

a Journal for Greek letters

From Stories to Narratives:
the enigmas of transition

Editors Vrasidas Karalis and Panayota Nazou



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Modern Greek Studies
AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND

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Correspondence and payments

Department of Modern Greek A18,
University of Sydney, NSW 2006 Australia
T (+612) 9351 7252
E-mail vrasidas.karalis@sydney.edu.au

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Editors

Vrasidas Karalis & Panayota Nazou

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Bacchos,
Theophilos

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Alexander on horse,
Theophilus

Carole M. Cusack
University of Sydney

Vestigial States: Secular Space and the Churches in Contemporary Australia¹

Introduction

The legacy of the Enlightenment is increasingly contested in the twenty-first century. Science is a key explanatory authority for technological modernity, but since the mid-twentieth century new religious forms and supernaturally-tinged popular culture (close relatives of religion, but liberated from the traditional and institutional aspects of that phenomenon) have been resurgent. The so-called 'World Religions' (the biblical creeds of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, and the sub-continental *dharmic* traditions of Hinduism and Buddhism) have resisted the notion that they share a common inheritance with secularism. It is here argued that these ongoing disclaimers are examples of professional boundary maintenance that reveals much about the embattled position of traditional religious institutions within secular modernity, in which popular culture and communications media have radically transformed the climate in which religious affiliation and spiritual identities are negotiated.²

From a religious studies point of view, the methodological models of sociology and cognitive science (which are representative of a range of non-confessional scholarly approaches), clarify these boundary conflicts as intrinsically politically-motivated stances aimed at shoring up religion's declining power bases in the Western countries like Australia, through the assumption of roles offered by governments (provision of education, medical care,

job provision agencies and so on).³ Naomi Goldenberg's model of religious institutions as 'vestigial states', defined as 'the institutional and cultural remainders of former sovereign ties surviving within the jurisdictions of contemporary governments provides valuable insights'.⁴ When the churches are viewed in this way, it is clear that in order to retain any influence in secular societies in which they can no longer make citizens heed them, religious bodies needs must partner with secular Western states to retain what little power is offered to them. This article uses Goldenberg's model as a lens through which to examine the contemporary Australian political and religious landscape.

Religion, the Enlightenment, and Romanticism: Reason and Democracy

The twin artistic and intellectual currents of the eighteenth century, the Enlightenment and Romanticism, advocated radically different approaches to knowledge, authority, philosophy, aesthetics, and religion (among other political and cultural domains). The Enlightenment championed scientific experiment (empiricism), the primacy of reason in both individual decision-making and societal standards, and the universality and public status of knowledge arrived at through these processes. Romanticism advocated the primacy of experience and the authority of inner conviction based on individual desires, personal aesthetics, and suspicion of social conventions, authority structures, and familial duties and obligations.⁵ Both movements were concerned with individual freedom (the Enlightenment advanced representative democracy against other, less equitable political systems, and the Romantics espoused human rights for women and slaves among others, marriage for love, and the notion that personal fulfilment was a profound, integral, and honourable goal in life). Further, both had an immense impact on religion in the West, and began the transformation over time that renders religion in the eighteenth century almost unrecognisable from its contemporary manifestation.

When Australia was settled by Captain Arthur Phillip and the First Fleet in 1788, the rationalist aspirations of Immanuel Kant's essay, 'What is Enlightenment?' in which he argued that the condition of enlightenment (*Aufklärung*) required the 'freedom to make public use of one's reason in

all matters',⁶ had inspired the American War of Independence (1775-1782), and would manifest in the French Revolution of 1789, the Haitian slave revolt led by rebel Toussaint L'Ouverture in 1791, and a range of other anti-colonialist and democratic uprisings. Britain had an inherited social and political system that featured a monarch, a bicameral legislature, and an established church, the Church of England. The United States of America instituted a republic, comprising a federal two-house system (Senate and Congress) and a directly-elected President, with state governments beneath the federal level. Significantly, the American constitution mentioned religion just once; at the end of the Third Clause of Article 6, it states that 'no religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States'. Additional information about the place of religion in the modern secular republic of the United States is contained in the 1st Amendment, which provides that, 'Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof'.⁷ The complication of a state level of government means that throughout the centuries various states have attempted to make laws regarding religion that have been overturned by the judicial system, in protection of what is commonly called the 'separation of powers' (that is, the non-establishment of any religion). Further, the religious freedoms of the 1st Amendment are protected by the 14th Amendment, which affirms that '[n]o State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States'.⁸

These protections render the United States a secular states that is nonetheless highly favourable to religion, so much so that its religious diversity and luxuriant growth of new religious forms are unrivalled in the contemporary world. The modern idea of religious tolerance is traceable to the Protestant Reformation, in which the effect of Martin Luther's Ninety-Five Theses (1517) and his departure from the Catholic Church was the formation of multiple Christianities, not merely Catholicism and Lutheranism. Protestantism minimised institutional mediation and promoted the individual's personal relationship with God through reading the Bible, and Gutenberg's printing of the Bible in 1456 made it possible for devout Protestants to do this.⁹ Suddenly, there were potentially as many interpretations of scripture as there were readers, and every Christian could be his or her own spiritual authority. This was an important precursor to modern religious

tolerance, in that Protestantism endorsed the individual conscience and privatised religion, rendering the idea that those who held divergent beliefs might be persecuted on that account (as was the case in the Middle Ages) both tyrannical and unjust. Religious tolerance, religious freedom, and inter-faith dialogue, in which members of different faiths can share information about their beliefs and practices in a safe environment with no intention to proselytise, are distinctively modern and depend upon Enlightenment claims concerning the secular nature of the state, and its limited powers to interfere in citizens' religious affiliation or lack thereof.¹⁰

These interconnected historical changes are important when examining the status of religion in a twenty-first century democratic state like Australia, where despite the fact that the 2011 Census returned a figure of 61% of Australians identifying as Christian, other sources such as data from National Church Life Survey (NCLS) in 2011 suggest that approximately 15% of Australians attend regular (defined as monthly) Christian worship, a figure that is likely to have declined in the six years since that data was collected.¹¹ Australians exhibit distaste for, and on occasion hostility toward, unpopular religions such as the (new) Church of Scientology and (old, but new to Australia) Islam.¹² However, Marion Maddox has argued that Australians tend to code religion as a positive; even if they are not religious themselves, they believe that 'religion is a good thing for other people to have'.¹³ This is one possible contributing factor to the very close relationship that the federal and state governments in Australia have with the Christian churches.

The Emergence and Dominance of the 'World Religions' Paradigm

The academic discipline of Religious Studies has a contested genealogy, with a particularly fraught relationship with Theology (despite the clear distinction that Theology is a confessional emic discourse involving insiders, and Religious Studies is a non-confessional – or as colleagues in Europe tend to say, 'scientific' –etic discourse which may involve outsiders or insiders).¹⁴ Religious Studies is also now engaged in shifting the culture of the discipline away from prioritising the so-called 'World Religions' and developing more flexible and apt definitions of 'religion' to meet the challenge of those movements that have to date tended to be excluded from the

category. Among Religious Studies scholars it has been acknowledged for approximately thirty years that the theoretical models of religion that have dominated the field since its inception in the mid-nineteenth century were in the main uncritically derived from Christianity, and when applied to 'other' religions often produced caricatured, or seriously misleading renditions, due to what Michael Pye has termed the 'long shadow' cast by Christianity over well-nigh all religions and over the academic study of religion(s).¹⁵ This 'long shadow' is also partly responsible for the relationship of Religious Studies to Theology in the academy, and for the claim that periodically reappears that Religious Studies, despite its putative secular and scientific *modus operandi*, is nothing more than a disguised form of liberal Christianity.¹⁶

Christian derived models of religion also resulted in many religious and spiritual traditions being denied status of 'religion'. Indigenous Australian religions are a highly poignant example of this phenomenon. From 1788 when British colonial occupation commenced, to the 1871 publication of anthropologist Edward Burnett Tylor's *Primitive Culture*, Whites in Australia did not recognise that Aboriginal religions existed, rather classifying them as merely 'traditions' and 'customs'.¹⁷ The definition of 'religion' European observers used was based on Christianity, and as Indigenous Australians had no written texts, formal religious functionaries like priests or monks, ceremonial structures, or Supreme Being, the colonial invaders assumed they had no religion. Thus, in 1864 F.W. Farrar stated that Aboriginal Australians had 'nothing whatever in the shape of religion to distinguish them from the beasts'.¹⁸ This was not, however, due to lack of knowledge of what Indigenous people did: the colonial administrator David Collins (1756-1810) published *An Account of the English Colony of New South Wales* in 1798, a volume that was rich in descriptions of 'traditions' and 'customs', but from which the designator 'religion' was absent.¹⁹ Tylor's innovative research proposed a basic definition of religion, 'belief in spirit beings', a radical change in the model of religion that enabled Whites to recognize the Ancestors of Indigenous culture as religious beings, after eight decades of denigration and denial of Aboriginal Australian religion.²⁰

The 'World Religions' paradigm still dominates the high school and university textbook industry, and until recently was largely unchallenged in pedagogical contexts. It relies, as Mark MacWilliams et al have observed, on representing 'each of these traditions as a synthetic whole that can be

coherently summarized through a set of sub-categories; founders, sacred scriptures, fixed doctrines, ritual practices, festivals and so on'.²¹ The process whereby a religion became part of this elite group is also of interest; from the Early Modern era onwards, as European nations were engaged in colonialism and conquest of the Americas and the Pacific, Asia, Africa and the rest of the world, those religions that resisted the advances of Christian missionaries, whose literate clergy mounted arguments against conversion to the religion of the conquerors, became members of a small club of 'real' religions, usually consisting of: Christianity and its fellow Semitic monotheisms, Judaism and Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism (itself a Western construction unknown prior to British annexation of India). The list is sometimes extended to include Chinese Religions (Daoism, Confucianism), Zoroastrianism, Shinto, and Sikhism. It is important to note that all these religions have formal institutional structures, have written scriptures, and were successful in resisting the evangelistic efforts of Christian missionaries. Encounters with Christianity had the effect that the other 'World Religions' modelled themselves on the rich, powerful Western religion, indirectly reinforcing (and entrenching) the models of religion used by early Religious Studies scholars.²²

'Indigenous' religions are excluded from the 'World Religions' paradigm, in that they are diverse and from a range of geographical locations and historical eras. They are grouped together regardless of their historical, cultural or linguistic particulars. This arbitrary group is united on the criteria that such traditions (Native American, African, Maori, Aboriginal Australian, and Inuit religions, among others) are primal, non-literate, local, ethnic, non-proselytising, and are thus 'different' to the normative world religions. Yet Indigenous Religions are not the only religions that are excluded from the Christian-based 'World Religions' model. All forms of 'new' religion, which may be literate and textual (like World Religions) but lack origins in the distant past, formal institutional structures, and familiar beliefs and practices that resemble 'religion' as it is traditionally understood, are also excluded. This article will now consider how this happens, and how it is that the modern secular Western state has a 'special' relationship with Christianity (and by extension, a diluted relationship with other World, Indigenous and new religions) that results in the exclusion, and occasionally the vilification, of 'other' religions and spiritualities in both legal

contexts and public discourse.

Religion as a 'Vestigial State' and the Transformations of the Victorian Era

Naomi Goldenberg, Professor of Religious Studies at University of Ottawa, is engaged in a long-term research project that identifies religions as 'vestigial states'. This definition of religion emerged from Goldenberg's desire to shift the scholarship of religion from essentialist notions of supra-empirical realms, inner beliefs, and other non-verifiable elements that bolster the treatment of religion as *sui generis*, as irreducible.²³ In this model, religion is accorded special privileges, theological interpretations are favoured, and believer's understanding endorsed, rather than rational, secular evaluations being valued and sociological, political and legal insights being gained. Goldenberg states that:

these vestigial states called 'religions' are subject to limitations within the territories of Western democracies and benefit from certain privileges ... Vestigial states differ from the non-vestigial varieties chiefly pertaining to the range of powers they wield and in regard to the abstractions they cite to justify their authority. Those organizations recognised as states might ground themselves on such terms as freedom, equality, justice, or as the proper homelands of and idealized race or ethnicity, whereas vestigial states called religions often appeal to some form of divinity (generally male) as a foundational principle. Interestingly, for the most part, both state and vestigial states often cite the same abstractions as bases of authority. For example, both the United States and Canada conjure God as an originary architect in patriotic pledges and preambles of their central documents.²⁴

Goldenberg's work is central to the argument of this article, as the identification of religions as 'vestigial states' goes a considerable distance to explain why the secular state retains a special relationship with various Christian denominations and accords them privileges, while simultaneously attempting to exclude other arguably religious traditions and groups from being granted the status of religion and receiving any privileges attendant upon such status under the law.

As noted above, the twin currents of Enlightenment rationalism and Romantic emotionalism wrought a transformation of religion in the West.

Kant's *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone* (1793) reduced the core of religion to morality, and naturalised the figure of Christ as an exemplar of 'moral rightness' that was congruent with reason, because 'adherence to the principle of moral rightness is fundamental to what Kant considers to be the "religion of reason".'²⁵ This was compatible with the modern secular state's interest in both controlling and protecting its citizens through the rule of law.²⁶ Throughout the nineteenth century, the supernatural content of religion was continually undermined by the development of new academic disciplines such as Biblical criticism and archaeology, and challenges from the hard sciences. Books such as Charles Lyell's publication of *The Principles of Geology* (1830-1833) and Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species* (1859) both undermined literalist interpretations of the Bible with regard to God's creation of the Earth some six thousand years ago, and the creation of human beings by God in the Garden of Eden.²⁷

As science and reason eroded the content of traditional Christianity, the legacy of Romanticism emphasised personal experience, which manifested in a range of new religious and spiritual activity in the nineteenth century. For example, a combination of factors, including the Romantic movement's fascination with picturesque medieval ruins (genuine or artificial) and the exotic Catholicism they evoked, and the Enlightenment promotion of freedom which facilitated the subsequent passage of legislation such as the Catholic Emancipation Act (1829), resulted in a revival of Catholic devotional practices, such as pilgrimage to holy shrines, in both the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church.²⁸ The nineteenth century was a era of accelerated change, characterised by the retreat of institutional Christianity, the development of new religious choices (such as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, founded in the 1820s by Joseph Smith, Spiritualism, founded in the 1850s by the American sisters Margaret and Kate Fox, and the Theosophical Society, founded in 1875 by Madame Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott), and the increased opportunity for individualism and material consumption to become defining factors in the formation of the modern self and lifestyle. This growth in affluence had a Romantic dimension, considered in the light of consumer culture. The British sociologist Colin Campbell has argued that the origins of modern consumerism lie in Romanticism, in that the imagination fuels a cycle of desire and acquisition that 'never actually closes'.²⁹ This cycle of desire and acquisition applies equally to experiences (of history, of nature,

of exotic travel destinations, of culinary treats, or sensual play) as it does to objects. Experimentation with a range of religions was one way in which this consumption of experience manifested.

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw the birth of what is commonly called the 'spiritual seeker', a crucial part of the 'cultic milieu', the illegitimate and unregulated matrix of religious and spiritual ideas and groups that both governments and institutional Christianity strenuously sought to exclude from the category of 'religion'. The cultic milieu consists in the main of 'occult' and 'esoteric' (Latin and Greek terms respectively for 'hidden') beliefs and practices. These traditions have always been part of the religio-spiritual undercurrents of the West, which was dominated by Christianity from about 400 AD till about 1850. Monotheism is inherently absolutist, in that it preaches one God, one scripture, one source of authority, and (despite the fact that Christians often argue that the origins of human rights, religious freedom, and the secular state itself lie within the Christian tradition),³⁰ Christianity has persecuted other religions (in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Era), killed deviants within its own fold (heretics), and sought to convert adherents of other faiths or traditions in order to advance Christian dominion over the world.³¹ It is worth pointing out that Islam and Buddhism (of the World Religions) are also evangelistic, whereas Judaism and Hinduism share with Indigenous religions the notion that belonging is a matter of familial and tribal inheritance, so while conversion is possible, it is the exception rather than the rule.

Institutional Christianity Embattled: The Cultic Milieu and Popular Culture

Culture (including religion) in the contemporary West is dominated by three 'grand narratives'. The first is secularisation, defined by sociologist Peter Berger as 'the process whereby sectors of society and culture are removed from the domination of religious institutions and symbols',³² which maps the retreat of religious institutions from the public sphere and the concomitant privatization of religious beliefs and practices, and enables the growth of new religions in the relatively open secular space. The second of these is individualism, which has already been noted in the context of Romantic self-realisation. The final grand narrative is consumerism, in which

the market economy functions as an (almost fundamentalist) unquestioned foundation of the modern secular world. None of these grand narratives are conducive to Christianity, which historically (although the institutional church has been wealthy and powerful) has preached the virtue of poverty and the value of the afterlife, heaven, above that of earthly wealth and power.³³ Institutional Christianity used to dominate the public life of the West totally, but has receded dramatically since approximately 1960: consider now that a person can be born, partner, have children, live and die without ever going near a religious functionary; weddings and funerals may be conducted by secular celebrants; and it is unimportant to children whether their parents are married or not.³⁴ Christian institutions are less relevant as fewer people connect with them, and those that do are often seeking only part of the 'package' that Christianity offers (most commonly, education in a church school for children).

At the start of the twentieth century the West was becoming the target of evangelising Eastern religious leaders, in the wake of the World's Parliament of Religions, which ran from 11 to 27 September at the Chicago Exposition of 1893. The Parliament, which is often viewed now as the first occasion of interfaith dialogue and religious pluralism, was in reality a primarily Christian event, and some religions were excluded (for example, Latter-day Saints, Native Americans, and Sikhs, among others). Yet the Parliament's Chairman, Reverend Doctor John Henry Barrows, had enlisted representatives of Judaism, Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox Christianity, new religions including Theosophy and Christian Science, Hinduism (including Swami Vivekananda, founder of the Ramakrishna Mission), and Buddhism.³⁵ The Buddhist delegation at the Parliament emerged (along with Vivekananda) as one of the more influential groups, due to the warm reception given to the charismatic Sri Lankan Anagarika Dharmapala (1864-1933). On the opening day, Dharmapala gave the final speech, and threw down the gauntlet to the organisers by arguing that the Parliament 'was simply the re-echo of a great consummation which the Indian Buddhists had accomplished twenty four centuries ago'.³⁶ This was a reference to the great congress summoned by the Buddhist emperor Ashoka in Paliputra in 242 BCE.³⁷

In the 1960s, the early enthusiasm demonstrated by middle-class Westerners at the World's Parliament of Religions flowered as gurus from

India and monks from Tibet, among others, brought the religions of 'the East' to the West and found converts among freethinkers, college students, and ordinary people who were searching for meaning as faith in Christianity ebbed away.³⁸ This decade also saw the spread of home-grown Western new religious movements such as the Church of Scientology, Paganism, Satanism, and a range of Western 'gurus' teaching esoteric wisdom, often derived from Eastern religions or from lineages such as Theosophy, Anthroposophy, and the Work of G. I. Gurdjieff (1866-1949). These new religions have in general been denied the status of religion in law and have been opposed by the institutional churches. In the twenty-first century media coverage is still likely to be hostile, and factual knowledge about minority religions among Australians is minimal.³⁹ For example, among Studies in Religion students at the University of Sydney at Third Year level can take a unit called RLST303 Contemporary Australian Religion. The contemporary focus means that knowledge of religion in Australian history is presumed. The first session is usually dedicated to what students actually know about religion in Australia; questions such as "What percentage of Australians are Muslim?" often receives the answer 10% and even 15%, where the actual answer is 2%.⁴⁰

Alliances Between States and Vestigial States: Boundary Work and Shoring Up Religion

The challenges posed by the Enlightenment to Christianity (the ideal type of religion in the West) and the alliance that the churches (as vestigial states) have formed with the secular state are usefully interpreted in terms of the model of 'boundary work' proposed by Thomas F. Gieryn. In 1983 Gieryn interrogated disputes such as that between Christian creationists and Darwinian evolutionists as to the origin of human life, and analysed the strategies pursued by scientists in the nineteenth century to build a position of authority comparable to that of religion in the public sphere. He concluded that over time the 'intellectual ecosystem' was divided into distinct 'institutional and professional niches'.⁴¹ In the twenty-first century the situation has reversed, in that the dominance of religious institutions has diminished and science (and its partner, technology) has grown in power. Yet Christian churches retain a privileged position in Australian society, and enjoys a special relationship with government at all levels, particularly the states.

The continuing influence of Christianity is due to a number of factors. First, the White settlers brought Christianity to Australia, and evangelised the Indigenous inhabitants, many of who were by the mid-nineteenth century confined to Christian mission sites (for example, Hermannsburg in the Northern Territory, and Ebenezer in Victoria). Second, the percentage of Parliamentarians who are devout Christians - as opposed to nominal - is very much higher than in the general population. Third, 61.1% of people identified as Christian in the 2011 Census. Thus, Christianity is a familiar and well-understood religious narrative. The secular state celebrates Christian religious holidays of Easter and Christmas (even if they are substantially eviscerated of theological content) and it is often noted that those who are devout members of religions other than Christianity are therefore discriminated against, in that they may have to use their annual leave or obtain special arrangements to observe their religious holidays, while being forced to observe the Christian ritual calendar.⁴²

The special relationship of Christianity to the government of Australia is enshrined in law and convention, despite the fact that Section 116 of the Constitution of Australia, a foundational document for the relationship of the law to religion, provides that:

The Commonwealth shall not make any law for establishing any religion, or for imposing any religious observance, or for prohibiting the free exercise of any religion, and no religious test shall be required as a qualification for any office or public trust under the Commonwealth.

The Commonwealth of Australia's Constitution borrows from both the American 'separation of powers', and (in the Preamble, which asserts that the states 'humbly relying on the blessing of Almighty God, have agreed to unite in one indissoluble Federal Commonwealth') the British system in which the Church of England is the established religion.⁴³ Fascinatingly, some Seventh Day Adventists were behind the protections of Section 116, as they had become anxious (being a minority, and new, religion) that the mention of 'Almighty God' in the Preamble might mean that mainstream Christian churches would use it to seek a greater public role. Australian courts have, to date, interpreted only the 'establishment' and the 'free exercise' clauses, and both quite narrowly. The complicating factor is that there are three levels of Australian government (federal, state and local), and the

Section 116 protections refer only to the Commonwealth (exempting the six states and two territories, which are the source of most of the contested legal materials that concern religion).⁴⁴

The history of Australia since Federation in 1901 has been one of gradually widening the definition of religion to include more and more groups that used to be excluded. In the 1960s the Australian legal expert, Kevin Anderson QC, was commissioned by the government of the state of Victoria to author the *Report of the Board of Enquiry into Scientology* (1965). This report investigated Scientology and concluded, in highly emotive terms, that:

*Scientology is evil, its techniques evil, its practice a serious threat to the community, medically, morally and socially, and its adherents sadly deluded and often mentally ill.*⁴⁵

Anderson's *Report* is nearly fifty years old, and Australia in the 1960s was a far more conservative place than Britain or America, so his condemnation of L. Ron Hubbard and Scientology is unsurprising. It also represents a high point in anxiety about what was recognised as 'religion' in Australia. In the 1960s new religions appeared in great numbers in the United States and Britain, but Australia was more conservative than either of those nations, and the discourse of cults and brainwashing was particularly potent. However, it was the Anderson report that gave rise to one of the major liberalising actions in Australian law with regard to religion. Banned from trading under the moniker of Scientology, the religion re-grouped as the Church of the New Faith, and sought registration as a church in Victoria.

The tax benefits (and freedom from, for example, anti-discrimination laws in some cases and employment equal opportunity provisions as well) are usually invoked as the main reason 'fringe' or 'new' religions want to be recognised as such. However, being deemed a 'religion' might also carry with it a type of respectability, or indication of seriousness of spiritual purpose (as, for example, was the case when Tim Zell, now Oberon Zell-Ravenheart, founder with Lance Christie of the Church of All Worlds in 1962 - a modern Pagan religion initially based on Robert A. Heinlein's science fiction novel *Stranger in a Strange Land* [1961] - registered CAW as a church in California in 1967).⁴⁶ After being rejected in the Supreme Court of Victoria, and losing an appeal to the Full Bench, the Church of the New Faith (Scientology) won the High Court of Australia case "The Church of the New Faith vs Commissioner

of Payroll Tax' (1983).⁴⁷ All the judges were wary of taking any step that would involve them in mandating a definition of religion, but in a minority judgment, Lionel Murphy expressed the view that the evaluation of the content of a religion was improper, as well. He suggested:

the following three examples of criteria that might be used to qualify a body as a religion:

(i) Any body (i.e., organisation) which claims to be religious, whose beliefs or practices are a revival of, or resemble earlier cults, is religious.

(ii) Any belief in a supernatural Being or Beings, whether physical and visible, such as the sun and the stars, or a physical invisible God or spirit, or an abstract God or entity, is religious belief.

(iii) Any body which claims to be religious and offers a way to find meaning and purpose in life is religious'.⁴⁸

This judgment provides a bridge between the content of traditional and well-known religious beliefs, such as Christianity, and newer, less familiar creeds such as that of the Church of Scientology.

Do Churches Function as Vestigial States in Australia and Does it Matter?

In the nineteenth century the Roman Catholic Church established a system of schools that provided faith-based education to Catholic children. In the last quarter of the century, it was decided that public education that was 'free, compulsory, and secular' was suitable for a new society, and the states enacted legislation to that effect from 1872 to 1880.⁴⁹ However, no state defined 'secular' and religious schools continued to operate, and were in fact necessary as the capacity of state schools was inadequate. By the 1960s, the Catholic education system was struggling to accommodate larger numbers of students coupled with a diminished number of religious (nuns and brothers) to teach them. Throughout the decade the percentage of enrolments in Catholic schools declined. Despite vocal objections by Defence of Government Schools(DOGS) a state education lobby group, in 1967 New South Wales and Victoria provided recurrent subsidies to private schools, and by 1969 the other states had followed suit. The high point in

Australian conflict over religious versus state education was the Defence of Government Schools case, Attorney-General (Vic); Ex Rel Black vs Commonwealth (1981) in which the High Court of Australia ruled that state aid to private schools 'did not amount to a law "for establishing" a religion'.⁵⁰ In the years since that decision the passionate objection to private education, and Catholic education in particular, has receded so dramatically as to be non-existent. The Prime Ministership of John Howard (1996-2007) saw the federal government give enormous sums of money to wealthy private schools, and to fund the 'planting' of a multitude of new faith-based schools in areas deemed to be aspirational and lacking in educational choice. The result was the retreat of Australian children from public schools to the private sector. Maddox says of these changes:

According to the Bureau of Statistics in March 2013, of Australia's 3.5 million students, 2.3 million went to public schools, compared with 700,000 at Catholic schools and 500,000 at independent schools. Over the past ten years, the numbers at Catholic and independent schools had risen by twelve and 31 per cent respectively. In Queensland, numbers at non-government schools rose 39.1 per cent. The 'independent' category includes elite private schools, and an array of Muslim, Jewish and alternative schools, a small number of non-religious private schools and some more liberal, low fee Christian schools. However, the fastest growing sector is the self-styled 'Christian schools' that claim over 130,000 students across Australia.⁵¹

The Howard government resisted the trend to secularisation, and consistently attempted to reverse the decline of Christianity and to place certain government functions, such as job creation agencies, educational institutions, and welfare provision, in the hands of the churches.

In *God Under Howard: The Rise of the Religious Right in Australian Politics* (2005) Maddox identified the disjunct between Australia's secular culture and the quite successful adoption of American-style religious rhetoric by the Howard government, which combined a commitment to economic deregulation with a conservative social agenda. *God Under Howard* chronicles a sequence of issues establishing this conservatism: overriding the Northern Territory's euthanasia legislation; promoting a narrow definition of family in law and social policy; the scandal over the Hindmarsh Island Bridge, and the winding back of Aboriginal land rights and native title;

and the mandatory detention for asylum seekers and the ‘children overboard’ claims.⁵² Maddox argues that, despite Australia’s great religious and ethnic diversity (as well as the secular tenor of public affairs), John Howard explicitly identifies Australian values with Christian values. Different views are presented as the preserve of ‘special interest groups,’ and the ‘mainstream’ is characterised as frustrated by these groups, silent, and identified with conservative Christianity in the main. One advantage of employing such rhetoric and focusing on ‘values’-oriented policies is that ‘the Christian vote’ (linked to churches such as the Assemblies of God, the base of emergent political party Family First, and Sydney’s Hillsong, visited by Treasurer Peter Costello in 2004) is easily secured. However, although disproportionately influential because concentrated in marginal electorates, this vote is at most 5 per cent of the population. Maddox has noted that the Australian ineptitude in discussion of religion and ignorance of its workings have permitted ‘covert religiosity’ to ‘seep’ into the public sphere.⁵³

This is important in the discussion of the relationship between the churches and the federal (and state) government in Australia, and whether churches can be seen as vestigial states. When Howard was elected in 1996 the tradition hostility to Catholics among Australian Protestants had attenuated to the point that many Catholics voted for the Liberal-National Coalition, rather than the Labor Party, which had a historical connection with Roman Catholicism.⁵⁴ This was a visible sign of the decline in the number of active Christians in Australia; denominations that had traditionally mistrusted each other were brought together by adversity. Howard’s team included Treasurer Peter Costello, a devout Baptist, and Kevin Andrews, a Catholic who was a major figure in the Lyons Forum, which ‘actively pursued family-friendly policies (based on a narrowly traditional sense of the family)’.⁵⁵ Many of Howard’s ministry believed the churches should take over functions that had formerly been the responsibility of government. In view of Australia’s ageing population, falling birth rate, loss of permanent employment to contract and part-time jobs, and the increasing gap between rich and poor, Peter Costello’s March 2001 comment that ‘we just ought to get governments out as far as possible, out of family lives, you ought to let the non-government institutions of society, like the family and the school and the community and the church take a lot of the slack’ should sound alarm bells.⁵⁶

If that did not, the blurring of church and state that resulted when the Howard government appointed Anglican ‘Archbishop Peter Hollingworth as Governor-General in June 2001’ certainly did.⁵⁷ Hollingworth held an ecclesiastical post at the time of his appointment, and Howard’s signalling of previous Governor-Generals’ religious commitments (the Catholic Sir William Deane and Jewish Sir Zelman Cowen) was disingenuous, as the situation was quite different. In fact, Hollingworth resigned as Governor-General in 2003 after his failure to deal with sexual abuse in the Anglican Church emerged, and in 2015-2016 he has been called before the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, and has apologised publicly to victims. Notwithstanding the ignominy of his resignation, there is no doubt that Hollingworth, had he been a successful Governor-General, could have brought the Anglican Church and the government into an even closer relationship. However, more important for the status of churches as vestigial states is the wholesale manner in which the Howard era saw churches and church agencies take over the delivery of government services. The churches have a historical role in education, discussed above, and also in health as the Roman Catholic Church, in particular, has run a network of private hospitals.

The Howard Government privatised the Commonwealth Employment Service, and its replacement Job Network program involved ‘various church agencies ... such as the Salvation Army’s “Employment Plus” program’ and the Catholic Welfare Agency ‘was responsible ... for the management of Centacare’s Job Network contracts’.⁵⁸ Arguably, religious organizations are delighted to take on these government functions as it shores up their power in a society where faith is at a low ebb. Yet this engagement in the affairs of state is a two-edged sword; as Samuel Gregg argues, religious agencies may find themselves compromised by their close relationship with governments, in that ‘core mission statements’ may not cohere particularly well with ‘the teachings of their faith’.⁵⁹ In justifying his government’s stance re outsourcing functions to churches and also in stressing the Christian nature of ‘Australian values’, John Howard re-worked the myths of mateship, equality and a ‘fair go’ with a distinctive neo-conservative twist. Action to counter problems of discrimination does not, in this worldview, correct or compensate for systemic inequality; rather it is portrayed as ‘special pleading’ that makes ‘ordinary’ Australians resentful. Everyone is to be treated in

the same way, which homogenises difference and creates a culture of blame toward those who persist in maintaining their distinctiveness (Aborigines, Muslims, and other visible social groups). This raises the question of social justice for minority faiths that are disadvantaged in being little known, significantly misrepresented in the press, and numerically small.⁶⁰

Off loading government functions to churches, which encourage the vestigial state-like qualities of those institutions, dovetailed perfectly with economic deregulation, which substantially increases its attractiveness for those conservative Australian politicians whose Christianity was at best lukewarm. The most controversial material in *God Under Howard* examines what Maddox sees as the anti-democratic sentiments of members of the Federal Government and Christian conservatives alike. This is where the function of churches as vestigial states (at least in the minds of their members) is most clearly apparent. The utter inappropriateness of Sitiveni Rabuka, who led a military coup against the democratically elected government of Fiji and subsequently established a theocracy, being held up as a model at a 1998 Leadership Forum seems to have escaped the government's notice.⁶¹ Maddox's 'Epilogue' records conversations with Christian parliamentarians who argue that the Bible does not prescribe democracy, and that monarchy, dictatorship or theocracy are acceptable if the people holding office are Godly. It seems that if you have a church, you do not actually need a secular government; a vestigial state will do the job of the state.

The most contentious legacy of the Howard government's reliance on Christian churches was the 2006 introduction of the National Schools Chaplaincy and Student Welfare Program (NSCSWP) in 2006. Academic studies have noted that under the Howard government the "schooling agenda in Australia has been narrowed to one that gives primacy to purposes of schooling that highlight economic orientations (social efficiency) and private purposes (social mobility).⁶² The NSCSWP went beyond the funding to church schools against which Defence of Government Schools protested; the context for its introduction was defined by the funding of independent religious schools, discussed above, and the question of a national curriculum that was addressed in the government report *The Future of Schooling in Australia* (2007).⁶³ The NSCSWP provided federal government funding for religious chaplains in state schools, and in 2014 the High Court of Australia ruled for the second time that such provision was unconstitutional.⁶⁴

The Labor Government led by Julia Gillard removed the requirement that chaplains needed to be attached to a religious institution, but the Liberal-National Coalition Government led by conservative Catholic Tony Abbott reinstated the religious requirement for school chaplains. The High Court of Australia has ruled the chaplaincy program to be unconstitutional twice, because "[f]unding is not available to youth workers or counsellors that are trained to assist young people but who are not identifiably religious."⁶⁵ Yet this does not prevent the federal government pressing a religious agenda in state schools, despite legal and societal requirements.

Conclusion

In the twenty-first century West, the state is understood to be secular, individuals are deemed to be able to choose whatever identity they desire rather than following that of their family, class or religious tradition, so if an individual wants to join the Church of Satan or become a Wiccan, there is seemingly nothing to prevent him or her. All alternative spiritualities and new religions are technically legal in Australia, as the state of Queensland repealed its Witchcraft laws in 2001, and Victoria repealed the last statute that contained anti-Witchcraft provisions (which was actually the Vagrancy Act) in August 2005.⁶⁶ Yet there has been negative media coverage of Paganism, Witchcraft and alternative religions, and Christian churches have particularly engaged in a critical discourse that views Witchcraft and Paganism (and occasionally J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter series of novels and the popular films made of them) negatively. In late 2009, claims made by Reverend Danny Nalliah (of Catch the Fire Ministries, a Pentecostal church) captured the headlines. Nalliah claimed that: 'a "witch's coven" was conducting blood sacrifices at Mount Ainslie in Canberra. He called on Christians to engage in what he terms "spiritual warfare," and claims that witches "are cursing the Federal Parliament".'⁶⁷ Nalliah summoned Christians to Mount Ainslie on 17 October 2009 to combat the alleged witches. The Pagan Awareness Network, a mainstream representative pan-Pagan organization, issued press releases noting that no Pagans have been involved in any sacrifices in Canberra, and that Nalliah had a history of hostile engagement with non-Christian religions (he had been taken to court by the Islamic Council of Victoria for inciting anti-Muslim hatred, but was acquitted in 2006).⁶⁸

Christianity, despite its status as a vestigial state within Australia, has similarly been transformed by secularization, individualism, and consumerism is found in the commercialization and mercantilism of Pentecostal Churches such as Hillsong. Further, the Australian marketing company, FutureBrand (headed by Angus Kinnaird) was asked to produce a marketing strategy for the Christian religion. FutureBrand did two years of research and announced that the strategy would ‘keep the church, the Bible and religion well out of the picture’. What was left? The powerfully attractive human individual Jesus, who was marketed with the slogan ‘Jesus: All About Life’ in 2005. Kinnaird stated that the only tactic for marketing was to focus on Jesus, as ‘[t]he research shows that the church is an almost insurmountable obstacle to the campaign’.⁶⁹ Despite the fact that this marketing strategy comprehensively brands the churches as unsaleable and their products as superfluous to twenty-first century Australians, insights from politics and the law suggest that the putatively secular state of Australia will continue to depend on religious institutions, the vast majority of which are Christian, and that Goldenberg’s model of the ‘vestigial state’ should remind all complacent secularists that religion is far from quiescent in Australia.

Notes

- 1 The content of this article was first presented on 8 May 2014 as an Inaugural Professorial Lecture at the University of Sydney. My thanks are due to my research assistant, Venetia Robertson, and to Don Barrett, whose encouragement has contributed in no small way to my research over the years. It was presented a second time as the George Shipp Memorial Lecture at the Worker’s Education Authority (WEA), 72 Bathurst Street, Sydney, on 1 October 2015. I am grateful to Michael Newton, Executive Director of the WEA, for the invitation to give the Shipp Lecture.
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- 51 Marion Maddox, *Taking God to School: The End of Australia's Egalitarian Education?* (Sydney, Melbourne, Auckland and London: Allen & Unwin, 2014), 87-88.
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Boy with a basket
of fruit, 1503.
Caravaggio

Michael Tsianikas

Flinders University

Καβάφης: Παθητική συμφωνία

Στον ΒΚ, άλλοτε ΚΒ, πάντα Β ενάντια Κ.

Λέμε: Παθητική συμφωνία. Τι είναι άραγε «παθητική»; Αυτή που αναφέρεται στο πάθος; Αυτή που αναφέρεται στην παθητικότητα; Αυτή που έχει παθητικό; Και πώς άραγε μπορεί μια συμφωνία να είναι παθητική; Τι έχει άραγε συμφωνηθεί; Πώς μπορεί μια συμφωνία να είναι «παθητική», αφού το πάθος δεν συμφωνεί με τίποτε και με κανέναν; Ακούμε την παθητική του Μπετόβεν και τα χάνουμε, χάνουμε τα λόγια μας (όπως θα δούμε πιο κάτω, τί έπαθε ο Απολλώνιος, στο «Περί τα των ξυστών άλση»), και σαν κάτι να μην το ελέγχουμε πια. Σαν να ελέγχεται από μόνο του. Σαν ο έλεγχος να ελέγχεται από τον εαυτό του, αντάρτης της τάξης του, παράνομος της ευνομίας του. Ο πρώτος παράνομος είναι ο νόμος, όπως ο πρώτος άθεος είναι ο θεός: παράδοξα πάντα αρχίζει η ελευθερία...

Ελευθερία που δεν δοκιμάζεται στα πάθη, δεν πάσχει και δεν παθαίνεται, δεν νοείται. Η ελευθερία είναι παθολογική, το ξέρουμε. Πόσο πάθος όμως και, ως αποτέλεσμα, πόση παθητικότητα; Κάθε επιθυμία στο βάθος, και η επιθυμία ελευθερίας είναι πρωταρχική, είναι παθητική, στοχεύει αποκλειστικά στον εαυτό της. Και όσο πιο ενεργητική ακούγεται μερικές φορές, τόσο πιο παθητική είναι στη φύση της. Και ως παθητική, δεν έχει παρά να υποστεί τη δική της υπαρξιακή γραμματική, η οποία διαφοροποιείται ριζικά από τη γραμματική των σχολείων. Υπαρξιακή γραμματική: εξαίρεση του Λόγου. Είναι η γραμματική της οποίας η διάθεση για αυτονομία είναι τόσο δυνατή που,

αν και εκφράζεται μέσα από «ενεργητικές» συντάξεις, ακόμη και πράξεις που φαίνονται σαν να στοχεύουν σε μια επιλεγμένη ενέργεια, η διάθεσή της είναι παθητική. Εκεί γυρεύει να ενσαρκωθεί εκείνο που διεκδικεί ως αυτονομία. Αυτό κατακλύζει κατ' εξοχήν την ποίηση του Καβάφη. Έτσι, μεταφορικά πια, όλες οι τολμηρές καβαφικές «ενσαρκώσεις» δεν στοχεύουν στο βάθος στη σάρκα αυτή καθαυτή, όσο στην ενσάρκωση της επιθυμίας για ελευθερία, στη σωματοποίησης της, ως σώμα που έγινε αποσταγμένο πάθος, καθώς «ενοποιείται» και «παθαίνεται», όπως λιώνουν τα ορυκτά και παράγουν άλλο πράγμα (η ύλη, αλοιμόνο, παράγει τις πιο τέλειες παθητικές συμφωνίες, όχι ο άνθρωπος):

Αρρώστησεν ο νους του από λαγνεία.

Στο στόμα του μείνανε τα φιλιά.

Παθαίνεται απ' τον διαρκή πόθον η σάρκα του όλη.

Τον σώματος εκείνου η αφή είν' επάνω του.

Θέλει την ένωση μαζί του πάλι. ("Το 25ο έτος του βίου του", Β: 45)

Η ποίηση του Καβάφη εντοπίζεται εκεί ακριβώς που διατίθεται το ποιητικό αντικείμενο της επιθυμίας ως αυτόνομο, όποιο και αν είναι αυτό, αρκεί να είναι επιθυμία (η οποία συχνά μάλιστα για το λόγο αυτό «γυαλίζει»¹). Αυτό θα το αποκαλούσαμε εδώ ενεργή παθητικότητα, η οποία, ως παθητικότητα, δεν μπορεί παρά να αναφέρεται από τις «σπίθες» των παθών και τα οποία παίζουν καταλυτικό ρόλο στην ενσάρκωση της ελευθερίας: τόσης και τέτοιας ελευθερίας, αφού κάνει ό,τι θέλει μετεωρίζεται ανάμεσα στο αληθινό και στο ψεύτικο, στο πιθανό και απίθανο, πέραν αποδεκτών συμβάσεων· αυτό είναι που κάνει τον ποιητικό λόγο να «λέει», χωρίς κάποτε να συνειδητοποιεί και συχνά, χωρίς να «σκέπτεται»:

Επίσης, θα έπρεπε να φροντίζει [ο ποιητής] να μην παραβλέπει ότι μια συναισθηματική κατάσταση είναι ταυτόχρονα, ή μάλλον εναλλάξ, και αληθινή και ψεύτικη, και πιθανή και απίθανη. Και ο ποιητής –ο οποίος, ακόμη και αν φιλοσοφεί τα μάλα, παραμένει καλλιτέχνης- δίνει τη μια πλευρά: αυτό δεν σημαίνει ότι αρνείται την αντίθετη, ή ακόμη –κι εδώ ίσως να υπερβάλλω- ότι θέλει να υπονοήσει πως η πλευρά την οποία πραγματεύεται είναι η πιο αληθινή, ή η συχνότερα αληθινή. Απλώς περιγράφει ένα πιθανό και ενδεχόμενο συναισθηματικό – κάποτε φευγαλέο, κάποτε κάπως διαρκές. [...]
Ο Πλάτων είπε ότι οι ποιητές εκφέρουν σπουδαία νοήματα χωρίς να τα συνειδητοποιούν (Καβάφης, 2003, Πεζά: 330-331).

Το παραπάνω χωρίο φωτίζει εναργώς την καβαφική εργασία προς το «ουδέτερο» έδαφος, το κενό, όπου «ενσαρκώνονται» τα αισθήματα αλλά και τα ποιήματα. Το έδαφος αυτό είναι της ελευθερίας από παραδεδεγμένες πεποιθήσεις, όπως θα έλεγε ο Νίτσε ή ο Φλωμπέρ και, όχι σπάνια στον Καβάφη, εκφράζεται και με όρους ηρωικής πάλης ή και απόλυτης «αισθηματοποίησης» («Στον ίδιο χώρο» Β: 81). Και αυτό με τη σειρά του μας φέρνει στο ποιητικό εργαστήρι του, όπου αντιλαμβάνεται καλύτερα κάποιος μεγάλα ή μικρά κενά στα ποιήματά του, εκεί που τα «αριστουργήματα» του Καβάφη γίνονται λεπτοκαμωμένα αυτόνομα κομμάτια, κομμάτια μέσα σε άλλα κομμάτια, κρατημένα το ένα δίπλα στο άλλο μετά από φοβερή, μυϊκή κάποτε εργασία, όπως το διαπιστώνουμε στα Ατελή του ποιήματα. Φοβερή αλήθεια ένταση για τον Καβάφη, καθώς «διαστρέφεται» το ποίημα και πάει να γίνει «στροφή» λόγου.

Μυϊκή εμπειρία να, που πάντα παραμορφώνει. Τα πιο παραμορφωτικά αντικείμενα είναι ίσως εκείνα που δημιούργησε το αρχαίο ελληνικό «κλασικό» θαύμα, και μας κάνει να υποφέρουμε με την «τελειότητά» τους. Κάθε τελειότητα είναι παραμορφωτική. Και από τότε μέχρι σήμερα οι τέχνες δεν προσπαθούν παρά να αποκαταστήσουν αυτή την «ιδανική» παραμόρφωση και βασικά να απο-παθηκοποιήσουν (ή να απομυθοποιήσουν) το παθητικό με το οποίο μας χρέωσαν. Στον Καβάφη αυτό συχνά ξεμυτίζει ως συναισθηματική παραμόρφωση: άλλοτε ως ταύτιση, άλλοτε ως μίμηση, κάποτε ως «σκληρότητα» ή ως πάθος όταν το μάρμαρο γίνεται σάρκα («Τυανεύς γλύπτης», Α: 41) και άλλοτε ως μέσο για κοινωνικό ανέβασμα («Η συνοδεία του Διονύσου», Α: 29), σε ένα σφιχτό εναγκάλισμα ενεργητικού και παθητικού.

