dedication page, *Olympias* 'has been unjustly treated by history'. Because of her admiration for the ancient queen, Kalamaras has written the play to help people 'reassess [*Olympias*]' contribution to our Western civilization'.

Kalamaras has consulted several historical sources – she cites them at the end of the book – but she is not limited to mere facts. Ancient myths and rites, combined with her own imagination also play a significant role in rewriting the queen's life story. Kalamaras designs the plot and sketches the characters in such a way that they serve her revisionist perspective. *Olympias* has a symmetrical structure: it is divided into two acts and each act into eight scenes. The plot covers a period from *Olympias*' girlhood as Myrtali to the moment of her murder. Each new scene sheds more light on the heroine's life, character and relationships. The dialogues, the comments of minor characters and various episodes foreshadow future events, complicate the plot, create suspense and lead the conflict between *Olympias* and the forces that oppose her to a climax and finally to the resolution of the plot.

The precariousness of women's sociopolitical position and their victimization by male lust for sex and power in ancient patriarchal societies are two themes introduced in the opening scene and repeated throughout the play. In the first scene set in Epirus, the victim mentioned is Myrtali's sister Troas who was raped by and was forced to marry her uncle Arivvas, murderer of her father and usurper of his throne. In the last scene of the play set in Pydna, the victim is Olympias herself. Her death by stoning is ordered by ambitious Kassandros who first gets rid of her and her grandson and then forces Philippos' daughter Thessaloniki to marry him. In this way, he secures the Macedonian throne. Other scenes in between illustrate the prevailing male stereotypes about women (empty-headed, good only as sexual objects, mothers and weavers), stereotypes that justified their marginalisation, exploitation and destruction. Macedonian ladies are even excluded from the party at the Pella palace after Philippos' wedding to Olympias – only dancing whores are invited (scene four). In the description of this party, Kalamaras reveals the Macedonian generals' homosexual attraction to young men, their misogyny and their fear of the dynamic 'foreigner' Olympias.

Philippos II appears divided between the conflicting worlds of Olympias and his officers. As a king he believes that he is above laws/oaths. His relations to women are often motivated by political/military expediency. So he breaks his oath to Olympias by marrying Nikisipoli of Thessalia, right after the birth of Alexandros (scene eight). Lust is also one of his weaknesses. Gossips inform us about Philippos' previous marriages and his sexual affairs with whores and young men (scene six). Therefore, we are not surprised when, after nineteen years of successful reign with the help of Olympias, he marries young and sexy Kleopatra introduced to him by her devious uncle Attalos as an antidote for Olympias (Act two, scene two). Philippos' last marriage which results in Olympias' marginalisation justifies her earlier protest to him that a woman [is] just a tool to be used for pleasure and convenience (p. 56). The ups and downs in Olympias' life illustrate that not only ordinary women but also queens derived their social identity and power from a man.

Olympias' entrapment by Kassandros and her tragic death do not come as a surprise either, because Kalamaras prepares her reader/spectator for these events by illustrating women's subordinate social position in Macedonia, by making vivid character portrayals to show Olympias' and her enemies' clash of value systems and interests, and by using various prophesies and warnings. In the first two scenes of the play she introduces some of Myrtali's dominant traits through the detailed description of the young woman's initiation as a Bacchante by a female Hierophantis at the Dodonian temple and the praise of her mentor Leonidas: devotion to the gods, spiritual knowledge, wisdom, iron will, political ambition, love of science and the fine arts, respect for natural laws, etc. In later scenes

Kalamaras uses other characters to inform us about the queen's efficiency in matters of government and her significant role in Philippos' and later in her son's efforts to unite the Hellenes, to punish the Persians and free the Hellenic cities in Asia Minor. Olympias' bravery, honesty and concern for her subjects as well as her spiritual work as Hierophantis are praised.