Το αγκάλισμα αυτό, κάποτε γίνεται αποσιώπηση ή «σκιές», εκεί που πάνε να σμίξουν: αυτό είναι που θα ονομάζαμε ενεργή παθητικότητα στον Καβάφη, εκφρασμένη σε τόσα ποιήματα και με τόση επιτήδεση κάποτε («Για νάρθουν», Β: 17). Άλλοτε «κρύβονται» μέσα σε αυτοαναφορικές εκφράσεις ή «μετέωρες» λέξεις και έκαναν πολλούς σχολιαστές των ποιημάτων του – ακαλαίσθητα πάντα, βέβαια – να σπεύσουν να «διορθώσουν» τη σύνταξη ή «αποκαταστήσουν» την ενάργεια του μηνύματος, για να μη μείνει στο τέλος μήνυμα, παρά να γίνει πληροφορία. Όχι σπάνια η παθητικότητα αυτή αποδίδεται και ως «άγνονη»: τίποτε αλήθεια παθητικότερο από το άγνονο και στον Καβάφη

αυτόματα γίνεται «άγωνα αγάπη» (το ίδιο είναι συνήθως και ο έρωτας):

*Πολίτου εντίμου υιός — προ πάντων, ευειδής
έφηβος του θεάτρον, ποικίλως αρεστός,
ενίοτε συνθέτω εν γλώσση ελληνική
λίαν ευτόλμους στίχους, που τους κυκλοφορώ
πολύ κρυφά, εννοείται — θεοί! να μην τους δουν
οι τα φαιά φορούντες, περί ηθικής λαλούντες —
στίχους της ηδονής της εκλεκτής, που πηγαίνει
προς άγωνα αγάπη κι αποδοκιμασμένη (B: 37).*

Εδώ, στο ποίημα αυτό, «Θέατρον της Σιδώνας (400 Μ.Χ)», όλα κυρήσσουν το απόλυτο αυτόνομο της ελευθερίας. Κάθε στίχος σάλπισμα ελευθερίας: θέατρο, εναντίωση στο οικογενειακό και ιερατικό κατεστημένο, ευείδεια, ποικιλία, ποιητική ευτολμία, γράφοντας «μέσα» στη γλώσσα («εν γλώσση ελληνική», όχι «έξω» από αυτή), μυστικότητα, εκλεκτή ηδονή, άγωνα αγάπη και αποδοκιμασμένη: αυτό είναι το πραγματικό «θέατρο» της αυτόνομης επιθυμίας και όχι εκείνο της Σιδώνας, που παραπλανητικά μας παραπέμπει εδώ. Ποιας Σιδώνας, παίζουμε τώρα; Από εδώ αναδύεται η Αφροδίτη ως επιθυμία, ως δύναμη θηλυκότητας, και ως μην υπάρχουν ερωτικές «κυρίες» στα ποιήματα του Καβάφη: η θηλυκότητα στην ποίησή του είναι δύναμη, η μόνη πανίσχυρη δύναμη αλήθεια, τόσο που να γίνεται ναρκισσιστική, να χαϊδεύει το σώμα της, το ομοφυλοποιούμενο σώμα. Όποιος δεν αγάπησε το σώμα του πρώτα, πώς μπορεί να αγαπήσει το άλλο; Ο Καβάφης δεν ήταν ούτε γκέι ούτε γκέισα. Ο Καβάφης ήταν Γαία.

«Άγωνα αγάπη»: τι φρούτο είναι αυτό; Υπάρχει άραγε πράγματι αγάπη που να μην είναι άγωνα; Αν είναι γόνιμη, δεν είναι πια αγάπη, αλλά κάτι άλλο, δεν είμαστε σίγουροι τι. Το γραμματικό λογοπαίγνιο (πάντα σχεδόν η «έφηβη» γραμματική παίζει με τον εαυτό της) εντείνει στο πάθος και λογο-παίζοντας αναδεικνύει την ελευθερία του λόγου και την ανεξάρτηση του υποκειμένου από δεδομένη συντακτική/γραμματική διάθεση. Η γραμματική που αποφασίζει, κάνει του κεφαλιού της. Στο «Άγε ω βασιλεύ Δακεδαιμονίων» (B: 80) η Κρατησίκλεια, πριν εξοριστεί στην Αλεξάνδρεια, συναντά το γυιο της, Κλεομένη Γ', στο ναό του Ποσειδώνα. Εκεί ξεχειλίζουν τα πάθη τους, και αφού η γυναίκα «συνέρχεται», προχωρά προς εκείνο που δεν επιβάλλεται μόνο από τη Σπάρτη, αλλά από ακόμη κάτι περισσότερο και ισχυρότερο: από μια

«άγωνα» σήμερα γλώσσα και από αυτό που «δίδεται»: το γραμματικό «διδώ». Η γραμματική ως ύλη και όχι ως σύνταξη:

*Όμως ο δυνατός της χαρακτήρ επάσχισε·
και συνελθούσα η θαυμασία γυναίκα
είπε στον Κλεομένη «Άγε, ω βασιλεύ
Δακεδαιμονίων, όπως, επάν' έξω
γενώμεθα, μηδείς ίδη δακρύνοντας
ημάς μηδέ ανάξιόν τι της Σπάρτης
ποιούντας. Τούτο γαρ εφ' ημίν μόνον·
αι τύχαι δε, όπως αν ο δαίμων διδώ, πάρεισι.»*

Και μες στο πλοίο μπήκε, πηγαίνοντας προς το «διδώ».

Στο ποίημα «Έτσι πολύ ατένισα» (A 83) –και σε πολλά άλλα εκείνο που ξεχωρίζει είναι η ενεργητική προδιάθεση του υποκειμένου να μιλήσει για την ομορφιά. Για να το πετύχει αυτό αφήνεται να παρασυρθεί από μια ηγεμονεύουσα παθητικότητα, καθώς αποσύρεται στο παρελθόν της νεότητας και μάλιστα στις νύχτες αυτής της νεότητας: πιο παθητικό από αυτό δεν γίνεται. Εκεί, τελικά, διαπιστώνουμε ότι η εμπειρία αυτή υπαγορεύεται από τη βούληση της ποίησης και όχι από το ίδιο το υποκείμενο και ότι συσχετίζεται με πρόσωπα συναντημένα κρυφά και όλως τυχαία. Η επιχείρηση «κυνήγι ομορφιάς» φαίνεται ότι δεν ρυθμίζεται από το ίδιο το υποκείμενο, που υποβάλλεται στη μυσταγωγία μιας πλήρους παθητικότητας, αλλά από όλα αυτά που ενσκήπτουν, όταν λυθούν τα δεσμά των όποιων συμβάσεων:

*Την εμορφιά έτσι πολύ ατένισα,
που πλήρης είναι αυτής η όρασίς μου.*

*Γραμμές του σώματος. Κόκκινα χείλη. Μέλη ηδονικά.
Μαλλιά σαν από αγάλματα ελληνικά παρμένα·
πάντα έμορφα, κι αχτένιστα σαν είναι,
και πέφτουν, λίγο, επάνω στ' άσπρα μέτωπα.
Πρόσωπα της αγάπης, όπως τάθελεν
η ποίησίς μου μες στες νύχτες της νεότητός μου,
μέσα στες νύχτες μου, κρυφά, συναντημένα*

Το υποκείμενο μιλά μωζοζαλισμένο σχεδόν και η μία φράση φέρνει την άλλη. Κάποιες φράσεις είναι χωρίς ρήματα, εκεί ίσως αποκαλύπτεται η παθητικότητα ως αρημάτιστη και οι λέξεις χωρίς ταγό, σκορπίζονται,

όπως ο Πάνας προγκούσε τα πρόβατα: πέρασμα από την κλασική ομορφιά των αγαλμάτων σε εκείνη του καβαφικού ερωτισμού, κρυφά και φανερά, φωτισμένα και νυχτερινά. Αυτή είναι η προσπάθεια να αποδοθεί μια παθητική καθολικότητα, η οποία είναι αποτέλεσμα της βούλησης της ποιήσεως και όχι του ποιητή.

Εδώ καταλαβαίνουμε καλύτερα τη χρήση του «ατένισα»: είναι το ρήμα που δηλώνει απόλυτη απόσταση και απόλυτη εγγύτητα χρόνου και τόπου, αυτό που όντως χαρακτηρίζει το βίωμα της ομορφιάς: από που απενίζεις, αν το απενίζεις πραγματικά, τότε σε απενίζει το ίδιο (και αυτό λέγεται πλήρωμα, για το -μα θα μιλήσουμε πιο κάτω), όταν υφίσταμαι εμβρόντητος αυτό που μου συμβαίνει και «δεν πιστεύω στα ίδια μου τα μάτια». Γιατί, εκείνο που ξεκίνησα να κάνω, τελικά με κάνει (γίνομαι «καμωμένος», κατά τον Καβάφη), και αυτό που κοιτάζω μακριά, έρχεται και ξεχειλίζει στα μάτια μου: αυτό θα μπορούσε να χαρακτηριστεί και τηλε-πάθεια. «Σκληρό», εμπειρικό αντικείμενο, εμπάθος και ευπαθέστατο είναι αυτή η τηλεπάθεια που κυριεύει το νου και τις αισθήσεις και πέφτει στα χέρια μας σαν αναμμένο κάρβουνο: φυσικά, α-φύσικο: Η Αλεξάνδρεια, π.χ.: «Είν' ενδιαφέρουσα πολύ και συγκινητική / η Αλεξάνδρεια του έκτου αιώνας, ή του εβδόμου στες αρχές / [...] Δεν είν' αφύσικον αν έτσι αισθηματικά / την εποχήν της απενίσομεν αυτήν» (Ατελής: 255).

Τηλε-πάθεια

Το απένισμα, η ανατένιση και η αποκάλυψη είναι αποτελέσματα τηλε-πάθειας. Η τηλεπάθεια κυριεύεται από πάθος και παθητικότητα. Το τελευταίο πράγμα που θα περίμενε κάποιος από τον απόλυτα λογοκρατούμενο Καβάφη είναι να ασχολείται με τηλεπάθειες, και όμως αυτό συμβαίνει τόσο συχνά. Δεν υπάρχει περίπτωση ο Καβάφης να πιστεύει στην τηλεπάθεια, αλλά είναι ενδιαφέρον ότι τον απασχολεί ως αισθητικό φαινόμενο, όπου όλα, πάραυτα, και σχεδόν εμπρηστικά, αισθητοποιούνται. Τόσα τα ξαφνικά ολοκαυτώματα στον Καβάφη! Εμπρηστικά, ναι: αφού συναντούμε τόσο συχνά στην ποίησή του λέξεις ή φράσεις που κυριεύουν το υποκείμενο με τη «ζέστη» τους, αλλά και το λάβρο πάθος. Πολύ γνωστό είναι το ποίημα «Πολυέλαιος» (Α: 60), όπου δηλώνεται η παράδοση του σώματος στην εκπύρωση των παθών, αφού δεν αντιστέκεται σε αυτήν, αντίθετα παραδίδεται «γενναία». Και άλλες

φορές, καθώς κορώνει ο πόθος, όπως, π.χ., στο «Εγκατάλειψες» (Ατελής: 272): «Μετά τον κινηματογράφο, και τα δέκα / λεπτά που μείνανε στο μπαρ, μια νύχτα είχε ανάψει / στα μάτια και στο αίμα των η επιθυμία [...]».

Αυτές οι δυνατές και απότομες εκπυρώσεις δεν παράγουν μόνο στιγμιαίο πάθος αλλά, μέσα στο χρόνο, στρέφονται προς τον εαυτό τους, δημιουργούν δικούς τους εαυτούς και απομακρύνονται από το αρχικό υποκείμενο, «παράνομα» σχεδόν, κάποτε «εγκληματικά», για να αυτονομηθούν· και δεν αυτονομούνται εάν δεν παθητικοποιηθούν: θεμελιώδες σημείο αναφοράς για την καβαφική αισθητική, πολύ περισσότερο μάλιστα αν αυτή είναι «ερωτική αισθητική», όπως διαβάζουμε στο «Φωτογραφία»:

*Βλέποντας την φωτογραφίαν ενός εταίρου του,
τ' ωραίο νεανικό του πρόσωπο
(καμένο τώρα πια είχε χρονολογία
το ενενήντα δύο η φωτογραφία),
του πρόσκαιρου τον ήλθεν η μελαγχολία.
Μα τον παραμυθεί όπου τουλάχιστον
δεν άφισε – δεν άφισαν καμιά κουτή ντροπή,
τον έρωτά των να εμποδίσει ή ν' ασχημίσει.
Των ηλιθίων τα “φαυλόβιοι”, “πορνικοί”,
η ερωτική αισθητική των δεν επρόσεξε ποτέ.*

Το ενδιαφέρον του Καβάφη για την τηλεπάθεια, ενώ τον συνοδεύει από τα πρώτα του ποιητικά βήματα, φαίνεται ότι μεγαλώνει σταθερά και πιο συγκεκριμένα καθώς ο ποιητής έχει περάσει στην όψιμη ωριμότητα. Το πρώτο του ποίημα (δημοσιευμένο από τον ίδιο στην πρώτη του συλλογή του 1904) «Φωνές» (Α: 95), είναι στην ουσία του τηλε-παθητικό («Ίδανικές φωνές κι αγαπημένες/ [...] Κάποτε μες στα όνειρά μας ομιλούνε/ κάποτε μες στην σκέψη τες ακούει το μυαλό. / Και με τον ήχο των για μια στιγμή επιστρέφουν / ήχοι από την πρώτη ποίησι της ζωής μας — / σα μουσική, την νύχτα, μακρυνή, που σβύνει»). Αυτό όμως που αρχίζει ως μια μουσική και ηχητική καθαρότητα που φέρνει κάποτε και νοήματα, αργότερα: ενσαρκώνεται από υποκείμενα που υφίστανται την ίδια εμπειρία, η οποία επικαιροποιείται και γίνεται ιστορική: ο απόλυτος και λυτρωτικός θρίαμβος της ύλης.

Και στις δυο περιπτώσεις, το υποκείμενο δηλώνει την έλξη που αισθάνεται ο ποιητής όχι για το φαινόμενο αυτό καθαυτό, αλλά για το

πάθος που εγείρει και πώς το ποιητικό υλικό παθηκοποιείται μέσα στην ίδια του τη φύση, στον ίδιο το λόγο «μέσα». Αν από την πρόωμη περίοδο αναφέραμε ενδεικτικά τις «Φωνές», από τα οψιμότερα θα μπορούσαμε να αναφέρουμε «Περί τα των Ξυστών άλση» (Ατελή: 187):

*Είχε εξαγριωθεί ο Δομτιανός,
υπέφεραν δεινώς η χώρας από αυτόν.
Στην Έφεσο, ως κι αλλού, πολλή ήταν δυσθυμία.
Ότ' εξαίφνης, σαν μιλούσε μια μέρα ο Απολλώνιος
περί τα των Ξυστών άλση· εφάνη αίφνης
«σαν νάναι αφηρημένος και σαν μηχανικώς»
τον λόγον του να κάμει. Ός που έπαυσε τον λόγον
κ' εφώναξε το «παίε τον τύραννον», εν μέσω
λίαν απορημένων πολλών ακροατών.
Εκείνη την στιγμή είχε η ψυχή του δει
τον Στέφανον, στην Ρώμη, χτυπώντας με το ξίφος
τον Δομτιανόν με κύλικα χρυσήν
ζητώντα ν' αμυνθεί· και, τέλος, τους αθρούους
να μπαίνουν δορυφόρους, κ' ευθύς τον μαρόν
τον βασιλέα (σχεδόν λιπόθυμον) να σφάζουν..*

Η τηλεπάθεια ελευθερώνει το αντικείμενο της εμπειρίας σαν να είναι ζωντανό, σαν να ενσαρκώνεται μπροστά στα μάτια αυτού που βιώνει ένα τέτοιο πάθος, τόσο μακρινό αλλά και τόσο άμεσο. Η τηλεπάθεια ελευθερώνεται ως «αντικείμενο», τόσο συμπαγής και ισχυρή είναι που το υποκείμενο «χάνει» τα λόγια του: στο παραπάνω ποίημα, όχι οποιοσδήποτε, αλλά ένας από τους μεγαλύτερους φιλοσόφους-μύστες, ο Απολλώνιος, χάνει τον ειρμό του λόγου του («εκείνη τη στιγμή / που είχε αφαιρεθεί ο κορυφαίος μάγος / εκείνη τη στιγμή είχε η ψυχή του δει», μια άλλη εκδοχή στην οποία δούλευε ο Καβάφης, Lavagnini, 1994: 189). Ο Απολλώνιος αρχίζει να μιλά «μηχανικά» (σαν «κουρδιστό πορτοκάλι») και, εντελώς ξαφνικά, αλλάζοντας κουβέντα, ξεφωνίζει: «παίε τον τύραννον». Φανταζόμαστε την έκπληξη των ακροατών του: όλη η Έφεσος ήταν εκεί, λέει ο Φιλόστρατος (από τον οποίο εμπνέεται ο Καβάφης), σαν να ήταν ο ίδιος ο Φιλόστρατος εκεί:

*Διαλεγόμενος γαρ περί τα των Ξυστών άλση κατά μεσημβρίαν,
ότε δη και ταν τοις βασιλείοις εγγίνετο, πρώτον μεν αφήκε της
φωνής οίαν δείσας, είτ' ελλιπέστερον ή κατά την εαυτού δύναμιν*

*ηρμήνευσεν ίσα τοις μεταξύ λόγων διορώσι τι έτερον, είτ' εσιώπησεν
ώσπερ οι των λόγων εκπεσόντες, βλέψας τε δεινόν εις την γην
και προβάς τρία ή τέτταρα των βημάτων «παίε τον τύραννον,
παίε» εβόα, ουχ ώσπερ εκ κατόπτρου τινός είδωλον αληθείας
έλκων, αλλ' αυτά ορών και ξυλλαμβάνειν δοκών τα δρώμενα.
εκπλησσομένης δε της Εφέσου (παρήν γαρ διαλεγομένω πάσα)
επισχών όσον οι διορώντες, έστ' αν γένηται τι των ανφιβόλων τέλος
«θαρρείτε,» είπεν «ω άνδρες, ο γαρ τύραννος απέσφακται τήμερον»
(Lavagnini, 1994: 192-193).*

Για λόγους που εξηγήσαμε ως τώρα, από το παραπάνω απόσπασμα αντιλαμβάνεται κάποιος γιατί ο Καβάφης καθιλώνεται στο κομμάτι αυτό. Μια ολόκληρη πόλη βιώνει αυτό στο οποίο υποβάλλεται και ο ίδιος ο Φιλόστρατος. Το πάθος κυριεύει τα πλήθη, η Έφεσος εκπλήσσεται, η πόλη βρίσκεται στο δρόμο των αποκαλύψεων και δεν είναι τυχαίο ότι εκεί παγανιστές, χριστιανοί (και «αιρετικοί»), εβραίοι και μυστικοφιλόσοφοι δρουν και συνεπαίρνουν τα πλήθη. Ο Απολλώνιος καθιλώνει τα πλήθη τον πρώτο αιώνα μ.Χ., ο Φιλόστρατος θα αφηγηθεί τα γεγονότα αυτά κανένα αιώνα αργότερα, ο Απόστολος Παύλος, «ώσπερ εκ κατόπτρου τινός είδωλον αληθείας έλκων» θα μεταμορφώσει εκ θεμελίων την πόλη αυτή. Ο Καβάφης, τελικά, εκεί θα δει την Έφεσο «μηχανική», μέσα σε ένα δάσος, όχι επειδή ο ίδιος πίστευε στα μαγικά «κάτοπτρα», αλλά γιατί σύγκορμα και σύμφυχα ο όχλος πιάνεται σε αυτά: πώς άραγε μοιράζονται τα πλήθη; πώς «επλήσσεται» ο λαός; Δύσκολο το ερώτημα, αλλά ένα είναι σίγουρο εδώ: όχι μέσα από τον ορθολογισμό και αριστοτελικές μεθόδους, παρά μέσα από την εγκατάλειψη στα πάθη και στην παθητικότητα. Έτσι εξηγείται η εμπρηστική συμπεριφορά του πλήθους και η «αυταπάρηση»: πώς και γιατί αρνείται κάποιος τον συλλογικό εαυτό του (όχι ως αρνητικότητα του εαυτού -που είναι άλλο πράγμα, αλλά ως εκμηδένισή του): τι άραγε είναι η μηδενοπάθεια του πλήθους;

Το πάθος γίνεται πιο παθητικό, καθώς στο τέλος ρέει και αίμα. Γνωρίζουμε την αιμοφιλία του Καβάφη (αλλά και άλλων πολλών). Κάπου εκεί κοντά, αν και δεν ακούγεται στο ποίημα, παραμονεύει μια περίεργη σχέση του Καβάφη με το αίμα, αρκετές φορές εκδικητικό και άλλοτε «ερωτικό»: «στες λάγνες του αίματος ορμές» («Τα επικίνδυνα»: Α: 46), «κ' επιθυμία παληά ξαναπερνά το αίμα» («Επέστρεφε», Α: 56),



Judith and
Holofernes, 1599
Caravaggio

«το αίμα του, καινούριο και ζεστό» («Πέρασμα», Α: 86). Εκδικητικό/ερωτικό: το διάστημα δεν είναι και τόσο μεγάλο, ας ξαναθυμηθούμε εδώ και το «Έν πόλει της Οσροηνής» (Α: 76). Από δω και πέρα, επειδή δεν έχουμε τα εφόδια, θα πρέπει να επιτρέψουμε την ψυχανάλυση να συνεχίσει.

Πέρα από τα συγκεκριμένα ποιήματα τηλε-πάθειας στον Καβάφη, παρόμοιες «τηλε-πάθειες» χαρακτηρίζουν το ευρύτερο έργο του, εκεί ιδίως που επικρατούν ισχυρά πάθη. Στο ποίημα «Σοφοί δε προσιόντων» διαπιστώνεται η τηλε-ακουστική ικανότητα των σοφών. Στο «Μέρες του 1903» (Β: 92), πρόκειται για μια ισχυρή τηλεπάθεια, η οποία, με τον τρόπο της, ενσαρκώνει το «χαμένο» πάθος με μια παθητική ανάμνηση, σαν να είναι ζωντανή, σαν να παίρνει σάρκα και οστά σε ένα τηλε-ερωτικό τόρα:

*Δεν τα ήγφα πια ξανά — τα τόσο γρήγορα χαμένα
τα ποιητικά τα μάτια, το χλωμό
το πρόσωπο στο νύχτωμα του δρόμου*

Εδώ τελικά δεν μπορούμε να μην αναφερθούμε και στο ποίημα «Κατά τις συνταγές αρχαίων ελληνοσύρων μάγων» (Β 87), ως ένα άλλο ποίημα τηλε-πάθειας. Ο Σαββίδης το τοποθετεί στο 1931, άρα μέσα στα οψιμότερα του ποιητή, και υπογραμμίζει αυτό που αναφέραμε στην αρχή αυτής της εργασίας, πώς όσο περνούν τα χρόνια, το έντονο πάθος που αναπτύσσει ο Καβάφης για τις τηλε-πάθειες, όταν, τελικά, τηλε-καβαφοποιείται:

*«Ποιο απόσταγμα να βρίσκεται κατά τες συνταγές
αρχαίων Ελληνοσύρων μάγων καμωμένο
που, σύμφωνα με την αναδρομήν,
και την μικρή μας κάμαρη να επαναφέρει.»*

Η παθητική αναπόληση αφορά στο όλο: στο χρόνο, στο χώρο, στην αισθητική και στην επιθυμία, σε μια τόση ισχυρή δόση σύμπραξης των που δεν μπορεί παρά να επιτευχθεί μόνο μαγικά, με τη χρήση ενός σπάνιου φίλτρου/ελιξήριου, τη χρήση ενός αποστάγματος. Το απόσταγμα, ως ελιξήριο πάθους, ελευθερώνει δυνάμεις, ανεξέλεκτες από τη βούληση του ατόμου, παθητικοποιεί τη διεργασία και την απελευθερώνει τόσο πολύ και έτσι μόνον μπορεί να πετύχει τα ισχυρότερα. Αυτό ακριβώς που χαρακτηρίζει την εμμονή ενός αισθητή. Αυτό είναι που επισύρει την απώλεια της προσωπικότητας, το χάσιμο/εύρημα της ταυτότητας, με την συνοδευτική έκπληξη: «είμαι αυτός που δεν είμαι».

Έτσι, δεν μας κάνουν πια εντύπωση οι αναφορές του Καβάφη σε «αποστάγματα» ή «ποτά»: «επήγα μες στην φωτισμένη νύχτα. / Κ' ήπια από δυνατά κρασιά, καθώς / που πίνουν οι ανδρείοι της ηδονής», διαβάζουμε στο «Επήγα» (Α: 59). Το παράδοξο εδώ είναι (και αυτό δηλώνει τη σχέση «είμαι το δεν είμαι»), ότι, όσο πιο «ανδρείος» υποστηρίζει ότι είναι κάποιος, τόσο περισσότερο δηλώνεται ακριβώς το αντίθετο: η «ανδρεία» παράδοση στην ηδονή ή στο ποτό και η «ανδρεία» ανάδυση αυτού που προκύπτει ως ανεξέλεκτο αποτέλεσμα: η ενέργεια που ελευθερώνεται, εκείνο που αποκαλύπτεται ως ισχυρό και παντοδύναμο αποτέλεσμα: η ανάδυση του μη όντος ως «διαφθορά»:

*Θάταν το οινόπνευμα που ήπια το βράδυ,
θάταν που νύσταξα, είχα κουρασθεί όλη μέρα.
Σβόσθηκεν απ' εμπρός μου η μαύρη ξύλινη κολόνα
με την αρχαία κεφαλή κ' η πόρτα της τραπεζαρίας,
κ' η πολυθρόνα η κόκκινη και το καναπεδάκι.
Ήλθε στην θέσιν των της Μασσαλίας ένας δρόμος.
Κ' ελευθέρα η ψυχή μου, χωρίς συστολή,
εκεί εφάνηκε πάλι κ' εκινείτο,
με την μορφήν αισθητικού κ' ηδονικού εφήβου-
Τον διεφθαρμένον εφήβου: ας λεχθεί κι αυτό.*

Ποίημα του 1919 αυτό: Κοιτάζοντας τα χειρόγραφα (στο βιβλίο της Lavagnini, 1994), διαπιστώνει κάποιος τη μεγάλη μάχη που δίνει

ο ποιητής να ενσωματώσει όλα αυτά που κινούνται αδέσποτα και με πολύ πάθος, στο πεδίο που πάει να αυτονομηθεί και λέγεται ποίημα: ψυχική αυτονομία και ψυχή αγέραστη (πολύς πλατωνισμός εδώ), η αναπόλυση του εφήβου που μπορεί να είναι ηδονικός, αισθητικός αλλά και διεφθαρμένος, το εδώ και το εκεί, κτλ., σε σημείο που δεν μπορούμε να είμαστε απόλυτα ακριβείς, αν ο νέος του ποιήματος είναι κάποιος άλλος, ή το φάντασμα του ίδιου του ποιητή ως νέου, ή η ανάδειξη ενός ουδέτερου, τρισυπόστατου εφήβου². Το θέμα είναι ότι η ψυχή, αδέσποτη και ασύστολη, κάνει ό,τι θέλει, παίρνει τη μορφή ηδονικού νέου: όταν η ηδονή ψυχοποιείται, τότε η διαφθορά ιδανικοποιείται, σαν σε «σβύσμο»: «Σβύσθηκεν απ' εμπρός μου η μαύρη ξύλινη κολόνα».

Η συνείδηση του -μα

Καιρός να ξαναπιάσουμε σκηνές «εγκλήματος» στην ποίηση του Καβάφη: Το έγκλημα εγκαλεί και εγκαλείται³ στον τόπο του -μα: Από εδώ πηγάζει και η «παθητικοποίηση», και έτσι αποκαθιστάται πλήρως το «έγκλημα» και αισθητικοποιείται. Παλιός, γόνιμος δρόμος, όλων των τεχνών, που αιτιολογεί γιατί τάχα οι αναγνώστες/θεατές να ευχαριστούνται τόσο πολύ, γινόμενοι μάρτυρες τόσο βίαιων κάποτε αναπαραστάσεων (Ο Καντ, λάτρης της γαλλικής επανάστασης, προτιμούσε να την κοιτάζει από μακριά, ως θέαμα μόνο). Η χρονοχρονική απόσταση ανάμεσα στο αναπαριστώμενο και σε αυτόν που το βλέπει, γίνεται θέαμα. Η δύναμη του επιθέματος -μα: δηλώνει το **αποτέλεσμα της ενέργειας**, μας λέει η γραμματική, όπως τα: θέλημα, θέαμα, νύχτωμα, πέρασμα, άναμμα, κάμωμα, απόσταγμα, ποίημα, π.χ., στον Καβάφη, αλλά και το περίφημο «είδωμα». Στο «Μέρες του 1908», εκτίθεται κάποιος 25άρης, που ζει από τα χαρτιά, το τάβλι και τα δανεικά. Ξενυχτά, προσπαθώντας να βρει κάποιον να τον γελάσει στα χαρτιά, ένα ρεμάλι σχεδόν, φορώντας ρούχα κανελιά, ξεθωριασμένα, ψάχνοντας μάταια για δανεικά. Και, κάποτε, ξενυχτισμένος, πάει στη θάλασσα, όπου πέφτει γυμνός για κολύμπι. Εκεί στην παραλία, το γυμνό του σώμα αποθεώνεται κλιμακωτά, ώσπου να γίνει πλήρες θέαμα:

*Α μέρες του καλοκαιριού του εννιακόσια οκτώ,
απ' το είδωμά σας, καλαισθητικά,
έλειψ' η κανελιά ξεθωριασμένη φορεσιά.*

*Το είδωμά σας τον εφύλαξε
όταν που τάβγαζε, που τάριχνε από πάνω του,
τ' ανάξια ρούχα, και τα μπαλωμένα εσώρουχα.
Κ' έμενε ολόγυμνος· άψογα ωραίος· ένα θαύμα.
Αχτένιστα, ανασηκωμένα τα μαλλιά του·
τα μέλη του ηλιοκαμένα λίγο
από την γύμνια του πρωιού στα μπάνια, και στην παραλία.*

Το -μα αποθεώνεται καλαισθητικά, στο δεύτερο σκέλος του ποιήματος. Η τεχνική αυτή φαίνεται να αποδίδει τα μέγιστα, καθώς από σχετικά πεζές περιγραφές περνούμε στη χρήση μια άλλης γλώσσας, φορτισμένης παθητικά. Η μετάβαση από το πρώτο στο δεύτερο και η επαύξηση της παθητικότητας επιτυγχάνεται με ένα αυστηρά καθαφικό εύρημα/τέχνασμα: τελικά είναι οι μέρες που κοιτάζουν, είναι το «είδωμά» τους, δηλώνει ο ποιητής. Με τη θηλυκοποίηση του χρόνου, σαν οι μέρες να ήταν παρθένες που περιηγούνται την παραλία και βλέπουν ξαφνικά κάτι που δεν πιστεύουν τα μάτια τους (μπάνισμα). Πρόκειται για μια πράξη στον τόνο του -μα πάλι εδώ: στο ποίημα δυο φορές περιγράφεται ως -μα: «είδωμα». Ωραίος νεολογισμός του Καβάφη, που δηλώνει όχι αυτόν/αυτήν που κοιτάζει αλλά εκείνο που βλέπεται, όχι σαν βλέμμα αλλά ως «είδωμα», όχι ως θεωρία, αλλά ως θεώρημα (για να θυμηθούμε εδώ τον Παζολίνι). Αλλά και ως είδος, πλατωνική μορφή, καθώς βγαίνουμε από τη σκιά του κανελιού και πάμε για το φως του ήλιου. Για τον Πλάτωνα αυτό: που δεν πολυσυμπάθησε τη «γύμνια του πρωιού» στον ποιητή τους στίχους.

Ημεροποίηση της εμπειρίας («μέρα μέρωσε», τραγουδά το δημοτικό άσμα και δηλώνει με την άμεση «αφέλειά» του την παθητικοποίηση της μέρας), σαν εμμονή εν τέλει, έρχεται και ξανάρχεται στην ποίησή του και έγινε ένα από τα πιο διάσημα ρεφραίν στη σκέψη εκείνων που ασχολούνται όχι μόνο με τον Καβάφη, αλλά με την ποίηση γενικότερα. Ο τίτλος «Μέρες», καθαφικό εύρημα, εκφράζει την παθητικότητα του χρόνου, το χρόνο ως αυτοσκοπούμενο -μα, ως πάθημα/μάθημα⁴.

Για να συμβεί κάτι τέτοιο, συχνά, δεν έχει παρά να περάσει από τη διαδικασία μιας σχεδόν «παράνομης» εμπειρίας, καθώς υπερβαίνονται παραδεδεγμένοι κανόνες και νόμοι. Η παρανομία έγκειται αρχικά στην αμφισβήτηση κανόνων της παραδοσιακής «γραμματικής» και λόγου. Το παράνομο δεν έγγειται στο ότι αναφέρονται τολμηρές λέξεις,

περιγράφονται τολμηρές πράξεις, κ.τ.λ., το παράνομο έγκειται στο γεγονός ότι προκύπτει μόνο μέσα από κάποια «σκάνδαλα» λόγου, που ξαφνιάζουν γιατί δραπετεύουν από τον κόσμο της ηθικής και μεταβαίνουν στο χώρο της αίσθησης. Εκεί είναι που παίζονται κορώνα γράμματα τα σώματα των ανθρώπων αλλά και τα σώματα των λέξεων. Το ξέρουμε: η ηθική δεν τα πάει καθόλου καλά με τις αισθήσεις και έρχεται μετά η αισθητική να βάλει κάποια προσωρινή τάξη, έστω και αν πριμοδοτεί το «ανήθικο», ανατρέπει την «τρεχάμενη» ηθική, όπως θα έλεγε ο Καβάφης. Με την αισθητική παθητικοποιείται το αίσθημα και ελευθερώνεται: υλικά, χειροπιαστά, χειρουργικά και «καμωμένα».

Είναι η ενδιάμεση «χώρα» παύσης εχθροπραξιών, όπου αποσύρεται ο καλλιτέχνης (όχι με επιτυχία πάντα, βέβαια). Αυτός είναι ο χώρος της αυτονομίας του πάθους, της παθητικότητας. Στον Καβάφη ο «τόπος» αυτός αναδύεται με τόση συχνότητα. Ας ξαναθυμηθούμε εδώ το «Έν πόλει της Οσροηνής», και σε άλλα πολλά, όπως και στο «Μια νύχτα» (Α: 55), όπου από μια «κάμαρα φτωχική και πρόστυχη» και με μπόλικη τηλεπάθεια, περνούμε σε μια αισθητική «μέθη»:

*Κ' εκεί στο λαϊκό, το ταπεινό κρεβάτι
είχα το σώμα του έρωτος, είχα τα χείλη
τα ηδονικά και ρόδινα της μέθης —
τα ρόδινα μιας τέτοιας μέθης, που και τώρα
που γράφω, έπειτ' από τόσα χρόνια!
μες στο μονήρες σπίτι μου, μεθώ ξανά.*

Αυτή η μηχανή λειτουργεί στο νου του Καβάφη, καθώς κοιτάζει από κοντά, ή από απόσταση (ή και εναλλάξ) και μετά σπρώχνει την ίδια την απόσταση να κοιτάξει (κλασική περίπτωση μανισίματος), καθώς «αισθηματοποιείται» ή «αισθητικοποιείται»: «Κ' αισθηματοποιήθηκες ολόκληρο, για μένα» («Στον ίδιο χώρο», Β: 81). «Κ' έτσι ένα παιδί καλό / [...] / το αισθητικό παιδί με το αίμα το καινούριο και ζεστό» («Πέρασμα»: Α: 86). Είναι μάλιστα χαρακτηριστικό ότι στον Καβάφη από το αίσθημα περνούμε στην αισθηματοποίηση και από εκεί στην αισθητικοποίηση (όχι πάντα με την ίδια σειρά): η παθητικότερη καβαφική συμφωνία προκύπτει ανάμεσα στα χάσματα αυτών των περασμάτων, που κρατούν την αυτοτέλειά τους και διεκδικούν την αυτονομία τους: Έτσι, π.χ., στο «Επέστρεφε» (Α: 56), «ταχείλη και το δέρμα ενθυμούνται...», στο «Νόησις», (Α: 64), «Μέσα στον έκλυτο της νεότητός μου βίο / μορφώνονταν βουλές

της ποιήσεώς μου», στο «Ενώπιον του αγάλματος του Ενδυμίωνος» (Α: 65), «επευφημία εξύπνησαν αρχαίων χρόνων ηδονή».

Τα σώματα του Σολωμού ντύνονται με ιδέες, εκείνα του Καβάφη τις γυμνώνονται. Δύο υπήρξαν τα μεγάλα «χάσματα» της νεότερης ελληνικής ποίησης: εκείνο του Σολωμού και εκείνο του Καβάφη. Ο πρώτος προσπαθεί να το γεμίσει ιδεαλιστικά, ο δεύτερος να το αυτονομήσει υλικά, ηδονικά, σκανδαλιστικά, παθητικά. Αυτή η κίνηση ελευθερώνει χώρο, χρόνο και λόγο, από την αρχαιότητα, ως τον αιώνα του: εδώ όλα μπορούν να ξεμυτίσουν: επιγράμματα, ομηρικά έπη, πλατωνικές ιδέες, αναγεννησιακά ανθίσματα, νεοκλασικισμός, ρομαντισμός, ρεαλισμός, διαφωτισμός, παρελαύνουν στο βάθος των ποιητικών τοπίων του και αφήνουν ίχνη από το πέρασμά τους (πέρασμα: άλλη μια χαρακτηριστική εμμονή του Καβάφη). Αυτό ο Καβάφης το συνδέει με την ερωτοπάθεια τη δική του και των αρχαίων: « Η ζωή μου περνά μέσα σε διακυμάνσεις ηδονικές, μέσα σε συλλήψεις -πραγματοποιημένες ενίοτε- ερωτικές. Το έργο μου πάει προς τη σκέψη. [...] Εργάζομαι σαν τους αρχαίους. [...] -ερωτοπαθείς - [[τόση]] τόσοι/ τους - όμοια σαν και μένα». (*Ανεξέδοτα Σημειώματα*: 48). Το έργο «σκεπτοποιείται» λοιπόν. Πράγματι, σκέψη που δεν «σκεπτοποιείται», σκέψη δεν είναι. Στο παραπάνω χωρίο, στο τέλος, προσέχουμε βέβαια την πάλη του λόγου ανάμεσα στο «τόση», «τόσοι» και «τους»: όταν οι αντωνυμίες παλεύουν μεταξύ τους, τότε ακριβώς επιτελείται η «σκεπτοποίηση».

* * *

Η «ερωτοπάθεια» είναι ο κατ' εξοχήν έρωτας παθητικής διάθεσης, όπου σαρκώνεται το χάσμα, τόσο περισσότερο, όσο βιώνεται και ως «σχίσμα». Τα δυο συνυπάρχουν στον Καβάφη και ως σχίσμα και ως χάσμα, ανάμεσα στο γεγονός και όπως αυτό «περνά» στην αναγνωστική του αναγνώριση. Κάπως αδέξια μερικές φορές, ο Καβάφης υποκύπτει στον πειρασμό να προσφύγει σε μια τεχνική χασμο-ποίηση, καθώς μεταθέτει το ποίημα σε κάποια άλλα «χαρτιά», όπως π.χ., στο «Έγκλημα» (*Ατελής*: 248-249). Τότε το ποίημα γίνεται αποθετικό, αρνείται σχεδόν τον εαυτό του, εγκαταλείπεται σε κάποια σκόρπια χαρτιά, που δεν βρίσκουν όνομα, δεν βρίσκουν χρόνο:

*Ένα σχισμένο στρώμα ήταν καταγής.
Κατάκοποι πέσαμε οι δυό. [...]*

*Μες στα χαρτιά ενός ποιητή βρέθηκε αυτό.
Έχει και μία χρονολογία, μα δυσανάγνωστη.
Το ένα μόλις φαίνεται · μετά εννιά μετά
ένα · ο αριθμός ο τέταρτος μοιάζει εννιά.*

Έχει ενδιαφέρον η χρονολογία στο τέλος του ποιήματος. Κοιτάζοντας το αρχαιολογικό υλικό (Lavagnini : 247) βλέπουμε τον Καβάφη να αμφιταλαντεύεται ανάμεσα στο 1896, 189..., 1916 και 1919, χωρίς ποτέ να ολοκληρώσει το ποίημα, όπως ξέρουμε. Το πάθος του (η μανία του) για τους αριθμούς, δηλώνει ένα ιδιαίτερο σημείο εμμονής για τον ίδιο. Αξίζει να ασχοληθεί κάποιος πιο συστηματικά. Για την ώρα, θα θέλαμε να υποστηρίξουμε ότι η εμμονή αυτή συμβαδίζει με την «αριθμητική» σκέψη του Καβάφη, την ένταση που δοκιμάζει, καθώς τα αισθήματα περνούν στους αριθμούς, όπου και αισθητικοποιούνται χωρίς περαιτέρω κουβέντα: οι λέξεις χάνουν και τις αισθήσεις και το νου τους, οι αριθμοί ποτέ. Τελικά (ως «καλοί φιλόλογοι», όπως συνηθίζουν να λένε), το θέμα δεν είναι να αποφανθούμε αν οι αριθμοί ανταποκρίνονται σε κάποιο γεγονός που σχετίζεται με τη ζωή του ποιητή, αλλά να αναδείξουμε τους αριθμούς ως απόλυτο σημείο αισθητικής προσήλωσης στον Καβάφη: οι αριθμοί δεν μιλούν, οι άνθρωποι είναι που σιωπαίνουν.

Το ίδιο γίνεται στο «Η αρχή των» (B:22), χάσμα, σχίσμο, παθητικότητα και αριθμοί. Κάθε γραμμή και ένα αισθητικό μανιφέστο. Η ίδια διαδικασία, σε πιο δραματικό τόνο και με έντονο το στίγμα του παθητικού, καταγράφεται τόσο έντονα στο «Ίμενος» (B:10): Εδώ το φανταστικό όνομα που φέρνει στο νου τον Ίμερο (ενσάρκωση της πιο ισχυρής επιθυμίας, αδελφός του έρωτα και του αντέρωτα). Τόσο πολύ που η συνοδούσα ηδονή, αυτονομείται, κηρύσσει ανεξαρτησία από τα συμβατά ηθικά και «υγιή» καλούπια :

*«... Ν' αγαπηθεί ακόμη περισσότερο
η ηδονή που νοσηρώς και με φθορά αποκτάται·
σπάνια το σώμα βρίσκοντας που αισθάνεται όπως θέλει αυτή —
που νοσηρώς και με φθορά, παρέχει
μιαν έντασιν ερωτική, που δεν γνωρίζει η υγεία ...»*

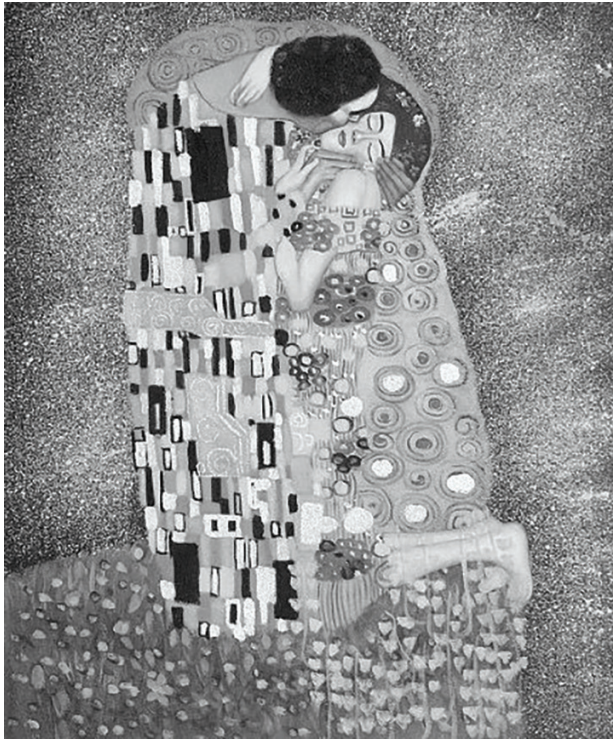
*Απόσπασμα από μιαν επιστολή
τον νέου Ίμερον (εκ πατρικίων) διαβοήτου*

*εν Ύνρακούσαις επί ασωτία,
στους άσωτους καιρούς του τρίτου Μιχαήλ.*

Η μανία των αριθμών: όταν βασίλευε ο Μιχαήλ ο Τρίτος, ο Μέθυσος, ο άσωτος. Τρίτος; Ποιος Μιχαήλ, ποιος Μέθυσος, ποιος άσωτος και ποιος τρίτος; Παίζουμε τώρα; Αλλά οι αριθμοί φορτώνονται το ποίημα, εξαγοράζουν το πάθος του και ξεπληρώνουν τη «φθορά» του. «Φθορά» που καταγράφεται λεκτικά στον κορυφαίο στίχο: «σπάνια το σώμα βρίσκοντας που αισθάνεται όπως θέλει αυτή-». Στίχος οριακός στην εκφορά του, ωραίο σύμπτωμα παθητικής «δυσλειτουργίας» στον Καβάφη. Το παθητικό στην τέχνη γενικά είναι δυσλειτουργικό, ούτως ή άλλως. Η ποίηση του Καβάφη ρυθμίζεται ιδιαίτερα από αυτή τη «δυσλειτουργία», αφού στη φράση που αναφέραμε πιο πάνω, δηλώνεται μεν η διάσταση μεταξύ σώματος και νοσηρής επιθυμίας, αλλά, ταυτοχρόνως, και η πλήρης υποταγή του σώματος στην ηδονή. Η ηδονή κάνει ό,τι θέλει, και αυτό δεν μπορεί παρά να δημιουργεί δυσλειτουργίες. Η ηδονή, νοσηρή και φθοροποιός, αιτιολογείται, επειδή ίσως ο Ίμενος είναι νέος και ανώριμος. Υπάρχει αυτή η διάσταση προσωπικότητας και προκύπτει ως διάσταση σώματος και ηδονής: για τούτο και η παθητική έκκληση: «Ν' αγαπηθεί ακόμη περισσότερο», ώσπου να αριθμοποιηθεί, να χωνευτεί σαν κοπριά, στο σύνταγμα της ιστορίας.

Η «δυσλειτουργία» εκφράζεται με διάφορους τρόπους: λεκτικά, γραμματικά, συντακτικά, χασματικά κτλ., καθώς αποδίδεται η ένταση στο χώρο ως χάσμα, συχνά ως «σχίσμο» της γλώσσας και αντιστρέφονται τα σενάρια: από ενεργητικά σε παθητικά, όπως το «Εκόμισα εις την τέχνην» (B: 27). Ο ποιητής αρχίζει να κομίζει μεν, αλλά, τελικά, αφήνεται να «κομίζεται» εξ ολοκλήρου:

*Κάθομαι και ρεμβάζω. Επιθυμίες κ' αισθήσεις
εκόμισα εις την Τέχνην— κάτι μισοειδωμένα,
πρόσωπα ή γραμμές· ερώτων ατελών
κάτι αβέβαιες μνήμες. Ας αφεθώ σ' αυτήν.
Ξέρει να σχηματίσει Μορφήν της Καλλονής·
σχεδόν ανεπαίσθητως τον βίον συμπληρούσα,
συνδυάζουσα εντυπώσεις, συνδυάζουσα τες μέρες.*



*The Kiss (Lovers),
1907-1908
Gustav Klimpt*

Η κάμαρα που γίνεται κάμερα

Εδώ πιστοποιείται το κλασικό καβαφικό εργαστήρι, όπου συναρμολογείται η συνείδηση: παροντική έκλαμψη ενός γεγονότος, αποτέλεσμα σύγκρουσης δύο πλανητών. Για τούτο και η μνήμη είναι τελικά συνείδηση στον Καβάφη: συνεύρεση, σύγκρουση ειδών, πύρωμα, έκλαμψη και ίνδαλμα (ινδάλλομαι = παρουσιάζομαι, φαίνομαι): αλλά και ανάμνηση, με την πλατωνική σημασία. Η διαδικασία δεν ολοκληρώνεται πράγματι ποτέ, πώς μπορεί να γίνει αυτό αφού γίνεται γνωστή εκ των υστέρων πάντα; Αφού όλα, κατά τον Πλάτωνα, είναι ανάμνηση; Όταν από τη χώρα της αιωνιότητας στέλλονται συνημμένα μηνύματα από το δέρμα της ψυχής μας; Η συνείδηση κρατά τα κλειδιά των μυστικών της και των αποκαλύψεών της και ως εκ τούτου ανάγεται καθαρά στη χώρα του παθητικού, καθώς παθαίνει χωρίς να μαθαίνει. Στο «Ο ήλιος του απογεύματος» (B: 7), έχουμε όλα τα υλικά που θα φουσκώσουν το προζύμι ανάμνησης «ειδωμένης» από το φωτισμό του ήλιου του απογεύματος. Ο τίτλος αλλά και η χρήση του φωτός αυτού, δεν μπορεί παρά να δηλώνει τη διαδικασία της φαινομενολογίας ενός βιώματος,

μισοφωτισμένης, αλλά τόσο ισχυρής που δίνει συνείδηση στα ίδια τα πράγματα, η συνείδηση γίνεται το «σκληρό» αντικείμενο, μια σωστή ύλη:

*Την κάμαρην αυτή, πόσο καλά την ξέρω.
Τώρα νοικιάζονται κι αυτή κ' η πλαγινή
για εμπορικά γραφεία. Όλο το σπίτι έγινε
γραφεία μεσιτών, κ' εμπόρων, κ' Εταιρείες.*

Α η κάμαρην αυτή, τι γνώριμη που είναι.

*Κοντά στην πόρτα εδώ ήταν ο καναπές,
κ' εμπρός του ένα τουρκικό χαλί·
σιμά το ράφι με δυο βάζα κίτρινα.
Δεξιά· όχι, αντικρύ, ένα ντολάπι με καθρέπτη.
Στη μέση το τραπέζι όπου έγραφε·
κ' η τρεις μεγάλες ψάθινες καρέγλες.
Πλάι στο παράθυρο ήταν το κρεβάτι
που αγαπηθήκαμε τόσες φορές.*

Θα βρίσκονται ακόμη τα καϊμένα πουθενά.

*Πλάι στο παράθυρο ήταν το κρεβάτι·
ο ήλιος του απογεύματος τώφθανε ως τα μισά.
...Απόγευμα η ώρα τέσσερες, είχαμε χωρισθεί
για μια εβδομάδα μόνο ... Αλλοίμονον,
η εβδομάς εκείνη έγινε παντοτινή.*

Βίωμα μιας ερωτικής «κάμαρης»: Τα έπιπλα της κάμαρης βιώνουν άμεσα και έντονα ένα ανθρώπινο πάθος, σαν να ήταν ζωντανά: «Θα βρίσκονται ακόμη τα καϊμένα πουθενά». Θα πρέπει να περάσουμε στο δεύτερο μέρος του ποιήματος για να διαπιστώσουμε ότι μιλούμε για το παρελθόν και όχι το παρόν (κλασική διαδικασία συνειδητοποίησης). Η πρώτη συνειδησιακή έκπληξη, σαν παροντικό φως, θα ακολουθηθεί από σειρά άλλων, όπου θα αναδειχθεί το παρελθόν, η συνείδηση ως παρελθόν και ας βιώνει αποκαλυπτικές εξάρσεις. Το θέμα όμως δεν είναι η βιογράφηση ενός ερωτικού δεσμού, αλλά το πώς η συνείδηση αναδιαμορφώνει τον εσωτερικό της χώρο, και μάλιστα δουλεύοντας με σχολαστική ακρίβεια («Δεξιά· όχι, αντικρύ, ένα ντολάπι με καθρέπτη»).

Η διαδικασία αυτή δεν αποκαλύπτει ποτέ το όλο και για τούτο εργάζεται ακόμη προς την κατεύθυνση αυτή. Ο τίτλος του ποιήματος,

“Ο ήλιος του απογεύματος”, που μάλλον θα μπορούσε να ήταν άλλος, ασυνείδητα ίσως, εκφράζει αυτή την εργασία της μισοφωτισμένης συνείδησης, καθώς κινείται προς το φωτεινό μέρος της μυστήριας αλήθειας. Και μυστήρια θα παραμείνει για πάντα: το δηλώνουν οι τελευταίοι στίχοι, με τα αποσιωπητικά τους, με την αινιγματική εξαφάνιση του άλλου εραστή και με την τελική λέξη “παντοτινή”· ως παντοτινή και ανέφικτη αναζήτηση της αλήθειας.

Η κάμαρη πάντως είναι ο τόπος που φωτογραφίζει το πώς λειτουργεί η συνείδηση και ότι χρειάζεται τόπο να κατοικήσει. Νά πώς η κάμαρα, τελικά, αποκαλύπτεται κάμερα, σκοτεινό άρα αντικείμενο πόθου, όπου πετά χαρούμενη και ανέμελη στο φως του έξω. Στο ίδιο μήκος κύματος κινούνται πολλά ποιήματα του Καβάφη. Στο “Να μείνει”, π.χ., δηλώνεται ακριβώς η επιθυμία του υποκειμένου να “κατοικήσει”, κτιζοντάς την σχεδόν, ως οικία μιας ξεχωριστής ερωτικής εμπειρίας. Και δεν υπάρχει αλήθεια πιο κατάλληλη ανθρώπινη εμπειρία από την ερωτική, όπου δοκιμάζονται τα οικοδομικά υλικά της συνείδησης:

*Η ώρα μια την νύχτα θάτανε,
ή μάμισυ.*

*Σε μια γωνιά του καπηλειού·
πίσω απ’ το ξύλινο το χώρισμα.
Εκτός ημών των δυο το μαγαζί όλως διόλου άδειο.
Μια λάμπα πετρελαίου μόλις το φώτιζε.
Κοιμούντανε, στην πόρτα, ο αγρυπνισμένος υπηρέτης.*

*Δεν θα μας έβλεπε κανείς. Μα κιόλας
είχαμεν εξαφθεί τόσο πολύ,
που γίναμε ακατάλληλοι για προφυλάξεις.*

*Τα ενδύματα μισοανοίχθησαν — πολλά δεν ήσαν
γιατί επύρωνα θείος Ιούλιος μήνας.*

*Σάρκας απόλαυσις ανάμεσα
στα μισοανοιγμένα ενδύματα·
γρήγορο σάρκας γύμνωμα — που το ίνδαλμά του
είκοσι έξι χρόνους διάβηκε· και τώρα ήλθε
να μείνει μες στην ποίησιν αυτή.*

Και εδώ, είκοσι έξι χρόνια αργότερα, η συνείδηση φέρνει πίσω από το μισοφωτισμένο βίωμα, ως ίνδαλμα, την εμπειρία που θα “κατοικήσει” και θα “μείνει” σε ένα ποίημα, “στην ποίησιν αυτή”. Δε μη μακρυγορούμε άλλο: Το ίδιο περίπου ισχύει στα ποιήματα «Μέρες του 1896», «Μέρες του 1901», «Μέρες του 1903», «Μέρες του 1909, ’10 και 11».

Ο τόπος αναδύεται, φωτογραφικά αρνητικά, ως χώρος. Και είναι χώρος με μορφή, ολόκληρη σαν αίσθημα, αναλλοίωτη τελικά και παντοπονημένη· για τούτο και ο «άσχετος» τίτλος του παρακάτω ποιήματος: « Στον ίδιο χώρο »:

*Οικίας περιβάλλον, κέντρων, σννοικίας
που βλέπω κι όπου περπατώ· χρόνια και χρόνια.*

*Σε δημιουργήσα μες σε χαρά και μες σε λύπες:
με τόσα περιστατικά, με τόσα πράγματα.*

Κ’ αισθηματοποιήθημες ολόκληρο, για μένα.

* * *

Μετά από ένα τόσο μεγάλο ταξίδι, αν είμαστε «σοβαροί φιλόλογοι» τελικά, θα έπρεπε να μπορούσαμε να απαντήσουμε στο ερώτημα που θέσαμε στην αρχή αυτής της εργασίας: τι είναι άραγε μια συμφωνία παθητική; Η μέθοδος εδώ μπορεί να είναι μόνο αρνητική· καλύτερα: αποφαιτική. Έτσι μόνο θα μπορούσε να οριστεί: σαν αυτό που δεν είναι για κάτι, αλλά μόνο για τον εαυτό του. Πώς όμως θα αποδοθεί το: «για τον εαυτό του»; Ίσως μπορεί να οριστεί ως παθητική φωνή που πάσχει και παθαίνεται, ως πάθηση του λόγου, παραφωνία της φωνής, οπλισμός παροπλισμένος, φάρμακο που γιατρεύει και σκοτώνει μαζί, για πάντα ή για λίγο, αρρωστημένη υγεία: «Είναι πληγή από φρικτό μαχαίρι.— / Τα φάρμακά σου φέρε Τέχνη της Πουήσεως, / που κάμνουνε —για λίγο— να μη νοιώθεται η πληγή («Μελαγχολία του Ιάσωνος Κλεάνθου· ποιητού εν Κομμαγηνή· 595 Μ.Χ».

«Η σάρκα, αλοίμονο, θλίβεται και έχω διαβάσει όλα τα βιβλία», δήλωσε «άσκοπα» ο Μαλλαρμέ. Αυτό που είναι άσκοπο, παθαίνει και πεθαίνει μόνο του, ακέραιο κάποτε και ξαφνικό, ως σάρκα, ως μέλος, ως έχειν, ως είδωμα, σαν σε ύπνο βαθύ: σα μουσική νότα, ως καβαφική πληκτο-πάθεια:

στο πληκτικό χωριό όπου αναμένει-
 έπεσε στο κρεβάτι απόψι ερωτοπαθής,
 όλ' η νεότης του στον σαρκικό πόθο αναμένη,
 εις έντασιν ωραίαν όλ' η ωραία νεότης του.
 Και μες στον ύπνον η ηδονή προσήλθε· μέσα
 στον ύπνο βλέπει κ' έχει την μορφή, την σάρκα που ήθελε

“Στο πληκτικό χωριό”: αυτός είναι ο τίτλος του παραπάνω ποιήματος. Η πλήξη, τελικά, κορώνει παθητικότητα. Η πλήξη δεν έρχεται μόνη της, φέρνει μαζί της πλήκτρα: «Σαν έξαφνα, ώρα μεσάνυχτ', ακουσθεί /αόρατος θίασος να περνά / με μουσικές εξαίσιες, με φωνές—». Και νά η τελική απάντηση στο αρχικό ερώτημα: «Τι είναι άραγε παθητική συμφωνία»; Είναι τα πλήκτρα που παίζονται, «έξαφνα», στη μουσική τους⁵...

Notes

- 1 Μιχάλης Τσιανίκας (2007), *Καβαφικές Φωτοθυμίες*, Εκδόσεις Κανάκη, Αθήνα.
- 2 Εδώ δεν μπορούμε παρά να σκεφτούμε και τους μεγάλους ποιητές και κυρίως τον Μπωντλαίρ, για τον οποίο ο Καβάφης έτρεφε ιδιαίτερη αδυναμία. Η αδυναμία αυτή προκύπτει από την ισχυρές δόσεις εντάσεων που προσκόμισε ο γάλλος ποιητής στην ποίηση, με αναφορές σε ουσίες που όχι μόνον πολλαπλασιάζουν τη δύναμη της ποιητικής εμπειρίας, αλλά κυρίως γιατί με τον τρόπο αυτό παθητικοποιείται στο έπακρο και η ποιητική έκφραση και κυρίως η ποιητική εμπειρία. Ο Καβάφης το εντοπίζει αυτό όχι ακριβώς όπως το λέμε εδώ, αλλά όχι μακριά από το σχετικό πνεύμα, ως: «Και με φαίνεται ότι ο Baudelaire ήταν κλεισμένος μέσα σε πολλή στενό κύκλο ηδονής”. Στα λόγια αυτά κρύβεται ο “αισθητής”, στο “στενό κύκλο”, από εκεί αναδύεται η ένταση και οι λέξεις ελευθερώνουν αυτό που κουβαλούν μαζί τους: “Διότι η καλλιτεχνικές εντυπώσεις κάποτε μένουν καιρόν αχρησιμοποίητες, παράγουν άλλες σκέψεις, μεταλλάσσονται από νέες επιρροές, και όταν αποκρυσταλλούνται εις γραπτές λέξεις, δεν είναι εύκολο να ενθυμηθούμε ποια ήταν η ώρα της πρώτης αφορμής, από πού η γραπτές λέξεις αλήθεια πηγάζουν” (Καβάφης, 1983: 42).
- 3 “Η τάξη σε αποκόβει από την πλήρη θεώρηση των πραγμάτων. Η ευνομία ενεργεί ως πολιτισμική αξία που καθοδηγεί, αλλά παράλληλα στερεί τη γνώση των αγαθών που αποδοκιμάζει για να προστατεύσει άλλα. Κι αυτό, ένας πνευματικός άνθρωπος οφείλει να το παραβεί για να είναι ενάρετος στη γνώση. Το συμπέρασμα είναι όμως πως ο πνευματικός και αισθητικός νέος πρέπει να τολμά πέρα από τα νόμιμα όρια. Και αυτή η τόλμη σε πρώτο στάδιο είναι η τόλμη της απόκτησης έκνομης ηδονής.” Βασίλης Λαδάς, *Ελευθεροστυπία*, 6-6-2003.
- 4 Δεν είναι τυχαίο που ο Σεφέρης, δεν ξέρουμε πότε, αποφάσισε να τιτλοφορήσει την απέραντη ημερολογιακή σεφεριάδα του, «Μέρες». Διαβάζοντάς τες, αντιλαμβάνεται κανείς ότι δίνεται ο λόγος στη συνείδηση της ημεροποίησης, και αυτό προδίδει την καβαφική προοπτική.
- 5 Είχε ολοκληρωθεί αυτό το κείμενο, όταν ήρθε σαν καβαφικό ποίημα από τη βιβλιοθήκη μας, το ωραίο κείμενο της Τζίνιας Πολίτη, «Το γραπτό και το άφραστο ή περί πάθους», *Ποίηση* 26, Φθινόπωρο-Χειμώνας 2005, 118-142.

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Self Portrait,
Michelakakis

George Vassilacopoulos & Toula Nicolacopoulos

La Trobe University, Melbourne

George Michelakakis, Visual Artist in 'the Time of Death'

Making an image means putting [the human] into the world as a spectator [...] producing the trace of one's absence on the world's inner wall and constituting one's self as a subject who will never see him or herself but who, seeing the other, allows the other to see what they might share (Mondzain 2010:313).

Ever since the association of “ways of seeing” visual images (Berger, 1972) with multiple interpretive processes bringing into play viewers’ own knowledge and beliefs, explorations of the figure of the artist as image-maker take place within discourses that seek to determine the role of the artist’s intentions, whether actual or ascribed, in the viewer’s interpretation of the meaning of an artwork with or without the aid of an “informed eye” (cf. Maes, 2010). Yet without returning to the idea that artworks contain *inherent* meaning, to something discoverable independently of particular artist/viewer relations to the artwork, the figure of the visual artist also has the potential to lead us back into a consideration of the fundamentals of a subject-world relation. In such a project one presupposes a certain understanding of the relationship of the artist, the artwork and viewer to their world and, in particular, to their historical era, an understanding that takes this relationship to be mutually informing in productive ways. In this paper and its sequel, “George Michelakakis, Art as Re-collecting Goya’s *The Third of May*”, we aim to explore this relationship by considering the meaning and significance for contemporary visual culture of a certain phenomenon broadly associated with the modern Western European historical trajectory which, having previously oriented itself in relation to a visionary future, now finds itself in the grips of what, borrowing from Picasso, we will be

referring to as “the time of death”. Having first emerged with the retreat of French Revolutionary ideals during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, by the late twentieth century the time of death has established itself as a world-shaping force. We aim to illustrate the impact of this phenomenon on visual culture through a discussion of the artistic practice of the Greek-Australian visual artist, George Michelakakis.

To examine Michelakakis’ *oeuvre* in relation to our thesis we proceed via a set of unusual associations: (1) Michelakakis’ artistic practice, which we introduce auto/biographically in the first section of this paper and analyse in some detail in the sequel; (2) Francisco de Goya’s famous painting, *The Third of May 1808 in Madrid* [Figure 1], whose significance in relation to the time of death we explain in this paper and whose formal details, including the enigmatic deployment of light, we discuss in relation to a selection of Michelakakis’ works in the sequel; and (3) Picasso’s reflections on Goya’s painting along with his own portrayal of death famously in *Guernica*. As we elaborate below (section 3), although Picasso was troubled by and struggled to explain the source of light in *The Third of May*, in particular Goya’s positioning of the much discussed lantern, he was nonetheless convinced that the painting “truly places us in the time of death”. What does death signify in this context? What is the relationship between death and the lantern that Goya inserts in *The Third of May*? What is it for the artist/viewer to be placed in the time of death and how does Michelakakis’ artistic practice respond to this positioning? These are the overarching questions that guide our analysis in this paper and its sequel (hereafter “our questions”).

In the present paper we argue that, while Goya is understandably a source of inspiration for Michelakakis, something significantly more than a relationship of inspiration connects these artists, despite the obvious temporal and cultural distance between Francisco de Goya (1746-1828) who served as the official painter of the Spanish Royal family, and George Michelakakis (1945-), a Greek-Australian migrant and political activist of the Left. The different historical moments to which the artists belong are nonetheless deeply connected to the abyssal movement of modern Western history’s nihilistic being. In both cases the artists’ experience of this history is in terms of the retreat of solidarity understood as the site and vision of the self-determining gathering that the French Revolution proclaimed, the wilful togetherness that springs from the liberation from imposed institutional

forms as portrayed by David, painter of the Revolution, in *The Tennis Court Oath*. For Michelakakis this experience extends to the late twentieth century retreat of Marxist ideals. Significantly for our analysis, both artists address the death of the gathering conceived as the schism between the indeterminate gathering, the mass of people historically readied to enact the call to gather, and its devastating institutional forms. But whereas Goya’s *The Third of May* opens up the field of the gathering of death, almost two centuries later Michelakakis finds himself dwelling in the already established world of death, uncovering its logic through an artistic path traversing more than forty years. In section 1 we illustrate the astonishing diversity of Michelakakis’ artistic production and, in conversation with the artist, identify those aspects of his *oeuvre* that speak to the overarching questions we raised above. In section 2 we locate the auto/biographical study of section 1 within our broader philosophical approach to art criticism arguing that the former must be incorporated into an approach that views the artistic practice under consideration as at once being informed by and informing the historical, whilst also addressing trans-historical questions. In sections 3 and 4 we begin formulating a substantive answer to our first three questions. Our paper concludes by identifying a selection of Michelakakis’ works whose careful study (in “George Michelakakis, Art as Re-collecting Goya’s *The Third of May*”) will allow us to demonstrate how they are deeply marked by the monism and world-shaping power of the historical phenomenon of the time of death, thus giving an answer to our fourth question.

1 George Michelakakis – visual artist and political activist

George Michelakakis belongs to the generation of migrants who arrived in Australia from Greece in the latter part of the post-war mass migration era. Migration was already a feature of the Pireas household into which he was born on the 12 December 1945, the year of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Michelakakis’ father, a member of the Greek Left, was a migrant from Crete who made his living as a cobbler in Athens. His mother, a deeply religious woman dedicated to the teachings of the Church, was an Asia Minor exile. Michelakakis’ earliest connections with drawing came in the form of a child’s creative escape from the excessive poverty and hardship of European life in the World War II aftermath, which was compounded in Greece by the fierce class conflict that led to the Civil War.

After serving in the military during the enormous social and political upheaval that produced Greece's 1967 military dictatorship, Michelakakis returned home to Pireas to study plastic arts and theory of art at the Athens based Vakalo School of Art from 1967 to 1971. He initially participated in group exhibitions and competitions, which earned him the 1968 Novice Award for pencil drawings produced in Cyprus whilst serving in the military. This activity was cut short when, joining other artists in protest against the Junta, he refused to take part in further cultural events. [See Figure 2.]

Michelakakis recalls his formative years as largely constrained by three possible life narratives: religious subservience, political activism and emigration. In the artist's words:

Before and during military service and whilst I was studying art, my artistic production reflected the apprehensiveness, the confusion and lack of direction that characterised young people of the time who were being pulled between religion and nationalism, and between exploration of their sexuality and the pursuit of some sort of living amid rather hopeless prospects. For the children of the working class with an interest in the visual arts, there were no avenues of information or support, unless their parents could afford to send them overseas (Michelakakis, 2016).

On the voyage to Australia and after arriving in Melbourne in 1971, Michelakakis produced drawings consisting of charcoal on cardboard. These works, like those he had produced in Greece, typically applied oil, charcoal or ink onto re-shaped and deliberately roughened cardboard surfaces. [See Figure 3.]

Whilst Michelakakis' initial Australian production focused on the esoteric and existential concerns that had informed his artistic practice in Greece, soon after coming into contact with Melbourne's vibrant Greek-Australian Left community and, indeed, after joining the Communist Party of Australia, his art took an explicitly political turn. This reflected the realisation that the issues he had previously attributed to the failings of a personal psychology were in fact symptomatic of a wider social inequality and systemic injustice. From 1972 to 1974 Michelakakis worked on a series titled "Torturers", which was first exhibited in Melbourne in 1978 at the Pinacotheca gallery and in Sydney in at the Bondi Pavilion. [See Figure 4.]

These pieces, variously hanging from the ceiling or the wall or sitting on the floor, consist of charcoal, led and ink drawings on cardboard backed onto wooden frames with plexiglass overlay. Whilst their form was inspired by the stiffness and limited mobility of the figures of shadow puppet theatre, thematically they referenced Kostas Varnalis' poem, "Dictators" and the poetry of Yannis Ritsos. From 1980 until 1987, during which time he had relocated to Sydney, Michelakakis produced the series titled "Curtains". [See Figure 5.] Continuing to reference an all-pervasive violent public and political culture that annihilates any semblance of solidarity, the "Curtains" are made from similar materials to those used in the "Torturers" series. This time, however, the cardboard surfaces are painted using acrylics and they are pierced throughout with three or four centimetre dark threads hanging out over the surfaces and sometimes exceeding the plexiglass with which they are covered.

Between 1989 and 1990 Michelakakis turned his attention to the "Books", a series of room length sculptures made from reclaimed discarded and second hand books sourced from around Sydney. [See Figure 6.] Working in cultural spaces defined by the loss of solidarity the artist aspired to re-assert familiarity with and control over regimes of knowledge production. Some of the works in this series were exhibited at Sydney's Art Space in a group exhibition. A number were transported to Greece towards the end of 1991 when Michelakakis returned to Greece to care for his elderly mother. Most were destroyed.

The truth is I wasn't at all inclined to care about the fate of these works. They were the product of deeply disturbing times that I wanted to leave behind (Michelakakis, 2016).

Immediately on returning to Greece Michelakakis was drawn to the newspapers and magazines that he found scattered on the streets of Pireas.

Because I never had a professional relationship to my art I had no need of confining myself to conventional choices of materials or organising my work around a particular medium. Over the years, I found myself increasingly drawn to the rubbish around the place and to its deployment in accordance with its specific symbolic power depending on where I was living. This kind of relationship to used and discarded objects dates back to the First World War and the disillusionment of many of Europe's artists (Michelakakis, 2016).

Repeating the techniques previously applied to Sydney's "Books", Michelakakis collected and compiled newspapers and magazines for use in his next series. "Man of Sorrows" was the first of a number of series that would feature drawing directly on newspaper. [See Figure 7.]

Production of the "Newspapers and Magazines" of Greece occupied the artist from 1992 to 1996. Whereas Sydney's "Books" had aspired to stand in for an absent solidarity against the background of the monumental failures of knowledge regimes, these works continued to deploy the same symbols in a new effort to denounce the superficiality of the cultural values that dominated Greece's public-political culture in the 1990s.

This was a period in which desperate people who were flowing into Greece in the hope of surviving the collapse of the "socialist regimes" in their own countries, were willing to do almost anything to survive. Racist attitudes flared alongside new opportunities for exploiting the vulnerable. For the first time in a long while the Greeks felt "superior" and they were eager to make this visible to all (Michelakakis, 2016).

The "Newspapers and Magazines" consist of drawings on newspaper of various sizes as well as floor length and extendable sculptures made from carved piles of newspapers and magazines, which were decorated with objects sourced from around the artist's neighbourhood, including blades, glass bottles and snail shells. These works remain in the basement of Michelakakis' family home where they were conceived, most likely in partially destroyed form. [See Figure 8.]

They were the product of a sense of the precariousness of everyday life in Greece at the time, my disgust at the ruthlessness of Greece's nouveau riche, the cheats who were exploiting the vulnerable, as well as my feelings about the hopelessness of the situation (Michelakakis, 2016).

Towards the end of 1996 and during 1997 Michelakakis worked on two more series. The first, his "Portraits of the Artist", apply pastels to broadsheet newspapers pierced with hanging black threads and featuring a variety of images of household tools and equipment found in the family home such as hammers, screw drivers, spatulas, sewing awls, knives, forks and brushes. These works consist of triptychs in which an image of the artist is flanked on either side by an image of one of these tools. [See Figure 9.] The "Portraits of Friends" series commenced following a short visit to Australia.

These Portraits were like a crack in the darkness, a magical light, like an image that can only exist in a dream state (Michelakakis, 2016).

Referencing a by-gone world, an irretrievable solidarity, the "Portraits of Friends" consist of thirty pieces of dry pastels applied to broadsheet newspapers pierced with black dangling threads and buttons. [See Figure 10.] Both series are located in Pireas.

A more pessimistic outlook, centred on the all-pervasive consumerism of everyday life and the failure of values, has subsequently dominated Michelakakis' artistic practice. Reduced copies of the "Portraits of Friends" were used to create "Labels for Consumer Products", a series made from ninety relabelled cheap wine bottles sourced from the local supermarket. Three copies of each of the thirty portraits function as product labels for the ninety otherwise symmetrical bottles that are displayed alongside one another. [See Figure 11.] During this period, Michelakakis also worked on a satire of the Greeks' relationship to religion and the power of the Greek Church, which gave rise to "The Artist's Urine" consisting of fifty small prescription bottles that had been given to the artist's grandmother in the 1950s and 1960s. The bottles are displayed in four metre length rows. [See Figure 12.] The artwork is located in the artist's family home in Pireas. Continuing to critique Greek society, from 1999 to 2001 Michelakakis also produced a number of large format drawings on newspaper. However, this work was cut short when he moved to Ikaria for eight years. On the island, Michelakakis' artistic practice referenced the problem of environmental degradation in works made from animal products (the faeces and wool of goats), sea salt and rubbish that washed up on the beaches. These consciousness-raising "Environmental Works" were shown at a number of group exhibitions held on the island over this period. [See Figure 13.]

Since returning to Sydney in 2009 Michelakakis has produced two more series of works, which were exhibited at The Shop Gallery in 2015 and 2016. Responding to the global refugee crisis, the first, "Blankets and Talismans", which was exhibited alongside a selection of the earlier produced "Curtains", consists of a range of talismans made from fabric, decorated with black paint and sewn onto regular single sized blankets sourced from Sydney's op shops and army disposals. On the weathered blankets, the talismans symbolising familiar markers of success and religious or

political commitment are portrayed in a negative light.[See Figure 14.] Indeed, “the swastika, the Euro, the crucifix, the gospel, everything foregrounds the symbols of our subjugation, of our voluntary servitude” (Karalis, 2015). The second series, “That Obscure Object of Desire”, reacts to the Greek Church’s opposition to the Australian Marriage Equality campaign and to the hypocrisy within the Greek-Australian communities with respect to sexuality. It consists of fifteen pieces, twelve drawings of male and female sexual organs and three of newspaper and promotional materials focused on the Church’s opposition to the Marriage Equality campaign. All fifteen pieces are surrounded by religious symbols, which are painted in gold on black backgrounds from various materials including fabric and cardboard. [See Figure 15.]

2 Art criticism as philosophical critique

The previous section documents Michelakakis’ reflections on the creative process alongside the artworks produced in relation to his experiences of his times diachronically, transnationally and from within urban and rural settings. Certain lines of continuity, both thematic and in terms of the artist’s style and choice of materials run through Michelakakis’ artistic practice. We have observed the impact of an intensified experience of alienation from the dominant values and public discourses of the times, which the artist links to the crushing power of the retreated solidarity that we mentioned at the outset. In many ways Michelakakis’ *oeuvre* participates in a long-standing tradition of deploying visual art as a form of protest. The critique of political violence, of class exploitation, of widespread consumerism and hypocrisy, the desire for and loss of relations of solidarity and of their institutional supports, as well as the artistic enlistment of ephemeral, discarded and otherwise useless objects to the service of new meaning-making, are all worthy of further study in their own right.

However, our present aim is to move beyond piecemeal considerations of how these particular(series of) artworks form new signifiers in relation to their themes. Although the artist’s image-producing practices form part of our inquiry, our approach to art criticism cannot be confined to the discussion of such meaning-making practices. Nor can we be focused primarily on the artist’s intentions in producing the artworks in question, though such reflections certainly play a role in our appreciation of the meanings of the

artworks to be examined. Despite being illuminating for certain purposes, the above observations do not suffice for an approach to art criticism that aspires to comment on the capacities of visual cultural production to speak to fundamental, philosophical questions concerning the subject-world relation. Indeed the questions we posed at the outset, and our rationale for considering the sort of opening that Goya’s *The Third of May* creates for Michelakakis’ artwork, arose from a broader conception of the role of the viewer as critic than as a mere interpreter of new signifiers since, at stake here is the ontological significance of the image-making and the artwork. Thus, before proceeding to give an account of the terms of reference of a substantive answer to our questions, we will explain briefly our understanding of a critical practice that is philosophical in its orientation.

Recognising the power of art to engender philosophical questions, Erin van Alphen follows Hubert Damisch in proposing a critical practice that pays attention to the *trans-historical* dimensions of artworks (van Alphen, 2005: 195). This he suggests is to take the artwork’s agency to function *as thinking*:

If art ‘thinks’, and if the viewer is compelled to think with it, then art is not only the object of framing [...] but it also functions in turn, as a frame for cultural thought (van Alphen, 2005: 193-194).

Although we agree that a focus on art’s agency, its productive power or ability to act as a “frame for cultural thought” does indeed fall within the scope of a philosophical approach, our discussion thus far suggests that van Alphen’s characterisation is rather one-sided and perhaps too general for our purposes. In suggesting that our focus should be *trans-historical* questions, the proposal downplays the significance of *appropriately situating* philosophical questions in relation to the historical phenomena being explored, which may nonetheless extend beyond specific historical moments. That Michelakakis’ artworks, like Goya’s *The Third of May*, are activated at the site of the inheritance of the French Revolution is significant for the philosophical questions we have posed. As we can see from the “Curtains”, the “Books”, “Portraits of Friends” and “Newspapers and Magazines” for which the retreat of solidarity is pivotal, the artist arrives at the site of the production of the visual objects only after monumental historical events have given rise to the possibility of visual portrayals revealing that which

shapes the subject's fundamental orientation to the world. Michelakakis' "Curtains", which call forth the infinitely disorientating death of an entire historical era, are the strongest case in point but, as will become clear once we have explored the impact of the death of time on the historical era (section 3) that frames possibilities for artistic production within the time of death (section 4), the point holds for these other works as well. So appealing to trans-historical questions, though necessary, will not suffice to differentiate our philosophical approach to art criticism.

Given the role played by the historical era in the production process, the artist is in one sense a late-comer concerning possibilities for the disruptive framing of cultural thought to which van Alphen appeals. Arguably, the producer of the "Curtains", the "Portraits of the Artist" or the "Portraits of Friends" is already dead in death. At the same time, in so far as the artist is this late-comer with respect to the time of death, in enacting this death with the production of his art, he is also positioned to announce the arrival of the time of death to his world, a world that directly springs from this time. The artist is thus a messenger and a herald whilst also being the message and the prophecy of what is already the case. Ultimately the artist is the pain of the deadly wound the world is, a wound that art cannot heal. The only option is to move deeper into the depths of the wound: death in death. In this regard art is not so much a critique of *different aspects* of the world, no matter how abhorrent, but a struggle with the fundamental orientation that informs its various dimensions. The artist is therefore ghostly in the sense of being *not-in-and-of* this world and, in giving visual shape to the singularity of the 'this', his artwork is relatively powerless to effect change. So although we are indeed interested in Michelakakis' artwork with a view to accounting for its agency or power to shape cultural thought as van Alphen (2005: 192) proposes, left unqualified this suggestion attributes too much power to the visual object. If what defines art is its power to reveal and give shape to what is truly fundamental to the world, and if in the present historical moment this fundamental is *death*, then art is also powerless to overcome this death. Moreover, in such a case the practicing of this powerless power defines the singular being of the artist, which incorporates and extends beyond the specificities of biographical and interpretive relations. Here singular being *thinkingly registers* the historical in a way that *produces*

the fundamental in the shape of the artwork. The artwork is thus the product and an agent of this encounter. On this account, we can adopt an approach to art criticism that views visual objects and the artistic practices giving rise to them as at once informing and being informed by the historical, without thereby reverting to an approach that focuses exclusively on artworks as expressions of the times that produced them. Let us turn next to the substance of this mutual agency and, specifically, to the significance of death for the artist.

3 Death and Vision

Death is indeed central to the modern Western European experience of history, as we can well appreciate when viewing paintings like Goya's *The Third of May* and Picasso's *Guernica*, to give two prominent examples spanning the previous two centuries. Both works depict the senseless loss of life, the former with a scene from the execution of Spanish patriots by the Napoleonic invading French army and the latter with a representation of the Spanish city of the same name in the aftermath of the dropping of Nazi bombs during the Spanish Civil War. Having left behind the eighteenth century tradition of historical painting that produced bloodless battle images featuring acts of heroism, these emotionally charged works no doubt reference the specific mass killings in order to draw the viewer's attention to the horrors of war.

Yet, contrary to initial appearances, as visual representations of death both paintings do more than just this; they also open up and reveal a deeper layer of historical disturbance, one that frames and informs the specific instances of the all too human violence they depict. For Goya and Picasso, as for Michelakakis, death transcends the materiality of the specific deaths brought about by senseless wars. T. J. Clark hints at this in relation to Picasso when, at the conclusion of his study, *Picasso and Truth*, he reflects on Picasso's response to the civilisational impact of the bombing of Guernica:

For suppose modernity were to come upon an instant in which the whole imaginative structure of habitation – of being "in", of shaping the world around in an implicit model of room and window – looked death in the face. Suppose this were more than a one-time atrocity. Suppose that in the bombing of Guernica modernity in some sense encountered

its future and saw a whole form of life collapsing – ceasing to exist as the determinant form of the human (Clark, 2013:281).

Significantly from our perspective, with *Guernica* modernity “looked death in the face” in the final and all-encompassing sense of an implosion of the world under its own historical weight. From the standpoint of the Western European gathering, this death is the terrible anti-vision of the future represented as the site of a total collapse. It is in this sense that Picasso’s depiction of death, a depiction of an historical event of exceptional brutality, nonetheless also serves to orient the modern Western gathering and to shape its historical mode of being in its fundamentals, albeit negatively in the present instance.

In so far as he proposes reading Picasso’s *Guernica* in terms of a collective death that floods the future of the Western European gathering, Clark alerts us to the idea of a *fundamentally altered* experience of historical time. For, as Emanuel Levinas observes,

Since the Bible, we [Western Europeans] are accustomed to thinking that time is going somewhere, that the history of humanity is going toward a horizon, even if it goes through detours or vicissitudes. Europe built its vision of time and history on this conviction and this expectation that time promised something. Despite its rejection of transcendence and religion, the Soviet regime was the heir of this conception. Since the 1917 revolution we felt that something was still being heralded, prepared, in spite of obstacles and mistakes. Even though the collapse of the Soviet system entails many positive aspects, it causes a disturbance that reaches profound categories of the European consciousness. Our relation to time is in crisis. In fact, it seems to me that we Westerners absolutely have to situate ourselves in the perspective of promising times. I don’t know to what extent we can manage it without it. This is what I find most disturbing in the present situation’ (Levinas, 1994:133).

By comparison with *Guernica*, which we might say visually functions in the extended aftermath of the loss of “promising times” that Levinas laments, the experience of history in visionary terms informs Goya’s *The Third of May* in an explicit way. Although, its image of the executed bodies ahead of the seemingly endless line of those awaiting execution depicts a similarly all-encompassing devastation, *The Third of May* nonetheless focuses our attention on the martyr facing the firing squad with upraised arms in despair.

Here death is not reduced to the apocalyptic destruction of a gathering that has turned against its own future. For in the relationship between the martyr and the firing squad through which we encounter the very horizon of an infinite failure to connect, we are nonetheless reminded of a vision of togetherness, one that the French Revolution had announced and which violently retreated in its bloody aftermath. As we argue in the sequel, this experience of history in terms of the retreated vision provides the context in which Michelakakis’ work derives its significance.

Moreover, through its depiction of the death of the gathering, Goya’s painting arguably points us in the direction of a history that is even more complex and intriguing than that of Picasso’s *Guernica*. For, as we argue elsewhere, it suggests that the death of the gathering already belongs to the gathering of death.¹ At the beginning of the 21st century we still find ourselves in the abyssal spaces of the Revolution’s idea of the gathering that has retreated. Against the receding horizon of the future this historical gathering of death is being intensified through both the repetition of deaths and the deepening of death. We might say, the worst keeps happening anew precisely because it has already happened in the sense of having drawn us into the depths of its abyssal momentum. Thus it is not just the future that is implicated in *The Third of May* but all dimensions of historical time or, indeed, of the death of time.

4 The time of death in art

For Clark, it is only against the background of the supposition of modernity’s total collapse – a collapse we have associated through Goya with the death of time – that we can make sense of the enormity of the artistic challenge Picasso faced when painting his *Guernica*. Clark sum up this challenge with the question: “How on earth was painting to represent such an ending without falling itself into spatial rubble, a spatial nothing [...] This was the problem.” (Clark, 2013: 281). That Picasso grappled, perhaps inadequately and over some period, with this problem is also suggested by his own reading of Goya’s achievement with *The Third of May*, as reported by two of his friends in separate conversations with Picasso. In one of these conversations, Gilot recalls Picasso saying that Goya’s painting:

truly places us in “the time of death”. All the elements in the picture are chosen and placed in a hierarchy, deriving from the enormous square

lantern, placed on the ground in the centre of the canvas like the light of eternity (Gilot's recollection of Picasso's words, cited in Clark, 2013: 250).

Similarly, in another conversation about *The Third of May*, Malraux recalls Picasso commenting:

And then there is the enormous lantern on the ground, in the centre. That lantern, what does it illuminate? The fellow with upraised arms, the martyr. You look carefully: its light falls only on him. The lantern is Death. Why? We don't know. Nor did Goya. But Goya, he knew it had to be like that (Malraux' recollection of Picasso's words, cited in Clark, 2013: 248).

Unable to say why Goya placed the lantern in the scene as he did, Picasso nonetheless confidently identifies his own artistic sensitivity with that of Goya: having realized that Goya “places us in ‘the time of death’”, he shares with Goya both the knowledge that the lantern *is death* and the inability to say why this is so. But awareness of “the time of death” leads Picasso no further than to an appreciation of the death of time itself, as evidenced by his *Guernica*.

Picasso's inability to give an answer to the question Goya's lantern poses may have had something to do with his failure fully to appreciate that in reality Goya's lantern is death in the deeper sense of shining light on *the gathering's otherwise invisible schism*. Elsewhere, we argue in some detail that Picasso was haunted by the schism between the stone-like formed gathering of the members of the execution squad and the fluid formlessness of the executed patriots that he had visually encountered in *The Third of May*.² This would explain why he took death at once to define the painting as whole whilst also being identified with the enigmatic lantern that, in a visually surprising manner, is the only object that Goya placed in the space *between* the line of victims and their executioners' rifles.

What we are suggesting is that the deaths depicted in Goya's painting, the executions, presuppose death as the schism that operates, not on the level of a visual *event*, but rather as the invisible field in which the viewer is forced to dwell – a field that has been constituted *through and as* the gathering of death, which the likes of Picasso could not avoid. In essence the viewer is placed *between* the indeterminately gathered victims depicted in the artwork as indiscriminately receiving the force of the violent act, and those who enact the killing, the faceless executioners. The viewer is thus situated in the empty space of the schism between the formless mass of

powerless people who have been disconnected from the now ossified institutional forms to which the firing squad alludes, and the firing squad as the formed gathering that violently imposes itself just because it is *not connected* with the mass of citizens.

Although the depicted act of killing presupposes this schism between form and formlessness, in so far as one participates in the historical aftermath of the visual event it is the twenty-first century viewer who gives effect to the schism itself by dwelling in its space. In contrast to the viewer of *Guernica* who arguably participates in the visual event simultaneously as victim and as perpetrator of the apocalyptic violence, in dwelling in the space of the silent violence of the schism – the death before deaths that *The Third of May* announces – Goya's viewer is positioned to imagine the very overcoming of the schism itself. For at the same time as looking death in the face through the eyes of the martyr, one can imagine the transformational possibilities were the members of the firing squad able to lift their heads and look back upon the martyr's face.

It is precisely this appreciation of the possibilities opened up by schism of death that distinguishes the artistic practice of George Michelakakis as a fellow traveller in the time of death. Ultimately Picasso's reference to the time of death signals the death that frames particular deaths, a death that, as we can appreciate from the careful study of Michelakakis' works that will follow, marks the pleasures of peace just as much as it denounces the killings linked to wars. The time of death lays bear the meaning of the historical moment, which, referencing one of Michelakakis' series, constitutes something like the dropping of a curtain between individuals and peoples who have thus become unrecognisable to one another. As we argue in the sequel, Michelakakis' “Curtains” give visual presence to the invisibility of the schism of death that Goya's lantern illuminates.

Indeed, as we hope to show in the analysis to follow, between the light of Goya's lantern, which in occupying the centre of *The Third of May* execution scene, illuminates the invisibility of darkness, and the all-consuming darkness portrayed by the black surfaces of Michelakakis' curtains we can trace the explosive formulation and the no less astonishing reformulation of key moments in the story of “the time of death”, a fundamental orientation of the world that Picasso could only name. Like two cupped palms, the images of the lantern and the curtain hold the era together, an era that is proving itself to be nothing short of a prolonged Third of May.

In exploring the character and significance of the ‘time of death’ in Goya and Michelakakis, our story will thus focus on the famed power of one famous piece of art in relation to a series of works by a comparatively unknown artist. In particular, we propose an account of the significance of the movement of Michelakakis’ artistic practice from the faces of the “Torturers” to the all-encompassing darkness of the “Curtains”, the institutional failures in the shape of the “Books”, the “Newspapers and Magazines” and ultimately to the visionary power of the “Portraits of Friends”. Whereas with *The Third of May* Goya marks a beginning in creating the opening of death, Michelakakis silently takes stock of a kind of end, redefining this beginning in terms of a perpetual intensification, where the world of the time of death is concerned.

Notes

- 1 “Picasso’s *Guernica* and the *Time of Death*”, working title of paper in progress.
- 2 Ibid.

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Artworks



Figure 1: Goya, *Third of May 1808*. Oil on canvas, 268 x 347 cm, 1814. In Museo Del Prado Madrid. Image courtesy of Wikipedia. Retrieved 20 October 2016. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Third_of_May_1808.



Figure 2: Michelakakis, *Sketch*. Pencil on paper, 21 x 30cm, Kirinia, Cyprus, 1966. Artist's personal collection. Image courtesy of the artist.



Figure 3: Michelakakis, *Self-portrait*. Charcoal, ink, tempera on cardboard, 100 x 70cm, Melbourne 1971. Artist's personal collection. Image courtesy of the artist.

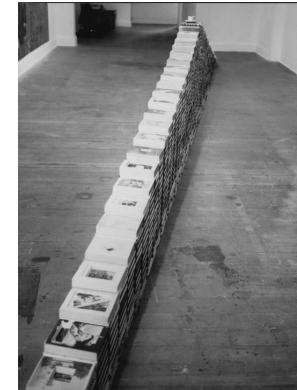


Figure 6: Michelakakis, *Melancholy and the Inability to mourn in public*. 965 books and other materials, 8.6m x 1.12 x 19cm, Sydney, 1991. Image courtesy of the artist.

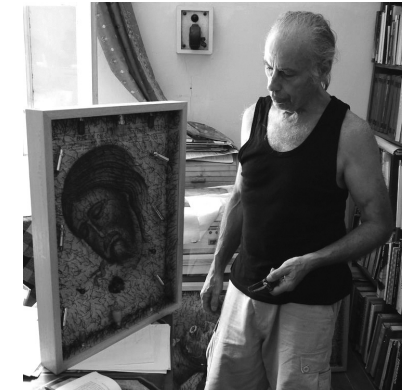


Figure 7: Michelakakis, *The Man of Sorrows*. Pastels on newspaper, thread, light bulbs, 40 x 70 cm, Pireas, Greece, 1993, pictured with the artist. Image courtesy of the artist.



Figure 4: Michelakakis, *Torturer*. Charcoal, ink, tempera on cardboard, 79 x 80cm, Melbourne 1973. Private collection. Image courtesy of the artist.



Figure 5: Michelakakis, *Curtain*. Acrylics, charcoal and threads on cardboard, 200 x 110 cm, Melbourne, 1981. Artist's personal collection. Image courtesy of the artist.



Figure 8: Michelakakis, *The Alphabet of the Nation*. Part of 24 piles of newspapers and other materials, 30 x 40 x 30cm per pile, Pireas, Greece, 1995. Image courtesy of the artist.