Only her enemies call her murderess, whore, bitch and witch in order to justify her destruction. Moreover, Kalamaras presents Olympias as a loving mother who imbues her son Alexandros with her ideals. It is mainly through him that she realizes her dream of spreading the Hellenic civilization to other countries. Alexandros is highly idealized in the play. He is constantly mentioned as the son of both Ammon-Zeus and Philippos, descendant of the divine Heracles. The three fates prophesy that his life will be short but his glory immortal. Kalamaras suggests that Olympias is behind his achievements as a King.

In contrast to Olympias, her antagonists Arivvas and the Macedonian generals are the villains in the play. As characters they remain static and they are portrayed as uncultivated, violent, ruthless men interested only in war, power, alcohol and sex. Some of the labels other characters attach to them are: unjust, small-minded, heartless, hideous, unmerciful, etc. Through these labels and other comments about the generals' moral weaknesses the author prepares us for the tragic end: Alexandros' poisoning by Antipatros' younger son Iolas and Olympias' murder by his older son Kassandros. The queen's problems with these officials are also foreshadowed in Act One through Leonidas' warnings, the prophesies of the blind oracle Amalthia and the prophet Aristandros, as well as the comments of some Macedonian ladies about their men's mistreatment of women.

The quick alternation of different scenes and settings described in detail, the successful combination of fact, fiction and myth, as well as the variety of spectacle and sound effects (costumes, golden objects, religious rituals, dance, music, thunderstorms, snakes, eagles, etc.) also set the atmosphere and the keynote of the tragedy and enrich its plot. The scenes describing or alluding to religious mysteries revive an important aspect of ancient Greek civilization in which Olympias and other women played a significant role. As priestesses, prophetesses, etc. they developed the ability to commune with both supernatural and natural forces and thus to empower themselves. Olympias dies bravely as a Hierophantis who believes in life after physical death. Thus, she manages to transcend the pain and humiliation of being stoned. The sound and spectacle devices Kalamaras uses (lightning striking the spot where the queen lies, shaking the earth and terrifying her executioners, heavy clouds approaching, wild wind, huge waves) suggest both Zeus' and nature's anger against the murderers. Kalamaras also uses a small chorus of three women to make the concluding comments about Olympias. These women identify the queen

with Mother Earth, with Goddess Demeter, offer her women's 'unconditional love' (p. 93) and promise to worship her in their hearts. As becomes obvious from the way Kalamaras recreates Olympias' life and death, she succeeds in her feminist task to prove the queen's moral, intellectual and spiritual worth and her contribution to the shaping of great historical events. As a playwright Kalamaras has also succeeded in writing a well-built and exciting play, which keeps our attention arrested from beginning to end.

Ekaterini Georgoudaki

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Γιώργος Καναράκης

Όψεις της λογοτεχνίας των Ελλήνων της Αυστραλίας και Νέας Ζηλανδίας

[Facets of the literature of Greeks in Australia and New Zealand]

Αθήνα: Εκδόσεις Γρηγόρη [Σειρά: Ο Ελληνισμός της Διασποράς] 2003, σελ. 329.

Αικατερίνη Γεωργουδάκη

Ποιήτριες ελληνικής καταγωγής στη Βόρεια Αμερική, Αυστραλία και Γερμανία:

Ακροβατώντας ανάμεσα σε δύο πατρίδες, δύο ταυτότητες.

[Women Poets of Hellenic Origin in North America, Australia and Germany:

On a Tightrope between Two Homelands, Two Identities]

University Studio Press, Thessaloniki, 2002, pp. 208.

Both books reviewed here comprise extensive studies on Greeks of the Diaspora and this is one of the reasons that they are reviewed together. The author of the former, Professor George Kanarakis (Charles Sturt University in New South Wales, Australia), is an authority on Greeks in Australia while the author of the latter, Professor Aikaterini Georgoudaki, Emeritus Professor in the Department of English and American literature in the University of Thessaloniki, has written extensively on women writers, especially American women writers. Both these books are also written in the Greek language and have been published in Greece, the former by Ekdoseis Grigori in Athens, the latter by University Studio Press in Thessaloniki.