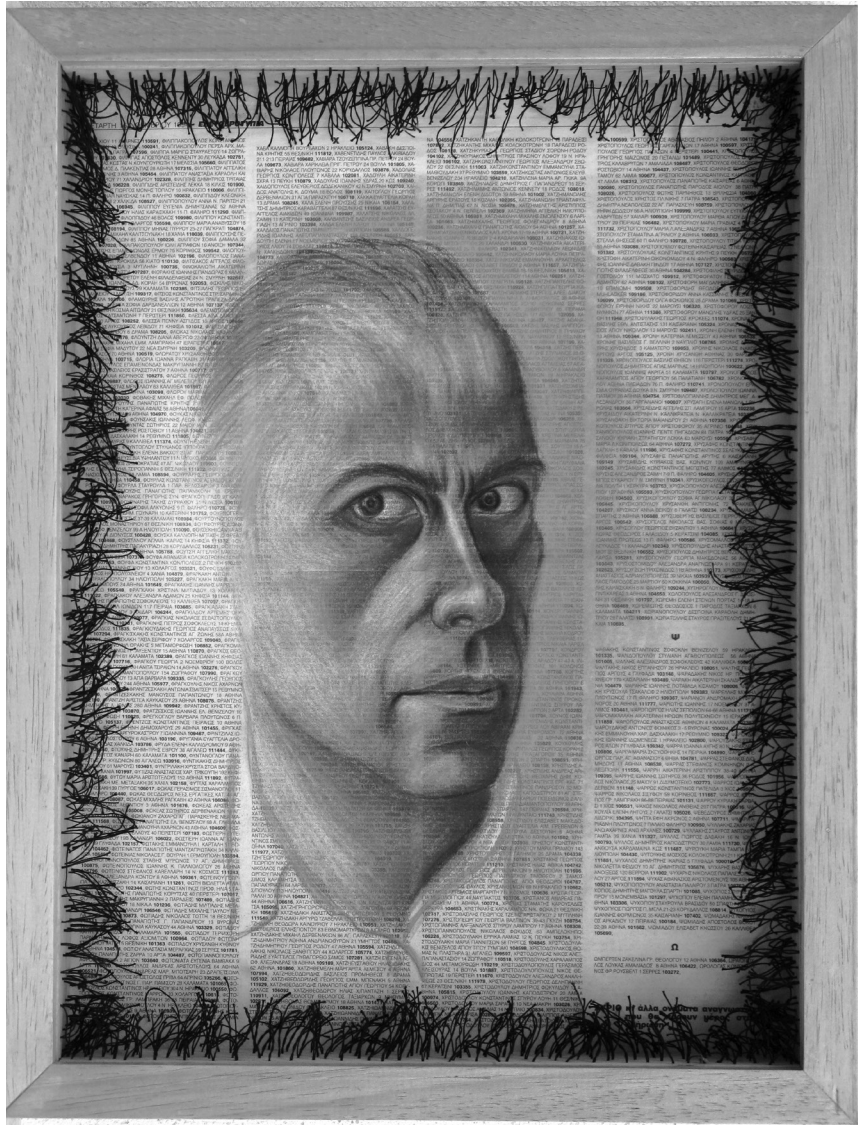


Figure 9: Michelakakis, *Portrait of the Artist*.
One part of triptych, pastels on newspaper and thread,
30 x 40cm, Pireas, Greece, 1996.
Artist's personal collection.
Image courtesy of the artist.



Figure 10: Michelakakis, *Portrait of Tes Lyssiotis*.
Pastels on newspaper, thread and buttons,
40 x 57cm, Pireas, Greece, 1998.
Artist's personal collection.
Image courtesy of the artist.



Figure 11: Michelakakis, *The Blood of an Indian Migrant in Greece*. Three bottles of wine, wax and labels, Pireas, Greece, 1999. Image courtesy of the artist.

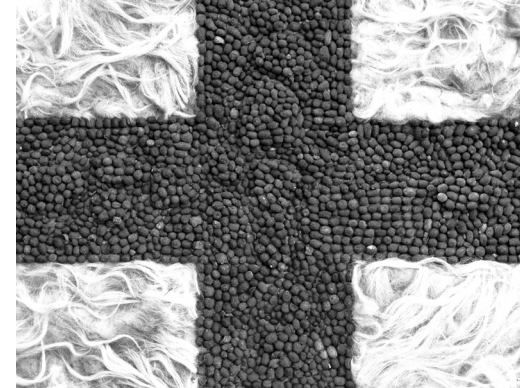


Figure 13: Michelakakis, *The Destruction of the Mountains*. Goats' faeces and wool, 100 x 80cm, Ikaria, Greece, 2006. Image courtesy of the artist.

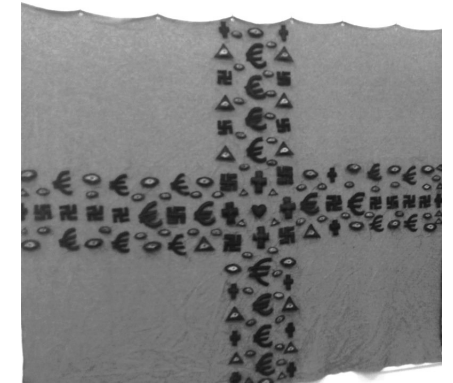


Figure 14: Michelakakis, *Blanket with Talismans*. Blanket, paint, fabric, thread, 200 x 180cm, Sydney, Australia, 2015. Image courtesy of the artist.



Figure 12: Michelakakis, *Medicine for the Treatment of Religiosity*. 50 bottles containing the artist's urine, Pireas, Greece, 1999, pictured with the artist. Image courtesy of the artist.



Figure 15: Michelakakis, *Safe Icon*. Pencil on paper and other materials, 49 x 55cm, Sydney, Australia, 2016. Image courtesy of the artist.

Anthony Dracopoulos

Νεοελληνικές Σπουδές, Εκμάθηση Γλωσσών και Πολιτισμική Επάρκεια

Modern Greek Studies, Language Learning and Cultural Competence

Abstract

This paper examines the status of Modern Greek studies at primary, secondary and tertiary levels in NSW during the period 1996-2011 within the context of prevalent language policies, practices and trends in other languages. It identifies an indisputable downward trend in demand for second language learning across most languages particularly in years 11 and 12 which in turn impacts demand at university level. Publicly available data indicates that the experience of Modern Greek is not unique. There is a chronic problem in second language learning which places Australia well behind other OECD countries. The paper argues that the decrease in student demand is primarily due to the lack of a coherent language policy and lack of coordination between federal and state governments policy. These two factors give ambiguous messages about the importance of learning a second language in a globalised world and contribute to the paradox of a largely monolingual society in a multicultural context. Finally, it identifies key components for a sustainable language policy within the Australian context and proposes the model of cultural competence as a fitting framework for developing a functional policy which promotes the acquisition of critical cross cultural skills for effective communication in a global, multicultural world.



1. Εισαγωγικά

Οι Νεοελληνικές σπουδές στην Αυστραλία ήταν πάντα ένα μικρό γνωστικό αντικείμενο. Ακόμη και στις ακμαίες εποχές της δεκαετίας του 1980 και 1990, όταν μαθητές της δεύτερης μεταναστευτικής γενιάς ανακάλυπταν έκπληκτοι μια δυναμική στο έργο Νεοέλλνων ποιητών και δημιουργών που αφορούσε άμεσα τη δική τους αναζήτηση ταυτότητας, δεν ήσαν σε θέση να ανταγωνιστούν παρεμφερή γνωστικά αντικείμενα με εδραιωμένη παράδοση και μεγαλύτερο πολιτισμικό εκτόπισμα. Έκτοτε βέβαια, οι συνθήκες άλλαξαν ριζικά τόσο αναφορικά με τη ζήτηση όσο και με την προσφορά του μαθήματος. Τα πιο πρόσφατα χρόνια ιδιαίτερα γίνεται λόγος για τη μείωση των σχολείων της δευτεροβάθμιας εκπαίδευσης που προσφέρουν Νεοελληνικά, αλλά και για την επιβίωση πανεπιστημιακών προγραμμάτων, σε ένα ανταγωνιστικό περιβάλλον με αντίξοες συνθήκες, όπου οι νεοφιλελεύθερες οικονομικές προοπτικές για την ανώτερη παιδεία επηρεάζουν καθοριστικά τόσο τον αριθμό των φοιτητών που επιλέγουν το μάθημα σε ανώτερα στάδια εκπαίδευσης, όσο και τη μεταμόρφωση του αντικειμένου του ίδιου, το οποίο προσπαθεί να αποκρυσταλλώσει ένα νέο πρόσωπο και να ανταποκριθεί σε νέες αναζητήσεις.

Μάλιστα παρά την ευσυνειδησία, επινοητικότητα και επιμονή πολλών δασκάλων και καθηγητών αλλά και παρoικιακών παραγόντων, απώλειες έχουν καταγραφεί ακόμη κι εκεί που ίσως θα περίμενε κανείς πως είχαν περισσότερες πιθανότητες να εδραιωθούν και να ανθίσουν. Σε πόλεις όπως η Μελβούρνη, για παράδειγμα, που η έντονη παρουσία του ελληνικού στοιχείου θα μπορούσε να τροφοδοτήσει τις Νεοελληνικές σπουδές με μια σταθερή βάση φοιτητών, έχει απομείνει μόνο ένα πρόγραμμα σπουδών στην τριτοβάθμια εκπαίδευση. Η κατάσταση αυτή, όπως θα περίμενε κανείς, δεν είναι ανεξάρτητη από παράλληλες πτωτικές τάσεις στους αριθμούς των μαθητών που επιλέγουν το μάθημα των Νεοελληνικών στις τελευταίες τάξεις του Γυμνασίου. Οι ανησυχητικές αυτές εξελίξεις, όπως ήταν επόμενο συνοδεύθηκαν από προβληματισμό και απογοήτευση, ενώ συχνά κατέληξαν σε θρηνολογίες. Στις περισσότερες περιπτώσεις, όμως, αντιμετωπίστηκαν ως αποκλειστικό πρόβλημα των Νεοελληνικών. Σκοπός της παρούσας εργασίας είναι να εξετάσει την κατάσταση

των Νεοελληνικών στη Ν.Ν.Ο κατά την περίοδο 1996-2011, στο πλαίσιο της επικρατούσας γλωσσικής πολιτικής που εφαρμόζεται στην Αυστραλία, να την συγκρίνει με την αντίστοιχη κατάσταση σε άλλες γλώσσες και να προτείνει στο τέλος ένα ίσως πιο λειτουργικό πλαίσιο για την εκμάθηση μιας δεύτερης γλώσσας.

2. Τα Νεοελληνικά στη Ν.Ν.Ο.

Τα στοιχεία που παρουσιάζονται στον ακόλουθο πίνακα¹ είναι αρκετά για να δούμε τις γενικότερες τάσεις που αναπτύχθηκαν στην επιλογή του μαθήματος του Νεοελληνικών κατά την περίοδο 1999-2011. Στον πίνακα καταγράφεται ανά πενταετία περίπου το σύνολο των μαθητών που παρακολουθούν το μάθημα των Νεοελληνικών: α) στην πρωτοβάθμια εκπαίδευση, όπου παρατηρείται μια σχετικά ανιούσα τάση, β) στις πρώτες τέσσερις τάξεις του γυμνασίου, όπου σημειώνεται μια ουσιαστική πτωτική τάση μέχρι το 2005, ακολουθούμενη από μια σημαντική ανάκαμψη την επόμενη πενταετία και τέλος γ) στις δύο τελευταίες τάξεις του γυμνασίου, όπου βλέπουμε μια ανησυχητικά σταθερή μείωση των μαθητικών προτιμήσεων, που κατά τα διαρκεία της ίδιας περιόδου φτάνει στο ύψος του 78%.

ΕΠΙΠΕΔΟ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗΣ	ΕΤΟΣ			
	1996	2000	2005	2011
Πρωτοβάθμια Εκπαίδευση Αριθμός μαθητών	3134	3617	4277	3758
Δευτεροβάθμια Εκπαίδευση (yr 7-10) Αριθμός μαθητών	1573	800	624	961
Δευτεροβάθμια Εκπαίδευση (yr 11-12) Αριθμός μαθητών	668	444	218	143

Στην τριτοβάθμια εκπαίδευση, ο αριθμός των διδασκόντων στα τρία πανεπιστήμια του Σύδνεϊ που προσφέρονται Νεοελληνικές σπουδές είναι ενδεικτικός της δυναμικής του αντικειμένου. Στο Σύδνεϊ συνεχίζουν να υπάρχουν τρία προγράμματα σπουδών (The University of Sydney, Macquarie University και U.N.S.W.). Το Τμήμα Νεοελληνικών και Βυζαντινών Σπουδών στο πανεπιστήμιο του Σύδνεϊ, το μοναδικό τμήμα με Έδρα στην Αυστραλία, συνεχίζει να προσφέρει πλήρες πρόγραμμα σπουδών. Από τις πέντε μόνιμες θέσεις που διέθετε κατά τη δεκαετία του 1990, λειτουργεί τώρα με τρία μόνιμα μέλη, ενώ σύντομα το μόνιμο προσωπικό του πρόκειται να μειωθεί σε δύο. Το πανεπιστήμιο του Μακουόρι επίσης συνεχίζει να προσφέρει πλήρες πρόγραμμα σπουδών με ένα μόνιμο μέλος, ενώ στο πανεπιστήμιο της N.N.O, το πρόγραμμα σπουδών έχει περιοριστεί στο πρώτο έτος αρχαρίων. Το μόνιμο προσωπικό του προγράμματος από δύο μέλη που ήταν στην δεκαετία του 1990 έχει μειωθεί τώρα στο 0.4. Οι φοιτητές αυτού του πανεπιστημίου που επιθυμούν να συνεχίσουν τις σπουδές τους παρακολουθούν μαθήματα Νεοελληνικών στο πανεπιστήμιο του Σύδνεϊ. Η μείωση του αριθμού των διδασκόντων αντανακλά προφανώς τη μείωση του αριθμού των φοιτητών.

Από τα στοιχεία αυτά γίνεται φανερό ότι η ουσιαστική μείωση στον αριθμό των μαθητών που επιλέγουν τα ελληνικά σημειώνεται στα ανώτερα στάδια σπουδών, ειδικότερα στις τελευταίες τάξεις του γυμνασίου και στο πανεπιστήμιο. Σ' αυτό, βέβαια, το στάδιο των σπουδών, κάποια μείωση είναι αναμενόμενη, ιδιαίτερα όταν λάβει κανείς υπόψη του ότι οι μαθητές προσανατολίζονται σε μαθήματα που αφορούν στη μελλοντική επαγγελματική τους αποκατάσταση. Ωστόσο, πρέπει να σημειωθεί ότι η μείωση είναι τέτοια που, στο πλαίσιο των προτεραιοτήτων και του οικονομικού ορθολογισμού των πανεπιστημίων, θέτει, αν όχι σε κίνδυνο, σίγουρα υπό πίεση την ύπαρξη των προγραμμάτων σπουδών. Αντίθετα, οι στέρροι αριθμοί ειδικά στο δημοτικό αλλά και στις δύο πρώτες τάξεις του γυμνασίου μπορούν εν πολλοίς να αποδοθούν στον υποχρεωτικό αριθμό γλωσσικών μαθημάτων που οφείλουν να παρακολουθήσουν οι μαθητές σ' αυτά τα στάδια των σπουδών τους.

3. Παράγοντες που επηρεάζουν την επιλογή των Νεοελληνικών

Πέρα βέβαια από αυτή τη θεσμική συνθήκη υποχρεωτικής παρακολούθησης γλωσσικών μαθημάτων που ενθάρρυνε την παρακολούθηση γλωσσικών μαθημάτων με προφανείς θετικές συνέπειες στην επιλογή των Νεοελληνικών, αρκετοί άλλοι παράγοντες συνέτειναν στην γενική πτωτική τάση. Ο πρώτος είναι δημογραφικός. Στο παρελθόν, όταν για ευνόητους λόγους άτομα ελληνικής καταγωγής ήταν συγκεντρωμένα σε περιορισμένο αριθμό προαστίων, μπορούσαν με βάσιμα επιχειρήματα να προβάλλουν με επιτυχία το αίτημα διδασχής της γλώσσας τους στα κρατικά σχολεία της περιοχής που διέμεναν. Με την καλύτερευση, όμως, της οικονομικής τους βάσης και την προσαρμογή τους στο χώρο υποδοχής, τα άτομα αυτά μετακόμισαν σε καλύτερες περιοχές με αποτέλεσμα τη διασπορά τους σε μια ευρύτερη γεωγραφική κλίμακα. Η διασπορά αυτή είχε, όπως ήταν επόμενο, συνέπειες στη ζήτηση του μαθήματος, εφόσον σήμαινε πως δεν συγκεντρωνόταν αρκετός αριθμός μαθητών για να καθίσταται εφικτή η προσφορά του μαθήματος εκεί που παραδοσιακά υπήρχε στέρεη ζήτηση.

Ο δεύτερος λόγος αφορά στη σταδιακή έκπτωση της λειτουργικότητας της γλώσσας. Συνηθισμένη πρακτική σε μετανάστες πρώτης γενιάς ήταν να μιλούν τα παιδιά κυρίως ελληνικά στο σπίτι. Σε πολλές μάλιστα περιπτώσεις δεν υπήρχε άλλη επιλογή από τη στιγμή που οι ηλικιωμένοι μετανάστες δεν είχαν τη γλωσσική επάρκεια για να επικοινωνήσουν με τη νεότερη γενιά στα αγγλικά (Tsianikas & Maadad, 2013: 374). Η πρακτική αυτή, εκπορευόμενη τόσο από πρακτικές ανάγκες επικοινωνίας, όσο και από την ευγενή επιθυμία διατήρησης της γλώσσας, είχε προφανώς θετικά αποτελέσματα, γιατί καθιστούσε τη χρήση των ελληνικών λειτουργική σε καθημερινή βάση. Με την πάροδο, όμως του χρόνου και την ουσιαστικότερη ενσωμάτωση της ελληνικής παροικίας στην αυστραλιανή κοινωνία, μειώθηκε παράλληλα και η ανάγκη επικοινωνίας στα ελληνικά. Στην εποχή μας, ακόμη και μετανάστες πρώτης γενιάς προτιμούν, ή καταβάλλουν προσπάθειες, να επικοινωνούν με τη νεότερη γενιά στα αγγλικά. Είναι επόμενο

ότι η πρακτική αυτή, μειώνοντας τη λειτουργικότητα των ελληνικών στην καθημερινή επικοινωνία, περιορίζει τα κίνητρα για την εκμάθηση ή τη βελτίωση της γλώσσας.

Σημαντικό ρόλο στη Ν.Ν.Ο. έπαιξε επίσης το νέο αξιολογικό σύστημα εισαγωγής στο πανεπιστήμιο, αλλά και ο τρόπος με τον οποίο διαχειρίστηκε τις αλλαγές που προέκυψαν από την εισαγωγή αυτού του συστήματος η ευρύτερη ελληνική παροικία. Όπως κάθε αλλαγή, η εισαγωγή ενός νέου, πιο περίπλοκου, συστήματος αξιολόγησης αντιμετωπίστηκε με καχυποψία και φόβο και σχετικά γρήγορα συνέβαλε στην ευρεία αποχή της άποψης ότι η επιλογή του μαθήματος των ελληνικών δεν αποτελεί πλεονέκτημα για τις εισαγωγικές εξετάσεις στο πανεπιστήμιο. Στο πλαίσιο του σκληρού ανταγωνισμού για μια θέση στο πανεπιστήμιο, οι μαθητές στρατηγικά επιλέγουν μαθήματα με τα οποία πιστεύουν πως έχουν περισσότερες πιθανότητες να μεγιστοποιήσουν τη βαθμολογία τους και όχι με βάση τα πραγματικά ενδιαφέροντά τους. Η εκμάθηση μια δεύτερης γλώσσας, που θεωρήθηκε δύσκολη δεν εξυπηρετούσε αυτό το στόχο. Με την ίδια προσπάθεια θα μπορούσαν να επιτευχθούν καλύτερα αποτελέσματα σε ένα άλλο μάθημα, το οποίο μάλιστα θα μπορούσε να έχει άμεση σχέση με τη μελλοντική επαγγελματική αποκατάσταση του υποψηφίου.² Οι απόψεις αυτές είχαν ως αναπόφευκτη συνέπεια τη μείωση του αριθμού των μαθητών που επιλέγουν τα νεοελληνικά ειδικά στις τελευταίες τάξεις του γυμνασίου, με φυσικό επακόλουθο τη μείωση του αριθμού των φοιτητών που επιλέγουν το μάθημα στο πανεπιστήμιο.³

Τέλος, η παράλληλη επικράτηση μιας παιδευτικής τάσης που συνδέει άμεσα τη γνώση με την επαγγελματική αποκατάσταση είχε ως αναπότρεπτο αποτέλεσμα τη σταδιακή υποτίμηση των ανθρωπιστικών σπουδών και των γλωσσών ειδικότερα. Τη στιγμή μάλιστα που, με την επανεισαγωγή διδάκτρων στα πανεπιστήμια, ημι-ιδιωτικοποιήθηκε η ανώτερη εκπαίδευση, ήταν επόμενο ότι οι μαθητές θα επέλεγαν γνωστικά αντικείμενα με κριτήριο το επαγγελματικό τους αντίκρισμα. Σ' αυτό το πλαίσιο, τόσο οι γονείς όσο και οι μαθητές, επηρεασμένοι από μια μεθοδική κυβερνητική εκστρατεία προβολής και προώθησης των λεγόμενων μαθημάτων

STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics), δίνουν έμφαση στην ειδική αυτή κατηγορία μαθημάτων τα οποία μπορούν να οδηγήσουν σε πτυχία με άμεση επαγγελματική αποκατάσταση.⁴ Το χρησιμοθηρικό, βέβαια, ερώτημα που προκύπτει από μια τέτοια προοπτική: ποια είναι η χρηστικότητα των ελληνικών είναι, βέβαια, αντίστοιχο με το ερώτημα ποια είναι η χρηστικότητα της ιστορίας, της κοινωνιολογίας ή της φιλοσοφίας και συνεπώς είναι ερώτημα που δεν πάει μακριά. Παρ' όλα αυτά η λογική αυτή έχει γίνει ευρέως αποδεκτή και προφανώς αποτρέπει, παρά ενθαρρύνει την εκμάθηση γλωσσών.

4. Οι γλώσσες στην Ν.Ν.Ο.

Οι παράγοντες αυτοί εξηγούν το μειωμένο ενδιαφέρον για τα Νεοελληνικά στις τελευταίες τάξεις του Δυκείου και στο πανεπιστήμιο. Σκιαγραφούν, ωστόσο, μία μόνο πλευρά του ευρύτερου προβλήματος που αφορά γενικά στην εκμάθηση γλωσσών στην Αυστραλία. Για να αποκτήσουμε μια πιο ολοκληρωμένη εικόνα θα πρέπει επίσης να εξετάσουμε τις τάσεις που αναπτύσσονται στην εκμάθηση άλλων γλωσσών. Αν κοιτάξουμε τη ζήτηση για τις υπόλοιπες γλώσσες θα δούμε μια παραπλήσια ανησυχητική τάση. Στην δεκαπενταετία που εξετάζουμε εδώ, πτωτικές τάσεις στο συνολικό αριθμό μαθητών που σπουδάζουν μία γλώσσα από το δημοτικό μέχρι και το γυμνάσιο, με ελάχιστες εξαιρέσεις, σημειώνονται σε όλες σχεδόν τις γλώσσες. Αν περιοριστούμε στις γλώσσες που παραδοσιακά έχουν μεγάλη ζήτηση στη Ν.Ν.Ο, βλέπουμε ότι οι μαθητές που παρακολουθούσαν μαθήματα Ιαπωνικών από 80.619 μειώθηκαν σε 32.038. Έχουμε δηλαδή μια πτώση της τάξεως περίπου του 60%. Στα Γαλλικά ο αντίστοιχος αριθμός μειώθηκε από 54.580 σε 31.650, μια πτώση, δηλαδή, γύρω στο 43%. Στα Ιταλικά ο αντίστοιχος αριθμός μειώθηκε από 39.256 σε 26.445, μια πτώση που ανέρχεται περίπου στο 33%. Στη γενική αυτή τάση, εξαίρεση αποτελούν γλώσσες, όπως τα Κινέζικα που από 12.408 ανέβηκαν σε 24.912 και τα Αραβικά όπου ο αριθμός των μαθητών αυξήθηκε από 6.544 σε 10.488. Και στις δύο όμως αυτές περιπτώσεις, η αύξηση αποδίδεται κυρίως στο μεγαλύτερο αριθμό μαθητών δεύτερης γενιάς με καταγωγή από αυτές τις γεωγραφικές

περιοχές και όχι στις αλλαγές προτίμησης του συνόλου των μαθητών (Education & Communities, 2013a: 4).⁵

Η ίδια πρωτική τάση παρατηρείται και στους αριθμούς των μαθητών που επιλέγουν μια γλώσσα για τις εισαγωγικές εξετάσεις στο πανεπιστήμιο. Γλώσσες υψηλής προτίμησης, όπως τα Ιαπωνικά και τα Γαλλικά, μολονότι συνεχίζουν να απολαμβάνουν υψηλά ποσοστά στις προτιμήσεις των μαθητών συγκριτικά με άλλες γλώσσες, στην δεκαετία που εξετάζουμε εδώ ακολουθούν τη γενική πτωτική πορεία που επισημάναμε. Στα Ιαπωνικά έχει σημειωθεί μια πτώση της τάξης του 37% και στα Γαλλικά μια πτώση που φτάνει το 28%. Σταθεροποιητικές τάσεις παρουσιάζουν τα Ιταλικά και τα Κινέζικα, ενώ σημαντική είναι η μείωση και στα Ινδονησιακά, που παραδοσιακά θεωρείται γλώσσα στρατηγικής σημασίας για την Αυστραλία.⁶ Από 511 μαθητές το 1996 τα Ινδονησιακά έφτασαν σε 232 μαθητές το 2011, μια πτώση που ανέρχεται στο 55%.

Θα μπορούσε βέβαια να υποστηριχθεί ότι τα στατιστικά στοιχεία μπορούν πάντοτε να διαβαστούν με ένα συγκεκριμένο τρόπο, να δοθεί δηλαδή έμφαση σε κάτι και να παραγνωρισθεί κάτι άλλο. Με άλλα λόγια, να συγκροτηθεί μια ιστορία ή μια αφήγηση η οποία επιβεβαιώνει την προοπτική του ανθρώπου που επιχειρεί την ανάλυση των στοιχείων. Στην περίπτωση όμως των γλωσσών στην Αυστραλία και στην Ν.Ν.Ο. ειδικότερα, όπως και να κοιτάξει κανείς τα στατιστικά δεδομένα, το συμπέρασμα παραμένει το ίδιο. Με εξαίρεση ορισμένες αναλαμπές, η ζήτηση γενικά για τις γλώσσες μειώνεται με ραγδαίους ρυθμούς. Ο σημαντικότερος ίσως δείκτης αυτής της κατάστασης είναι ότι στην δεκαετία του 1960, γύρω στο 40% των μαθητών παρακολουθούσαν μαθήματα μιας δεύτερης γλώσσας στις τελευταίες δύο τάξεις του γυμνασίου, ενώ στην εποχή μας το ποσοστό αυτό έχει πέσει κάτω από το 10% (Learning Through Languages, 2013a: 7).

Ένας άλλος δείκτης είναι ο συνολικός αριθμός των προσφερόμενων γλωσσών στα πανεπιστήμια, ο οποίος κατά την περίοδο που εξετάζουμε εδώ μειώθηκε από 66 σε 29 (Learning Through Languages, 2013a: 17). Η κατάσταση είναι δραματικότερη αν λάβουμε υπόψη μας ότι σε μια προσπάθεια καλύτερης διαχείρισης των περιορισμένων οικονομικών πόρων, αλλά και υπεράσπισης των

γλωσσών, ορισμένα πανεπιστήμια αναπτύσσουν συνεργασίες με άλλα, έτσι ώστε να μπορέσουν να συνεχίσουν να προσφέρουν τη δυνατότητα επιλογής εκμάθησης μιας συγκεκριμένης γλώσσας στους φοιτητές τους. Χαρακτηριστική είναι, για παράδειγμα, η σχετικά πρόσφατη συμφωνία συνεργασίας ανάμεσα στα δύο μεγαλύτερα πανεπιστήμια της Ν.Ν.Ο., σύμφωνα με την οποία φοιτητές του πανεπιστημίου Ν.Ν.Ο. που επιθυμούν να σπουδάσουν Ινδονησιακά, Ελληνικά και Ιταλικά μπορούν να παρακολουθούν αυτά τα μαθήματα στο πανεπιστήμιο του Σύδνεϊ.

5. Χαμένοι στη μετάφραση

Όλα αυτά δείχνουν ότι το ζήτημα της μείωσης του αριθμού των μαθητών που επιλέγουν το μάθημα των Νεοελληνικών δεν είναι αποκλειστικά ελληνικό πρόβλημα, αλλά γενικότερο πρόβλημα που διέπει την εκμάθηση των γλωσσών στην Αυστραλία. Μάλιστα, όπως γίνεται φανερό από τη σχετική βιβλιογραφία⁷ επανέρχεται σε σταθερή βάση τόσο από ειδικούς ερευνητές και δασκάλους γλωσσών, όσο και από τα Μέσα Μαζικής Ενημέρωσης. Συνοψίζουμε εδώ ορισμένες από τις βασικότερες κοινές συνισταμένες αυτών των κειμένων:

α) Γενικές παρατηρήσεις

- Επισημαίνονται με απόγνωση οι πτωτικές τάσεις στην εκμάθηση γλωσσών και διατυπώνεται συχνά η αναγκαιότητα αποκρυστάλλωσης μιας σωστής και μεθοδικής κρατικής παρέμβασης με ξεκάθαρη γλωσσική πολιτική, η οποία θα αναγνωρίζει τις νέες γλωσσικές ανάγκες που αναπτύσσονται στο πλαίσιο της παγκοσμιοποίησης.
- Υπογραμμίζονται τα στοιχειώδη γνωσιολογικά οφέλη από την εκμάθηση μιας δεύτερης γλώσσας που μεταξύ άλλων συμπεριλαμβάνουν: την άμεση σχέση διγλωσσίας και γνωστικών ικανοτήτων, όπως η βελτίωση της μνήμης, η πλατύτερη αντίληψη και η δυνατότητα εκτέλεσης πολλαπλών εργασιών, τη διεύρυνση της ματιάς των μαθητών και την εξοικειώσή τους με άλλους πολιτισμούς και διαφορετικές

κοινωνίες, την καλύτερη εποπτεία της πρώτης γλώσσας, την ευκαιρία να καταλάβει κανείς ότι ο τρόπος που αντιλαμβάνεται την πραγματικότητα δεν είναι ο μοναδικός, τη σημασία της κατανόησης ότι άλλοι γλωσσικοί κώδικες σηματοδοτούν τον κόσμο με διαφορετικό τρόπο κ.α.

- Τονίζεται η άμεση σχέση μεταξύ των πρακτικών εκμάθησης μιας γλώσσας στην πρωτοβάθμια και δευτεροβάθμια εκπαίδευση και στην ανώτερη εκπαίδευση. Οι ασυνέχειες και τα προβλήματα που παρατηρούνται στα δύο πρώτα στάδια εκπαίδευσης επηρεάζουν καθοριστικά την επιλογή των γλωσσών στις τελευταίες τάξεις του γυμνασίου και στο πανεπιστήμιο.
- Για πολλά χρόνια, δύο βασικοί πυρήνες ενίσχυσαν την εκμάθηση γλωσσών: η υποχρεωτική παρακολούθηση συγκεκριμένου αριθμού διδακτικών ωρών και η καταγωγή των μαθητών.
- Αρκετά σχολεία στην προσπάθειά τους να βελτιώσουν τις επιδόσεις τους στους διαγωνισμούς NAPLAN έχουν παραμελήσει τις γλώσσες.
- Τεράστιο πρόβλημα παραμένει το γεγονός ότι εξ αιτίας της μικρής ζήτησης, αλλά και των περιορισμένων οικονομικών πόρων, πολλές τάξεις λειτουργούν με μαθητές διαφορετικών επιπέδων γλωσσικής επάρκειας. Ο παράγοντας αυτός λειτουργεί αποτρεπτικά για την επιλογή γλωσσικών μαθημάτων ακόμη και για μαθητές που είναι αφοσιωμένοι στην εκμάθηση γλωσσών.
- Όπως έχουν τώρα τα πράγματα, μαθητές και γονείς πιστεύουν ότι η επιλογή μιας γλώσσας δεν προσφέρει συγκριτικό πλεονέκτημα σε σχέση με άλλα μαθήματα για την εισαγωγή στο πανεπιστήμιο.
- Κατά παράδοξο τρόπο, παρά τη μακρόχρονη έμφαση στην πολιτισμική πολυμορφία, βασικό διακριτικό γνώρισμα της αυστραλέζικης κοινωνίας είναι η μονογλωσσία.

β) Παρατηρήσεις που αφορούν στη γλωσσική πολιτική

- Υπογραμμίζεται η έλλειψη σταθερής και συγκροτημένης γλωσσικής πολιτικής με ξεκάθαρο όραμα για το μέλλον.
- Συγκριτικά με άλλες χώρες, η Αυστραλία υστερεί στην προώθηση της εκμάθησης γλωσσών. Για παράδειγμα, στη Γαλλία είναι υποχρεωτική η παρακολούθηση μαθημάτων μιας δεύτερης γλώσσας (3 ώρες την εβδομάδα) σε όλη τη μέση εκπαίδευση. Στην Ιαπωνία η εκμάθηση μιας δεύτερης γλώσσας είναι υποχρεωτική στο δημοτικό αλλά και στο γυμνάσιο, ενώ στην Κίνα είναι υποχρεωτική η εκμάθηση Αγγλικών στο δημοτικό και στο γυμνάσιο.
- Συγκριτικά με χώρες του Ο.Ο.Σ.Α., η Αυστραλία έχει μείνει πίσω. Στις χώρες αυτές, κατά μέσο όρο 10% του υποχρεωτικού προγράμματος σπουδών αφιερώνεται στην εκμάθηση μια δεύτερης γλώσσας μέχρι την ηλικία των 14 ετών. Υπολογίζεται ότι στην Ν.Ν.Ο. η υποχρεωτική εκμάθηση περιορίζεται στο 2%. Είναι προφανές ότι η πρακτική των 100 ωρών υποχρεωτικής διδασκαλίας στην πρώτη και δεύτερα γυμνασίου δεν είναι δυνατόν να έχει σοβαρά αποτελέσματα.
- Για πολλούς λόγους, η εκμάθηση γλωσσών στην Αυστραλία συνιστά μια ειδική περίπτωση. Πρόβλημα παραμένει ότι συγκριτικά με άλλες χώρες, οι οποίες επικεντρώνουν την γλωσσική τους πολιτική στη συστηματική παροχή μικρού αριθμού γλωσσών, στην Αυστραλία προσφέρεται η δυνατότητα εκμάθησης πολλών γλωσσών. Για ορισμένους ερευνητές αυτό ίσως εξηγεί ότι στο σύνολό της η γλωσσική πολιτική παραμένει ατελέσφορη.
- Ειδικά για τη Ν.Ν.Ο. επισημαίνεται η έλλειψη συγκροτημένης γλωσσικής πολιτικής. Η Ν.Ν.Ο. υστερεί συγκριτικά με άλλες Πολιτείες (Queensland, Victoria, the ACT και South Australia), παραμένοντας προσκολλημένη σε μια γλωσσική πολιτική που γράφτηκε το 1991. Δεν υπάρχει συγκροτημένη πολιτική και δεν υπάρχει συνέχεια από το νηπιαγωγείο στο γυμνάσιο.

- Η Βικτώρια είναι η μόνη πολιτεία η οποία έχει καταστρώσει ένα συγκεκριμένο σχέδιο δράσης με πραγματοποιήσιμους στόχους, που αποβλέπει στην υποχρεωτική μάθηση μιας δεύτερης γλώσσας μέχρι την τετάρτη γυμνασίου από όλους τους μαθητές.
- Σ' αυτό το πλαίσιο, μεμονωμένες κινήσεις, όπως αυτές των πανεπιστημίων για την επιβράβευση των μαθητών που επιλέγουν γλώσσες σε προχωρημένο επίπεδο, με επιπλέον βαθμούς (bonus ATAR points) αποτελούν κινήσεις στη σωστή κατεύθυνση. Ωστόσο, αν περιοριστούμε μόνο σ' αυτές, στην πραγματικότητα επουλώνουμε με ημίμετρα ένα ήδη τραυματισμένο σύστημα.

γ) Η πολιτική διάσταση του προβλήματος

- Τα υψηλά ποσοστά μαθητών που επέλεξαν στο παρελθόν μια δεύτερη γλώσσα στις τελευταίες δύο τάξεις του γυμνασίου αποδίδεται σε ένα πρόγραμμα σπουδών που καθιστούσε υποχρεωτική την εκμάθηση μιας δεύτερης γλώσσας.
- Τα πρόσφατα χρόνια, οι κυβερνήσεις δίνουν αντιφατικά μηνύματα για τη σημασία των γλωσσών. Από τη μια μεριά τονίζουν την ανάγκη εκμάθησης ασιατικών γλωσσών και από την άλλη επιδιώκουν τη διαμόρφωση ενός ενιαίου εθνικού σχολικού προγράμματος το οποίο περιλαμβάνει ευρωπαϊκές και ασιατικές γλώσσες.
- Παρατηρείται μια έλλειψη συντονισμού ανάμεσα στην ομοσπονδιακή κυβέρνηση και στις πολιτειακές κυβερνήσεις.
- Στις περιπτώσεις εκείνες που η Αυστραλιανή κυβέρνηση παρενέβη δυναμικά, (χαρακτηριστικό παράδειγμα εδώ αποτελεί η κυβέρνηση Hawke) έπαιξε ουσιαστικό ρόλο στην αναβάθμιση γλωσσών. Ωστόσο, μολονότι κατόρθωσε να αλλάξει εν μέρει το σκηνικό για κάποιο μικρό χρονικό διάστημα, απέτυχε να αναστρέψει την κατάσταση στο σύνολό της.
- Πρόσφατες κρατικές παρεμβάσεις έδωσαν κάποια ώθηση στην επιλογή γλωσσών, βελτιώνοντας τους αριθμούς μέχρι την τετάρτη γυμνασίου, αλλά δεν κατόρθωσαν να επηρεάσουν τις

επιλογές των μαθητών στις τελευταίες τάξεις του Λυκείου, όπου συνεχίστηκε η πτωτική τάση.

6. Πολιτικές παρεμβάσεις και γλωσσικές πρακτικές

Αν, βέβαια, υπάρχει σύγκλιση απόψεων ειδημόνων για ζητήματα γλωσσών, η οποία μάλιστα έτυχε υποστήριξης από τα Μ.Μ.Ε, το ερώτημα είναι τι ακριβώς έκαναν οι κυβερνήσεις της Αυστραλίας για να αντιμετωπίσουν αυτό το πρόβλημα. Αρχής γενομένης από την κυβέρνηση του Bob Hawke, ιδιαίτερα από το 1990 και μετά, επενδύθηκαν κονδύλια και ενέργεια στην ανάπτυξη ενός εθνικού σχεδίου δράσης που θα υποστήριζε και θα ενθάρρυνε την εκμάθηση κυρίως των ασιατικών γλωσσών. Η προσπάθεια αυτή, που συνεχίστηκε και από την κυβέρνηση Paul Keating, είχε άμεσα αποτελέσματα και επέδρασε καταλυτικά στις επιλογές των μαθητών, τονώνοντας το ενδιαφέρον για τις ασιατικές γλώσσες (κυρίως τα Ιαπωνικά, τα Ινδονησιακά και τα Κινέζικα), στο βαθμό μάλιστα που τα Ιαπωνικά εκτόπισαν τα Γαλλικά από την πρώτη θέση των μαθητικών προτιμήσεων, ως τη γλώσσα με το μεγαλύτερο αριθμό μαθητών σε όλα τα επίπεδα εκπαίδευσης. Η στρατηγική αυτή παραγκωνίστηκε κατά την περίοδο 2002 - 2008 από την Κυβέρνηση των Φιλελευθέρων του John Howard για να αναβιώσει με την κυβέρνηση του Kevin Rudd και στη συνέχεια με την κυβέρνηση της Julia Gillard (National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Program (NALSSP) 2008 - 2012). Από το αντίθετο πολιτικό στρατόπεδο υπήρξαν προσφάτως προαγγελίες δεσμεύσεων κονδυλίων με στόχο την προώθηση των γλωσσών με απώτερο στόχο την αύξηση του αριθμού των μαθητών που επιλέγουν μια γλώσσα στις τελευταίες τάξεις του Γυμνασίου στο 40% επί του συνολικού αριθμού μαθητών, χωρίς ωστόσο περαιτέρω λεπτομέρειες ή συγκεκριμένο πρόγραμμα δράσης ως προς την επίτευξη αυτού του στόχου.⁸

Το δίδαγμα από τη μερική επιτυχία του προγράμματος των Εργατικών είναι ότι η αντιμετώπιση της κατάστασης είναι κατ' εξοχήν ζήτημα πολιτικό. Απαιτεί τη διαμόρφωση μιας συγκροτημένης γλωσσικής πολιτικής με καθαρούς στόχους και επαρκή χρηματοδότηση για την εφαρμογή της. Η πολιτική αυτή

για να είναι αποτελεσματική πρέπει κατ' αρχήν να έχει συνέπεια και συνέχεια από την ομοσπονδιακή κυβέρνηση, ανεξάρτητα από το κυβερνών κόμμα, και να βρίσκεται σε αρμονία με την πολιτική των πολιτειακών κυβερνήσεων. Όπως μας δείχνουν σχετικές μελέτες, η συνεχής αλλαγή στόχων δημιουργεί σύγχυση τόσο στους παιδαγωγούς όσο και στους γονείς και στους μαθητές. (Attitudes, 2007 και Ham, 2008). Παράλληλα, οι στόχοι της θα πρέπει να έχουν εσωτερική συνοχή και να είναι διατυπωμένοι με διαύγεια έτσι ώστε να περνούν στην ευρύτερη κοινωνία ξεκάθαρα και όχι συγκεχυμένα μηνύματα για τη σημασία της εκμάθησης γλωσσών. Απλώς επενδύοντας δημόσιους πόρους με την ελπίδα πως θα αλλάξουν τα πράγματα, χωρίς συνεκτικό, προγραμματισμένο και λεπτομερές σχέδιο δράσης, ενδέχεται, όπως άλλωστε έγινε στο παρελθόν, να ανακοπεί για λίγο η πτωτική πορεία των γλωσσών, αλλά δεν λύνεται το πρόβλημα σε βάθος χρόνου.

Το βασικό, ωστόσο, πρόβλημα ειδικά με μια πολιτική πρακτική, όπως αυτή που επιχείρησε να εφαρμόσει το Εργατικό κόμμα, είναι ότι διαχωρίζοντας τις γλώσσες σε περισσότερο ή λιγότερο επιθυμητές, όχι μόνο δεν κατόρθωσε να καταπολεμήσει τις ήδη επικρατούσες αρνητικές αντιλήψεις για την εκμάθηση γλωσσών, αλλά τις διαιώνισε. Πρώτον, γιατί έδωσε την εντύπωση πως η πολιτική αυτή αποτελεί όχι μια συστηματική αντιμετώπιση της γενικότερης μείωσης του ενδιαφέροντος για τις γλώσσες, αλλά προσπάθεια διάσωσης μέρους από ένα όλο που συνεχίζει να υποφέρει. Γι' αυτό μπορεί για λίγο να έδωσε ώθηση σε ορισμένες ασιατικές γλώσσες, αλλά στην πραγματικότητα αυτο-υπονομεύτηκε, εφόσον άθελά της συνέτεινε στη διατήρηση του στίγματος που συνοδεύει την εκμάθηση των γλωσσών γενικότερα. Επιπλέον, συνέβαλε στη διαιώνιση της σύγχυσης που επικρατεί σε σχέση με τη γλωσσική πολιτική στην Αυστραλία, δίνοντας την εντύπωση πως έχουμε μια πολιτική για τις ασιατικές γλώσσες με συγκεκριμένους στόχους, μια διαφορετική πολιτική για τις ευρωπαϊκές γλώσσες και τέλος μια άλλη πολιτική για τις γλώσσες και τον πολιτισμό των Αβοριγίνων. Είναι αυταπόδεικτο πως μια μονομερής έμφαση θα είχε αντίκρουσμα μόνο αν αποτελούσε τμήμα μιας συνεκτικής και συνολικής θεώρησης. Κάτι τέτοιο όμως δεν έγινε. Γι αυτό τον λόγο

αναχαίτισε, αλλά δεν απέτρεψε την πτωτική τάση που παρατηρείται στο συνολικό αριθμό των μαθητών που επιλέγουν μία γλώσσα για τις εισαγωγικές εξετάσεις στο πανεπιστήμιο.

Αξίζει, σ' αυτό το σημείο να αναρωτηθούμε: γιατί οι αριθμοί παραμένουν ανθηροί στο δημοτικό, πού οφείλεται η επιτυχημένη πρακτική παλαιότερων περιόδων, και πώς εξηγείται ο μεγάλος αριθμός συμμετοχής στην εκμάθηση μιας δεύτερης γλώσσας σε άλλες χώρες με τις οποίες συνήθως συγκρίνεται η Αυστραλία. Το κοινό στοιχείο και των τριών αυτών περιπτώσεων, όπως γίνεται φανερό από τα στοιχεία που παραθέσαμε παραπάνω, είναι ένα σχολικό πρόγραμμα το οποίο καθιστά υποχρεωτική την εκμάθηση μιας δεύτερης γλώσσας με την παρακολούθηση συγκεκριμένου αριθμού διδακτικών ωρών σε όλα τα στάδια της εκπαίδευσης, οδηγώντας προοδευτικά σε υψηλότερα επίπεδα γλωσσικών δεξιοτήτων.

Από αυτή την προοπτική η σχετικά πρόσφατη πρόταση του ACARA για τη θεσμοθέτηση συγκεκριμένου αριθμού διδακτικών ωρών για κάθε επίπεδο εκπαίδευσης κινείται στη σωστή κατεύθυνση. Συγκεκριμένα, το ACARA προτείνει αριθμό ωρών αφιερωμένων στην διδασχία μιας δεύτερης γλώσσας που αντιστοιχεί στο 5% του συνολικού αριθμού διδακτικών ωρών για το Δημοτικό, στο 8% για τις τέσσερις πρώτες τάξεις και ακόμη μεγαλύτερο ποσοστό για τις τελευταίες τάξεις του γυμνασίου (ACARA, 2011: 28, 30-31). Οφείλουμε όμως να σημειώσουμε ότι τα ποσοστά αυτά ακόμη αφήνουν την Αυστραλία πίσω από τις χώρες του ΟΑΣΑ, οι οποίες κατά μέσο όρο αφιερώνουν 10% του σχολικού προγράμματος σε γλωσσικά μαθήματα, ενώ παράλληλα προτείνονται ως μια «ενδεικτική κατανομή ωρών» και όχι ως δεσμευτική διδακτική πρακτική. Πρόκειται επομένως για μια πρόταση που αφήνει περιθώρια για περαιτέρω βελτίωση.

Βέβαια, παρόμοιοι πρακτικοί στόχοι δεν συνιστούν συγκροτημένη πολιτική και δεν αρκούν από μόνοι τους να πείσουν για τη λειτουργικότητα ενός γλωσσικού προγράμματος. Οι στόχοι αυτοί είναι απαραίτητο να ενταχθούν σε ένα ευρύτερο πλαίσιο στο οποίο τα επιμέρους στοιχεία έχουν καθαρό και συγκεκριμένο ρόλο, ενώ ταυτόχρονα αιτιολογείται η λειτουργικότητά του στα δεδομένα της ευρύτερης Αυστραλιανής κοινωνίας. Και σ' αυτή την κατεύθυνση, η πρόταση του ACARA περιέχει έγκυρες και βάσιμες παρατηρήσεις

με τις οποίες επιχειρείται να εδραιωθεί η αναγκαιότητα μιας δεύτερης γλώσσας στο σχολικό πρόγραμμα. Ωστόσο, μολονότι στο σύνολό τους ορθές και βάσιμες, οι παρατηρήσεις αυτές απαριθμούνται σχεδόν αμήχανα σε έναν εκτενέστατο κατάλογο, με αποτέλεσμα να διαχέεται σχεδόν η στόχευση στη σημασία και στη λειτουργικότητα της εκμάθησης μιας δεύτερης γλώσσας. Θα ήταν ίσως περισσότερο αποτελεσματικές αν είχαν ενταχθεί σε ένα ενιαίο και περιεκτικό εννοιολογικό πλαίσιο από το οποίο απορρέουν ως φυσική συνέπεια και το οποίο μπορεί εύκολα να αναχθεί σε πολιτικό πρόταγμα.

Ένα τέτοιο πλαίσιο θα πρέπει να στηρίζεται σε ρεαλιστικές βάσεις, να χρησιμοποιεί τα διδάγματα του παρελθόντος, να λαμβάνει υπ' όψη του τις υπάρχουσες πρακτικές άλλων χωρών με επιτυχημένα γλωσσικά προγράμματα, να έχει νόημα για το άτομο αλλά και για την ευρύτερη κοινωνία στην οποία δρα το άτομο και κατ' επέκταση να είναι προσαρμοσμένο στις ιδιαιτερότητες της Αυστραλίας και της πολιτισμικής της πολυμορφίας. Μια επιτυχημένη γλωσσική πολιτική δεν θα μπορούσε, για παράδειγμα, να παραγνωρίσει ότι η Αυστραλία αποτελεί ένα μοναδικό πολιτισμικό σταυροδρόμι, ότι ανήκει γεωγραφικά στην Ασία, αλλά πολιτισμικά συνδιαλέγεται με το δυτικό κόσμο, όπως επίσης ότι είναι μια χώρα που διακρίνεται από την ταυτόχρονη παρουσία και πολιτισμική πρακτική διαφορετικών παραδόσεων, συμπεριλαμβανομένης και της παράδοσης των Αβοριγίνων.

7. Γλώσσες και πολιτισμική επάρκεια (cultural competence)

Στη συγκρότηση ενός τέτοιου πλαισίου, που είναι σε θέση να συστέγασει τους επιμέρους παράγοντες που αναφέρθηκαν παραπάνω, να αποκτήσει πρακτική στόχευση και συνάμα να εξυπηρετήσει την πολιτική ανάγκη διαμόρφωσης συγκροτημένης γλωσσικής πολιτικής, θα μπορούσε ενδεχομένως να βοηθήσει το μοντέλο της «πολιτισμικής επάρκειας». Η έννοια αυτή αρχικά προέκυψε στο αμερικάνικο περιβάλλον πολιτισμικής πολυμορφίας από την ανάγκη παροχής αποτελεσματικότερων υπηρεσιών σε άτομα που παρουσιάζουν ουσιαστικές διαφορές από την κυρίαρχη κουλτούρα. Σ' αυτές τις συνθήκες αναγνωρίστηκε η ανάγκη ανεπτυγμένων διαπολιτισμικών δεξιοτήτων καθώς και η ανάγκη μετεκπαίδευσης επαγγελματιών,

ειδικά στο χώρο της υγείας, έτσι ώστε να καθίσταται δυνατή η επικοινωνία με άτομα διαφορετικών εθνοτικών ή πολιτιστικών ομάδων με τρόπο που να δείχνει κατανόηση στις ιδιαιτερότητές τους, αλλά και συγκεκριμένα στις διαφορετικές αντιλήψεις τους για ζητήματα υγείας. Παράλληλα όμως έφερε στην επιφάνεια έναν παράγοντα με τον οποίο θα πρέπει αναπόφευκτα να αναμετρηθούν αρκετές σύγχρονες κοινωνίες, η σύνθεση των οποίων, με τις μαζικές μετακινήσεις πληθυσμών, σταδιακά αποκτά περισσότερο ή λιγότερο τα χαρακτηριστικά κοινωνιών πολιτισμικής πολυμορφίας. Σε μία ευρύτερη, βέβαια, κλίμακα, θα λέγαμε πως, ούτως ή άλλως, ακόμη και σε ένα σχετικά ομοιογενές εθνοτικό σύνολο, συνυπάρχουν πολλές διαφορετικές πολιτισμικές πρακτικές. Γεννιόμαστε και μεγαλώνουμε χωρίς την επιλογή μας στο πλαίσιο μιας δεδομένης πολιτισμικής ομάδας, η οποία συμβάλλει καθοριστικά στη διαμόρφωση των αντιλήψεων, των πεποιθήσεων και των αξιών μας. Η αλληλεπίδραση των διαφορετικών αυτών κόσμων σε καθημερινή βάση κάνει ίσως τη ζωή πιο ενδιαφέρουσα, την ίδια στιγμή όμως ενδέχεται να δημιουργήσει προβλήματα, τα οποία για να ξεπεραστούν απαιτούν ανεπτυγμένες διαπολιτισμικές ικανότητες.

Είναι προφανές ότι το μοντέλο της πολιτισμικής επάρκειας μπορεί να έχει ποικίλες εφαρμογές σε πολλές σύγχρονες κοινωνίες, ειδικότερα στους τομείς της εκπαίδευσης και παροχής υπηρεσιών. Ως εκ τούτου, απέκτησε σχετικά διαφορετική σημασία σε διαφορετικά πλαίσια. Στη βάση, ωστόσο, αυτών των διαφορετικών θεωρήσεων παραμένει η μονογραφία του T. Cross, «Για ένα Πολιτισμικά Επαρκές Σύστημα Υγείας» (Cross et al, 1989). Σύμφωνα με αυτή τη μελέτη, η πολιτισμική επάρκεια παραπέμπει στην ανάγκη αποτελεσματικής επικοινωνίας και αρμονικότερης συμβίωσης σε έναν κόσμο που γνώρισμά του είναι η διαφορά και όχι η ομοιογένεια.

«Ορίζεται ως ένα σύνολο συναφών συμπεριφορών, στάσεων και στρατηγικών που χρησιμοποιούνται σ' ένα σύστημα, σε μια υπηρεσία ή μεταξύ επαγγελματιών, προκειμένου να τους διευκολύνουν να εργαστούν αποτελεσματικά σε διαπολιτισμικές καταστάσεις. Η λέξη «πολιτισμικός, η, ο» χρησιμοποιείται γιατί υποδηλώνει όλο το μοτίβο της ανθρώπινης συμπεριφοράς που περιλαμβάνει σκέψεις, επικοινωνίες, ενέργειες, έθιμα, πεποιθήσεις, αξίες και θεσμούς

μιας φυλετικής, εθνοτικής, θρησκευτικής ή κοινωνικής ομάδας. Η λέξη «επάρκεια» χρησιμοποιείται επειδή υπονοεί το να έχει κανείς την ικανότητα να λειτουργήσει αποτελεσματικά. Ένα πολιτισμικά επαρκές σύστημα φροντίδας αναγνωρίζει και ενσωματώνει - σε όλα τα επίπεδα - τη σημασία του πολιτισμού, την αξιολόγηση των διαπολιτισμικών σχέσεων, την επαγρύπνηση προς τη δυναμική που αναδύεται από τις πολιτισμικές διαφορές, την ανάπτυξη διαπολιτισμικών γνώσεων και την προσαρμογή υπηρεσιών στις ιδιαιτερότητες που προκύπτουν από συγκεκριμένες πολιτισμικές ανάγκες.» (Cross et al, 1989: 13).

Βέβαια, εδώ και αρκετά χρόνια γίνονται σημαντικές προσπάθειες για την αναγνώριση της πολιτισμικής πολυμορφίας και της διαφορετικότητας αλλά και για την καταπολέμηση του ρατσισμού και της ανισότητας τόσο μέσω της εκπαίδευσης, εξοικειώνοντας μαθητές σε νεαρή ηλικία με διαφορετικές πολιτισμικές πρακτικές, όσο και με τη νομική κατοχύρωση και την εισαγωγή νομοθετικών διατάξεων. Δεν χωρεί αμφιβολία πως αρκετές δυτικές κοινωνίες απομακρύνονται προοδευτικά από τις ομογενοποιητικές διαδικασίες του παρελθόντος, επιχειρώντας να επαναπροσδιορίσουν τη συνοχή τους όχι καλύπτοντας τη διαφορά αλλά αναγνωρίζοντάς την. Η ιδέα της πολιτισμικής επάρκειας συνεχίζει και αναπτύσσει περαιτέρω αυτές τις προσπάθειες. Συνιστά, θα έλεγε κανείς το επόμενο φυσιολογικό στάδιο εξέλιξής τους. Είναι, όμως, κάτι παραπάνω από την ανοχή ή την αναγνώριση των πολιτισμικών διαφορών, στοιχεία στα οποία παρέπεμπε η προγενέστερη έννοια της πολιτισμικής και διαπολιτισμικής ευαισθητοποίησης (cultural awareness). Ο τελευταίος αυτός όρος θεωρείται ότι έχει πλέον ολοκληρώσει τον κύκλο του, κυρίως επειδή δεν φρόντισε να διασφαλίσει τη συστηματική απόκτηση διαπολιτισμικών γνώσεων και δεξιοτήτων με αποτέλεσμα να αποτύχει να συμβάλλει ουσιαστικά στην αλλαγή ατομικών και κοινωνικών συμπεριφορών (Imagine a Culturally Competent Australia: 4).

Η πολιτισμική επάρκεια δεν έχει, λοιπόν, να κάνει με την εδραίωση ή διατήρηση της διαφορετικότητας, ούτε σχετίζεται με ποσοστά εκπροσώπησης ατόμων από μειονοτικά πλαίσια σε ομάδες

λήψης αποφάσεων. Αντίθετα, παραπέμπει στη διαπιστευμένη κατανόηση διαφορετικών πολιτισμικών πρακτικών και πεποιθήσεων, την ανάπτυξη δεξιοτήτων επικοινωνίας και διάδρασης με άτομα διαφορετικών εθνο-πολιτισμικών ή μειονοτικών ομάδων, έτσι ώστε να μπορεί κάποιος να επικοινωνεί αποτελεσματικά μαζί τους και να μεγιστοποιεί την ποιότητα των υπηρεσιών που τους προσφέρει. Στη βάση της βρίσκονται οι αρχές της εμπιστοσύνης, της ισοτιμίας, του σεβασμού της διαφορετικότητας, και της κοινωνικής δικαιοσύνης. Η ανάπτυξή της συνιστά μια συνεχή δυναμική διαδικασία που ξεκινά από τον αναστοχασμό της κουλτούρας από την οποία προέρχεται κάποιος και προχωρά στην εξέλιξη επικοινωνιακών δεξιοτήτων και την ανάπτυξη γνώσεων για άλλους πολιτισμούς και τις γλώσσες τους. Πρόκειται επομένως για ένα πλαίσιο μέσα στο οποίο μπορεί όχι μόνο να κατανοηθεί η διαφορά, αλλά και να γίνει λειτουργική στο πλαίσιο μιας κοινωνίας η οποία ολόένα αναδεικνύει τη διαφορά, αλλά δυσκολεύεται να τη φέρει στα μέτρα της. Κι αυτό, γιατί ενθαρρύνει την ανοιχτότητα σε διαφορετικές πολιτισμικές προοπτικές και γενικά καθιστά εύρυθμη τη λειτουργία μιας κοινωνίας, συμβάλλοντας καθοριστικά στην επιτυχή διαχείριση της διαφορετικότητας.

Στον τομέα της εκπαίδευσης, που μας ενδιαφέρει εδώ, είναι προφανές ότι ειδικά στην Αυστραλία, με την παράλληλη συνύπαρξη διαφορετικών εθνο-πολιτισμικών ομάδων, η πολιτισμική επάρκεια είναι απαραίτητο προσόν για κάθε δάσκαλο. Αν δεχθούμε ότι κάθε διδακτική πρακτική διαμεσολαβείται από την επαφή του κόσμου που φέρνει ο μαθητής με τον κόσμο που κουβαλάει μαζί του ο δάσκαλος, η αποτελεσματική διδασκαλία, ιδιαίτερα σε ένα πολιτισμικά πολύμορφο περιβάλλον, εξαρτάται σε μεγάλο βαθμό από το γεφύρωμα των δύο διαφορετικών αυτών κόσμων. Τη στιγμή μάλιστα που κάνουμε λόγο για «πολλαπλή νοημοσύνη» (multiple intelligences) (Gardner, 1993) και συνεπώς για την ανάγκη να ανταποκριθούμε ως δάσκαλοι σε διαφορετικές γνωστικές ανάγκες και ρυθμούς μάθησης και γενικά στις διαφορετικές προσληπτικές ικανότητες των μαθητών, η αναγνώριση της διαφοράς που προκύπτει από την πολιτισμική πολυμορφία είναι απαραίτητο συστατικό της διδακτικής πράξης.

Οι απαιτούμενες διαπολιτισμικές δεξιότητες που απαιτούνται γι' αυτό το γεφύρωμα θα μπορούσαν, βέβαια, να αναπτυχθούν και με τρόπους πέραν της εκμάθησης μιας δεύτερης γλώσσας. Είναι αυταπόδεικτο όμως πως μόνο μέσω της εκμάθησης μια δεύτερης γλώσσας μπορούν να αναπτυχθούν σε υψηλά επίπεδα. Κάθε άλλη προσπάθεια θα είναι επιδερμική και είναι πιθανόν να οδηγηθεί σε αποτελέσματα παραπλήσια με την πολιτική της διαπολιτισμικής ευαισθητοποίησης. Προφανώς δεν μαθαίνει κανείς μια δεύτερη γλώσσα απλώς και μόνο για να είναι σε θέση να επικοινωνήσει με κάποιον άλλον. Αυτό θα μπορούσε να γίνει ακόμη και στη νοηματική γλώσσα, αν υπήρχε επιτακτική ανάγκη επικοινωνίας. Απώτερος στόχος είναι να ανοίξει κανείς ένα παράθυρο στο κόσμο του Άλλου, να μάθει για τον πολιτισμό του και συνεπώς να καταλάβει τον Άλλο. Η εκμάθηση μιας δεύτερης γλώσσας οδηγεί ακριβώς σε αυτό που απαιτεί η πολιτισμική επάρκεια, για τον απλό λόγο ότι ο Άλλος είναι η γλώσσα του, αφού μέσω αυτής κατανοεί και σηματοδοτεί τον κόσμο του. Πάνω απ' όλα προσφέρει την ευκαιρία σε κάποιον να βάλει τον εαυτό του στη θέση του άλλου, να κατανοήσει τις συμπεριφορές ή τα κίνητρά του, και συνεπώς να αναπτύξει το αίσθημα της ενσυναίσθησης, τη θεμελιώδη, δηλαδή, προϋπόθεση, κάθε ηθικής στάσης. Παράλληλα, όπως χαρακτηριστικά υποστηρίζει ο Lo Bianco: «η διγλωσσία μπορεί να προωθήσει περισσότερο τον αναστοχασμό και τη φαντασία των πολιτών, ενώ παράλληλα οι αρχές του δημοκρατικού λόγου και των ίσων ευκαιριών, αρχές που υποστηρίζει και διακηρύσσει η Αυστραλία, επίσης βρίσκουν απήχηση με τη διδασκαλία των γλωσσών, δεδομένου ότι το μεγαλύτερο μέρος της ανθρωπότητας ζει σε κοινωνίες και συνεχίζει παραδόσεις που έχουν σφυρηλατηθεί σε μη αγγλόφωνους χώρους» (Lo Bianco, 2009: 64).

Πέρα, βέβαια, από τα γενικά οφέλη που επιγραμματικά συνοψίσθηκαν παραπάνω, τα πρακτικά οφέλη από μια παιδευτική προοπτική που ενθαρρύνει την πολιτισμική επάρκεια μέσω της εκμάθησης μιας δεύτερης γλώσσας σε μια χώρα όπως η Αυστραλία, υπάρχουν και συγκεκριμένα οφέλη που αφορούν σε μαθητές από διαφορετικά εθνο-πολιτισμικά περιβάλλοντα συμπεριλαμβανομένων και των Αβοριγίνων. Όταν η κουλτούρα στην οποία ακούσια γεννιόμαστε παρουσιάζεται υποτιμημένη ή θεωρείται υποδεέστερης

σημασίας είναι επόμενο πως η συμμετοχή μας στην κοινωνία δεν θα είναι υγιής. Αντίθετα, η αποδοχή και αναγνώρισή της είναι περισσότερο πιθανόν να έχει θετικές επιπτώσεις και για το άτομο αλλά και για το κοινωνικό σύνολο. Το πολιτισμικό πλαίσιο από το οποίο προέρχεται κάποιος συνιστά θεμελιώδες στοιχείο οικοδόμησης μιας στέρερης ταυτότητας και είναι απαραίτητο στην ανάπτυξη των απόμου ιδιαίτερα όταν ακόμη βρίσκεται σε μικρή ηλικία. Με την ευκαιρία εκμάθησης της γλώσσας και του πολιτισμού της καταγωγής τους, οι μαθητές από μειονοτικές πολιτισμικές ομάδες μπορούν έτσι να αναπτύξουν μια θετική στάση απέναντι στην πολιτισμική πολυμορφία, αλλά και μια θετική αίσθηση του ανήκειν, μια κατανόηση των αμοιβαίων υποχρεώσεων και δικαιωμάτων που είναι απαραίτητα για την ουσιαστική ενσωμάτωσή τους στην κοινωνία, αλλά και μια αναστοχαστική στάση απέναντι στο δικό τους πολιτισμικό πλαίσιο.

Στο βασικό, λοιπόν, ερώτημα που θέτει η προοπτική της πολιτισμικής επάρκειας: Τι είδους πρακτικές και στρατηγικές μόρφωσης μπορούν να ενθαρρύνουν τη συνεργασία και την αρμονική συμβίωση και ταυτόχρονα να συμβάλλουν στη μείωση της απόστασης που χωρίζει την κατανόηση διαφορετικών πολιτισμικών ομάδων σε μια δεδομένη κοινωνία, αναμφίβολα η εκμάθηση μιας δεύτερης γλώσσας και η εξουκείωση με τον πολιτισμό της μπορεί να παίξει καθοριστικό ρόλο. Συνιστά το φυσικό χώρο μέσα στον οποίο μπορεί να ανθίσει η πολιτισμική επάρκεια. Μπορεί να συμβάλει στη διαπαιδαγώγηση όχι απλώς της ανοχής, αλλά και της κατανόησης του Άλλου και μ' αυτό τον τρόπο να διεκδικήσει το χώρο που της ανήκει. Σε ένα τέτοιο πλαίσιο θα μπορούσε να καταπολεμηθεί η απονία του ενδιαφέροντος για τις γλώσσες και να αποκτήσει η εκμάθηση γλωσσών λειτουργική θέση στο αυστραλιανό εκπαιδευτικό σύστημα. Η προώθησή τους στο πλαίσιο της πολιτισμικής επάρκειας θα συνέβαλε παράλληλα στη διαμόρφωση μιας συνεκτικής και ενιαίας γλωσσικής πολιτικής και συνεπώς θα έδινε ένα ξεκάθαρο μήνυμα για τη σημασία των γλωσσών στην ευρύτερη αυστραλιανή κοινωνία. Ως εκ τούτου, δεν θα χρειαζόταν μια ιδιαίτερη σοφιστική επιχειρηματολογία για να προωθηθούν οι ασιατικές γλώσσες ή οι γλώσσες και ο πολιτισμός των Αβοριγίνων. Μέσα σ' αυτό το

πλαίσιο, ακόμη και αν δεν κατορθώσουν οι μαθητές γλωσσών να αναπτύξουν τις γλωσσικές τους δεξιότητες σε υψηλό επίπεδο, απλώς και μόνο με το να εκτεθούν σε έναν δεύτερο πολιτισμό, αναμφίβολα θα αποκτήσουν μια αίσθηση του Άλλου και κατά συνέπεια θα αναπτύξουν διαπολιτισμικές δεξιότητες που θα τους βοηθήσουν να συνεργαστούν αποτελεσματικότερα με άτομα που προέρχονται από διαφορετικά μειονοτικά και εθνο-πολιτισμικά πλαίσια.

Notes

- 1 Ο πίνακας συγκροτήθηκε από στοιχεία που συλλέχθηκαν κατά καιρούς από καταλόγους του Board of Studies. Σταματούν το 2011, γιατί από το σημείο αυτό και μετά ο επαναπατρισμός αρκετών Ελληνο-αυστραλών επηρεάζει τη συμμετοχή στο μάθημα των Νεοελληνικών και γι' αυτό το λόγο θα χρειαζόταν μια ξεχωριστή μελέτη. Για επιπρόσθετα στοιχεία που περιλαμβάνουν και άλλες πολιτείες, βλ. Tsianikas & Maadad 2013.
- 2 Βλ. και *Learning Through Languages*, 2013a: 14-5.
- 3 Ανεξάρτητα, βέβαια, από το αν η άποψη που επικράτησε είναι βάσιμη ή όχι, ο συσχετισμός της επιλογής των μαθημάτων στο επίπεδο των εισαγωγικών εξετάσεων με αυτή στο επίπεδο του πτυχίου μολονότι έχει κάποια βάση, δεν είναι αναγκαίος, εφόσον οι φοιτητές έχουν τη δυνατότητα να επιλέξουν τα ελληνικά στο πανεπιστήμιο ως μάθημα επιλογής ακόμη και από το επίπεδο των αρχαρίων.
- 4 Βλ. και *Learning Through Languages*, 2013a: 14-5.
- 5 Βλ. και *Education & Communities*, 2013b. Για στοιχεία που αφορούν άλλες πολιτείες βλ. Tsianikas & Maadad 2013.
- 6 Για την κατάσταση των Ινδονησιακών, που αποτελούν γλώσσα στρατηγικής σημασίας για την Αυστραλία, βλ. Hill 2012 και Kohler & Mahnken 2010.
- 7 Βλ. την βιβλιογραφία στην παρούσα μελέτη.
- 8 Για μια σύνοψη των βασικότερων πολιτικών πρακτικών της Ομοσπονδιακής κυβέρνησης και της πολιτείας της Ν.Ν.Ο, βλ. *Learning Through Languages* 2013a: 40-47.

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Kehagias,
Theophilos

Dimitris Paivanas

Un-framing the Greek Civil War

Commenting on the Greek civil war has been beset with perils since the unceremonious end of the conflict on 9 October 1949. The internecine hostilities have been generating divergent opinions and animated discussions in Greece among scholars, intellectuals and ordinary citizens for longer than might have been expected. A debate on the topic in the Greek daily and monthly press at the last turn of the century was described as a “second civil war” and lasted almost as long as the conflict itself.¹ More recently, on 1 July 2014, Nikos Marantzidis a political scientist at the University of Macedonia in Northern Greece was assaulted by a pair of black-clothed men for his published views on the civil war. Having recovered in hospital a fortnight later, he declared in an interview that his cousins, party cadres of the KKE (Greek Communist Party), believe he is betraying the entire family.² A quarter of a century after the fall of the Berlin Wall what is now commonly described as the ‘first hot incident of the Cold War’ can still lead to anything between dissension, intellectual skirmish, and bodily harm. Indeed, recent researchers have frequently referred to the memory of the Greek civil war as “cultural trauma”.³

What does it mean, then, to “un-frame” a complex set of historical circumstances such as the Greek civil war? I will attempt to answer this question by means of a selective retrospective to relevant cultural practices from the 60s to recent times, as, indeed, the introductory comments and

hitherto annotations already suggest. The first part of the article, comments on enduring ideological divisions in Greek society highlighted by Cold-War antinomies and intensified by political expediency after the demise of the Colonels' military dictatorship (1967-74). In the second part, vicissitudes in the reception of two works of fiction by Thanasis Valtinos [*Η κάθοδος των εννιά* (*The Descent of the Nine*, 1963) and *Ορθοκωστά* (*Orthokostá*, 1994), both fictional narratives on the theme of the civil war] will broaden the scope and lead to tentative conclusions.

1. Ideological Residues of the Cold-War: a Nation in Prolonged Crisis

Nikos Marantzidis along with Stathis Kalyvas, a political scientist at Yale University, are the authors of numerous scientific publications on the civil war. Since the year 2000, when Kalyvas' work on "Red Terror" in the region of Argolis was first published,⁴ they have questioned the left's sanctified contribution to the resistance and its conduct during the civil conflict, occasionally in co-written articles and books. Indeed one of their more recent co-written publications entitled *Internecine Passions* has allegedly made it to the best-seller list.⁵ They were not the first ones to challenge the Left's narrative on the internecine bellicosity, but they were heard broadly in the latter part of the prolonged period that followed the demise of the Colonels' dictatorship, known as *Metapolitefsi* (literally, "change of government", 1974-2008).⁶ They have been labeled as "revisionists" (αναθεωρητές) of a popular historical discourse that began evolving in the Left's propaganda during the 40s, was revived after, and in reaction to, the Colonels' regime, and was authorized as state-endorsed official history in the 80s under the auspices of PASOK (Panhellenic Socialist Movement) which was first voted in power in 1981.

Evidence of the climate spawned by PASOK's cultural policies during the period 1981-1989 may have been witnessed at the inaugural launch of Nicholas Gage's *Eleni* in 1983 when Athens demonstrators protested its Greek publication.⁷ Two years later, audiences of *Eleni* the movie were met disapprovingly by menacing leftist sympathizers who heckled prospective viewers at the front of the theatre. The film was withdrawn after a few screenings in Athens. *Eleni* was filmed in Spain because PASOK policy makers forbade its filming in Greece.⁸ As far as I'm aware, the film has never

been shown on Greek television. I attended the second launching of the book in early 2004 at the centre of Athens in the lavish surroundings of a venue on the ground floor of the hotel "Grande Bretagne". On the evening, a strategically chosen heterogeneous troika comprising Theodoros Pangalos (PASOK politician), Dora Bakogianni (New Democracy politician) and Thanasis Valtinos (author) presented and praised the work for its matter-of-fact treatment of a personal issue. *Eleni* is a report-like, semi-novelistic biography of the author's mother, killed by communists in Epirus during the Civil War. She had arranged her children's escape from forced conscription by what was the Greek Democratic Army at the time. When everyone left the venue in 2004, armoured police buses barricaded the surrounding area and shield-bearing MAT (Urban Crowd-Control Units) patrolled the nearby streets as precautionary measures. There were no incidents in the unusually calm avenues of Vasileos Georgiou, Amalias, and Vasilissis Sofias. The cultural ambiance germinated by the new Athens Metro (2000), Greece's accession into the Eurozone (2001), and hosting the 2004 Olympics while boarding PASOK's "train of modernization" under the leadership of Costas Simitis was perhaps incongruous with a vocal revival of divisive issues.⁹

It took less than a quinquennium for this apparent civic euphoria to change. Latent animosities seemingly unrelated to civil-war memories were vented at the Athens December riots in 2008 when the ill-situated 15-year old Alexandros Grigoropoulos was shot by police. Since 2012, however, public screenings of *Eleni* have been announced periodically by local branches of the right-wing organization "Golden Dawn" (Χρυσή Αυγή), currently represented as the third-strongest party in the Greek parliament. Indeed, its Southern Athens branch invites its website visitors to online viewings of *Eleni* with the ill-conceived announcement of "a cinematic work 'banned' by PASOK".¹⁰ One may reasonably assume that such viewings were arranged for reasons of political propaganda in a fronting climate and aimed at debunking the sanctified image of the Left's conduct during the civil war.

The halo-bearing image of the "andartis" (guerilla / rebel) was not new in the 80s. It was cultivated by EAM (National Liberation Front) during the latter part of the German Occupation most notably in propaganda posters and in heroic representations of male and female guerillas in photographs such as those of Spyros Meletzis among others.¹¹ Photographic portraiture of the period features Greek male guerillas framed by women in traditional

folk costume, accompanied by stern female fighters sporting rifles and bandoliers or similarly attired cross-bearing priests who were occasionally paralleled with pious warriors in the 1821-War of Independence against the Ottomans.¹² Historical researchers have been exploring less aggrandizing aspects of the period questioning both implicitly and explicitly enduring myths of the resistance and the internecine conflict.¹³ Their counterparts from the so-called “revisionist” political sciences also document with overt didacticism at times that these noble guerilla-icons were at a considerable remove from historical truth.¹⁴ As one of a series of stamps released in 1982 illustrates, it was that very image which was reinforced in the collective memory during the 80s. The stamp portrays a linocut sketch of two collaged photographs by Spyros Meletzis. One is of a female guerilla brandishing a rifle and looking alertly in the opposite direction of its barrel, and one of a bearded ELAS warrior (National Popular Liberation Army, the military arm of EAM) also in military attire. In the source-photograph, the male figure is perched on a Greek mountaintop, straddling with rifle in hand, one foot fixed firmly on a rock, and staring calmly in the distance against the background of a semi-nebulous sky.¹⁵ The figure is glorified largely due to its stance and the low angle from which it was photographed, a favourite technique in several of Meletzis’ portraits.

As the 1982 stamp suggests, in the period immediately after the 1973 Polytechnic events and the demise of the Colonels’ dictatorship in 1974, such imagery and its corresponding narrative acquired new political significance. The resistance and civil war became known as “Αντίσταση” or “Αντάρτικο” with a pronounced inclination to merge the two unqualifiedly and without chronological or geographical distinctions. As soon as PASOK came in power participants who were collectively known as “Συμμορίτες” (Gangsters or Banditti) in the 40s and 50s were to be granted war pensions by parliamentary decree (passed in 1982¹⁶) for taking part in the resistance against the forces of the triple occupation. The left-swing policy aimed at a reconciliation that unified the nation under a new *soi-disant* “socialist” government, but the undeclared reason was PASOK’s appropriation of the Left’s vote in the 1981 and 1984 elections. As the cited examples and the ensuing incidents attest, the glorification of the Left’s contribution to the resistance was cultivated in the electorate coupled with a wholesale repugnance for the conservative Right which was identified with the

authoritarianism of the Colonels and U.S. interventionism. In the long term, PASOK’s political expediency germinated a newly polarized community.

In an article published in 1979 in the leftist newspaper *Avgi* the now deceased historian Philippos Iliou, the son of Ilias Iliou, former leader of EDA (United Democratic Left, 1951-1985), wrote the following comment:

*“Ο στοχασμός και η έρευνα για τον εμφύλιο πόλεμο στη χώρα μας ... σηματοδεύτηκαν, κυρίως, όχι τόσο από τη διερεύνηση των πραγματικών καταστάσεων, όσο από την προσπάθεια να δικαιωθούν, ή να δικαιολογηθούν, παλαιότεροι και μεταγενέστεροι πολιτικοί προσανατολισμοί. Άνθισαν, έτσι, και ανθίζουν ακόμη, πολιτικές και ιδεολογικές ‘ερμηνείες’ που αντιμετώπισαν με αρκετή αδιαφορία τα πραγματικά περιστατικά.”*¹⁷

Such views faded into inaudibility in the cultural ambience of the *Metapolitefsi* even among leftist sympathizers. The memories of oppression and censorship during the Colonels’ dictatorship, the student uprising at the Polytechnic events and the image-building heroics of the Left’s conduct during the civil war gave new purpose to progressive political forces and helped forge the political and cultural identities of many throughout the period. It would appear that in the late 70s and throughout the 80s the civil war was mounted in a crimson vignette for public consumption and for the purposes of PASOK’s political benefit. For the 50-year commemoration of the end of the internecine conflict, the Athens University historian George Mavrogordatos described this cultural turn as “The ‘revanche’ of the defeated”:

*“... το καθεστώς διακρίσεων ... σε βάρος των ηττημένων του Εμφυλίου ... διενκόλυνε από πολύ νωρίς τη ρομαντική ανασκευή του παρελθόντος από την Αριστερά. ... Άνοιξαν έτσι διάπλατα οι πόρτες για μια ‘ρεβάνς’ των ηττημένων στο πεδίο της συλλογικής μνήμης που επιβλήθηκε και επίσημα μετά το 1981.”*¹⁸

The Eleni-case, Mavrogordatos’ and Iliou’s comments, and the assault on Professor Matantzidis illustrate that the Greek civil war is a kind of Lazarus subjected to periodic resuscitations that expose political antinomies and revive enduring dormant divisions in Greek society. Indeed, preminent scholars such as Thanos Veremis and George Mavrogordatos have suggested that fratricidal clashes have been a feature of the Greek nation’s development since its inception with implications for the stability of the

national institution in Greece as the first sovereign nation in Europe.¹⁹ It is perhaps not surprising that in the year 2000 Thanasis Valtinos' published a novel that commented on the National Schism (Εθνικός διχασμός, 1916) between Royalists and Venizelists, before, during, and after the Asia Minor Debacle in 1922. At the "*fin de siècle*" the author was accused of promoting a retrogressive reinstatement of the monarchy in Greece, of "turkophilia" for extending a gratuitous hand of friendship to Greece's eastern neighbours, in a work of fiction whose generic impurity failed to transform the concomitant historical events into a national narrative of epic proportion or tragic poignancy.²⁰

It would appear, therefore, that – short of attributing such national inclinations to historical continuity since the Peloponnesian War (431-404 BC)– Cold-War antinomies gave different guise and a renewed *raison d'être* to age-long socio-political divisions deeply embedded in Greek society after the fall of the Berlin Wall. In such an polarized climate, cultural products such as films, histories, and novels, lend themselves to partisan readings of the past with little regard for historical verity. In 2009, for instance, and echoing similar accusations cast at Valtinos' *Orthokostá* in 1994 (see part 2 herein), an anonymous commentator of the extreme leftist newspaper *Rizospastis* criticized Pandelis Voulgaris' controversial film on a reconciling view of the civil war (*Ψυχή Βαθιά*, 2009) for distorting historical facts.²¹ Since the 80s, throughout the 90s and intermittently until nowadays, a widespread preoccupation with the internecine bellicosity continues to yield a daunting amount of diverse material on the topic: personal memoirs, biographies, histories, films, literary output, journalistic commentary, conference proceedings, and an abundance of scientific articles and books. To a lesser extent, however, this was also the case in the early 60s and 70s.

2. Literary vs. Historical Discourse

Thanasis Valtinos' *Η κάθοδος των εννιά* [*The Descent of the Nine*, henceforth referred to as (the) *Descent*] was first-published in 1963 in the periodical *Εποχές* and has enjoyed numerous reprints since.²² It first appeared in book form in German (1976) then in Greek (1978) after it had been published in English translation (1973) in the self-proclaimed "postmodernist journal" *Boundary 2*.²³ It is a quasi-testimonial narrative about the gradual demise of nine guerillas of the Greek Democratic Army (Δημοκρατικός

Στρατός Ελλάδος) in the Peloponnese, in the inclement heat of August 1949 and at the hands of hostile locals as well as indeterminate numbers of the National Army (Εθνικός Στρατός) and MAY (Μονάδες Ασφαλείας Υπαιθρου = Countryside Security Units). The *Descent* illustrates what the guerillas suffered in the final year of the civil war but also alludes to Red violence and the ideological disappointment of some of those who employed it. The leader of the group, the ironically named Nikitas (Victor) commits suicide. He states at one point: "Πού να πιαστείς τώρα να γυρέψεις κουράγιο από την ψυχή σου" (p. 19). At another: "Τόσο αίμα. Κι ύστερα να μην ξέρεις πού να φτάσεις" (p. 61), and "να φτάσω στη θάλασσα... να πέσω μέσα και να τριφτώ μέχρι ν' αλλάξω πετσό" (p. 62), just three examples of such allusions among others in the plot involving disgruntled locals and mindless or unrestrained guerilla violence, occasionally exercised in desperation due to impasse (e.g. p. 25, 29, 42-3 and 55).

In 1963 the Athens University philologist Nasos Vagenas, then first-year representative for the student-youth of EDA, reminisced in a personal interview (18 March 2004) that a non-leftist colleague encouraged him to read the *Descent*. He also recalled that leftists praised the book but, in his retrospective assessment, it also appeared to be 'exposing the movement'. Peter Mackridge also reported to me (e-mail dated 1 December 2003) that in the late '60s and early '70s he had heard the novella being praised by both left-wing intellectuals and the politically conservative Pandelis Prevelakis, and described the work as "something of a 'cult text' among a certain group of people". These mixed responses suggest that in the 60s and early 70s the text drew sympathy for the nine guerillas without crowning them in halos. It narrated their plight but did not transform it into an ideological triumph.

The *Descent* was submitted to *Εποχές* by the literary critic George Savvidis against the author's knowledge probably as an answer to Manolis Anagnostakis' request for testimonies on the civil war in the previous issue.²⁴ Savvidis had had the text in his possession for at least 3 years.²⁵ He may have unearthed it in 1963 because in 1960 and 1962 two out of three novels in Stratis Tsirkas' trilogy *Ακυβέρνητες πολιτείες* had caused uproar in the Greek Left. The Communist Party asked Tsirkas to disown his work and, upon Tsirkas' refusal, its branch in Alexandria banned the author from membership in 1961.²⁶ Both *Εποχές* and the leftist journal *Επιθεώρηση*

Τέχνης, among other publications argued the relevant issues.²⁷ The *Descent* appears to have become involved in these debates on disenchantment with the Communist Party, the political patronage of artistic expression and critical thought and the conduct of the Left during the civil war. Party-bound leftist critics did not respond to the lack of vision for the proletariat in the *Descent* but nor did those from the so-called ‘renewing’ or ‘renewed’ left’ (Ανανεωτική Αριστερά).²⁸

A similar issue was raised again in 1974, six years after the split of the KKE in 1968. Aris Alexandrou’s novel *Το κιβώτιο* (*The Crate*) commented allegorically on the ideological void carried by the communists during the civil war in the form of an empty crate.²⁹ *Η Δέσχη*, and *Αριάννη*, the *Descent* and *Το κιβώτιο* among other works of fiction are examples of how literature has repeatedly challenged the fixations of popular history and biases of officially endorsed history in Greek culture. This trend was reversed, somewhat belatedly, in the year 2000. The historian Giorgos Margaritis, currently in the department of Political Sciences at the University of Salonica, presented his history of the civil war in the introduction as an attempt to “correct a historical misunderstanding” attributed explicitly to Alexandrou’s *Το κιβώτιο*.³⁰ This is one of the more striking examples of historiography and literature as contesting or mutually supplementing discourses in Greek culture.

The *Descent* seems to have been written in a climate of intellectual skepticism about the divisive effects of the civil war on Greek society in the 50s.³¹ This skepticism seems to have been marginalized after 1974. In the leftist euphoria of post-dictatorship Greece, Spyros Tsaknias glossed the novella as a “tragedy of the popular movement”.³² The *Descent* was henceforth hailed as one of the grand narratives of the Left where a tragic defeat transformed itself into an epic triumph through artistic expression, thus echoing Mavrogordatos’ assessment quoted at the end of the previous section. The *Descent* was scripted for the silver screen by Valtinos himself in the early 80s and released in 1985 under the direction of Christos Siopachas. Contrary to the book’s mid-term reception, responses to Siopachas’ filmic rendition were unfavourable due to an alleged distortion of the book’s ideological splendor.³³ In 1995, one reader confessed to have laid the book on a comrade’s grave in place of the conventional carnation.³⁴ It was not until 2001 that Kostas Voulgaris questioned the value of the *Descent* for the Left

on the dubious grounds of historical inaccuracy.³⁵ So, the pendulum of the reception of Valtinos’ story swung from a balanced or ambivalent appraisal before the Colonels’ junta to leftist apotheosis after it and, for some leftist readers, all the way to deposition almost overnight in the mid-90s. Voulgaris’ wishful dethronement of the *Descent* from its painstakingly constructed ideological pedestal was written against the background of PASOK’s populist rhetoric and cultural policies and in the aftermath of the “*Orthokostá* controversy”.

Orthokostá, often described as the twin brother of the *Descent*, was first published in 1994 and divided the critical community instantly. The leftist intellectual and editor of the acclaimed journal *Ο Πολίτης*, the late Angelos Elefantis, criticized the novel for excessive demystifying and on the grounds of ignoring the ideological stakes (ιδεολογικά διακυβεύματα).³⁶ Unsurprisingly, both Kostas Voulgaris and Giorgos Margaritis were his confessed disciples, but others followed suit along similar lines.³⁷ Some of the defending critics were well known leftists themselves: Dimitris Raftopoulos, Titos Patrikios and the late Philippos Iliou, all spoke in the work’s favour at the inaugural launch.³⁸ Indeed, in 1962 Raftopoulos, had also commented on Tsirkas’ *Η Δέσχη*, claiming that it revealed the “breach of revolutionary legality” by people who were responsible “for the repeated failures of the [communist] movement” in Greece.³⁹ *Orthokostá* was doing the same but disrobed the violence off any ideological motives or embellishments. Indeed, leftist ideologues in the novel are consistently ostracized by their more bellicose comrades or abandon the cause on personal principle. In 1995, Tzina Politi defended the novel arguing that it “exposed the dominant discourse of official Historiography [sic]”.⁴⁰ Valtinos himself participated in the debates stating in an interview: “Σου σκοτώνουν τη μάνα! Ποια ‘διακυβεύματα’ μου λένε;” alluding to both Elefantis’ critique and Gage’s *Eleni*.⁴¹

The novel comprises 47 testimonial narratives recounting the brutality used as early as 1943 by both factions and the retreating Germans in the Peloponnese. It also refers to the use of different venues by ELAS as camps for detaining, torturing and eliminating non-sympathizers. The Monastery of *Orthokostá* (Eortakoustí or Artokostá) was one of several such venues throughout the Peloponnese. Such conduct provoked brutal reprisals from the Security Battalions among other organizations until 1945 at least.

A number of commentators claimed that the novel was exonerating the latter and, to the author's dismay, that the voice of their thitherto consecrated opponents was being silenced.⁴² The novel, therefore, could be treated as both a reaction to the post-1979 leftist gloss of the *Descent* and to a new falsification of the civil conflict in the official discourse of the 80s. In the so called "dirty 1989" (το βρώμικο 89), Valtinos was one of 120 writers and artists who expressed their discontent with PASOK's cultural policies. The relevant document was composed by Dimitris Raftopoulos and proofed by Valtinos. It protested against the "violation of the rules of pluralism ... the misinformation and biased control of the Media... and the frivolous and manipulating use of History ..." All of these, amounted to a "symptom of totalitarianism that was unacceptable in a democratic government".⁴³

After 1994 the *Orthokostá* controversy expanded in big-bang fashion for over a decade, putting the veracity of PASOK's discourse on the resistance and the civil war in question and shaking a great part of the Greek leftist intelligentsia out of its ideological complacency. The skirmishes were described in the daily press as a "second civil war" or "almost civil-war-like debate".⁴⁴ Occasionally commentators who actually participated in the events objected to the novel for posing a threat to their social integrity.⁴⁵ Identities had been formed, and the ideological foundations of this formation were being shaken. As late as 2003, Valtinos was being characterized, as a "neoconservative" who had recoiled to the "hard-core reactionary nationalism [*ethnikofrosyni*] of the German Occupation".⁴⁶ Even in the celebratory cultural ambiance of 2004, *Orthokostá* was criticized for confusing the reader by abstracting a personal view to the status of historical truth and for defying research on the agreed chronological beginnings of the conflict.⁴⁷ In the same year the novel was proclaimed as a "symbol of a revisionism" in historiography⁴⁸ and in February of 2005 Valtinos was described as a reformed "rhetorician of the new Right".⁴⁹ The pendulum of critical reception had swung all the way for Valtinos. Indeed the novel has been referred to by both Kalyvas and Maratzidis to lend argument to their theses about the Left's brutality against civilians during the occupation⁵⁰ and has therefore been credited for the "revisionist" turn in historical studies and the political sciences. The intensity of the controversy sobered down after 2005, particularly after 2008 when Valtinos' was accepted as a regular member of the Athens Academy or, rather, it was transposed to blogs in cyberspace.⁵¹

In summary, and to conclude, it appears that after 1974 the issue of the Left's violent conduct during the occupation and civil war was thought of as best forgotten, while the exaltation of ELAS, EAM and the KKE in the people's struggles against fascism was exploited to PASOK's political advantage throughout the 80s. It also formed the basis for the construction of political and cultural identities and served members of the intelligentsia who sought to construct a new role for the erstwhile marginalized Left in post-dictatorship Greece. At the same time it spawned a new clandestine censorship that polarized the entire community. Today's climate is to some extent the result of this cultural *about-face* after the Colonels. Un-framing the civil war may well mean that the intellectual community needs to retell its story without treating the combatants as saints or demons. Literature has been trying to point in that direction since the 60s at least. To rethink the generic status of the civil war as an historical narrative may well signal a cessation of sentimentalizing the period in either epic or unfairly tragic terms. The latter has led almost inevitably to a grand narrative of one faction or another. A more hybrid, even vertiginous narrative like some readers have found *Orthokostá* to be,⁵² might better capture the complexity of the conflict. I'm not arguing for a removal of the ideological issues from the historical canvas, nor on focusing on the local alone, but for an acceptance of ideology not as an exclusive motive behind the brutality and the involvement of civilians in reprisals. If the Modernist period was an age of extremes, grand narratives, totalitarianisms, and absolutisms, it might be that a post-modernist period will signal a decisive shift away from such polarities. If it does, in the Greek cultural context it will certainly have been aided by literature.