In her review of Kanarakis' translated first book, *Greek Voices in Australia: a tradition of prose, poetry and drama* (ANU, 1988), Australian writer Beverley Farmer concludes thus: 'George Kanarakis has united Australia's Greek writers at last, in a substantial volume which is a monument to them and to his dedication and scholarship.' This

reviewer certainly concurs with Farmer. The aforementioned book, which was published in Greek in 1985, combined with Dimitris Tsaloumas' award-winning poetry collection *The Observatory* (1983) became the catalyst for subsequent interest in the literature of Greeks in Australia. Since then volumes have been written by and about Greeks in Australia and Kanarakis has been a key figure, researching and publishing on this topic, as well as on other aspects of Greeks in Australia, such as the Greek press.

Kanarakis was not initially one of us – the Greeks of the diaspora – so to speak. He came to Australia not as an immigrant, but as an academic and stayed on, making Australia his second home. His first book in 1985 and its English translation *Greek Voices in Australia* in 1988, were followed by more books on the Greeks including, *In the Wake of Odysseus: portraits of Greek settlers in Australia* (1997, in English) and *The Greek Press in the antipodes...* (2000, in Greek).

His latest book reviewed here can be characterised, like his other publications, both by a passionate devotion to his research, and by academic detachment. Put simply, he did not have an axe to grind. His book is the result of many years' research and consists of new and previously published work. In other words, it is a collection of individual papers re-worked and edited to form a whole. This can be problematic as no matter how hard the author may try, not all chapters will organically fit-in.

The book consists of two main parts, divided according to country: first, Australia and, second, New Zealand, the latter containing – understandably – only one chapter. The main part, 'Australia', contains two sections. The first is titled 'The literature of Greeks in Australia' with chapters 1-11, and it examines all aspects of this literature, including identity, women writers, the literature of Greeks from certain regions such as Macedonia and Cyprus, the issue of marginalisation, humour in writing, to name a few. All these subchapters fit-in well and provide a comprehensive picture.

The second section is titled 'Hellenism in Australian literature' and contains chapters 12-13, which deal with how Greeks in Australia (since the 1980s) appear in Australian literature, and the presence of Byzantium in the Australian literary tradition, respectively. In my opinion, this subsection does not easily fit-in, as the book clearly states in its title that it is concerned with literary writing by Greeks in Australia and New Zealand, not the influence of Greeks to Australian literature. If the Byzantine influence can be included, why not the classical influence which is much greater in Australian (and western) literature.

The key point in this book, however, and the most important one, is that the writing of Greeks in Australia forms a corpus, replete with literary production, grammarology and literary criticism. Its author is a grammarologist, who fills each chapter of this book with detailed information placed within a socio-historical context and supported by numerous footnotes to substantiate his material. In fact, as a literary critic, I have found Kanarakis'

footnotes a real treasure, packed with invaluable information and, notwithstanding the occasional error – some of which I noticed simply because I was intimately familiar with the topic – I am sure that many readers will depend on the author's footnotes to assist their own research on the writing of Greeks in Australia.

Kanarakis contends in his book that his aim is not to critically appraise the writing of Greeks in Australia, but rather to place it in a sociohistorical context and make it available to the public. According to the author, the *whole* body of Greek writing counts, irrespective of its literary value, as the writers in question contribute, each in his/her own way in documenting, depicting, or exploring their times. Each era, produces a number of writers some of whom will establish themselves and will be recognised as writers while still living. The rest of them, however, will still play a role as many will capture the spirit of their times. How well, of course, is a matter, I think, of what passes as good literature at the time.