Notes

- 1 See, e.g.: A. Λιάκος, "Ο φόρος του αίματος", *Πενήντα χρόνια μετά τον Εμφύλιο*, Ermis, Athens 1999, p. 21-25. "Εκσυγχρονίζεται η Ιστορία;" *Το βήμα* (4 February 2001). "Μεταμοντερνισμός, Ιστοριογραφία και αριστερά", *Ο Πολίτης* 107 (January 2003) p. 12-17, and "Ένας πόλεμος που ξεκίνησε... μετά τον πόλεμο", *Τα Νέα - Βιβλιοδρόμο* (28-9 August 2004) p. 12-3. Ν. Μπαστέα, "Προσωπικά πάθη. Πολιτικά εγκλήματα. Μια ιστορία εκδίκησης", *Τα Νέα - Πρόσωπα 21ος αιώνας* 140 (10 November 2001) p. 15-7. Χρ. Ξανθάκης, "Ο ΕΛΑΣ κάνει την πιο καλή δουλειά", *Ελευθεροτυπία* (12 August 2001) p. 14-5. Φ. Φιλίππου, "Αίμα χαμένο και κερδισμένο. Το μαρτυρολόγιο των ηττημένων του Εμφυλίου και οι αιματηρές συγκρούσεις στους κόλπους της ελληνικής Αριστεράς", *Το βήμα* (4 November 2001) p. 24 and "Όταν οι σύντροφοι σκοτώνουν", *Το βήμα-Βιβλία* (16 March 2003) p. 5. X. Φλάσερ, "Η πολιτική αλλοιώνει την ιστορική μνήμη", *Η Καθημερινή*

- (3 February 2002) p. 32. Γ. Μαργαρίτης, “Η δεκαετία του 1940-1950: Μια ιστοριογραφική πρόκληση”, *Ο Πολίτης* 104 (October 2002) p. 28-34. “Για την αναπαλαίωση παλαιών μύθων”, *Το βήμα - Βιβλιοδρόμιο* 104 (9-11 April 2004) p. 6-7 and “Όταν η μελέτη της Ιστορίας γίνεται... κουτσομπολιό”, *Το βήμα - Βιβλιοδρόμιο* (5-6 June 2004) p. 10-11. Α. Ελεφάντης, “Μετανοείτε!”, *Ο Πολίτης* 103 (September 2002) p. 14-7. Β. Κρεμμυδάς, “Διαμεσολαβημένα κείμενα”, *Η Αυγή* (8 December 2002). Χ. Εξερτζόγλου, “Ιστορία και Ιστοριογραφία: ένα σχόλιο”, *Η κυριακάτικη Αυγή* (1 December 2002). Ε. Γαζή, “Περί μεταμοντερνισμού και ιστοριογραφίας”, *Ο Πολίτης* 107 (January 2003), p. 18-21. Θ. Μποχώτης, “Η πρόσφατη διαμάχη για την ελληνική ιστοριογραφία”, *Ο Πολίτης* 109 (March 2003) p. 32-35. Φ. Ηλιού, “Οι βιωμένες ιστορίες και η ιστοριογραφική προσέγγιση”, *Η Αυγή* (7 September 2003). Σ. Καλύβας και Ν. Μαραντζίδης, “Νέες τάσεις στη μελέτη του Εμφυλίου πολέμου”, *Το βήμα - Βιβλιοδρόμιο* (16-7 October 2004) p. 14-5 and “Δεν θα επιστρέψουμε στα πέτρινα χρόνια”, *Το βήμα - Βιβλιοδρόμιο* (20-1 March 2004) p. 10-11. Η. Νικολακόπουλος, “Η ‘κόκκινη βία’ και ο εξαγνισμός των δωσίλογων”, *Το βήμα - Βιβλιοδρόμιο* (22-3 May 2004) p. 10-11. Τ. Καμπύλης, “Δωσιλογισμός, ακτινογραφία ενός ταμπού”, *Τα Νέα - Βιβλιοδρόμιο* (26 June 2004) p. 12. Ν. Πανουργιά, “Η στριγωμένη αντίληψη του Στάθης Καλύβας για την Ιστορία και τον Εμφύλιο. Ο ‘Άγιος Βελουχιώτης’ και οι... άμοιροι Ταγματασφαλίτες”, *Τα Νέα - Βιβλιοδρόμιο* (2 October 2004) p. 22-3. Χ. Φλάισερ, “Για να εξοικονομηθεί πολύτιμο γερμανικό αίμα...”, *Τα Νέα - Βιβλιοδρόμιο* (3-4 July 2004) p. 12-13. Μ. Μαΐλης, “Αντίσταση και Εμφύλιος (1941-1949)” *Ριζοσπάστης*, (12 September 2004) p. 11. Δ. Καϊρίδης, “Ποιοι φοβούνται την κριτική σκέψη;”, *Τα Νέα - Βιβλιοδρόμιο* (21-2 August 2004) p. 11. Κ. Παπαϊωάννου, “Ο καβγάς για την αλήθεια”, *Τα Νέα - Βιβλιοδρόμιο* (24-5 July 2004) p. 8-9 and “Η απομυθοποίηση της Ιστορίας ως μυθοποίηση του παρόντος”, *Τα Νέα - Βιβλιοδρόμιο* (25 September 2004) p. 12. Θ. Αλεξίου, “Ένσταση στον αναθεωρητισμό”, *Τα Νέα - Βιβλιοδρόμιο* (31 July 2004) p. 14. Ε. Μαχαίρας, “Μια νέα (και σοβαρότερη) προσπάθεια για την παραποίηση της Ιστορίας”, *Ριζοσπάστης* (25 December 2004) p. 11. Γ. Μωραΐτης, “Ο δοσιλογισμός της Κατοχής. Με φόντο το σήμερα (β’ μέρος)”, *Ριζοσπάστης* (25 December 2004) p. 11. Η. F. Meyer, “Πόσοι ήταν οι νεκροί στα Καλάβρυτα;”, *Τα Νέα - Βιβλιοδρόμιο* (27-8 November 2004) p. 10. Ν. Μπακουνάκης, “Ο Τράουντλ και ο αναθεωρητισμός”, *Το βήμα - Βιβλία* (26 September 2004) p. 43/1, and Γ. Μαντάς, “Απάντηση σε βιβλίο παραποίησης της Ιστορίας”, *Εθνική Αντίσταση* 128 (October-November 2005), σ. 80-5.
- 2 Κατερίνα Μπακογιάννη, “Νίκος Μαραντζίδης: Αν. καθηγητής στο Πανεπιστήμιο Μακεδονίας – Έχω ξαδέφια στελέχη του ΚΚΕ. Θερμούν ότι προδίδω την οικογένεια”, *K 580* (13 July 2014) p. 8-10.
- 3 See e.g., Ath. Anastasiadis “Trauma – memory – narration: Greek Civil War novels of the 1980s and 1990s”, *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (2011), p. 92–108. See also, Γ. Βούλγαρης “Τρεις φορές Έλληνας ή η απώθηση του εμφυλιακού τραύματος”, *Τα Νέα* (3 November 2001) p. 8, Βεν. Αποστολίδου, *Τραύμα και μνήμη. Η πεζογραφία των πολιτικών προσφύγων*, Polis, Athens 2010, and Ν. Δεμερτζής, Ε. Πασχαλούδη and Γ. Αντωνίου (eds), *Εφύλιος: Πολιτισμικό τραύμα*, Alexandria, Athens 2012.
- 4 S. Kalyvas “Red Terror: Leftist Violence during the Occupation” in Mark Mazower (ed.) *After the War was Over, Reconstructing the Family, Nation, and State in Greece, 1943-1960*, Princeton University Press, 2000. Kalyvas draws parallels between the experiences of the inhabitants in a village of Argolis with those of fictional characters in Valtinos’ *Orthokostá* (p. 170, ftnt. 105). Kalyvas has also written a Forward for the novel’s recently published English translation (Th. Valtinos *Orthokostá*, translated by Jane Assimakopoulos and Stavros Deligiorgis – Foreward by Stathis N. Kalyvas, Yale University Press, n.p., 2016, p. vii-xxi).
- 5 Σ. Ν. Καλύβας and Ν. Μαραντζίδης, *Εμφύλια πάθη – 23 ερωτήσεις και απαντήσεις για τον εμφύλιο*, 2nd ed., Metaichmio, Athens 2015. Cf. *Το βήμα*, “Ευπώλητα” (22 May 2016) at <http://www.epbooks.gr/datafiles/Untitled-1.pdf> [accessed 10 October 2016].
- 6 In 1978, Constantinos Tsoukalas had argued optimistically that the civil war had ended in 1974 vis-à-vis its ideological and cultural implications (see, his “Η ιδεολογική επίδραση του εμφυλίου πολέμου”, *Η Ελλάδα στη δεκαετία 1940-1950: Ένα έθνος σε κρίση*, Themelio, Athens, p. 561-90). With equal historical irony, in 1994 (the year of publication of *Orthokostá*), Katia Lebesi of Kedros publishers had claimed that the theme of the civil war was “a bit passé” (quoted in Γ. Χουλιάρας “Πολιτισμός και πολιτική Εμφύλιος πόλεμος και ‘πολιτιστική ανασυγκρότηση’ στην Ελλάδα” in Χ. Φλάισερ (ed.), *Η Ελλάδα ‘36-‘49. Από τη Δικτατορία στον Εμφύλιο. Τομές και συνέχειες*, Castaniotis, Athens, p. 428, n. 2).
- 7 Ν. Γκατζογιάννης, *Ελένη* (trans. Al. Kotzias), Elliniki Evroekdotiki, Athens 1983.
- 8 See Vrasidas Karalis, *A History of the Greek Cinema*, Continuum, New York 2012, p. 208-9; Martha Klironomos “The Topos of Home in New Greek-American Writing” in D. Tziouvas (ed. & intro.), *Greek Diaspora and Migration since 1700*, p. 246, and footnote 7 thereon; and Eleftheria Arapoglou “Identity Configuration and Ideological Manipulation in Nicholas Gage’s A Place for Us”, *MBLUS* vol. 30, nr. 3 (Fall 2005), p. 71.
- 9 See footnotes 45-49 in Section 2 below.
- 10 See, e.g. <http://www.xryshaygh.com/enimerosi/view/drastrhiohtes-topikwn-organwsewn-kai-purhnwn-megara-serres-kalamata>, <http://www.xryshaygh.com/imerologio/view/t.o.-a.-lioswn-acharnwn-kamaterou-binteoprobolh-ths-istorikhs-tainias-elen> and http://xryshayghnp.blogspot.gr/2012/10/blog-post_2396.html [accessed 26 October 2014].
- 11 See Σπ. Μελετζής, *Με τους αντάρτες στα βουνά*, Athens 1996. Also www.lifo.gr [accessed 26 October 2014]. Meletzis took several of these photographs but also seemingly less idealizing ones. Overall, the photographs of Costas Balafas from the civil war in Epirus tend to be more ironic and documentary in style.
- 12 See, e.g. Γ. Παπαθεοδώρου (ed., introd. and photo legends), *Εμφύλιος 1946-1949. Οι εικόνες μιας τραγωδίας*, Ιστορικό λεύκωμα 6, Metron Editions, Athens 2006, p. 17; also the self-proclaimed “collector’s edition” of Peter McGee (ed.) “Δεκεμβριανά” *Εμφύλιος Τύπος*, Issue 1, Albertas Ltd, London, p. 3-7. A propaganda lithographic poster featuring the guerilla Παπα-Χολέβας claims “1941-1944 Νέοι Παπαφλέσσηδες. Διάκοι ρίχτηκαν στους αγώνες του Έθνους” at <http://papaholevas.blogspot.gr/> [accessed 26 October 2014].
- 13 See, e.g. L. Baerentzen, “Η απελευθέρωση της Πελοποννήσου - Σεπτέμβριος 1944” in Τζ. Ο. Ιατρίδης (ed.), *Η Ελλάδα στη δεκαετία 1940-1950. Ένα έθνος σε κρίση*, Θεμέλιο, Athens 1984, p. 225-43 and Ch. R. Shrader, *The Withered Vine – Logistics and the Communist Insurgency in Greece, 1945-1949*, Praeger, Westport, Connecticut and London, 1999. Also, R. Clogg’s exposure of inaccuracies in the documentary *The Hidden War* in his “A Case Study in Bias and Distortion. Channel Four’s Film on Greece’s Civil War” *Encounter* (February 1987) p. 70-7.
- 14 See, e.g. on the term “resistance” Σ. Ν. Καλύβας and Ν. Μαραντζίδης, *Εμφύλια πάθη*, op.cit. p. 107-8. Also on the anti-communist sentiments spawned by activities of the OPLA organization, in a historiographical work, Σ. Μουμτζής, *Η κόκκινη βία 1943-1946 – Η μνήμη και η λήθη της Αριστεράς*, Επίκεντρο, Athens 2013, p. 202-204.
- 15 It is a photograph dated 1944 and signed by Spyros Meletzis. See, e.g. https://pontosandaristera.files.wordpress.com/2011/12/30_1.jpg, [http://1.bp.blogspot.com/-WY6P5J9o8Fk/U1GOoMACckI/AAAAAAAAAv6Y/fUK2v_307ZM/s1600/1982+%CE%95%CE%B8%CE%BD%CE%B9%CE%BA%CE%AE+%CE%91%CE%BD%CF%84%CE%AF%CF%83%CF%84%CE%B1%CF%83%CE%B7+1940-1944+\(8\).jpg](http://1.bp.blogspot.com/-WY6P5J9o8Fk/U1GOoMACckI/AAAAAAAAAv6Y/fUK2v_307ZM/s1600/1982+%CE%95%CE%B8%CE%BD%CE%B9%CE%BA%CE%AE+%CE%91%CE%BD%CF%84%CE%AF%CF%83%CF%84%CE%B1%CF%83%CE%B7+1940-1944+(8).jpg) [accessed 26 October 2014]. On 23 February 2016 a new stamp series was released featuring 5 members of the organization of EAM for the 75th anniversary of its foundation.
- 16 See ΦΕΚ 1982/115 here <http://www.et.gr/index.php/2013-01-28-14-06-23/2013-01-29-08-13-13>, and D. Close “The road to reconciliation? The Greek civil war and the politics of memory in the 1980s” in P. Carabott and Th. Sfikas (eds), *The Greek Civil War. Essays on a*

- conflict of exceptionalism and silences*, Centre for Hellenic Studies, King's College, Ashgate, London 2004, pp. 257-78.
- 17 Φ. Ηλιού, “Το σχήμα του Εμφυλίου Πολέμου”, republished in his *Ο ελληνικός Εμφύλιος Πόλεμος – Η εμπλοκή του ΚΚΕ*, Themelio, Istoriki Vivliothiki, ASKI, Athens, 2004, p. 21 (my italics).
- 18 Γ. Μαυρογορδάτος, “Η ‘ρεβάνς’ των ηττημένων”, *Πενήντα χρόνια μετά τον Εμφύλιο*, Ermis, Athens 1999, pp. 38-40. See also Γ. Βούλγαρης, *Η Ελλάδα της Μεταπολίτευσης 1974-1990. Σταθερή δημοκρατία σημαδεμένη από τη μεταπολεμική ιστορία*, Themelio, Athens 2002, pp. 29-31 and Ν. Μαραντζίδης, *Δημοκρατικός Στρατός Ελλάδας (ΔΣΕ) 1946-1949*, Θέματα Ιστορίας 2, Alexandria, Athens 2010, pp. 15-28.
- 19 See e.g., Θάνος Βερέμης, “Κατακερματισμένη ή ενιαία κοινωνία”, *Η Καθημερινή* (2 August 2009) p. 18 and Γ. Θ. Μαυρογορδάτος, *1915 Ο Εθνικός Διχασμός*, Patakis, 7th ed., Athens 2015.
- 20 Γ. Γεράσης, “Παρουσίαση Βιβλίου. Από την ‘Ζωή εν τάφω’ στην ταφόπετρα της ιστορίας (και της λογοτεχνίας). Θανάσης Βαλτινός: ‘Συναξάρι Κορδοπάτη Βιβλίο Β’ Βαλκανικοί - ‘22’”, *Μονόκερως* 8 (Summer-Autumn 2000) pp. 99-113, and Δημ. Κούρτοβικ, “Ιστορία, ιστορίες, ιστ... ιι...”, *Τα Νέα - Πρόσωπα* (7 July 2001) p. 34.
- 21 Anonymous, “‘Ψυχή βαθιά’ και παραποίηση της ιστορίας – Με αφορμή την ταινία του Π. Βούλγαρη”, *Ριζοσπάστης* (13 October 2009) at <http://www.rizospastis.gr/story.do?id=5302600>. See also Τζία Γιοβάννη, “‘Ψυχή βαθιά’ και η... αλήθεια πέρα”, *Ριζοσπάστης* (8 October 2009) <http://www.rizospastis.gr/story.do?id=5295902> [both accessed 26 October 2014] and Kostis Kornetis, “From Reconciliation to Vengeance: The Greek Civil War on Screen in Pantelis Voulgaris’s [sic] *A Soul so Deep* and Kostas Charalambous’s [sic] *Tied Red Thread*” *FILMICON: Journal of Greek Film Studies*, Issue 2 (September 2014), pp. 93-116.
- 22 Θανάσης Βαλτινός, “Η κάθοδος των εννιά” *Εποχές* 5, (September 1963), pp. 32–45. All references to the text are to Θ. Βαλτινός, *Η κάθοδος των εννιά*, Agra, Athens 1984.
- 23 In German (tr. Johannes Weissert), LCB-Editionen, West Berlin 1976 and in English as “The Descent of the Nine”, *Boundary* 2 (1, 1973) Nr. 2, pp. 321–47.
- 24 Μ. Αναγνωστάκης, “Ο θρύλος και το ιστορικό τοπίο”, *Εποχές* 4 (August 1963), p. 73.
- 25 Valtinos had handed him a typescript in 1960 on the occasion of his being awarded a prize for one of his early short stories (“Αύγουστος ‘48”) published in the magazine *Ταχυδρόμος*.
- 26 Χρ. Προκοπάκη (timeline draft), *Στα ίχνη του Στρατή Τσίρκα*, Kedros, Athens 1985, p. 22.
- 27 See Χρ. Προκοπάκη (ed.), *Οι ‘Ακυβέρνητες πολιτείες’ του Στρατή Τσίρκα και η Κριτική 1960-1966*, Kedros, Athens 1980, pp. 48-9.
- 28 The narrative mode that the party-bound critics appear to have favoured was that of ‘socialist realism’ (see V. Apostolidou, *Λογοτεχνία και ιστορία στη μεταπολεμική αριστερά. Η παρέμβαση του Δημήτρη Χατζή 1947-1981*, Polis, Athens, pp. 132-3). Perhaps not surprisingly, Tsirkas’ trilogy *Ακυβέρνητες πολιτείες* was banned from circulation in 1967 by the Colonels’ regime.
- 29 For commentary on *Alexandrou’s Το κιβώτιο*, see, e.g., Δ. Ραυτόπουλος, *Άρης Αλεξάνδρου, ο εξόριστος*, Sokolis, Athens 2004, pp. 285-338 and 348-69.
- 30 Γ. Μαργαρίτης, *Ιστορία του εμφυλίου πολέμου 1946-1949*, Vol. 1, Vivliorama, Athens 2001, p. 31, note 4.
- 31 In his tripartite work *Three Greek One-Act Plays* (1978), described by Valtinos as a sequel to the *Descent*, the author offered a poignant parody on the same issue during the 50s, 60s and 70s. For a detailed commentary, see D. Paivanas, “Parody and National Crisis: Thanasis Valtinos’ *Three Greek One-Act Plays* and its critical reception”, *A Journal for Greek Letters: Modern Greek Studies Australia and New Zealand*, Vol. 16-17 B, (2013-2014), pp. 545-562, in particular, pp. 548-9 and 551-8.
- 32 Σπ. Τσακνιάς, “Ένα τέλειο έργο”, *Η Καθημερινή* (19 Απριλ 1979). Republished as “Θανάσης Βαλτινός Η κάθοδος των εννιά”, in Σπ. Τσακνιάς *Δακτυλικά αποτυπώματα*, Castaniotis, Athens 1983, p. 17-23 and in Θ. Πυλαρινός (ed.), *Για τον Βαλτινό. Κριτικά κείμενα*, Aegeon, Nicosia 2003, p. 73-8. See also Βασ. Ραφαηλίδης, “Ελληνική αισιόδοξη τραγωδία σε τέσσερα μέρη”, *Διαβάζω* 22 (July 1979), pp. 67-70.
- 33 See, Π. Κάγιος, “Το «οδοιπορικό της ήττας»” (interview with Ch. Siopachas), *Τα Νέα* (13 Dec. 1984), p. 6. In Christos Siopachas’ filmic rendition, the director decided to give the story an alternative ending to the one originally planned (personal interview with Valtinos, 23 June 2001). The film ends circularly with a reading of the novella’s first paragraph.
- 34 Κ. Σταυρόπουλος, “Οι αφύλακτες διαβάσεις της ιστορίας”, *Η Αυγή* (29 January 1995), p. 34. Contrarily, Stavropoulos also confessed in the same article to have been unable to complete his reading of *Orthokostá*.
- 35 See, e.g., Κ. Βούλγαρης, “*Remington και Ορθοκωστά*”, *Νέα Εστία* 1733 (April 2001) pp. 695-6. Valtinos claims that the *Descent* is historically accurate to the last iota (personal interview 23 June 2003).
- 36 Α. Ελεφάντης, “*Ορθοκωστά* του Θανάση Βαλτινού”, *Ο Πολίτης* 126 (June-July 1994) pp. 61-6.
- 37 E.g., Κ. Βουκελάτος, “*Η Ορθοκωστά* του Θανάση Βαλτινού και το ιδεολόγημα: τι ελασίτης τι ταγματασφαλίτης”, *Ιχνητής* 10 (2nd period, August-October 1994) p. 26. Κ. Σταυρόπουλος, “Οι αφύλακτες διαβάσεις της ιστορίας”, *Η Αυγή* (29 January) p. 34. Γ. Μωραΐτης, “Δικαίωση των Ταγμάτων Ασφαλείας”, *Ριζοσπάστης* (4 September 1994) p. 16, and Ε. Μαχαίρας, “Αναξιοπίστο κείμενο η ‘Ορθοκωστά’ του Θ. Βαλτινού”, *Καθημερινά Νέα* (Tripolis, 9 December 1994) p. 4. Also 11 years later, Γ. Μαντάς, “Απάντηση σε βιβλίο παραποίησης της Ιστορίας”, *Εθνική Αντίσταση* 128 (October-November 2005) pp. 80-5.
- 38 Valtinos confessed to me in a personal interview (23.06.2001) that he had anticipated adverse reaction to *Orthokostá* from the leftist sector. The troika of the presentation panel appears to have been strategically chosen by the author to mitigate possible negative responses from members of the intellectual population. See Ειρ. Βεργοπούλου, “*Ορθοκωστά*: Ο παραλογισμός στην ιστορία”, *Η Εποχή* (22 May 1994) and the somewhat provocative pre-publication of part of chapter 41 of the novel in Α. Λαμπρία, Αναστασία και Ο. Μπάτη, Όλγα (eds), “Προδημοσίευση. Γυμνή, μυθιστορηματική αλήθεια”, *Μεσημβρινή* (21 April 1994), p. 16.
- 39 See, Χρ. Προκοπάκη (ed.), *Οι ‘Ακυβέρνητες πολιτείες’ του Στρατή Τσίρκα και η Κριτική 1960-1966*, op. cit., p. 65.
- 40 Τζ. Πολίτη, “Το βουβό πρόσωπο της ιστορίας” in *Ιστορική πραγματικότητα και νεοελληνική πεζογραφία (1945-1995)*, Επιστημονικό συμπόσιο (7-8 April 1995), Etaireia Sroudon Neollinikou Politismou kai Genikis Paideias, Kamatero 2007, pp. 229-45.
- 41 Μ. Πιμπλής, “Σου σκοτώνουν τη μάνα. Ποια ‘διακυβεύματα’ μου λέτε;” (interview with Thanasis Valtinos), *Τα Νέα - Βιβλιοδρόμιο* (14-15 August 2004) p. P12.
- 42 Valtinos disagreed strongly with V. Apostolidou in regard to whether the voice and the trauma of the Other are evident in the novel. See, Β. Αποστολίδου, et al. “Στρογγυλό τραπέζι: Αφήγηση, αναπαράσταση, λογοτεχνία”, *Η Κατοχή και ο Εμφύλιος στην τέχνη, Νέα Εστία* 1845 (June 2011), pp. 1019-20.
- 43 Cited in Th. Valtinos, “Ένα κείμενο”, *Μανδραγόρας* 30 (September 2003), p. 79 and republished in Th. Valtinos, *Κρασί και νύμφες*, Hestia, Athens 2009, pp. 206-9.
- 44 Α. Βασιλάκου, “Ο συγγραφέας έχει τις πληγές του...”, *Πανόραμα* (1 November 1994) pp. 76-8 and Έλ. Χουζούρη, “Ο ίδιος δεν σκότωσα, αλλά θα μπορούσα”, *Κράμα* 21 (December 2004) pp. 66-7.
- 45 Γ. Καπράλος, “Οι ιστοριογράφοι της Αντίστασης”, *Τα Νέα* (29-30 May 2004) p. 67 and Α. Βενέτης, “Η κριτική της ‘Ελένης’”, *Τα Νέα* (9-11 April 2004) p. 44.
- 46 Τ. Κωστόπουλος κ.λ., “Οι ταγματασφαλίτες δικαιώνονται”, *Ο ίός της Κυριακής, Κυριακάτικη Ελευθεροτυπία* (26 October 2003), pp. 43-52.

- 47 Ο. Σελλά, “Η λογοτεχνία, η ιστορία και η άποψη”, *Ο Πολίτης* 122 (May 2004) p. 47.
- 48 Κ. Βούλγαρης, *Η Παρτίδα*, Vivliorama, Athens 2004, pp. 19-20.
- 49 Λ. Καζαντζάκη, “Η πτώση των τειχών και των προσχημάτων. Η πώς ένας πρώην συγγραφέας της Αριστεράς μεταλλάσσεται σε ρήτορα της Νέας Δεξιάς”, *Η Αυγή* (21 November 2004) p. 30.
- 50 See footnote 4 herein and Ν. Μαραντζίδης, “Εμφύλιος και εξορία εμπνέουν τη λογοτεχνία. Πώς η πεζογραφία άνοιξε τον δρόμο στην Ιστορία για να ασχοληθεί με τα θέματα ταμπού”, *Το βήμα* (27 June 2010) <http://www.tovima.gr/books-ideas/article/?aid=340224> [accessed 30 June 2010].
- 51 Salient examples are: Ηριδανός, «*Ορθοκωστά*- Αναζήτηση τέλος για τον Εμφύλιο», Κ. Κουρεμένος “*Ορθοκωστά*” *Το διαδικτυακό τεφτέρι μου*, and Πάνος “*Η καλύβα ψηλά στο βουνό*” [all accessed 21 November 2014]. For a more comprehensive discussion of *Orthokosta* and its reception, see Δ. Παϊβανάς, *Βία και αφήγηση: Ιστορία, ιδεολογία και εθνικός πολιτισμός στην πεζογραφία του Θανάση Βαλτινού*, Hestia, Athens 2012, pp. 179-211, or D. Paivanas, “Cold Wars after 1989: Thanasis Valtinos’ *Orthokosta* [sic] and its Reception”, *Etudes Helleniques/Hellenic Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 1, (Spring / Printemps) 2010, pp. 21-53.
- 52 See, e.g. the recent reviews of the novel’s English translation at <http://www.asymptotejournal.com/blog/2016/08/04/whats-new-in-translation-august-2016/>, <http://www.wordswithoutborders.org/book-review/orthokosta-by-thanassis-valtinis> and <http://www.full-stop.net/2016/06/28/reviews/tomleclair/orthokosta-thanassis-valtinis/> [all accessed 7 September 2016].

Athanasia Glycofrydi-Leontsini

University of Athens

Κείμενο και Εικόνα: Ο Τηλεοπτικός Μ. Καραγάτσης¹

Abstract

Text and Image: M. Karagatsis’s Televised

This paper is divided into two parts. In the first part I deal with the relations between literature and television, a new expressive and representative media of modern art which combines various forms of art and expression with technology and technique, by connecting text with image and by posing the question of faithful or non-faithful mimesis or representation. The adaptation of literary works into cinematography, written by classic but also contemporary writers, has been a creative conversion of written text into images which revealed the dynamic relation between text and image, but also the value of the seventh art. The same is true about television, which constitutes in our times an important form of expression, communicative but at the same time representative, relating directly to the representative power of cinematography and, from a theoretical point of view, with interpretation which refers to value-judgments exegeses. At any rate, the televised adaptation of a literary work constitutes a creative representation and expression of the script-writer’s and the director’s imagination, since the literary work is usually the first material of a cinematographic or televised production that creates a new form of art and reveals the relations amongst the arts, but also those of the creative contributors involved in it.

In the second part of my paper, I explore the televised Karagatsis (1908-1960), whose several works have been rendered into successful

adaptations into the small screen, and I attempt a listing of the televised adaptations of his novels and short stories that reveal the questions that I analyzed at the first part of my paper. Short-story writer and novelist, one of the most important of his generation in the 1930's, M. Karagatsis wrote novels, short-stories and theatrical plays that had a great impact to the literary audience. Although he remains the myth-maker who 'traps' into his text his own self and his personal reality, Karagatsis, via his work, is also revealed as an 'adequate memoir writer' of his time, and provides modern Greek prose writing with a strong cosmopolitan air at a time where the character and historical novel prevailed, establishing thus the urban/bourgeois novel.

From the first Karagatsis's novels to be adopted into the small screen, during the period 1974-1981, were *Giougerman* (1940) and *Colonel Liapkin* (1933) in which the author uses the story of real persons as narrative material. The characteristic feature of both these novels, as well as of that of *Chimaira* (1936), is the pinpointing of a true that concerns all emigrants and refugees and their success or failure, as the case might be, to acclimatize into the Greek society of the 1930's. *Giougerman* and *Colonel Liapkin* were amongst the established literary texts which were adapted for the needs of the small screen during that period, when a "small cultural renaissance" was created, with the restoration of democracy and the 'metapoliteusis' period and the abolition of censorship, that had a general impact also at the TV programmes produced by the YENED TV Channel. The *Mithistorima ton Tessaron* which was written in rotation by the best known novelists of the 1930's generation (Stratis Myrivilis, M. Karagatsis, Aggelos Terzakis and Elias Venezis), was adapted into a social serial of the time and was played on TV a few months before the 'period of *allagis*', when after the national elections of the 18th of October 1981, the merging of the two State TV Channels takes place and the change of the TV Executive Directors, creating thus a climate similar to that of the 'metapoliteusis' period. The *Kitrinos Fakelos*, a two volume detective style 'meta-novel' with an important psychoanalytical sub-content, which was published in 1956, is the last and most complex Karagatsis's novel that was televised by ANT1, starting on Monday 1st October 1990. It was considered as one of the first attempts of the newly established private television to antagonize the state one with a large and expensive production.

At the same time, in my paper I also investigate into the televised adaptations of Karagatsis's short-stories. The *Bourini* is an adaptation of Karagatsis's short-story that was written during the period of the German Occupation, and a social telly era serial in five 45 minutes' episodes, produced by ET2 and played on the 28th of January 1987, which puts forward the issue of bourgeois corruption. *To Nero tis Vrochis*, an adaptation of Karagatsis's short-story as a 50 minutes' TV film, was shown on television for the first time on Thursday 2 November 1983. Karagatsis also inspires, nevertheless, younger screen players, since the scenario entitled *Monachiki Vroxi* by Nikolaos Michas, which came out from Karagatsis novels entitled *To Nero tis Vroxis* and *I Monaxia*, a collection of novels that was published in 1950, awarded him fairly recently the Best Award of Adapted Novel Scenario for a short length movie in 2008 which was declared a 'Karagatsis Year', while in 2007 two new productions of his plays took place, *Giougerman* and *To 10*. The adaptation of Karagatsis's works into the small screen reveals the impact of his literary work to the wider audience but also the public's interest to go over from the image to the text.

I. Κείμενο και εικόνα, λογοτεχνία και τηλεόραση

Οι σχέσεις λογοτεχνίας και φιλοσοφίας,² ποίησης, ζωγραφικής και φιλοσοφίας,³ λογοτεχνίας και κινηματογράφου, λογοτεχνίας και αλήθειας,⁴ έχουν διερευνηθεί και σχολιασθεί ευρύτατα. Η λογοτεχνία, η οποία απεικονίζει την ανθρώπινη φύση και περιγράφει ανθρώπινες πράξεις, είναι ίσως η μοναδική τέχνη που περιλαμβάνει «αξίες ζωής», γι' αυτό και η σωστή εκτίμησή της δεν είναι πρωταρχικά αισθητική. Οφείλουμε επίσης να αναγνωρίσουμε πως οι αξίες που εκφράζουν τα λογοτεχνικά έργα σε σχέση με τον εξωτερικό κόσμο είναι κυρίως υποκειμενικές και διαφορετικές τόσο για τους αναγνώστες όσο και για τους κριτικούς, γι' αυτό και υπόκεινται σε διαφορετικές ερμηνείες. Η διερεύνηση ωστόσο των σχέσεων λογοτεχνίας και τηλεόρασης, ενός νέου εκφραστικού και παραστατικού μέσου της σύγχρονης τέχνης - που συνδυάζει την τεχνική, την τεχνολογία και διάφορες μορφές τέχνης και έκφρασης - παρουσιάζει ιδιαίτερο ενδιαφέρον, γιατί συνδέει το κείμενο με την εικόνα και θέτει το θέμα των σχέσεων της πίστης ή μη μίμησης ή αναπαράστασης. Αν και

αρχικά η τηλεόραση, της οποίας η εφεύρεση βασίστηκε σε μια σειρά διαδοχικών ανακαλύψεων διαφόρων επιστημόνων που στηρίζεται σε ένα σύστημα εκπομπής και λήψης εικόνων, περιορίστηκε σε εκπομπές που περιελάμβαναν ειδήσεις, αποτελέσματα αγώνων κρίκετ και ταχυδακτυλουργικά τρικάζ, ωστόσο ήδη από το 1937 διεύρυνε τον ορίζοντά της και μας έδωσε την πρώτη παραγωγή του BBC μιας σκηνοθετημένης και κινηματογραφημένης για την τηλεόραση παραγωγής του θεατρικού έργου του Λουίτζι Πιραντέλο *Ο άνθρωπος με το λουλούδι στο στόμα*. Έκτοτε οι σχέσεις της τηλεόρασης με τον αφηγηματικό λόγο, μυθιστορηματικό ή θεατρικό, καθιερώνονται και αποδεικνύεται η δυναμική των εικόνων, όχι πλέον των ζωγραφικών ή κινηματογραφικών έργων αλλά των τηλεοπτικών σειρών ή τηλεταινιών των οποίων τα σενάρια δημιουργούν, όπως παλαιότερα οι ζωγραφικοί πίνακες, με ρεαλιστικό ή συμβολικό τρόπο, μια νέα μορφή παραστατικής τέχνης, που συγκρίνεται συχνά με τη φωτογραφία, τη ζωγραφική και κυρίως τον κινηματογράφο.⁵

Η μεταφορά λογοτεχνικών έργων, κλασικών αλλά και σύγχρονων συγγραφέων, στον κινηματογράφο υπήρξε μια δημιουργική μετατροπή του λόγου σε εικόνες και απέδειξε τη δυναμική σχέση κειμένου και εικόνας αλλά και την αξία της έβδομης τέχνης, αφού, όπως έχει τονισθεί, «Το φιλμ πετυχαίνει κάτι εντυπωσιακό, διότι... δεν μας δίνει απλώς ένα αντικείμενο, αλλά μια αντίληψη αυτού του αντικειμένου, έναν κόσμο και συνάμα έναν τρόπο για να βλέπουμε αυτόν τον κόσμο, μια και ο τρόπος θεώρησης του καλλιτέχνη βρίσκεται στο έργο τέχνης -ισοβαρώς- μαζί με εκείνο του οποίου το έργο τέχνης αποτελεί θεώρηση».⁶ Παράλληλα όμως θέτει και μια δέσμη προβλημάτων μερικά από τα οποία μπορούν να ονομαστούν φιλοσοφικά, αφού αρκετά κινηματογραφικά έργα εγείρουν τη φιλοσοφική συζήτηση, καθώς θεωρούνται πως παρέχουν ένα τρόπο αντίληψης του κόσμου,⁷ που αναδεικνύει έναν κόσμο αξιών οι οποίες ωστόσο δεν είναι αποκλειστικά αισθητικές ή καλλιτεχνικές. Το ίδιο ισχύει και για την τηλεόραση η οποία είναι στην εποχή μας μια σημαντική μορφή έκφρασης, επικοινωνιακή και συνάμα παραστατική, που συνδέεται άμεσα με την απεικονιστική δύναμη του κινηματογράφου και, από άποψη θεωρητική, με την ερμηνεία, που αναφέρεται σε

εξηγήσεις αξιολογικής υφής. Αυτές, όπως συμβαίνει και με την ερμηνεία των λογοτεχνικών κειμένων, εξαρτώνται άμεσα από τα νοήματα που ενσωματώνουν και από τις ερμηνείες που δίδονται όχι μόνο από τους ειδικούς κριτικούς και από τους αναγνώστες, του λογοτεχνικού κειμένου αλλά και από τις ερμηνευτικές κοινότητες του ίδιου του δημιουργού.⁸ Όπως γράφει ο Fish «Ο κριτικός δεν είναι πλέον ο ταπεινός υπηρέτης των κειμένων των οποίων οι αρετές υπάρχουν ανεξάρτητα από κάθε τι που αυτός θα έπρεπε να κάνει. Είναι ό,τι αυτός πράττει στο πλαίσιο των περιορισμών που ενυπάρχουν στο λογοτεχνικό θεσμό, αυτό που φέρει στην ύπαρξη τα κείμενα... Η πρακτική της λογοτεχνικής κριτικής δεν είναι κάτι που χρειάζεται απολογία. Είναι ουσιώδης όχι μόνο για τη συντήρηση αλλά και για την παραγωγή των αντικειμένων που επισύρουν την προσοχή της».⁹ Θα μπορούσαμε συνεπώς να πούμε πως το λογοτεχνικό έργο, όπως άλλωστε και κάθε άλλο έργο τέχνης, δεν είναι αποκλειστικά συνδεδεμένο με τον δημιουργό του και τις προθέσεις του αλλά κάτι αυτοδύναμο που υπόκειται σε διαφορετικές ερμηνείες και απαιτεί, από τη στιγμή που αναδεικνύεται στο δημόσιο πεδίο, αναγνώριση και εξήγηση.¹⁰ Το ίδιο ισχύει και για το κινηματογραφικό έργο ή την τηλεοπτική μεταφορά ενός λογοτεχνικού έργου, αν και εδώ είναι εμφανείς και οι σχέσεις της λογοτεχνίας με τα δύο αυτά είδη σύγχρονης τέχνης.

Επικεντρώνοντας το ενδιαφέρον μου στην ελληνική τηλεόραση, που συμπλήρωσε τη χρονιά αυτή τα πενήντα σχεδόν χρόνια, θα ήθελα αρχικά να πω ότι οι έλληνες σκηνοθέτες στις δεκαετίες που πέρασαν, μετέφεραν έργα ελλήνων λογοτεχνών, άλλοτε με επιτυχή και άλλοτε με λιγότερο επιτυχή τρόπο, από τις προσπάθειές τους και την ανταπόκριση του κοινού αποδείχθηκε ωστόσο πως είναι ιδιαίτερα ενδιαφέρουσα η διερεύνηση των σχέσεων λογοτεχνίας και τηλεόρασης, όπως άλλωστε και των σχέσεων λογοτεχνίας και κινηματογράφου. Παράλληλα, από όλες αυτές τις προσπάθειες δημιουργικής μεταφοράς λογοτεχνικών κειμένων στην ελληνική τηλεόραση και στην ελληνική πραγματικότητα αναδείχθηκε γενικότερα το γεγονός πως όταν ένα λογοτεχνικό έργο αποτελεί το πρώτο υλικό του σεναρίου μιας κινηματογραφικής, και στην περίπτωσή μας μιας τηλεοπτικής παραγωγής, δημιουργείται μια νέα μορφή τέχνης, αναδεικνύονται οι

σχέσεις των διαφόρων τεχνών αλλά και των δημιουργικών συντελεστών που εμπλέκονται, αλλά και η παρουσία των λογοτεχνικών έργων, τα οποία στη νέα τους μορφή γίνονται κτήμα των πολλών, με συνέπεια να αναπτύσσεται στο ευρύτερο κοινό η αγάπη για την ανάγνωση έργων λογοτεχνικών και συνάμα η κριτική ικανότητα μέσω της οποίας η τηλεοπτική πλέον παρουσίαση ερμηνεύει και αξιολογεί όχι πλέον τις εικόνες αλλά τα ίδια τα κείμενα.

Αν και η σχέση λογοτεχνίας και κινηματογράφου είναι παλαιότερη από αυτήν της τηλεόρασης, ωστόσο δεν μπορούμε να παραβλέψουμε, στην περίπτωση μεταφοράς των λογοτεχνικών κειμένων στην τηλεόραση, όπως άλλωστε και στον κινηματογράφο, πως προβλήματα που σχετίζονται με τη διασκευή των βιβλίων, με τη μεταφορά δηλ. ενός λογοτεχνικού κειμένου στη μικρή ή τη μεγάλη οθόνη, με την πιστή απόδοση του βιβλίου ή με την ελευθερία του σκηνοθέτη να «προδώσει» το αρχικό κείμενο ή να εισάγει νεωτερικά στοιχεία, αλλά και θέματα όπως η μετατροπή του κειμένου σε εικόνα και ο τρόπος θεώρησης του αφηγηματικού λόγου από τον σεναριογράφο, βρίσκονται πάντοτε στο προσκήνιο των συζητήσεων. Αυτό επισήμανε, ο συγγραφέας-σεναριογράφος, ακαδημαϊκός Θανάσης Βαλτινός, αναφερόμενος στον κινηματογράφο, σε στρογγυλό τραπέζι, που οργανώθηκε από το Εθνικό Κέντρο Βιβλίου το Σάββατο 27 Νοεμβρίου 2004 στην Αποθήκη Γ' του Διέκτου Θεσσαλονίκης, με θέμα «Από το βιβλίο στην οθόνη», τονίζοντας πως «Το σινεμά είναι μια τέχνη με αυτόνομη γλώσσα, ξεχωριστή από τη λογοτεχνία...Δανείσθηκε πολλά βιβλία και σχεδόν όλα τα κλασικά έργα έχουν μεταφερθεί στον κινηματογράφο. Αυτό το συμπεθεριό δεν είχε πάντα καλά αποτελέσματα. Το κοινό θεωρεί ότι το σινεμά και η λογοτεχνία είναι παραπλήσια πράγματα. Δεν είναι, όμως, έτσι. Σε ένα βιβλίο υπάρχουν πολλά πρόσωπα, στοχασμοί, περιστατικά που δεν μπορούν να χωρέσουν σε μια ταινία. Για παράδειγμα έχουν μεταφερθεί στον κινηματογράφο το «Πόλεμος και Ειρήνη» και το «Δρ. Ζιβάγκο». Οι ταινίες ήταν μέτριες ως κακές. Υπήρξαν όμως εξαιρετικά καλές ταινίες με πηγή την παρά-λογοτεχνία, όπως το φιλμ νουάρ. Δεν έχω δει καλή ταινία από ένα καλό μυθιστόρημα».¹¹ Είναι γεγονός πως έργα κλασικά όταν μεταφέρονται στην οθόνη δεν έχουν πάντοτε μια επιτυχημέ-

νη μεταφορά και αυτό οφείλεται σε πολλούς παράγοντες που συνδέονται με τον σεναριογράφο, τον σκηνοθέτη, τους ερμηνευτές, αλλά και την οπτική αντίληψη της πιστής ή μη μεταφοράς του. Ωστόσο, πέρα από τις αναγκαίες για τα χρονικά πλαίσια μιας κινηματογραφικής ή τηλεοπτικής παραγωγής συντομεύσεις γεγονότων ή διαλόγων ή οποιωνδήποτε παραλήψεων που γίνονται για την οικονομία της υπό νέα μορφή παραστατικότητα τους, έχουμε παραδείγματα υποδειγματικών μεταφορών λογοτεχνικών κειμένων στη μικρή ή μεγάλη οθόνη που γεννούν την αισθητική συγκίνηση και απόλαυση κατά τον ίδιο τρόπο με άλλες μορφές τέχνης. Ο τρόπος με τον οποίο ανταποκρινόμαστε σε θεατρικά και κινηματογραφικά έργα δεν είναι μόνο διανοητικός αλλά και συγκινησιακός, και οι συγκινήσεις των οποίων έχουμε εμπειρία συνδέονται με τα γεγονότα και τους χαρακτήρες των μυθοπλαστικών αφηγήσεων αλλά και με την υιοθέτηση μιας συγκεκριμένης προοπτικής, εξαρτώνται δηλ. «από το ότι βλέπουμε τα πράγματα από μια άλλη οπτική γωνία».¹²

Στην εποχή μας καλλιτέχνες από διαφορετικούς χώρους, όπως σεναριογράφοι, μουσικοί, σχεδιαστές και γραφίστες, ενδυματολόγοι κ.ά., συνεργάζονται για να προσφέρουν τις υπηρεσίες τους στη μαζική παραγωγή και μας δίνουν έργα τα οποία αποσκοπούν στην οπτική εμπειρία και ευχαρίστηση, έργα μυθοπλαστικά που είναι κωμικά ή τραγικά, πνευματώδη ή συγκινητικά, που ασκούν κοινωνική κριτική ή σκοπεύουν στην εμπορικότητα. Πολλές μορφές σύγχρονης τέχνης, όπως οι κινηματογραφικές ταινίες ή οι τηλεταινίες χρησιμοποιούν τις νέες τεχνολογίες και συνδέουν τις εικόνες με τα κείμενα.¹³ Ωστόσο οφείλουμε να επισημάνουμε εδώ τις διαφορές που υπάρχουν μεταξύ των κινηματογραφικών ταινιών και των τηλεταινιών, στις οποίες αναφέρεται ο Ted Cohen, σημειώνοντας πως τις πρώτες τις βλέπει ένα κοινό περιορισμένο, σε διαφορετικούς χώρους και χρόνους, ενώ τα τηλεοπτικά προγράμματα τα παρακολουθούν ταυτόχρονα εκατομμύρια άνθρωποι, ή σε άλλες περιπτώσεις μικρές ομάδες ατόμων σε διαφορετικούς χώρους, γι' αυτό και θεωρεί πως οι δύο αυτές μορφές τέχνης μαζικής παραγωγής έχουν διαφορετικές δυνατότητες για καλλιτεχνική αναπαράσταση, έκφραση και δομική ολοκλήρωση. Οπωσδήποτε οι κινηματογραφικές ταινίες έχουν κατ'

αυτόν δυνατότητες για κοντινά πλάνα, για χρήση του τοπίου, πολλών οπτικών, για σκηνές που απαιτούν γυρίσματα εκτός από το στούντιο, και διαφέρουν από τις θεατρικές παραστάσεις όπου κυριαρχούν οι ηθοποιοί και η σε συγκεκριμένο χρόνο πράξη τους, ενώ η τηλεόραση κυρίως αποβλέπει στο να αναδείξει τις μεταβαλλόμενες σχέσεις των χαρακτήρων τους οποίους το κοινό παρακολουθεί σε εβδομαδιαίες συνέχειες.¹⁴ Ο κινηματογράφος όπως και η ζωγραφική σχετίζονται αναμφίβολα με την οπτική μας εμπειρία και θεωρούνται τέχνες που συνδέονται με τη μίμηση και την αναπαράσταση χωρίς να αποκλείουν ωστόσο τη δημιουργικότητα του σκηνοθέτη και του σεναριογράφου. Ο κινηματογράφος ιδιαίτερα, μολονότι φαίνεται να συνδέεται με την φωτογραφία, έχει ένα δυναμικό χαρακτήρα και όπως ο γάλλος θεωρητικός και κριτικός του κινηματογράφου André Bazin γράφει «η φωτογραφία είναι μια ταπεινή τεχνική, υπό την έννοια ότι ο χαρακτήρας του στιγμιαίου την αναγκάζει να πιάνει τον χρόνο αποσπασματικά... το σινεμά αντιθέτως διαμορφώνει το αντικείμενο όπως αυτό υπάρχει στον χρόνο και επιπλέον δημιουργεί μια απεικόνιση της διάρκειας του αντικειμένου».¹⁵ Θεωρεί συνεπώς στενές τις σχέσεις του κινηματογράφου με τον ρεαλισμό, αν και ορισμένοι θεωρητικοί υποστηρίζουν πως ο κινηματογράφος μπορεί να ξεφύγει από την στενή του σχέση με τη πραγματικότητα και να γίνει μια μορφή τέχνης που να ενσωματώνει συμβολισμούς και νοήματα αλλά και μορφικές, συγκινησιακές και αισθητικές ποιότητες. Το ίδιο πιστεύω πως ισχύει και για την τηλεόραση η οποία στηρίζεται αναμφίβολα στον ρεαλισμό, τη μίμηση και την παραστατικότητα, έχει όμως τη δυνατότητα να υπηρετεί τους ίδιους στόχους με τις άλλες τέχνες που είναι κατ' εξοχήν εκφραστικές και προθεσιακές.