Chapters 3, 4 and 5 in Part 1 on Australia contain the more interesting arguments as to the identity of the corpus and its position in the literatures of Australia and Greece, respectively. Kanarakis has not wavered in his position about the identity of the literature which Greeks produce in Australia, and this can be supported even by the titles of his book, which in translation read as: *The literary presence of Greeks in Australia*, 1985, *Facets of the literature of Greeks in Australia and New Zealand*, 2003. For Kanarakis, Greek is the only identity that can be given to this body of literature for the criterion he uses is 'language'. He argues that if a Greek writes in Greek, no matter where he/she writes, they are Greek writers. If they write in English, in Australia, then they should be considered Australian writers. (p. 41) Of course, based on criteria other than language, one can arrive at a different conclusion, and this is why writing by Greeks in Australia has also been labelled Greek-Australian literature. This chapter is replete with arguments about labels and as much as many of us may disagree with his reasoning, labels are political, or ideological, and as long they can be adequately defended, they may appear to be perfectly valid ones. The following example will suffice: In the 1970s, Australia became a multicultural country allowing multiple identities among its citizens, including its writers and artists. The label Greek-Australian emerged as a product of that time and may become obsolete in the not too distant future. It did, however, satisfactorily describe, at the time, the writing of Greeks in Australia, irrespective of the language used.

In chapter 3, 'Condemned to be marginal', Kanarakis provides a rich discussion about the disadvantages of being a hyphenated writer (Greek-Australian). He argues vehemently that by labelling, or being labelled by others as, Greek-Australians, these writers have become marginalised and considered as being something not as 'worthy' (p.93). He puts the issue in a world context by bringing in examples of writers such as Conrad or Nabokov, of whom, of course, nobody in their right mind could call Polish-English, or

Russian-American writers, respectively. As much as this chapter is rich with solid arguments, I still find that different times and situations are being compared and so false conclusions can easily be drawn. There is also another side, which Kanarakis does not consider. While many writers did not like being called Greek-Australian, or felt marginalised by it, the reality is that if it was not for the policy of multiculturalism – with an intention to value writers from other ethnic backgrounds (which encouraged a plethora of people to start writing), it can not be certain whether we would be able today to speak about a *corpus* of Greek writing. We would have a Tsaloumas or a Kefala for example, but they would be simply Australian writers.

The chapter on New Zealand is very informative and an important addition to the writings on Greeks in Australia, as it is doubtful that many students and scholars have done much (if any) research on that country. What emerges clearly from this chapter is that the Greek language could not be sustained for long and most of the writers who emerged in the last thirty years or so have written in English. For a country then with such small numbers of Greeks living there, the proportion of literary writers is extraordinary with Antigone Kefala being by far the better-known writer, certainly in Australia.

Kanarakis' book is adorned with a long list of photographs of writers or book covers, some of them only available from the author's personal archives. Together with the extensive footnotes and bibliography, this book is a great contribution to scholarship about Greek writers in Australia, no matter what label we attach to them.

While Kanarakis does give us a taste – in a separate chapter – of women writers in Australia by explaining the difficulties, or particularities, due to their gender within male societies, Georgoudaki's book is solely on women poets of the diaspora, providing a more sustained picture of their literature, as well as a comparative one. After a comprehensive introduction in which the author surveys the vast Greek diaspora in Australia, Canada, the United States and Germany, where the rationale for her book is also explained, she divides the main body into two parts, each with three chapters, according to the writers' thematic preoccupations. The first part concerns the immigrant experience where the themes are displacement, settlement in the adopted country and conflicts of a dual existence (in having two countries). The second part concerns the maintenance by Greek poets in the diaspora of a Greek cultural heritage where the thematic concerns are the influence of ancient Greek mythology, sources of inspiration and historical memory.

Writing a book about women writers of the Greek diaspora is certainly an admirable venture and for critics like this reviewer having extensively written on women, a most welcome undertaking. Comparisons and contrasts can be made more easily and the female immigrant experience can be examined in all its multifariousness. This is certainly my hope as I am reading this book.

The approach, which Georgoudaki chooses to take in this book is, like that of George Kanarakis, a grammatological one. Both authors supply us with as much useful information and footnotes as possible, within a sociohistorical context, but do not attempt a critical appraisal of the writers they are presenting. I presume that this is because they both see their role as facilitators, or conveyors of knowledge between the authors and their texts on the one side, and the readers on the other. This approach may also be indicative of a reluctance to critically appraise the texts of writers who are currently living and still producing more works. In other words, more time is needed to test the enduring, or non-enduring, value of these works. Only in her brief epilogue, does Georgoudaki intimate, ever so discreetly, that the literary value of these poems is mixed, while constantly emphasising the sociohistorical value.

Georgoudaki's book is breaking new ground by including writers from all the major centres of Greek migrant concentration (twenty seven from Australia, eight from the US, (disproportionate, in terms of the size of this country?) six from Canada and five from Germany) thus giving us a detailed picture of the concerns which preoccupied writing migrant women and, by extension, we may assume, a fairly comprehensive picture of the life of migrant women in all these countries. Of course, it is not clear whether the above number of writers is all-inclusive. It is possible that there may be more women writing in these countries so more research is obviously still needed but it seems to me that the picture which Georgoudaki presents here would not alter significantly if more writers from the United States were included.

While all writers – unless they are writing science fiction – base their writing on personal or observed experience, in the case of migrant women writers, this becomes much more apparent in this book. Their writing, seen collectively, provides a chronological journey of departure, arrival and life in the new land, nostalgia, clash of cultures, language problems, identity issues (especially in second-generation women), to name the main ones. There is a wide variety of form and style in these poems and, in literary terms, there are many poets or poems that may not survive the test of time. Many however will, especially those who possess skills, required in our sophisticated, post-folkloric era. Where such skills are more evident is in the poems where their creators remove themselves from the personal or social experience of migration and seek out female mythical, historical figures (including heroines from the Greek past) in order to subvert existing stereotypes about women in literature and in the oral tradition. Penelope, Aphrodite, Artemis, Demetra and Persephone, Ariadne, Olympias, or Bouboulina are explored from a feminine or feminist perspective and, as Georgoudaki states in her epilogue, the women poets emphasise the importance of the female experience through the centuries.

Georgoudaki's book is an invaluable source of information and reflection on women poets of the Greek diaspora.

A question, finally, which arises from both these books, is that of identity labels and readership. Kanarakis deals with such questions in his discussion about the label Greek-Australian and claims that such a label is marginalising writers because it places them in a category, which is separate from both the host country and the country of origin. This is possibly one reason why he gives his books such labels as 'the Greek Presence in Australia...' or 'The literature of Greeks in Australia...' etc.

Similarly, Georgoudaki titles her book 'Women poets of Hellenic Origin...' She also discusses in her introduction the issue of 'belonging': Where do these writers belong? She goes on to contend that they are, first, a part of Modern Greek literature. Second, they are also part of the literature of the host country. Third, because of their dual vision, or their walking a tightrope between two countries and two identities, they are also a subject for study within Comparative Literature Studies. Finally, because of their universal themes (war, exile, migration, poverty, racism, sexism, love, death, the role of poetry etc.), they also belong to world literature.

While about half of the writers examined in these books (those writing in English) can reach readers around the world, those writing in Greek will only be read by Greek readers in Greece and the Greek diaspora. Diasporic Greeks will no doubt, will be interested, as such poetry reflects their own experience and, as we well know, readers like to identify with what they read. One would have to hope that Greeks in Greece would be also interested to read such writers. Both Kanarakis and Georgoudaki are doing all they can to pave the way in the 'mother' country. If not for any other reason, Hellenic readers may be pleased to know that Greeks-speaking poets in the diaspora continue to cultivate the Greek language at a time when globalism (and the English language) is sweeping the world, while the English-speaking ones continue to be inspired by, and disseminating Greek culture.

As for those potential non-Greek readers in the host countries (countries of settlement), these books can only be read in English translation. Let's hope that both these books become available in English, just as Kanarakis' first book was.