Ένα άλλο στοιχείο στο οποίο θα αναφερθώ είναι η σχέση σεναρίου και βιβλίου που είναι εξίσου σημαντική. Όπως σημειώνει ο Ντένης Γιάδης, που μίλησε στην συνάντηση που ανέφερα πιο πάνω,¹⁶ «η επιτυχία της απόδοσης εξαρτάται ωστόσο από το βιβλίο. Πολλά βιβλία της σύγχρονης δυτικής λογοτεχνίας αποτελούν από μόνα τους έτοιμα σενάρια, όπως ο Κώδικας ΝταΒίντσι. Το πρόβλημα με το σενάριο είναι ότι απαιτεί γεγονότα, περιγραφές. Τα βιβλία πολλές φορές, όμως, αφορούν στις σκέψεις των χαρακτήρων». Οπωσδήποτε,

η μετατροπή ενός δράματος, ή μυθιστορήματος, ακόμη και μιας βιογραφίας σε κινηματογραφική ή τηλεοπτική ταινία αφορά τα κριτήρια επιλογής του α' ή β' κειμένου, τον τρόπο ανάγνωσης και παρουσίασης, τον τόπο ή τον χώρο που στήνεται το σκηνικό, αλλά και τα πρόσωπα που επιλέγονται για να παρουσιάσουν τους αφηγηματικούς χαρακτήρες, τη μουσική επένδυση, τη σκηνογραφία και τη σκηνοθεσία, ενώ ο εντοπισμός και η εύρεση των λόγων επιτυχίας ή αποτυχίας το κείμενο συνδέονται με ποικίλους παράγοντες, όπως με την επιλογή των ηθοποιών, την ανθεκτικότητα της ταινίας στον χρόνο, την πιστότητα στη σκηνική προσαρμογή σε σχέση με το ιστορικό πλαίσιο της εποχής ή με τις προθέσεις του σκηνοθέτη ή του σεναριογράφου. Όπως έχει λεχθεί σε κάθε τέχνη καθοριστικός παράγοντας είναι ο δημιουργός, είτε είναι ο συγγραφέας ή ο συνθέτης, είτε είναι ο γλύπτης, ο ζωγράφος ή ο αρχιτέκτονας. Στον κινηματογράφο όμως, και κατ' επέκταση στην τηλεόραση, δεν μπορούμε να μιλάμε για ένα μόνο συγγραφέα ή δημιουργό μια και είναι τέχνη που στηρίζεται στα πολυμέσα,¹⁷ πράγμα που ισχύει εξίσου και για την τηλεόραση.

II. Ο τηλεοπτικός Καραγάτσης

Σε όσα ακολουθούν θα αναφερθώ στον τηλεοπτικό Καραγάτση (1908-1960), ο οποίος αναδεικνύει, όπως και άλλοι Έλληνες λογοτέχνες των οποίων τα έργα έχουν διασκευαστεί για την τηλεόραση, τις δύσκολες σχέσεις λογοτεχνίας και μεγάλης ή μικρής οθόνης, πράγμα που τόνισε γενικότερα, στην ίδια συζήτηση στην οποία αναφέρθηκα πιο πάνω, ο συγγραφέας Γιώργος Σκαμπαρδώνης επισημαίνοντας «Ένα βιβλίο δεν είναι έτοιμο σενάριο. Μετατρέποντας ένα κείμενο σε εικόνα διαπιστώνεις ότι τα πράγματα είναι δύσκολα. Είναι σαν να μεταφράζεις το Παπαδιαμάντη στα σερβο-κροατικά. Πίσω από κάθε βιβλίο υπάρχει ένας συγγραφέας, ο οποίος καταθέτει σε αυτό την ψυχή του, την βαθύτερη υπόστασή του. Ο λόγος, οι φράσεις σ' ένα βιβλίο δεν είναι μια απλή αφήγηση. Εξυπηρετούν την ευταξία του κειμένου. Όλα αυτά συνθέτουν τη μοναδικότητα του βιβλίου, τη μοναδικότητα του συγγραφέα. Ο σκηνοθέτης παραλαμβάνοντας ένα βιβλίο για να το κάνει ταινία δεν παραλαμβάνει ένα άδειο κέλυφος, αλλά ένα σύμπαν. Και κάθε σεναριογράφος αντιλαμβάνεται το κείμενο ενός βιβλίου διαφορετικά. Πρόκειται για μια δυναμική

σχέση, δεν υπάρχει μοναδική αντιστοίχιση μεταξύ βιβλίου και ταινίας. Αν ένα βιβλίο το πιάσουν δέκα σκηνοθέτες θα προκύψουν δέκα διαφορετικές ταινίες». ¹⁸

Μετά από όσα εισαγωγικά ελέχθησαν, θα επιχειρήσω μια καταγραφή των τηλεοπτικών μεταφορών μυθιστορημάτων και διηγημάτων του Καραγάτση που αναδεικνύουν τους προβληματισμούς που εξέθεσα στην εισαγωγή μου σχετικά με προβλήματα που αναδύονται από τις σχέσεις λογοτεχνίας, κινηματογράφου και τηλεόρασης, συγγραφέα, σεναριογράφου ή σκηνοθέτη, αλήθειας και πραγματικότητας, ιστορίας και κοινωνίας. Διηγηματογράφος και μυθιστοριογράφος από τους σημαντικότερους της γενιάς του '30, ο Μ. Καραγάτσης - το πραγματικό του όνομα Δημήτρης Ροδόπουλος- γεννήθηκε στην Αθήνα το 1908, σπούδασε στη Νομική Σχολή του Πανεπιστημίου Αθηνών και πέθανε σε ηλικία 52 ετών. Εμφανίστηκε στα γράμματα το 1928 μέσα από τις σελίδες της «Νέας Εστίας» με το διήγημα «Η Κυρία Νίτσα». Το πρώτο του βιβλίο ήταν το μυθιστόρημα «Ο Συνταγματάρχης Διάπκιν» (1933) και ακολούθησαν, μεταξύ άλλων, τα μυθιστορήματα «Γιούγκερμαν» (1940), «Ο Κοτζάμπασης του Καστρούργου» (1944), «Αίμα χαμένο και κερδισμένο» (1947), «Βασίλης Δάσκος» (1948), «Τα στερνά του Μίχαλου» (1949), «Ο Κίτρινος φάκελος» (1956), ορισμένα από τα οποία μεταφέρθηκαν με επιτυχία στη μικρή οθόνη. Έγραψε ακόμη διηγήματα, θεατρικά έργα, όπως τα «Μπαρ Ελδοράδο» (1946) και «Κάρμεν» (1948), καθώς και τον πρώτο τόμο της «Ιστορίας των Ελλήνων» (1952), ενώ το μυθιστόρημά του «Το 10» έμεινε ανολοκλήρωτο και εκδόθηκε μετά το θάνατό του. Επηρεασμένος από τους μεγάλους γάλλους συγγραφείς του 19^{ου} αιώνα, Λέοντα Τολστόι, Εμίλ Ζολά, Ονορέ ντε Μπαλζάκ και Γουσταύο Φλομπέρ, ο Καραγάτσης έγραψε μυθιστορήματα που στηρίζονται στη σύγκρουση έρωτα και θανάτου, σύγκρουση που ανήκει στα πιο σημαντικά αρχέτυπα του ελληνικού πολιτισμού, ενώ δέχθηκε παράλληλα την επίδραση των ψυχαναλυτικών θεωριών που αναπτύχθηκαν στη Δυτική Ευρώπη κατά τις αρχές του 20^{ου} αιώνα και ιδιαίτερα της φροϋδικής θεωρίας για τη σημασία της libido. ¹⁹ Στα βιβλία του Καραγάτση, όπως έχει γραφεί, «οι ήρωες δυναστεύονται από το γενετήσιο ένστικτο, το οποίο γίνεται η μοίρα, η ανάγκη, αυτό που καθορίζει

την ψυχοβιολογική τους συγκρότηση». ²⁰ Στα έργα του μιλάει για «την χαρά της γενετήσιας ηδονής, το θεμέλιο τούτο της ανθρώπινης ευτυχίας» αλλά και για την τραγική ανθρώπινη μοίρα. ²¹ Δεν υπάρχει σ' αυτά ρομαντισμός ούτε εξιδανίκευση, αλλά ένας έντονος ρεαλισμός και η διάθεση να παρασταθούν ανθρώπινοι τύποι «αχαλίνωτοι, φθαρμένοι, ξεπεσμένοι, καταπονημένοι, άσωτοι και αδίστακτοι», ²² να αναδειχθεί ο έρωτας ως κινητήρια δύναμη της ζωής και το νόημα του τραγικού ηδονισμού, που σπρώχνει όμως τον άνθρωπο στον ξεπεσμό και την αυτοκαταστροφή. Ανατόμος της ανθρώπινης ύπαρξης, οξύτατος παρατηρητής της πραγματικότητας, αλλά και δυναστικός αφηγητής, όπως έχει χαρακτηριστεί από μελετητές του, ο Καραγάτσης θεμελιώνει πραγματολογικά την αφήγησή του στα έργα του, πράγμα που αφορά και τα τρία βασικά αφηγηματικά στοιχεία: τους μυθιστορηματικούς χαρακτήρες, την ιστορία/πλοκή και το μυθιστορηματικό σκηνικό. Αυτή η πραγματολογική θεμελίωση της αφήγησης χαρακτηρίζει το έργο του από τη νεανική μέχρι την ώριμη συγγραφική του περίοδο, όπως και η επιλογή του χώρου ο οποίος συνδέεται με τον αστικό περιβάλλον, το οποίο βέβαια εντάσσεται σ' ένα ευρύτερο φυσικό χώρο, εντός του οποίου λειτουργούν οι ρεαλιστικές συμβάσεις και αναπτύσσονται οι ανθρώπινες συμπεριφορές προσώπων που κυριαρχούνται από τα πάθη τους. ²³ Ο Καραγάτσης είχε επίσης την πρόθεση να αποκαλύψει με τα έργα του «ένα κόσμο που πεθαίνει», να ασχοληθεί με τον άνθρωπο ως μονάδα αλλά και με σύγχρονά του κοινωνικά προβλήματα, να ασκήσει κριτική στην ιστορία και στη κοινωνία. Αν και παραμένει ο μυθοπλάστης που «εγκιβωτίζει» μέσα στο κείμενο τον ίδιο του τον εαυτό και τη δική του πραγματικότητα, ²⁴ ωστόσο ο Καραγάτσης με το έργο του αποκαλύπτεται παράλληλα ως «επαρκής απομνημονευματογράφος» της εποχής του, και δίνει στην νεοελληνική πεζογραφία έναν ισχυρό τόνο κοσμοπολιτισμού σε εποχή που κυριαρχούσε το ηθογραφικό και το ιστορικό μυθιστόρημα, καθιερώνοντας το αστικό μυθιστόρημα. ²⁵

Από τα πρώτα μυθιστορήματα του Καραγάτση που μεταφέρθηκαν στη μικρή οθόνη, κατά την περίοδο 1974-81, ήταν «Γιούγκερμαν» και «Ο συνταγματάρχης Διάπκιν» στα οποία ο συγγραφέας χρησιμοποιεί την ιστορία υπαρκτών προσώπων ως αφηγηματικό υλικό,

επιλογή που του δημιούργησε προβλήματα στις σχέσεις του με τα πρόσωπα αυτά ή με τους συγγενείς του. Πράγματι, ο Μ. Καραγάτσης, συνδέοντας την αλήθεια με τη θεωρητική αντίληψη του αντικειμένου, την ιστορική ή κοινωνική πραγματικότητα με κοσμοπολιτικά στοιχεία, ορισμένες φορές χρησιμοποιεί για ήρωες των μυθιστορημάτων του ξένους πρόσφυγες στην Ελλάδα, ιδιότυπα προσαρμοσμένους στο μεσογειακό περιβάλλον²⁶ αλλά και πρόσωπα του στενού οικογενειακού ή φιλικού κύκλου ή ακόμη της ελληνικής κοινωνίας που τα θυμάται από τα παιδικά ή νεανικά του χρόνια ή τα έχει συναντήσει και συναναστραφεί σε διάφορες ελληνικές πόλεις στις οποίες έζησε, όπως η Δάρισα και ο Πειραιάς. Χαρακτηριστικό γνώρισμα των έργων αυτών που ήδη αναφέρθηκαν είναι η επισήμανση μιας αλήθειας που αφορά γενικά όλους τους μετανάστες και πρόσφυγες, «τους άλλους» γενικότερα, και σχετίζεται με τη διαπίστωση ότι η προσαρμογή στο νέο τόπο είναι πάντοτε δύσκολη, αλλά και με την προβολή της εθνικής ταυτότητας που αναδεικνύεται μέσα από παράθεση εθνικών χαρακτηριστικών διαφορών λαών που ανευρίσκονται διάσπαρτα κατά την αφήγηση, όπως αυτό είναι ιδιαίτερα φανερό λ.χ. στον «Συνταγματάρχη Διάπκιν»²⁷ και στον «Γιούγκερμαν», όπου τα κύρια πρόσωπα της αφήγησης είναι ένας λευκο-ρώσος και ένας γερμανο-φινλανδός, αντίστοιχα, αλλά και στην «Χίμαιρα» έργο που δημοσιεύθηκε σε συνέχειες το 1936 και κυκλοφόρησε σε βιβλίο την ίδια χρονιά, στο οποίο κυριαρχεί η γυναικεία μορφή της Μαρίνας, Γαλλίδας από την Rouen, παντρεμένης με Έλληνα ναυτικό –εφοπλιστή, που ζώντας πλέον ως Ελληνίδα στη Σύρο τελικά παρατηρεί τους Έλληνες ως «ο άλλος» και αναδεικνύει την αποτυχία της να «εγκλιματισθεί» στην ελληνική κοινωνία. Ο *Συνταγματάρχης Διάπκιν*, η *Χίμαιρα* και ο *Γιούγκερμαν*, αποτελούν ως γνωστό μια τριλογία με τίτλο «*Εγκλιματισμός κάτω από τον Φοίβο*», και έχουν κοινό θέμα, δηλ. την αποτυχημένη προσπάθεια τριών ξένων να προσαρμοστούν στην Ελλάδα του '30. Σε αυτά τα μυθιστορήματα, όπου οι ήρωες αγωνίζονται και ηττώνται και είναι εμφανής ο νόμος της τραγικότητας του ανθρώπου που αντιστέκεται στη μοίρα του, διακρίνουν μελετητές του έργου του ένα είδος αποξένωσης αλλά και το πορτραίτο του συγγραφέα, ο οποίος απεικονίζει όχι μόνο «τον άλλο» αλλά και τον «εαυτό του»,²⁸ αφού από νωρίς αισθάνθηκε «ξένος» στο περιβάλλον

του, ενώ παράλληλα προβάλλεται η ιδέα της εθνικής ταυτότητας, η ελληνικότητα, που απασχολεί νεοέλληνες πεζογράφους αλλά και φιλοσόφους της γενιάς του '30, καθώς και η ιδέα της ευρωπαϊκής ταυτότητας και της οικουμενικότητας.²⁹ Ωστόσο οι χαρακτήρες του Καραγάτση σε αυτά τα τρία μυθιστορήματα που αναφέρθηκαν, αλλά και σε άλλα έργα του, οφείλουμε να πούμε πως ωθούνται στο μοιραίο τέλος μιας αυτοτιμωρούμενης ύπαρξης από μια δύναμη που με δυσκολία καταλαβαίνουν και δεν μπορούν να ελέγξουν, προς μια πλήρωση που ο περίγυρος τους αρνείται σε αυτούς. Και ο περίγυρος αυτός είναι πρωτίστως η Ελλάδα και η Ελληνική κοινωνία του 1930. Η επιλογή, συνεπώς, από τον Καραγάτση ξένων ως πρωταγωνιστών των μυθιστορημάτων ή διηγημάτων του δεν πρέπει να μας παραπλανά, γιατί τα κείμενά του, που δείχνουν έναν κόσμο συμβάσεων που εμπλέκονται με τις μυθοπλαστικές συμβάσεις, αφορούν κυρίως την Ελλάδα της εποχής 1919-1930,³⁰ και μέσα από την ανάδειξη των διαφορετικών ταυτοτήτων και των εθνικών χαρακτήρων επιδιώκει να δείξει, εκτός από την ανάδειξη των ηθών, και την ένταση των παθών που κατατρύχουν την ανθρώπινη ύπαρξη. Έτσι αναδεικνύεται η ψυχογραφική αλλά και αφηγηματική ικανότητα του συγγραφέα ο οποίος συνδέοντας τη λογική με τη μορφοποιήσιμη φαντασία, τον λόγο με το συναίσθημα, αναπαριστά ενδεχομένως στα έργα του όχι μόνο χαρακτήρες αλλά και τον ίδιο του τον εαυτό, ενώ αναδεικνύει γεγονότα που έζησε και ανέπλεσε με τη φαντασία του όπως η πρωτοφανής καταστροφή στα Μικρασιατικά παράλια που έφερε κύματα ξεριζωμένων ανθρώπων στη Ελλάδα και ανέδειξε τα προβλήματα της μετανάστευσης και του εγκλιματισμού σε νέους τόπους.³¹

Τα μυθιστορήματα του Καραγάτση «Γιούγκερμαν» και «Ο συνταγματάρχης Διάπκιν» υπήρξαν ανάμεσα στα καταξιωμένα λογοτεχνικά κείμενα που διασκεύαστηκαν για τις ανάγκες της μικρής οθόνης κατά την περίοδο 1974-81, όταν δημιουργήθηκε με την μεταπολίτευση και με την αποκατάσταση της δημοκρατίας και την κατάργηση της λογοκρισίας, «μια μικρή πολιτιστική αναγέννηση» που είχε γενικότερο αντίκτυπο και στα προγράμματα της τηλεόρασης.³² Πράγματι, τα λογοτεχνικά κείμενα του Καραγάτση αλλά και άλλων κορυφαίων νεοελλήνων λογοτεχνών, όπως ο Αλέξανδρος Παπαδιαμάντης, ο Νίκος Καζαντζάκης, ο Στρατής Μυριβήλης, ο Άγγελος

Τερζάκης, που διασκευάστηκαν κατά τη περίοδο αυτή και έδωσαν, λιγότερο επιτυχημένες τηλεταινίες, είχαν σημαντική απήχηση στο κοινό και ευεργετικές συνέπειες στην προσπάθεια ανανεωτικής αλλαγής της νεοελληνική τηλεόρασης. Ο «Γιούγκερμαν», αν και είναι το τρίτο που εντάχθηκαν εκ των υστέρων από τον Καραγάτση σε μια τριλογία με τίτλο *«Εγκληματισμός κάτω από τον Φοίβο»*, αφού κυκλοφορήθηκε σε σειρές το 1938 και αυτοτελώς το 1940, υπήρξε το πρώτο μυθιστόρημα του Καραγάτση που διασκευάστηκε για την τηλεόραση σε σενάριο Βαγγέλη Γκούφα και σκηνοθεσία Βασίλη Γεωργιάδη και θεωρείται ένα από τα ωραιότερα σίριαλ που αυτός παρήγαγε. Κοινωνική σειρά εποχής, σε 140 επεισόδια των 30', προβλήθηκε από την ΤΕΝΕΔ το 1976 και διήρκεσε μέχρι την Παρασκευή 5 Αυγούστου 1977. Χαρακτηρίζεται ως «μια τολμηρή τοιχογραφία της ελληνικής κοινωνίας η οποία διαγράφεται σταθερά μέσα από την ιστορία ενός δυναμικού πρόσφυγα» με τον Αλέκο Αλεξανδράκη στον κεντρικό ρόλο και τη παρουσία πολλών άλλων αξιόλογων ηθοποιών.³³ Είχε προηγηθεί η κατά το 1975 προβολή του διασκευασμένου μυθιστορήματος του Νίκο Καζαντζάκη «Ο Χριστός ξανασταυρώνεται», το οποίο κάτω από τις οδηγίες του Βασίλη Γεωργιάδη αλλά και εξ αιτίας άλλων παραγόντων, όπως η πλοκή, το πολιτικό κλίμα της εποχής, τα ουμανιστικά του μηνύματα αλλά και οι ηθοποιοί, είχε σημειώσει μεγάλη ακροαματική επιτυχία.³⁴ Η μικρότερη επιτυχία που είχε ο τηλεοπτικός «Γιούγκερμαν» σε σχέση με το διασκευασμένο έργο του Καζαντζάκη αποδίδεται στο γεγονός ότι το έργο αυτό είχε πολλούς χαρακτήρες οι οποίοι αποσυντόνιζαν, εξαιτίας των μικρών τους ιστοριών, την κεντρική ιστορία, η οποία περιστρεφόταν γύρω από το πρόσωπο το Γιούγκερμαν.³⁵ Ο Γιούγκερμαν, που δημοσιεύθηκε σε συνέχειες στη *Νέα Εστία* το 1938, εκδόθηκε το 1940, και εκτός από τις κριτικές του Πέτρου Χάρη στην *Νέα Εστία* και του Γιάννη Χατζίνη στη *Πνευματική Ζωή*, είχε και δυσμενείς κριτικές στις εφημερίδες λόγω της ελευθεροστομίας και της θεματικής του. Κατά την υπόθεση του έργου ο Βάσια Γιούγκερμαν, πρώην ίλαρχος του τσαρικού στρατού, άνθρωπος με χαρακτήρα κυνικό, ηδονιστής και σαρκαστικός, ακούραστος εραστής και δολοφόνος κάποτε στη Χερσόνα, φθάνει μια μέρα του 1820 στον Πειραιά ως πρόσφυγας και

κατορθώνει να ανέλθει κοινωνικά και οικονομικά στην κοινωνία του Πειραιά της εποχής αυτής, άνοδος που δεν μπορεί να καλύψει ωστόσο τη μοναξιά της ψυχής του. Ο Γιούγκερμαν, ο οποίος προσπαθεί να στεριώσει σε ένα άγνωστο και εχθρικό κόσμο, θεωρείται ένας από «τους πιο ολοκληρωμένους, δυναμικούς έως τιτανικούς μυθιστορηματικούς χαρακτήρες του Καραγάτση» και έχει υποστηριχθεί πως το έργο αυτό παρουσιάζει υπαρκτά πρότυπα που συνδέονται με προσωπικές του καταστάσεις αλλά και με τον αφηγηματικό νατουραλισμό του συγγραφέα.³⁶

Την ίδια περίπου εποχή, και συγκεκριμένα το 1979, διασκευάστηκε για την τηλεόραση ένα από τα σημαντικότερα μυθιστορήματα του Καραγάτση «Ο συνταγματάρχης Δάπκιν», έργο που έχει χαρακτηριστεί ως «δράμα που μας συγκινεί βαθιά και πλουτίζει την πείρα μας» το οποίο συνδέεται με την έναρξη της ώριμης συγγραφικής περιόδου του Καραγάτση, αφού δημοσιεύθηκε σε πρώτη μορφή το 1933. Το πρώτο επεισόδιο της τηλεοπτικής διασκευής του μυθιστορήματος αυτού, που χαρακτηρίζεται ως κοινωνική σειρά, προβλήθηκε από την ΤΕΝΕΔ την Τετάρτη 3 Ιανουαρίου 1979, σε σενάριο Βαγγέλη Γκούφα και σκηνοθεσία Βασίλη Γεωργιάδη, και μολονότι μακρόσυρτη, αφού είχε 48 επεισόδια διάρκειας 45', θεωρείται μια καλή διασκευή, «με έμπειρη σκηνοθεσία και επιτυχημένο κάστινγκ που έγραψε ιστορία στην ελληνική τηλεόραση». Η επιτυχία της σειράς οφείλεται στη δύναμη του θέματος και στην πλοκή του αλλά και στη σκηνοθεσία και στους ηθοποιούς που κάλυψαν τις αδυναμίες μιας φτωχής παραγωγής.³⁷ Και σ' αυτό το έργο η λογοτεχνία συμπλέκεται με την ιστορία, η μυθοπλασία με τον αφηγηματικό νατουραλισμό. Είναι ένα έργο όπου είναι εμφανής η σχέση της μυθοπλασίας με την αντικειμενική πραγματικότητα. Ο συγγραφέας αφηγείται σ' αυτό τις περιπέτειες ενός ξεριζωμένου, αξιωματικού του ρωσικού ιππικού που έρχεται στην Ελλάδα, θεοφτωχός αλλά αξιοπρεπής, επιμένοντας στις σεξουαλικές εκφάνσεις της εκφυλισμένης ψυχοσύνθεσης του και αναδεικνύοντας τη μοναξιά της ψυχής του. Ο Διάπκιν, ρώσος ευγενής, πρώην συνταγματάρχης του τσαρικού στρατού που πέφτει θύμα των κοινωνικών μεταβολών μετά την επανάσταση στην Ρωσία, βρίσκεται στην Αθήνα και στη συνέχεια στη Δάρισα, όπου προσπαθεί

να αρχίσει μια καινούργια ζωή. Η προσαρμογή στο νέο τόπο είναι δύσκολη. Ο Διάπκιν, προσωπικότητα αντιφατική και πολυσύνθετη δεν ξεχνά την πατρίδα του και ξεχωρίζει ανάμεσα στους Δαρισινούς για τις παράξενες συνήθειές του και τον αλκοολισμό του. Η προσπάθεια να ενσωματωθεί στην ελληνική κοινωνία αποτυγχάνει μια και τον κυνηγούν εφιαλτικές αναμνήσεις του παρελθόντος που τον κάνουν να αυτοκτονήσει στον Πηνειό, ντυμένο με την μεγάλη στολή του τσαρικού στρατού.

Τα ίδια χαρακτηριστικά επαναλαμβάνονται και σε πολυάριθμα διηγήματα και αρκετά μυθιστορήματα του, ιδιαίτερα στα «Στερνά του Γιούγκερμαν» (1941) και στη «Χίμαιρα», ιστορία του πάθους της Μαρίνας Ρείζη όπου συμπλέκονται και πάλι ο έρωτας και το πάθος. Ο τηλεοπτικός Καραγάτσης του *Γιούγκερμαν* (1976) και του *Συνταγματάρχη Διάπκιν* (1979), βασίζεται σε ιστορικές υποθέσεις που πραγματεύονται την περιπέτεια έκπτωτων αξιωματούχων. Και οι δύο αυτές τηλεοπτικές παραγωγές, διασκευές των μυθιστορημάτων του, θεωρούνται πως ακολουθούν το μοτίβο της έμμεσης αντικομμουνιστικής τηλεοπτικής προπαγάνδας που είχε αναπτυχθεί κατά την περίοδο της χούντας, με έργα όπως ο «Άγνωστος πόλεμος» ή οι «επικές» ταινίες του Τζέιμς Πάρις. Από ιδεολογική άποψη αξιοποιείται σε αυτές ο κεντρικός άξονας των μυθιστορημάτων με την ανάδειξη των οδυνηρών εξελίξεων στη ζωή σημαντικών προσώπων μετά από κοινωνικοπολιτικές αλλαγές σε εποχή που κυριαρχεί το αίτημα για αποχουντοποίηση και για αναδιανομή εξουσίας και πλούτου για όλες τις παραγωγικές τάξεις. Από αισθητική πλευρά οι τηλεοπτικές αυτές σειρές διακρίνονται από την προσεγμένη ενδυματολογία και σκηνογραφία, από την μετάδοση του κλίματος της εποχής αλλά και από την καλή επιλογή των κινηματογραφικών ηθοποιών που είναι αναγνωρίσιμοι στο σύνολο των τηλεθεατών.³⁸ Ο Καραγάτσης αναδεικνύεται σε αυτά ως «ιστορικός της ιδιωτικής ζωής», και κατά το παράδειγμα του Zola, περιορίζει τα ρομαντικά στοιχεία, δίνει μια ρεαλιστική αναπαράσταση της καθημερινής ζωής. Ακολουθώντας άλλωστε μια βασική αρχή του κώδικα της μοντέρνας μυθοπλασίας, σκοτώνει τους ήρωες του, δηλ. «τους υπέρμετρα μεγενθυμένους χαρακτήρες, που είναι μαριονέτες μεγενθυμένοι σε γίγαντες».³⁹ Στα έργα αυτά προβάλλει το

θέμα της αλήθειας έντονα αλλά και αναδεικνύεται ο Καραγάτσης ως «ηθολόγος που δεν υποφέρει την αδικία, την παλιανθρωπιά, τον εξευτελισμό του ανθρώπου μπροστά στο συμφέρον».

Θα αναφερθώ στη συνέχεια στο «Το Μυθιστόρημα των 4», που γράφηκε ως γνωστόν εκ περιτροπής από τους γνωστότερους μυθιστοριογράφους της Γενιάς του '30, τους Στρατή Μυριβήλη, Μ. Καραγάτση, Άγγελο Τερζάκη και Ηλία Βενέζη. Το μυθιστόρημα αυτό δημοσιεύθηκε την άνοιξη του 1958 στην εφημερίδα «Ακρόπολις» σε συνέχειες με τεράστια επιτυχία και παρουσιάζει ιδιαίτερο ενδιαφέρον για τον μελετητή και τον κριτικό του έργου των τεσσάρων συγγραφέων αφού αποτελεί συμβολή στην αφηγηματική τέχνη και τεχνική.⁴⁰ Οι τέσσερις γνωστοί συγγραφείς συνθέσαν μια αφηγηματική ιστορία η οποία παρουσιάζει αρκετές δυσκολίες, αφού συνδέει διαφορετικά στυλ ή είδη γραφής (λ.χ. ρεαλιστικό-λυρικό) και ανόμοιους τύπους γραφής (όπως ο εμπειρικός ή ιδεαλιστικός, ο κοινωνικός ή αισθησιοκρατικός, ο αισιόδοξος ή πεσιμιστικός).⁴¹ Σ' αυτήν την ιστορία προβάλλεται η Νινέλα, μια χορεύτρια που στα χρόνια της Κατοχής ζει ένα μεγάλο και άτυχο έρωτα με ένα Ιταλό, τον Αμενταίο Μαντσίνι, τον οποίο ουδέποτε εμπιστεύθηκε απόλυτα και πάντοτε αναρωτιόταν αν την αγαπούσε αληθινά. Μετά πολλές περιπέτειες η Νινέλα θα πάρει την απάντησή της, όταν θα αποκαλυφθεί η ελληνική καταγωγή του Αμενταίο με αποτέλεσμα αυτός να αλλάξει θρήσκευμα, να επιλέξει την ελληνική υπηκοότητα και να πάρει το όνομα του πατέρα του. Και σ' αυτό το μυθιστόρημα αναγνωρίζουμε το συνειδησιακό πρόβλημα του Αμενταίο ο οποίος ψάχνει απεγνωσμένα για την εθνική του ταυτότητα, που την ανακαλύπτει μέσω της Νινέλας, η οποία ψάχνει και αυτή για την ουσιαστική ταυτότητά της. «Το μυθιστόρημα των Τεσσάρων», στο οποίο η συμβολή του Καραγάτση υπήρξε θετική από την άποψη της δημιουργίας νέων χαρακτήρων αλλά και της αναβάθμισης των υπαρχόντων⁴² θα προσελκύσει επίσης το ενδιαφέρον της τηλεόρασης η οποία θα δώσει ένα κοινωνικό σίριαλ εποχής σε 13 επεισόδια των 45' που προβλήθηκαν από την ΤΕΝΕΔ με ημερομηνία έναρξης την Τετάρτη 7 Ιανουαρίου 1981 σε σενάριο Γαλάτειας Σαράντη και Κωστή Ζώη ο οποίος άλλωστε σκηνοθέτησε την τηλεταινία.

Όψιμο δείγμα «πατριωτικού» σίριαλ έχει χαρακτηριστεί η παραγωγή αυτή σε μια εποχή που αλλάζουν ριζικά οι απαιτήσεις του τηλεοπτικού κοινού τόσο σε αισθητικό όσο και σε πολιτικό επίπεδο. Αξιοποιώντας τον πατριωτισμό των τεσσάρων κορυφαίων της γενιάς του '30, η σειρά αυτή αναδεικνύει μια διαφορετική πλευρά του Β' Παγκοσμίου Πολέμου και της Αντίστασης, ενός θέματος που χειριζόταν και προωθούσε αποκλειστικά η Αριστερά.⁴³ Ήταν μια από τις τηλεταινίες που προβλήθηκαν λίγους μήνες πριν από στην «εποχή της αλλαγής», όταν μετά τις εκλογές της 18^{ης} Οκτωβρίου 1981, πραγματοποιείται συνένωση των δύο κρατικών καναλιών αλλαγή των διευθυντικών στελεχών και δημιουργείται κλίμα ανανεωτικό παρόμοιο με αυτό της μεταπολίτευσης.

Ένα άλλο έργο του Καραγάτση, που προσήλκυσε το τηλεοπτικό ενδιαφέρον, είναι «Ο Κίτρινος Φάκελος», δίτομο αστυνομικού χαρακτήρα «μεταμυθιστόρημα» με σημαντικό ψυχαναλυτικό υπόβαθρο,⁴⁴ που κυκλοφορήθηκε το 1956, την χρονιά κατά την οποία ο συγγραφέας έπαθε σοβαρή καρδιακή προσβολή. Είναι άλλωστε το τελευταίο και πιο σύνθετο μυθιστόρημα του Καραγάτση. Αναδεικνύει την ιστορία του Μάνου Τασάκου, λογοτέχνη και δικηγόρου, που βρίσκεται νεκρός έχοντας υπογράψει ένα μονολεκτικό σημείωμα με τη λέξη «αυτοκτονώ». Σημαντικό στοιχείο στο μυθιστόρημα αυτό είναι ότι στηρίζεται στο περιεχόμενο ενός κίτρινου φακέλου που δεκάξι χρόνια μετά την αυτοκτονία του Τασάκου παραδίδει στον Καραγάτση η ερωμένη του αυτόχειρα Μαρία Ρούσση. Μέσα από τα χειρόγραφα του ημιτελούς αυτοβιογραφικού βιβλίου του Τασάκου, που έχει τον τίτλο «Θέσεις κι αντιθέσεις», αλλά και από τις αφηγήσεις της Μαρίας Ρούσση, ο Καραγάτσης συνθέτει σιγά-σιγά τη ζωή του Μάνου Τασάκου, μιας «σατανικής προσωπικότητας», και την πορεία ενός ερωτικού τριγώνου που σχηματίστηκε ανάμεσα σ' αυτόν, τον καλύτερο φίλο του, διάσημο νομπελίστα συγγραφέα Κωστή Ρούσση, και τη γυναίκα του Μαρία. Η ιστορία καταλήγει με τον θάνατο του ήρωα,⁴⁵ μοναχικού άνδρα, αρχοντικής καταγωγής και αδιόρθωτου γυναικά, που επέλεξε να πεθάνει από αιμορραγία μετά τον τραυματισμό του από την Μαρία, που τον τραυμάτισε για λόγους αντιζηλίας, και επειδή ο ίδιος ήθελε το μοιραίο, γιατί γνώριζε πως έπασχε από ανίατη ασθένεια. Αστικό μυθιστόρημα με μορφή αστυνομικού, διακρίνεται

για τον λογικό έλεγχο της μυθοπλασίας.⁴⁶ Ως γοητευτική έχει κριθεί η διασκευή του μυθιστορήματος αυτού το οποίο προβλήθηκε σε σενάριο Βαγγέλη Γκούφα και σκηνοθεσία Κώστα Κουτσομύτη, σε σειρά 39 επεισοδίων των 45' από το ΑΝΤ1, με ημερομηνία έναρξης την Δευτέρα 1 Οκτωβρίου 1990. Θεωρήθηκε ως ένας από τους πρώτους πειραματισμούς της νεοσύστατης ιδιωτικής τηλεόρασης να ανταγωνιστεί την κρατική, με μια μεγάλη και πολυέξοδη παραγωγή. Η επιτυχία της σειράς, από πλευράς τηλεθέασης, οφείλεται στον υψηλό προϋπολογισμό παραγωγής, την επιλογή καταξιωμένων ηθοποιών, στην εμπειρία του τηλεοπτικού σεναριογράφου Βαγγέλη Γκούφα αλλά και στην υποβλητική σκηνογραφία και ενδυματολογία υπό την έμπειρη σκηνοθεσία του Κώστα Κουτσομύτη, ο οποίος ανέδειξε τους χαρακτήρες με μια οπτικά μελαγχολική και λυρική διάθεση, τονίζοντας την πλαστικότητα των πλάνων και τις ευαίσθητες ερμηνείες. Ο ίδιος την ίδια εποχή είχε σκηνοθετήσει με επιτυχία *Τα Βαμμένα κόκκινα μαλλιά* του Κώστα Μουρσελά (1992) και την *Πρόβα νυφικού* της Ντόρας Γιαννακοπούλου (1995).⁴⁷

Αν και ο Καραγάτσης θεωρείται κυρίως ως μυθιστοριογράφος, ωστόσο δεν μπορεί να αγνοηθεί και το διηγηματογραφικό του έργο το οποίο περιέχεται στις συλλογές «Το συναξάρι των αμαρτωλών», «Η λιτανεία τω ασεβών», «Νυχτερινή ιστορία», «Πυρετός», «Το νερό της βροχής», «Το μεγάλο συναξάρι» και «Η μεγάλη λιτανεία». Σε αυτές τις συλλογές διηγημάτων διαπιστώνεται ποικιλία θεμάτων και γεγονότων, σκιαγράφηση προσώπων και παθητική διάθεση ερωτισμού, αλλά και συνταίριασμα της αληθοφάνειας με την πείρα και τη δημιουργική φαντασία.⁴⁸ Ήταν φυσικό συνεπώς να γίνουν τηλεοπτικές διασκευές και διηγημάτων του Καραγάτση από την ελληνική τηλεόραση που έχουν κριθεί ως αρκετά επιτυχείς. «Το μπουρίνι» είναι διασκευή της ομότιτλης νουβέλας του Μ. Καραγάτση, που γράφτηκε την εποχή της Κατοχής, και είναι κοινωνικό σίριαλ εποχής σε 5 επεισόδια των 45', παραγωγή της ΕΤ2 που προβλήθηκε στις 28 Ιανουαρίου 1987, σε διασκευή Αντώνη Σιμιτζή και σκηνοθεσία Γιάννη Διαμαντόπουλου. Χαρακτηρίζεται ως «ατμοσφαιρική απόδοση της νουβέλας του Καραγάτση, που εκτυλίσσεται στο θεσσαλικό κάμπο στις αρχές του αιώνα, στην οποία κυριαρχεί το έντονο ερωτικό στοιχείο και οι κοινωνικές αντιθέσεις των δύο τάξεων, των κολίγων και

των τσιφλικάδων, που αναδεικνύονται μέσα από τη δίκη του νεαρού κολίγου που καταδικάζεται σε θάνατο, παρά την αθωότητά του, για να μην βλαφτεί η υπόληψη ενός μεγαλοτσιφλικά της Θεσσαλίας. Θεωρείται επίσης ως «καλή αναπαράσταση εποχής, με υποβλητική μουσική και επιτυχημένο κάστινγκ», συστατικά σημαντικά της επιτυχίας, και υπήρξε μια επιτυχημένη σειρά, η οποία αξιοποίησε την οπτική του Καραγάτση για το θέμα της αστικής διαφθοράς.

«Το νερό της βροχής», διασκευή της ομότιτλης νουβέλας του Μ. Καραγάτση, ως τηλεταινία διάρκειας 50', προβλήθηκε για πρώτη φορά την Πέμπτη 2 Νοεμβρίου 1983. Χαρακτηρίζεται ως σίριαλ της «αλλαγής», και δείχνει τη συλλογική στροφή της τηλεόρασης και της κινηματογραφίας προς τα κοινωνικά θέματα. Παραγωγή της ΕΡΤ σε σενάριο της Φρίντας Διάπλα, γνωστής για τις προοδευτικές κοινωνικές της απόψεις και την πρωτοπόρα παρέμβασή της στα κινηματογραφικά δρώμενα της Ελλάδας, και του Κυριάκου Αγγελάκου, παρουσιάζει την ιστορία ενός ερωτικού τριγώνου, που το αποτελούν ένας φαρμακοποιός, μια εφησυχασμένη σύζυγος και μια φιλόδοξη ερωμένη σε μια μικρή βιομηχανική επαρχιακή πόλη,⁴⁹ και αξιοποιεί την οπτική του Καραγάτση πάνω στις διαπροσωπικές σχέσεις των απόμων αλλά και την ψυχογραφική του ικανότητα.

Ο Καραγάτσης εμπνέει ωστόσο και νέους σεναριογράφους, αφού το σενάριο με τίτλο «Μοναχική βροχή» του Νικόλαου Μίχα, που προέκυψε από τα διηγήματα του Καραγάτση «Το νερό της βροχής» και «Η μοναξιά», συλλογή μυθιστορημάτων που κυκλοφορήθηκε το 1950, του χάρισαν πρόσφατα το Βραβείο Διασκευασμένου Σεναρίου για ταινία μικρού μήκους του 2008 σε διαγωνισμό που δημιουργήθηκε πριν από τέσσερα χρόνια με θεσμοθέτη του Βραβείου τον Πέτρο Μάρκαρη, πρόεδρο της κριτικής επιτροπής και πρόεδρο του Εθνικού Κέντρου Βιβλίου. Ο σεναριογράφος τιμήθηκε στη Δράμα, στη διάρκεια του Φεστιβάλ Ταινιών Μικρού Μήκους Δράμας «για τον συνδυασμό της πλοκής των δύο διηγημάτων σε ένα ενιαίο σενάριο και για την ικανότητα του να μεταφέρει την εποχή των διηγημάτων του Μ. Καραγάτση στη σημερινή, χωρίς η τολμηρότητα των διασκευαστικών λύσεων που δοκίμασε να αλλοιώσει το πνεύμα του».⁵⁰

Με αφορμή την ανάδειξη του 2008 ως έτους Καραγάτση, το 2007 έγιναν ωστόσο και δύο νέες παραγωγές έργων του, ο «Γιούγκερμαν»

και το «10». Η κριτική δεν υπήρξε ιδιαίτερα ευνοϊκή με την νέα παραγωγή του Γιούγκερμαν και πράγματι, παρά τη σκηνοθεσία, τα κουστούμια και τις εντυπωσιακές εξωτερικές λήψεις, που απέδιδαν το κλίμα της εποχής, το έργο δεν είχε ακροαματικότητα, γεγονός που οφείλεται κατά την κριτική στο ότι οι ηθοποιοί δεν κατόρθωσαν, λόγω ενδεχομένως απειρίας, να προσεγγίσουν την ψυχοσύνθεση των ηρώων, με συνέπεια η τηλεοπτική σειρά να διακοπεί. Αντίθετα, το «10», έργο που διαδραματίζεται στον Πειραιά, σε μια λαϊκή πολυκατοικία που έχει τον αριθμό 10, σημείωσε στην τηλεοπτική του διασκευή μεγάλη επιτυχία, επειδή έγινε καλή επιλογή των ηθοποιών, αξιοποιήθηκε ένα μινιμαλιστικό σκηνικό, το παλιό εργοστάσιο της ΧΡΩΠΕΙ, εντός του οποίου έδρασαν οι χαρακτήρες, και έδειξε πως η σχέση λογοτεχνίας και τηλεόρασης, κειμένου και εικόνας μπορεί να δώσει νέα εκφράσεις στις παραστατικές τέχνες.

Ο Καραγάτσης υπήρξε γόνιμος και αυθεντικός συγγραφέας ο οποίος προσήλκυσε ένα ευρύ αναγνωστικό κοινό. Παράλληλα υπήρξε επαρκής θεατής και έμπειρος κριτικός του θεάτρου, όπως αυτό αποδεικνύεται από τις θεατρικές του κριτικές.⁵¹ Ωστόσο ως συγγραφέας κατόρθωσε να απεικονίσει ανθρώπινους χαρακτήρες, γεγονότα και καταστάσεις με ορθολογισμό και μέθοδο που αναδεικνύει πρόσωπα με προσωπεία που βασανίζονται έντονα και ακατάπαυστα. Μέσω αυτών ο συγγραφέας ασκεί κριτική στην αστική κοινωνία της εποχής του και στο θέμα των συμβάσεων, στο κοινωνικά αποδεκτό, όπως εκφράζεται μέσα από τον γάμο, την οικογένεια, την ταξική διαστρωμάτωση. Οι ήρωες του κατατρύχονται από αποκλίνουσες ή μη-αποδεκτές σεξουαλικές συμπεριφορές, που έρχονται σε πλήρη διάσταση με το υψηλό κοινωνικό τους status. Φανερά επηρεασμένος από τις φροϊδικές θεωρίες, και ενδεχομένως από το βιβλίο «Συγγραφείς και Ονειροπολήσεις» (1908) όπου ο Freud προτείνει να εκλάβουμε την καλλιτεχνική δημιουργία ως ανάλογη με το παιχνίδι των παιδιών, άποψη που εξέφρασαν ω γνωστό ο Καντ και ο Σίλλερ, μας δίνει κείμενα που είναι εγγραφές και εκφράσεις εικόνων, αναπαραστάσεις που δηλώνουν σχέσεις εικόνας και λέξεων. Αυτό όμως που θα ήθελα να τονίσω εδώ είναι ότι πέραν από την ευρύτερη γνωριμία του κοινού με τον συγγραφέα Καραγάτση και τις μυθοπλαστικές του

αφηγήσεις, η μεταφορά των έργων του στη μικρή οθόνη φανερώνει την απήχηση του έργου του στο ευρύτερο κοινό αλλά και το ενδιαφέρον του κοινού να μεταβεί από την εικόνα στο κείμενο. Ο ελληνικός κινηματογράφος και η ελληνική τηλεόραση μεταφέρουν τα τελευταία χρόνια λογοτεχνικά έργα ελλήνων συγγραφέων μετατρέποντάς τα σε εικόνες και αναδεικνύουν το γεγονός πως κινηματογράφος, τηλεόραση και λογοτεχνία αποτελούν αφηγηματικές μορφές έκφρασης που συνιστούν ταυτόχρονα αυτόνομες τέχνες, με δικούς τους κώδικες και μέσα έκφρασης.⁵²

Αναμφίβολα πολλά ερωτήματα συνδέονται με το θέμα των σχέσεων εικόνας και κειμένου, ιδιαίτερα στην εποχή μας που ζούμε στον πολιτισμό της εικόνας, όπου οι νέες τεχνικές και η τεχνολογία έχουν αναταράξει τα νερά και έχουν μεταβάλει τον συνολικό χαρακτήρα της τέχνης. Όλες όμως οι ενδείξεις αναδεικνύουν τις δυνατότητες που αυτές οι τέχνες προσφέρουν για να καταστήσουν δυνατή την πρόσληψη ιδεών, συμβολισμών, νοημάτων, κοινωνικών και ανθρώπινων καταστάσεων αλλά και αξιών, μεταξύ των οποίων περιλαμβάνονται οι συγκινησιακές και οι αισθητικές. Κυρίως όμως αναδεικνύουν την προθετικότητα και το ταλέντο του συγγραφέα που δημιούργησε το λογοτεχνικό κείμενο αλλά και τις προθέσεις και ικανότητες του σεναριογράφου και του σκηνοθέτη καθώς και την κριτική ικανότητα ενός ευρύτατου κοινού να προσλάβει, να αναγνώσει ή να ερμηνεύσει το κείμενο και την εικόνα.