Finally, if I can quibble a bit about the titles of these books: they are both too wordy (nine words in each title) and so not easily remembered. A catchy title for each one would have made them memorable, while a subtitle might have completed what the books are about. Still, this does not in any way detract from the main argument of this review that both books add their considerable weight to the documentation and analysis of diasporic writing while also giving later researchers a solid body of material on which to base their own contributions.

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Yota Krili

Triptych: poems (bilingual: Greek-English)

(Introduction by Helen Nickas)

Melbourne: Owl Publishing [Series: Writing the Greek Diaspora], 2003, 162 pp.

Yota Krili's book *Triptych* comes to add another ring to the chain of the already rich production of Greek-Australian Literature. This bilingual publication moreover, justifies entirely the purpose of its creation. The book, entitled 'Triptych', separates the poems conventionally into three parts (or three 'ptychs') each representing three different facets of the poet's literary expression. Within this work the poet unfolds her personal, psycho-spiritual explorations reflecting, not only her migrant experience but mainly her attempt to understand the collective human elements through her individual self.

The poet's voice sounds like a condemnation of injustices, lack of freedom and social inequalities while at the same time it indicates her attempt to investigate the nature of the human soul in relation to social behaviour. According to Aristotle 'poetry has the power to create and recreate the things' in the universe (1451b 29-32) so as to make a better and different world. This poetry collection is a valid testimony of human creation that expands the world even further, giving it a sensational echo.

The first part titled 'Patchwork' begins with the poem 'Travelling' where the reader finds him/herself in a position of travelling together with the poet's thoughts towards a process of awareness, particularly of the existence of the 'other'. It is an element that the reader encounters continuously throughout the course of their acquaintance with the text. It seems that the poet indicates the way that we have to follow in order to discover the deepest meaning of the poems by 'plunging' and 'exploring' the soul, in order to discover the paths that will lead us towards the ecstasy of the poetic impulse: '*Plunging / into uncharted territories / exposed and vulnerable / like / the hands of love exploring / a new lover's body and soul. / Intermittently / the backpack of desire is filled with ecstatic mementos and wider horizons*'. This is only one indicative example of the kind of poems in *Triptych*, which beckon us to continue reading and stimulate us intellectually due to their profound depth.

In *Triptych* we also find poems, which are dedicated to the natives of the Australian land. In order to pay respect towards the original people of this country, the poet feels that she has to include their misfortunes – since the time of the white invasion – in her poetic journey. We as readers, also feel that the poet might want, subconsciously, to identify – being a migrant herself – with the 'other', which in this case is the 'autochthonous'. The poetic experience captures aspects of ideological beliefs – 'Healing', 'Patchwork' – as well as the deepest mysteries of the human soul where the negative elements

are invisible to the human eye, but become visible through the power of literature. In the following poem, the poet indicates that she has now both the wisdom and the experience of life to recognise the monstrous side of the human nature and to name it: '*I remained unaware / of the invisible monster / that lurks in the human soul...*' Poems such as this declare the conscious ability of the poet to state clear situations that not only force her to acknowledge one's own self, but also to indicate the connection with the things that are related to the outside world. The world is at once simple and complicated and the poet relates this peculiar situation with the inner self. Thus the reader can benefit not only from the poetic ecstasies but also from an expanded knowledge of the world.

The second part titled 'Memories' offers the reader various and multi-dimensional emotions. In this part the poet travels through the Greek countryside where the poetic adventure captures representations of a world that was hitherto *written* mainly in the poet's memory. It seems then that the poet finds herself in a position to delve into her memory and to render in a truly unique manner some of the most rewarding images of the Greek countryside, resulting in many readers 'shivering' with nostalgia. The poet's memory functions like a camera, which projects multiple details of an almost mythical time in the Greek countryside. The images created by the poet derive from the deepest part of her conscious. The poet remembers and recreates poems that reflect nature, life, the every-day customs of villagers where even the negative elements they project become distinctively positively beautiful, colourful and idyllic: '*Our house sheltered everything. / Clang clang the bells of the herd / arriving in late autumn/ under the big veranda / ewes with huge bellies. / We waited anxiously the arrival / of the newborn lambs to bring Christmas / for mother to fry the first milk / for the sun to smile / so we could play / with them in the yard / our only dolls, soft and alive*'.

These poems not only convey the personal experiences and representations of village life in Greece but also powerfully reflect Greek literary demotic traditions, as Helen Nickas states in her introduction to this book (p. 7). The images from the past – some evoking a sense of Greece's pagan era – reflect life practises since time immemorial and are presented here through the different sounds of another language, thus having the freshness of a new environment. This aspect shifts the style of demotic poems into another dimension, one which only literature is able to achieve. Nevertheless these poetic creations concur with the poet's innocent childhood years so that whatever she recollects has the essence of purification and this factor indicates the clarity of her literary work.

Furthermore, 'Memories' displays a fair knowledge of a countryside that has become almost extinct. The poet reproduces vivid images through a myriad of statements that mirror rural life experiences as well as the reproductive cycle of nature. The people

portrayed as part of this panegyric circle are characterised by liveliness and vitality. The portrait of *Mana (Mother)* in the poem 'The Gardener', refers to the two Goddesses, Gaia and Dimitra, who represent the elements of productivity and fertility so closely associated with Mother Earth, responsible for the perpetuation of life: '*Early in summer / she [the mother] would sprightly climb / the stone staircase to the house / the lap of her skirt / full of the long awaited yield / blushing tomatoes, lustrous eggplants / cucumbers, zucchini, light-skinned potatoes / beans, herbs – the earthly manna*'.

The third part titled *Laya* records the Greek-Australian migrant experience. There is no sense of hatred or animosity but rather one of bitterness for both the lack of understanding and tolerance of the old towards the newcomers. Here the reader has the opportunity to experience moments of very intense feelings; one poem after another illuminates the poet's attitude and sustains the same motive of the migrant journey. It is a journey that marks the human exposure of the recent, at least, generations in this country, characterised by the same Greek experiences, hopes, aspirations and desires. Some of the readers, especially those of the generation of the 50s, 60s and 70s, would probably identify themselves with these poems, especially when the poet expresses a sense of lost youth. They may identify also with a vivid sense of nostalgia and other mixed feelings that are alluded to in the poems, having spent their most productive years working in undesirable conditions. The following two lines are a poignant description of their situation: '*We are the generation of the Diaspora / Factory fodder*'.

We also observe the subtle development of a female character throughout the text, functioning as the book's core, and the nucleus of its existence. It is the poet herself who has matured as a creator and a human being and at the same time she becomes conscious of her individualisation as mother and female. This is one of the most beautiful parts of this book. This maturity, recorded through a feminist, sensitive perspective lying beneath the surface of the language reaches its climax in the poem titled 'Portrait of a Woman'. Here we witness a woman who, though has always been conscious of the patriarchal system in which she was brought up, eventually accepts her divorced status, not as a loss of identity, but on the contrary as a completion of her individualisation. She easily disregards the social conventions and transubstantiates the traditional patriarchal values into poetic creativity and acknowledgment of the world's wisdom.

Finally, the poet's knowledge of the two languages – Greek and English – functions complementarily, in this poetry collection. The poet is able to express herself exceptionally well in both languages – an element that not all poets in Diaspora can possess. Each language has individual and unique characteristics that clearly reflect values, attitudes, cultures and traditions that govern them and, yet comfortably make up the poet's creative conscious.

Thus, for those readers initiated in bilingual literature, what *Triptych* offers is an outstanding experience and a familiarity with a plethora of personal (sometimes migrant) details. On many occasions the reader will be able to identify with the poet's penetrating voice, which reaches deep within the soul. For those readers uninitiated in bilingual works, this collection of poems will give them the opportunity to discover a different work of poetry, one which helps expand our knowledge of the diverse and unknown worlds out there. In both cases, readers will have benefited intellectually and if this is their only gain, then the work will still have succeeded in its purpose.

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