Notes

- 1 Η μελέτη αυτή ανακοινώθηκε για πρώτη φορά στο Convegno Internazionale M. Karagatsis: 100 anni dalla nascita, που οργάνωσε το Dipartimento di Studi dell'Europa Orientale, Lingua e Letteratura Neogreca του Università Degli Studi Di Napoli "L'Orientale", (Palazzo Di Mesnil-Sala Consiliare, Napoli-Italia, 27-28 Novembre 2008). Θα ήθελα να ευχαριστήσω τον Πρόεδρο της Οργανωτικής Επιτροπής του Συνεδρίου Καθηγητή Κωνσταντίνο Νίκα, που με τιμά με τη μακρόχρονη φιλία του, για την ευγενή πρόσκληση να συμμετάσχω σ' αυτό, καθώς και τον Παναγιώτη Τσολιά για τις γόνιμες συζητήσεις μας αλλά και για τη συμβολή του στη συγγραφή αυτής της μελέτης με το πληροφοριακό υλικό που μου πρόσφερε σχετικά με το θέμα της τηλεοπτικής μεταφοράς έργων του Καραγάτση.
- 2 Βλ. τη μελέτη, Α. Γλυκοφρύδη-Λεοντσίνη, «Τέχνη, καλλιτέχνης και μεγαλοφύα κατά τον Victor Hugo: Οι σχέσεις φιλοσοφίας και φιλολογίας», *Αισθητική και τέχνη. Κριτικές θεωρήσεις*, εκδόσεις Συμμετρία, Αθήνα, 2006, σσ. 433-447.
- 3 Βλ. τη μελέτη, Α. Γλυκοφρύδη-Λεοντσίνη, «Ο Πίναξ του Κέβητος και η παρουσία του στη δυτική και την ελληνική γραμματεία. Ut pictura philosophia», *Αισθητική και τέχνη. Κριτικές θεωρήσεις*, ό.π., σσ. 223-260.

- 4 Βλ. σχετικά με το θέμα αυτό Morris Weitz, "Truth in Literature", στο *Introductory Readings in Aesthetics*, edited with an Introduction by John Hospers, The Free Press, Macmillan Publishers, London, σσ. 213-224, και Douglas N. Morgan, "Must Art Tell the Truth", στο ίδιο, σσ. 225-241.
- 5 Ενστάσεις για τη σχέση της φωτογραφίας και της αναπαράστασης εκφράζει ο R. Scruton, σε μια προσπάθεια ανάδειξης των διαφορών που υπάρχουν μεταξύ ζωγραφικής και φωτογραφίας και σε σχέση με την οπτική αντίληψη και εμπειρία. Βλ. σχετικά Roger Scruton, *The Aesthetic Understanding. Essays in the Philosophy of Art and Culture*, Methuen, London and New York, 1983, σσ. 102-126.
- 6 Βλ. Arthur C. Danto, *Philosophizing Art: Selected Essays*, University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1999. Η αναφορά είναι από το: Κωστής Μ. Κωβαίου, *Φιλοσοφία και κινηματογράφος*, εκδ. Καρδαμίτσα, Αθήνα, 2002, σ. 9.
- 7 Βλ. Κ. Κωβαίος, μνημ. έργ., σσ. 9-10.
- 8 Βλ. Alan H. Goldman, *Aesthetic Value*, Westview Press, 1998, σσ. 107 κ.εξ.
- 9 Βλ. Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class?*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1980.
- 10 Βλ. Alan H. Goldman, ό.π., σ. 115.
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Bucolic,
Theophilos

Sophia Sakellis
University of Sydney

Red Hulk: A Modern Greek Tragedy of Dysfunction and Alienation

Abstract

Red Hulk, Asimina Proedrou's 2013 multi-award-winning Greek short film, explores themes of identity, nationalism and xenophobia in a contemporary Greek setting. It is a hard-hitting exposé of a society in decline, where frustration at the failing institutions gives rise to racism, sexism, intolerance and violence in an effort to cleanse society of the foreign element which is blamed for all its dysfunction. The plot offers insights into how conceptualisations of difference can lead to violent action, and its underlying causes. With the absolute rupture between signifier and signified in the national symbols, values, codes and traditions, the issue of identity has become narrowly defined, all-encompassing and self-absorbing, resulting in the severing of ties between individuals, their families and friends, as exemplified in the film by its protagonist. His inevitable alienation from traditional supports leads him to seek refuge with a close-knit ultranationalist group linked to corrupt police, which operates under strict codes of secrecy outside of the law, and ensures its longevity by binding its members within a web of ultranationalist criminality. Within the conference theme of *Un-framing Hellenism*, we explore nationalism in a Greek context and attempt to de-stereotype the nationalists' support base.

About *Red Hulk*

*Red Hulk*¹ is a confronting, multi-award winning² short film produced in 2013 in Athens, Greece, by Film Director, Producer and Screenwriter, Asimina Proedrou, as her self-described “low budget” graduation project for her film school.³ The film has received high praise for its creative and brave treatment of the themes of nationalism, racism and neo-fascism and has found a very receptive audience in Europe which, plagued by a rise in ultranationalism, has been actively seeking narratives to understand and contain it.

The film’s online synopsis offers the following apt description:

“The story takes place in Greece, in the current environment of rising chauvinism and racism, and deals with the matter of the distortion of a person’s personality as he experiences the excessive need of belonging to, and becoming a member of a group. The movie explores the effect on the character’s psychological state as he faces the potential consequences of his choices, raising questions about how the social, family and work environment can affect him.”

In an ironic twist of fate, the timing of the film’s premiere screening, at the annual Drama4Short Film Festival, on the evening of September 17th 2013, coincided with the murder of 34-year-old Greek anti-fascist hip-hop singer and rapper, Pavlos Fyssas, by members of the neo-Nazi *Golden Dawn* party, which reinforced fears of the real threat neo-Nazi violence presented, not only to foreign immigrants, but also to Greek nationals.

When asked whether hatred is the only answer for a lost soul in a Greece controlled by the TV channels and Troika, the Director offers insights into her motivation for making the film. [Translation from Greek]

“... with this film I did not want in any way to give advice, nor did I want to show how ‘bad’ Golden Dawn is... I just wanted to ask some questions... Questions dealing with the process of turning a society towards fascism, the social, economic, familial conditions that impact on it but also on the individual himself... the distortion that could occur in his personality under the insurmountable need for integration and ‘easy’ acceptance.”

Asimina Proedrou sets up her short film in a documentary style that is fast, blunt, compelling. She looks behind the façade, to her characters’ thoughts and motivations, not to exonerate them of their crimes, but to

understand them and convey to her audience how mundane, everyday events that lead to collective behaviours can lay the groundwork for barbaric actions to proliferate. By starting her film with a shocking crime, and then revealing the story’s background, she challenges her viewers to go beyond first impressions and seek an understanding of the underlying complexities, and an appreciation of how alienation, disillusionment and corruption can have a detrimental effect on the individual, and catastrophic consequences for society.

A crime with no punishment

In the film’s opening minutes, we witness a carload of young men passing a lone male waiting at a bus stop, talking carefree on his mobile phone and oblivious to the danger awaiting him. Totally unprovoked, the five men stop the car, get out and start circling around the hapless immigrant like a pack of wolves, hurling abuse and taunting him in a provocative and aggressive manner, with one of them repeatedly making racist ape-like gestures at him. Their deliberate mocking actions and insults aim at eliciting a response, to justify the act of aggression they have planned for their victim:

“Wow, wow, wow! What have we here? Cheese pie? What, you had cheese pies in Pakistan?”

He has not been targeted on account of his behaviour or to settle a score. He is not known to them. It is a random attack against a defenceless and unaccompanied immigrant. He only happens to be in the wrong place at the wrong time, and fits the racial profile of their intended victim. They verbally belittle and abuse him on account of his foreign ethnicity, which has not vested him with the entitlements bestowed on the locals, the ‘owners’ of the land, its language, and even its food. Cheese pie is arbitrarily elevated to their chosen national food, to serve as an example of what only they have a right to savour.

With no response coming from the victim, one is quickly invented. They give chase, five against one, and catch him in a secluded area under a building. While the other four hold him down, the strongest of the five, Yiorgo, is relentlessly and frantically urged by the others to stab the victim. The fatal stabbing of the innocent Pakistani takes place within the first few minutes of the opening scene. This intentional positioning of the stabbing at the start leaves the audience dumbfounded and numb.

The overall confusion is also reflected in the dialogue, consisting of unclear and muffled words uttered by unseen characters. Though unclear, their effect is nonetheless definitive, absolute and final. They unmistakably urge quick and irreversible action. A collective command, instigated for and on behalf of the group, to be executed without delay. An action that aims at proving loyalty to the group and its agenda that will, in turn, bind its members together in a web of secrecy towards a goal much bigger than any of them could pursue on their own.

The perpetrators leave the victim dead, and flee. The sight of them fills the audience with horror. We are appalled by their callousness and hatred; they do, indeed, deserve the most scathing condemnation, each and every one of them. But having witnessed the fateful event at the start, the lens has now moved on and is fixed upon the protagonist, seeking to interrogate him and find the causes that lead young men to commit such atrocities.

The film's protagonist, Yiorgo, or Giorgos in the official synopsis, is a fitness and sports fan working and living in Athens. He is an active supporter of the *Olympiakos* soccer team but his club membership has lapsed, as he, along with his co-workers, have not been paid for some months, a common phenomenon in a post-financial crisis Greece, where a massive, over fifty percent, unemployment among young people, and over twenty-five percent overall, forces workers to endure increasingly adverse working conditions to avoid retrenchment.

Soccer provides Yiorgo and his friends with a sense of identity by being a part of a network of peers with similar interests. The stadium is an inclusive arena that attracts fans of every race and gender, offering them companionship and social interaction. It also provides an outlet, or an opportunity to vent their frustrations, a 'release valve' which can take an aggressive turn when hooligans and neo-Nazis seize their opportunity to use the stadium as a battlefield to intimidate, implicate, attack, and cause chaos and disorder by promoting their racist agenda of violence against their victims, chosen at random for their race or colour.

On his return home after the stabbing, Yiorgo reveals a different side to his personality. Deep distress and guilt cause him a violent retch. He washes the blood off his clothes and tries to get some sleep, but keeps tossing in bed. He has great difficulty coming to terms with the crime and his

own involvement in it. His phone is incessantly ringing, but he leaves it unanswered. We will soon find out that those persistent calls are from the neo-Nazi group leader, one of the four others in the car, who, unlike Yiorgo, are totally remorseless, cold-hearted and devoid of any empathy.

Yiorgo's attempts to distance himself from the group are thwarted when the group leader visits him at home to express his support and allay his fears by giving him assurances that his police contacts will protect him. He uses misogynistic language when attempting to entice Yiorgo with prostitutes –to which the latter shows no interest– and forewarns him of further racist attacks the group has planned, where Yiorgo's involvement would be crucial and valued.

While still overwhelmed by fear and guilt, Yiorgo shuns the group's support, and declines joining them on their next round of intimidation attacks. They loosen the noose and let him off the hook temporarily, yet the phone keeps ringing unanswered while he walks home, through a sea of shops run by immigrants. There is no visual hint of Yiorgo ever harbouring ill feelings against migrants. He does not share with his neo-Nazi comrades any emotions of racism, xenophobia, intolerance or prejudice against foreigners. With new insight, we can now revisit the scene of the stabbing. Yiorgo's momentary hesitation was undoubtedly caused by fear, and was a reflection of his powerlessness and lack of control in the moments leading up to this dramatically escalating situation. He was trapped.

Having no time to react, Yiorgo seemed to obey, and that signalled the moment of his entrapment by the group. It was not his intention to kill. Even though we saw Yiorgo holding a threatening knife at the start of the frenzied attack, we could, in fact, only hear the repeated stabs and the victim's groans in the critical seconds that followed and could only guess at who had actually inflicted the blows. But Yiorgo's decision to obey would have been inevitable. Four against one, himself, his situation would have felt utterly precarious. He could not possibly have sided with the stranger, or they would have surely all turned on him. The moment of stabbing had also come too quickly for him to be able to react rationally within the story's time frame.

There was distinct intent on the part of the neo-Nazis to 'punish' the foreigner who, by his physical appearance and implied ethnicity,

represented an anathema to the racial purity of the city's young men whose self-appointed role had been to defend it. Yet, Yiorgo's guilt is undeniably well founded. He is a perpetrator in an unprovoked and heinous racist crime. There are no extenuating circumstances and no fault on the part of the victim. His victimisation has been unequivocal and undeserved.

However, any aggression seemingly exhibited by Yiorgo in his demeanour, scowl, mannerisms and short outbursts could be readily explained away by the difficulties and challenging circumstances of his daily life which are soon to become apparent as further events unfold. There is a sincere and gentle side to Yiorgo's character. Fitness, not aggression, is his way of coping with pressure, tension, anger or fear. He is always reserving his blows for his trusted punching bag, an instrument of fitness and of stress relief. His generation's hopelessness and lack of prospects have not, thus far, turned him into a ruthless thug, but disillusionment with a dysfunctional society can leave the individual unsupported by family and friends and unprotected by the state.

A state of corruption

Wondering whether he could be captured by the police, and with nowhere else to go, Yiorgo's only option now lies with the neo-Nazis who, despite his desperate attempts to avoid them since the killing, continue to treat him well and pledge their protection to him, in keeping, no doubt, with their predetermined recruitment plans. He is fully cognisant that they hold the key to his future, as there is widespread recognition among the population of police corruption and complicity.

Since before the 1950s, successive governments have promised and made numerous attempts to reform and streamline the Greek administrative apparatus, but none of their efforts have been successful, with Greece's bureaucracy remaining as complex, arbitrary and unresponsive to the needs of the citizens as ever. A 1998 public opinion survey found that *"inefficiency and corruption continue to pervade every aspect of the state machinery"*. (Danopoulos, Danopoulos, and Farazmand, 2001: 953)

Corruption involving both citizens and politicians has been a feature of the Greek state for many decades. Despite ongoing pressures on government spending on essential services, a self-serving supersize bureaucracy,

whose *raison d'être* is to provide jobs to more of the 'chosen' people and keep unemployment at artificially low levels, is allowed to flourish at the expense of a properly-run administration and, ultimately, of all the citizens. It can be argued that in their everyday dealings with the state administration, citizens are, in essence, regarded 'guilty' by the state until they can furnish paperwork that proves their 'innocence', so to speak, instead of being facilitated by those whose job description as 'public servants' is to serve the people.

Even though ninety-eight percent of Greek citizens identify corruption as a major problem in Greece, the mutual distrust between citizens and the government, and various schemes legitimising corrupt activities, have reinforced the problem. Corruption and tax evasion can be traced back to the Ottoman period of Greek history, where tax evasion was also considered a form of resistance against Ottoman rule. According to Litina et al.,

"despite the existence of a legal framework that is quite similar to that of most European countries, the existing infrastructure is inadequate to handle such extensive corruption, thereby giving rise to a generalized sentiment of non-punishment and an underestimation of the probability to be caught and punished. Second, this inefficiency of the system reinforces honest citizens' dissatisfaction and ultimately leads to a subconscious legitimization of corrupt acts, as a surviving mechanism in a corrupt society." (Litina and Palivos, 2013: 5-6)

Amid this background, the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn party, which was founded in 1980 and entered the 1996 elections winning only 0.1% of the vote, has followed a similar path to other European neo-fascist parties, and saw its numbers swell to around 7% after the global financial crisis, due to the massive unemployment rates and the fear and instability that ensued. The party's ultranationalist rhetoric, violent attacks on immigrants and strong links to state-led corruption, helped along by the state's neo liberal policies, are a big threat to democracy and to human rights.

The more this situation is prolonged, the greater the suffering and the more severe the chasm becomes between the ruling class and the rest of the populace. Disillusionment has set in and transcends their previously regimented, traditional party-line supports. The ineffective and clientelist system of governance has not allowed any development or modernisation of

the country to occur, which has added to the unfair distribution of wealth, lack of cohesion among the people and lack of loyalty towards the state, even while people profess their historic, albeit nebulous, feelings of patriotism towards their country.

Endemic and entrenched corruption has a corrosive effect on even the most well-meaning and ethical politicians who, over time, may resign themselves to joining everyone else in overlooking their moral compass and seeking a personal advantage. By employing family members to key posts in the public service, accepting 'gifts' for services or favours, shifting one's private wealth to safe havens in Switzerland and overseas, and other disguised or open corruption, they have collectively caused the state assets to dwindle away and the citizens to be left to carry the Atlassian burden of supporting wanton government spending on their own.

Such widespread corruption could not but affect all strata of society, right down to the individual. When Yiorgo's colleague invites him for lunch with his family, his invitation indicates a certain respect for the well-presented, unfrivolous, diligent and dependable young man who lives on his own and aspires to the Greek ideals of sport and fitness. He has assumed a somewhat protective role towards Yiorgo, as he understands that he lives away from his family.

When planning his visit to his colleague, Yiorgo picks up a little toy from the shelves of the neighbourhood grocery store and puts it in his pocket when the shop assistant is not looking, distractedly busy with her phone. He makes no attempt to conceal any of the groceries he is buying for himself, but only steals the gift he picked up for the family's young daughter. It is evident that he is unable to pay or budget for it, but traditional customs of civility and politeness seem to weigh more on his mind than upholding the law, an indication of his alienation from what is generally considered, at least among his peers, as enforced ethics of a corrupt state.

The theft committed by Yiorgo fits neatly within the mosaic of corruption in contemporary Greek society, but can simultaneously be seen as both an act of corruption and an act of rebellion. Shop owners represent a class of independent private business proprietors who are thought to have at their disposal a range of means for manipulating the state revenue system in order to evade tax. Yiorgo would not be in the minority in thinking that a little

plush toy is not going to make a dent in the financial state of the shop, or the country's economy for that matter.

The disinterested female shop assistant, sole employee running the shop who is occupied with her mobile phone, reinforces the stereotype of an alienated employee, who does not care for her job. Her sex also fits the stereotype of females working in low-paying retail jobs, that do not provide either the satisfaction or the monetary incentive that would be considered commensurate with their skills or attributes, thus generating further dissatisfaction and indifference. On an individual level, coupled with the scarcity of jobs, where having any job is the first priority for the majority of the people, lack of job satisfaction adds to their alienation from the workplace, professional and even social life.

Alienation has, in fact, a long and diverse history from antiquity to the present. Marx's adaptation of Hegelian dialectics to the theory of materialism allowed him to articulate the concept of alienation in his *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* in 1844.⁵ As work (in a Marxian sense) and education have lost their creative meaning for a major part of the Greek population, the country has become stagnant and uncompetitive, and has been especially vulnerable to the spectre of globalisation which has allowed other nations to take advantage of the unique opportunities it offers in exporting, for example, their products to established and emerging markets.

A background of profound alienation

Globalisation has accentuated the feelings of alienation among individuals who increasingly realise that their unique identity is under constant threat, undermined even from within when questioned about its true essence and character. The old triptych 'Πατρίς, Θρησκεία, Οικογένεια' (Country, Religion, Family) may still invoke in some quarters a nostalgic fondness for all things past, but is now a distant memory of no relevance, with its historic value heavily tainted.

Alienation is at the centre of Yiorgo's predicament. In a clear struggle to rid himself of the nightmare of the crime, Yiorgo has declined all persistent invitations from the neo-Nazis and escalated his efforts to disentangle himself from them. Yet, his repeated attempts to rebuild severed bridges with his soccer club friends are thwarted by his increasingly intolerant

response to their anguish at his association with racists, especially as he cannot ignore the fact that they are not aware of how deeply this association actually runs. His guilt for the murder cannot but magnify his remorse for his involvement with neo-Nazis and for misleading his friends, and that, in turn, creates a vicious cycle of escalating frustration and aggression.

Yiorgo now finds himself at a crossroads. With no support forthcoming from friends, his family appears as his only refuge, with geographic distance being but one of the obstacles. Hoping his family can help him pull away from his inescapable predicament, he leaves Athens to visit them at the family home in a regional town, but only his mother and younger brother are overtly happy to see him. Tensions are rekindled as soon as his intimidating father appears on the scene, with his impenetrable and emotionally overpowering presence hindering any expressions of affection towards him.

His mother and brother live in a traditionally patriarchal family and in fear of a domineering father, unable to show the older son the affection he and they crave, or to even speak to him openly or unhindered. Any comment they make becomes a constant reminder that it can, and does, lead to an argument that the father always has the last and decisive word over. They need to constantly monitor and temper their reactions in the presence of the father, or risk a reprimand and/or an escalation of conflict. Unsurprisingly, misogyny is underlying the language used by Yiorgo's father towards his wife, as well. Her roles as a wife and mother are inextricably linked with her ongoing treatment by him as a servant, and in keeping with existing male chauvinist traditions when giving her orders.

The body language between mother and sons is suggestive of an ongoing silent frustration at the familiarly oppressive scene that dampens all happiness at family gatherings, and serves as an omen for what will come next. The father starts by questioning Yiorgo about the reasons for his impromptu visit, a preamble to a serious conversation that the mother would be expected to initiate. She tries to evade it by bringing out the wine but, having already incurred the wrath of the father for taking her time in bringing him the knife he demanded, the weight of expectation falls heavily on her shoulders and she cannot delay her duty to ask the obligatory question about the son's studies. When that comes, it inevitably provides the trigger for the brewing clash between father and older son to come to a head.

Yiorgo may not be an enthusiastic student, but he is a dedicated fitness fan as glimpsed by his constant boxing practice with the punching bag when he is not cooking or relaxing at home. Boxing gives him the strength and control he lacks in his everyday life. It creates in him a sense of empowerment and purpose that counteract the hopelessness of his situation and, by extension, that of many of his generation in the harsh and alienating post-financial crisis urban society they have chosen, by default, for pursuing their studies or finding work, having had to leave their jobless towns.

His physical prowess has gained him recognition among his peers which, in turn, further strengthens his commitment to his fitness. For his father, however, and many in his generation, sport does not rate as highly as a career-oriented educational qualification, and he seizes the opportunity to show his displeasure at his son's perceived lack of application to his studies. The issue seems charged with an underlying, long term, emotional grievance, seething in the background. Yiorgo's family proves unable to help him at his time of crisis.

Yiorgo, feeling the pressure on him from all sides, storms out, with a breakdown in his relationship with his father looming as an inevitable outcome. Modern society has empowered children and young people, especially sons, to speak their minds but, in so doing, they have inadvertently risked alienation from familial supports which, albeit, are still functioning under the oppressive rules of an overpowering, misogynistic and unwieldy patriarchy. He leaves the next morning, much to the chagrin of his repressed mother and brother and, undoubtedly, his own.

The news bulletin he overhears in the coach on his journey back from the family home provides him with a temporary reprieve. *"There's been a new development in the case of the brutal murder of the 30-year-old Pakistani, who was found stabbed last Friday in Nea Ionia. Senior police officials expressed certainty that the murder of the 30-year-old was in fact a death contract to settle old scores, as the 30-year-old was a member of a drug trafficking ring. This dismisses early claims which attributed the murder to racist violence..."* The police are now blaming the crime on settling old scores within a drug-trafficking ring, a clear sign that his powerful new friends have exerted their influence over the police and, in so doing, have secured his cooperation in planning future attacks.

On revisiting his soccer club to renew his lapsed membership, Yiorgo's tough-guy persona and explosive reactions ensure communications are treading on egg shells. He interprets any hint of criticism as deep contempt, and his former mates are not willing to accept back to the fold the undesirable troublemaker he has clearly become, with his expulsion from the club now assured. After his old friends decline to extend a helping hand and sneer at him for not heeding their warning, his isolation is profound. They have their own battles to fight against the racist mob he has now joined, and will have to defend themselves against them at their team's games. Like him, they, too, feel betrayed by his sudden and—for them— inexplicable turn.

Filling the void by initiation and conversion

It is not only ineffective governments and political elites that are preying on the people and plundering national assets. All kinds of opportunists and ultranationalist ideologues, like the Golden Dawn, find fertile ground to promote their dubious ideologies by cultivating a tsunami of confusing and contradictory narratives, thus highlighting the lack of cohesion within a people in turmoil. The state mechanisms, paramilitary organisations, militant groups, rogue elements in the police force and unidentified individuals then all play their part by assisting them in their unscrupulous endeavours. (Karalis, 2014: 106-107)

Yiorgo's neo-Nazi friends exemplify these tactics. They seek to appropriate and convert everyone to their way of thinking, and promote their causes by fear mongering and blaming every single problem in modern society on immigrants, women, or any other group they may wish to demonise. The emancipation of women has effected changes which have disturbed their preferred status quo and they leave no stone unturned in their efforts to vilify and blame them. They use propaganda and vacuous slogans, and stop at nothing in order to 'proselytise' their members by appealing to their nostalgia for utopian ideals, religious doctrine or old-world values.

They seek prospective members among vulnerable groups of young, weak, alienated and inexperienced individuals who are willing to be active pawns in furthering their masters' causes, and lure them by promising them sexual favours from prostitution. Women, unseen and non-existent among the neo-Nazis, are vulgarly referred to in totally objectified terms,

as commodities to be used and shared among the group's current and prospective members. They are part of the illicit slave trade, usually sold, orphaned or victimised from a young age due to their family situation and child-like innocence, and end up in a foreign land, trapped and exploited with the aid of drugs and no means of escape.

They build up their victims' confidence by boosting their ego, offering them ample and initially generous support, and then secure their permanent participation in the group's activities by implicating them in acts of extreme violence that would normally result in their prosecution and imprisonment had it not been for their 'help'. It is then an irreversible process that binds new members to the group for fear of repercussions were they to be found out, and, like a cult, they pledge and demand loyalty, and offer protection by utilising their links to corrupt police, in a final act of conversion and ultimately brainwashing.

With his escapist utopian dream of resuming a normal life shown to be a chimera, Yiorgo's realisation that he is standing on the razor's edge looking down a precipice, so powerfully represented by his playing with a lighter at his workplace, as if he is about to burn down the world and himself along with it, culminates in his complete meltdown. Yiorgo's unresponsiveness draws the ire of his demanding and domineering boss. His colleague leaps to Yiorgo's defence, at his own risk, by reminding the boss they have not been paid for four months, and the boss does not miss his chance to threaten him with dismissal. When Yiorgo, still lost in pondering his predicament, does not intervene to defend his colleague, the latter is incensed.

Now Yiorgo is totally alienated from family, friends and colleague, and even from his monotonous and uncreative work. (Goldson and Muncie, 2006: 33) In the tragedy's inevitable conclusion, we see him re-join the racist mob, all seen leaving their headquarters, walking down the stairs, armed and ready for a confrontation and the ensuing battle, planned for the end of the game. In spite of his relentless efforts, Yiorgo's conversion is now complete in becoming a victim to the racist mob.

Concluding remarks

Red Hulk is a film whose depth and insight into racist violence more than make up for its short 28-minute duration. From the first to the last,

its scenes have painted a harsh picture, universal to any society, where nationalist violence can quickly escalate with unpredictable outcomes, especially when peer pressure and mob mentality are involved and dominate over reason and tolerance, leaving the individual with no means to escape the cycle of violence and intimidation. Victims of such attacks are not only their intended targets, but also some of the perpetrators who, by their own misguided actions, are implicated and bound within a group, rendering them hostages to extremism, unable to ever extricate themselves, even if they tried.

The scene at the family table is also devoid of state borders, and typical of any place where patriarchy rules and women are kept subservient; where men are taught to fulfil a tough and unemotional stereotype as the head of the family by making, and then imposing, their decisions on their family members on account of their masculinity. Where women are expected to remain silent, diffuse tensions or mediate between family members to avert conflict and a breakup in the family unit. Where domestic violence, be it psychological, verbal or physical, threatens not only women, but also their children, thus signalling the ultimate loss of their innocence and, apart from its devastating effect on the family, it can turn victims to perpetrators, with the cycle of violence repeated in perpetuity.

Red Hulk debunks popular but superficial views about the homogeneity of ultranationalist parties' supporters, by showing the path to extremism and the opportunities lost in 'deradicalising' at-risk individuals, especially when they are making repeated efforts to leave extremist groups. It shows how unprepared are trusting families, friends and colleagues when trying to comprehend the radicalised individual, as well as their own potential role, and the effort required in order to help them.

Patriotism and nationalism, in their multiple manifestations, define our identity and sense of belonging: to a family unit, community, town, nation, world. We feel the need to be part of a whole, but the closer we get to that whole, the more fragmented and divided it often seems to become. Every war we have fought has been testament to this duality of being together but apart, united but at odds, or part of a divided whole. *Red Hulk* hints at the effects of unemployment and financial anxiety on an already insecure, ignored and neglected people, under pressure from several external

and internal threats. In spite of their topicality, the themes are universal. The rampant influx of transient refugees whose aim is to gain a foothold into Europe on their way to affluent Western countries, handled so haphazardly and incompetently by the local authorities, has also caused huge change and disruptions, resulting in massive, even existential, upheavals for the local residents who feel disenfranchised by their own government.

The radical rhetoric of the totalitarian ultra-right-wing minority, which uses a utopian notion of collective mythical identity and ignores the intertextuality of its historical origins, then becomes a powerful pole of attraction for people who have lost everything they consider essential to the essence of their being, and are insecure or incognisant of their own identity but still captivated by its supposed majestic superiority and allure. This is a secret society bound by what its members consider as ideals of racial purity and patriotism. And racial purity, or ethnic cleansing, is arguably at the core of many wars fought as recently as this century, with catastrophic consequences on human lives, destruction of cultural monuments, and tremendous loss of potential cultural, social and scientific progress.

In conclusion, *Red Hulk* is a thought-provoking short film which deconstructs events that are progressively becoming more pertinent in our everyday reality. It is a succinct and faithful account of what can lead a vulnerable young man to establish ties with neo-Nazis and let his life descend into chaos. His own errors of judgment, augmented by the inadequacy of his close environment and the absence of effective support from family and friends, has rendered his descent irreversible.

This scenario plays out in numerous cases of individuals who are drawn into extremist or fundamentalist groups, firmly held together by ideology or religion, and posing a threat to humanity's safety, progress and values. More than a cautionary tale, the realism of this powerful narrative has become apparent from its first official screening. Looking at events devoid of their cause-and-effect complexities is adding to society's fragmentation and the alienation of its members. A void the individual may not be able to fill, and which, under the 'right' conditions may expose anyone, even those with the best intentions, to the risk of falling prey to extremist manipulation, brain washing and conversion.

Notes

- 1 The film's official title is in English and has only rarely ever been translated into Greek, as *Κόκκινος Χαλκ*. According to the official synopsis, "*Giorgos lives on his own in Athens. He lacks purpose, self-confidence, identity and peer acceptance. He fills the void by becoming the 'Red Hulk', as he is known at his football team's fan club. Until the day he gets involved in racial violence, entailing new problems and dilemmas...*" The character 'Red Hulk' is based on the fictional Marvel Comics superhero 'Hulk' and first appeared in a comic in March 2008. The nickname 'Red Hulk' is given to Yiorgo after the popular 2012 *The Incredible Hulk 2* film. The nickname seems fitting for the protagonist as it is an apt metaphor for the comics superhero who transforms into a giant when he gets upset or emotional, becomes violent and cannot be reasoned with, but transforms back into his calm persona after the crisis has passed. It also symbolises Yiorgo's general athleticism and body shape, his Olympiakos soccer club's colours and red hoodie he often wears.
- 2 The film has been awarded the *Grand Prix (Best Film)*, *Best Male Actor and Cinematography Award* at the Drama Film Festival (2013); *Best Short Film* at the Athens International Film Festival (2013); *Cinematic Award* at the Thessaloniki International Short Film Festival (2013); *Best Short Film* at the Los Angeles Greek Film Festival (2014); *Special Jury Award* at the Yerevan (Armenia) International Film Festival (2014), *Best Short Film (Fiction)* at the Clermont-Ferrand (France) International Short Film Festival (2014) and *Best Short Film (Fiction)* at the Tirana International Film Festival (November 2014).
- 3 AMC, Athens – Film Directing Department
- 4 The northern Greek city of 'Drama'
- 5 "*Marx conceptualised alienation as the separation of a worker from the product that was created, the process by which it was created, or from others who are involved in the production or consumption of the product. [...] other factors identified originally by Marx act as precursors of alienation that are experienced in the modern workplace, such as lack of meaningful work, not 'having a say' over the work process, and the extent to which an individual perceives his or her skills to be utilised in the course of work*". (Shantz, Alfes, and Truss, 2014: 2530)

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Vassiliki Rapti

Harvard University

"Either of the Height or of the Depth": Nanos Valaoritis' De-stereotyping of the "Greeks" in the Time of Crisis

Abstract

If there is anyone who has consistently de-stereotyped Greek culture, de-mythologized, de-constructed and ultimately reconstructed its imaginative potential, that person is Nanos Valaoritis who has now been turned into a cosmopolitan "cultural phenomenon." Always "present" in the Greek scene no matter where he lived (Paris, London, Geneva, Oakland, California or Athens and Nydri), the 96-year old avant-garde Nanos Valaoritis, like a "gadfly," kept paving the way for new ways of seeing and radical perceptions of the self, especially as dictated by his desire to re-examine the Ancients. Amidst the current crisis, Valaoritis indeed not only is "present" as a public persona, but he also has initiated long debates about the causes and effects of the crisis, especially since his open letter to the Greek Prime Minister Mr. Antonis Samaras, dated April 30, 2013, where he warned him about the dangerous effects of the increasingly appealing Neo-Nazi party Golden Dawn. Moreover, four new books of his came out of the Greek crisis from 2010 to the present: *Χρόσιματα* (2011), *Ουρανός χρώμα βανίλιας* (2011), *Το Πικρό καρναβάλι* (2013) and *Η του ύψους ή του βάθους: Πρόσφατα άρθρα γύρω από τον πολιτισμό στην Ελλάδα της κρίσης* (2013). This article pays particular attention to the last collection of articles which present Valaoritis's systematic exploration of the image of the Greeks as standing at the extremes, "either of the height or of the depth," throughout their long history, in an effort to "eradicate the stereotypes against the Greek

nation that so unjustly is deeply tormented,” as the book itself claims. This article not only elaborates on the main points that Valaoritis makes in this collection of articles, but more importantly, it contextualizes them within the frame of his overall avant-garde contribution to the Greek Letters.

“What might the new Trojan Horse by Mr. Schrank contain this time, I wonder? Let me surmise. Installments, bonds, the History of the Greek Nation by Paparrigopoulos, the History of the Greek War of Independence by Gordon, sitting on the benches Kolokotronis, Plapoutas, Markos Botsaris, Karaiskakis, Androutsos, Makriyannis, Bouboulina, Manto Mavrogenous, Kanaris, Miaoulis, all of them with their scimitars and pistols, ready to break loose to loot the Eurozone, to kill the Euro...! To occupy the E.U. in Brussels, to ravage all officers of the Commission, Commissioners, the Troikans, to sack the new Troy.”

“Could it be possible however that besides the enraged and indebted Greeks a few others be unleashed out of the door (of the Trojan Horse), such as Elytis, Cavafy, Seferis, Ritsos, Kavvadias, Sachtouris, Manto Aravantinou, Kosmas Politis, Tachtsis, Alexandros Schoinas, to limit myself to the 20th century. However, these fight with speech, language, words, concepts, ideas and not by means of transactions in order to make a world different from the one in which we live yet with distinguishable features of our own. For them we are Greeks and not for the incompetent scoundrels who machinate among us.”

“Should we prefer the Turkish Islamists than the lustful, bloodthirsty, ‘Christian’ barons of the North.? I hope not, for there are also the Balkans and the Russians who are Christians and the Chinese, the Indians, the Latino-Americans, the Japanese, even the Kaffirs, the Eskimos and the Bushmen, who are peoples with honor and keep their promises.”

(Nanos Valaoritis, *Either of the Height or of the Depth: Recent Articles on Civilization in Greece of the Crisis*, 2013)¹

A careful reading of these excerpts constitutes an anatomy of the entire collection entitled *Either of the Height or of the Depth: Recent Articles on Civilization in Greece of the Crisis* (*Η του Ύψους ή του Βάθους: Πρόσφατα Άρθρα για τον Πολιτισμό στην Ελλάδα της Κρίσης*) by Nanos Valaoritis

that comprises a full array of seemingly disparate articles, ranging from analysis of the current events in crisis-hit Greece to Surrealism and its main representatives in Greece. More specifically, besides its polemic and witty tone, one notices the loaded key-concepts and rhetorical devices and parallelisms that the author uses: the metaphor of the Homeric Trojan Horse with its dangerous cargo projected to today’s Greek debts and loans after a transition through the uprisings of the heroes of the Greek Revolution, ready to loot Europe. Also the mistrust in the relationship between the Europeans and the Greeks is well-established in this metaphor which yet takes on another form, even more powerful according to the author, and that is the possibility that amidst the cargo of the Trojan Horse may also be poets who fight with language and who hold the true image of the Greeks. After distinguishing between the two kinds of perceivers of the “Greeks”, the true ones such as the poets and the incompetent scoundrels who machinate among us, he hints to the latter as the Germans who then are directly attacked as “greedy, blood-thirsty ‘Christian’ barons of the North.” Finally, he suggests that there are other, more reliant allies with whom the Greeks could possibly establish all kinds of alliances, liberating themselves from the tyranny of the so-called Troika.



Image 1. The cover of the book *Either of the Height or of the Depth: Recent Articles on Civilization in Greece of the Crisis* (Psychogios, 2013).

This is exactly the type of content and style of this carnivalesque collection of recent articles which was written in parallel with his poetry collection *Bitter Carnival* (*Πικρό Καρναβάλι*), also published in 2013 by the same publisher (Psychogios).

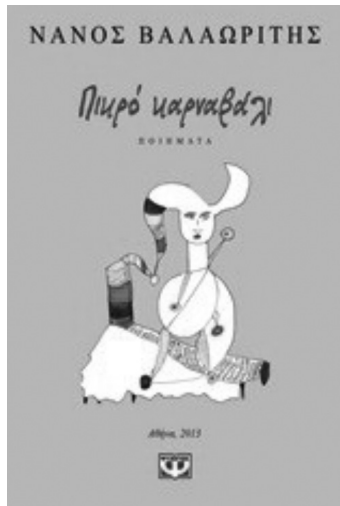


Image 2. The cover of the book *Bitter Carnival* (Psychogios, 2013).

I use the term carnivalesque here in the Bakhtinian sense from which also Valaoritis himself is inspired in both aforementioned books, in the sense “that carnivalesque literature — like the carnivals themselves — broke apart oppressive and moldy forms of thought and cleared the path for the imagination and the never-ending project of emancipation.”² In his article “Loki, The Return of Bakhtin” from *Either of the Height or of the Depth: Recent Articles on Civilization in Greece of the Crisis*, Valaoritis compares Rabelais’ rebellious carnivalesque world to similar recent phenomena in Europe: “Such comic and serious phenomena, as Bakhtin would call them, started making their appearance in Europe in a time of economic crisis when people suffer from austerity measures that have paralyzed the economic life of the society. High taxation, salary and pension reductions, unemployment, capital controls, everything is the result of a central power that enforces austerity measures in a time of crisis. This power is called German austerity policy....” (203). These carnivalesque phenomena then, according to Valaoritis, constitute a form of true rebellion against another oppressive system, reminiscent of slavery in antiquity or of the Church and aristocracy in Medieval times.

Seen in the Bakhtinian light then, the two aforementioned books by Nanos Valaoritis, which are like communicating vessels, it comes as no surprise to those who follow the cultural phenomenon named “Nanos Valaoritis.” For, in his long life, for more than eight decades now, and after numerous distinctions worldwide, Valaoritis, “one of the most distinguished and enigmatic of modern Greek poets, full of Platonic wisdom”, to use Lawrence Durrell’s words³, like a gadfly, activates the mind of his readers and gives lessons of resistance to any kind of dangerous stereotypes, due to which the image of Greece has suffered tremendous damage during the last years of the crisis that hit the country, especially from German newspapers and media like *Focus* (image 3), something that Valaoritis did not let without a bitter reaction: “What would the Germans say about Hermes by Praxiteles showing his genitalia while stepping on a German flag? Certainly, they would enjoy the ‘Greek humor’ as an expression of free speech. The wars with words are not less harmful than the wars with guns and bear evidence of how little the Europeans feel that they constitute a union of people and cultures with mutual identity, respect and solidarity. They show how many biases there exist and how little the wounds of the World War II have been healed in a third generation” (*Either of the Height or of the Depth: Recent Articles on Civilization in Greece of the Crisis*, 113-114).



Image 3. The cover of the German periodical *Focus*, published on February 22, 2010.⁴

Hurt by this outrageous and unethical attack through words, the Western image of the Greeks continues to suffer damage. I refer to all kinds of extreme stereotypes applied to the Greeks since antiquity, as, for instance, the one tied to the story of the Trojan Horse and summarized in the proverb “Fear the Danaans, even when bringing gifts”, or the Zorba type of careless, lazy and exuberant tax-evader Greek people who prefer to spend loans in having fun and as such are unworthy descendants of the ancient Greeks. Valaoritis, alluding to Odysseus Elytis, offers a poignant summary of such labels ascribed to the Greeks:

Since King Otto, Purifoy, to the Troika years, such friends become enemies, when they confront the recalcitrant and rebellious Greeks—regardless of ideology. Lazy, corrupted, against memoranda, tax-evaders, rich, poor, salaried, retired, sick, thieves, scoundrels, with their own clientele, living with debt and breaking the laws which they vote. Even these latter are preferable, because they are made in Greece, the epsilon in small case letter. And from a cosmopolitan frog I am transformed to a nationalist bull or rather another Minotaur, ready to devour annually six young men and six young women who will be sent to us as subjugation tax, no matter how improbable this may sound.

(Either of the Height or of the Depth: Recent Articles on Civilization in Greece of the Crisis, 112-113)⁵

Indeed, if there is anyone who has consistently de-stereotyped Greek culture, de-mythologized, de-constructed and ultimately reconstructed its imaginative potential, that person is Nanos Valaoritis who has consistently fought against any type of authoritarian form, manifested either in society or in the canonical works of Western tradition. Always ‘present’ in the Greek scene no matter where he lived (Paris, London, Geneva, Oakland, California, or Athens and Nydri), the now 94-year old Nanos Valaoritis kept paving the way for new ways of seeing and radical perceptions of the self, especially as dictated by his desire to re-examine the Ancients. Amidst the current crisis, Valaoritis not only is “present” as a public persona, but he also has initiated long debates about the causes and effects of the crisis, especially since his open letter to the Greek Prime Minister Antonis Samaras, dated April 30, 2013, where he warned him about the dangerous effects of the increasingly appealing Neo-Nazi party, Golden Dawn.

The goal of this paper is an attempt to offer an explanation for Valaoritis’ idiosyncratic and holistic approach to the current crisis in Greece with his systematic exploration of the image of the Greeks as standing at the extremes, “either of the height or of the depth,” throughout their long history. By the term “height or depth,” he refers to the moments of grandeur or humiliation in Greek history since antiquity respectively, bringing the following examples:

It is common knowledge that the Greeks usually distinguish themselves as a people better under urgent situations, as they did in antiquity. The Persian wars against the Carthaginians in Sicily, the height, the Peloponnesian War, the depth; the conquest of Alexander the Great, the height, his epigones, the depth; the 1821, the height, the civil wars, the depth. The list is long – and always in relation to foreigners, enemies, barbarians or between us, we will continue the same image along our history. What are the mysterious motives of this mechanism?

(Either of the Height or of the Depth: Recent Articles on Civilization in Greece of the Crisis, 219)⁶

Valaoritis wonders, locating this mechanism in the psychology of the poor and downtrodden nation. The list goes on caustically attacking all responsible parties besides the weaknesses of the capitalist system. I quote, for instance:

It is also the fault of the lack of vision of the political elite who discourages local production for the sake of an easier importation policy with high taxation which offers temporary revenue. [...] Under the current circumstances, dogmatic Left rightly targets poverty, yet it forgets the reasons, that it is not only the economic factors but also the psychological and political ones, a mistake of choices on behalf of the entire society, due to lack of self-confidence and due to the prevalence of the easy pathways without any long-term goals. For all these unfortunately it is the fault of the entire mentality of the nation ...

(Either of the Height or of the Depth: Recent Articles on Civilization in Greece of the Crisis, 97)⁷

Nevertheless, it is clear for Valaoritis that the Greeks are still the epigones of the ancient Greeks from whom the roots of the European civilization. And this is something that is not easy for the Europeans to swallow, especially since the Greeks changed the plans of the Germans in 1941, although they still remain the only nation that has not received the millions in compensation from a forced loan by the Nazis during the German Occupation in Greece. In the poem entitled “Why” from *Bitter Carnival*, Valaoritis concludes:

From the earthly map Greece has been erased
And it became again as it used to be once
An Idea which has ascended onto her geometric
Heaven from where she never landed back.

(*Bitter Carnival*, 10)⁸

Intrigued by Valaoritis’ idiosyncratic, holistic and diachronic exploration of the image of the Greeks as standing at the extremes, I argue that he succeeds in undoing the stereotypes applied to the Greeks, thanks to the particular relation he has established with the classical tradition, a relationship revolving around two axes: his immersion in the study of the Greeks in their diachrony and his embrace of Surrealism, for whom it represents a genuine path to freedom. It is not accidental then that Surrealism covers a long part in his book *Either of the Height or of the Depth*. Thanks to Surrealism, which for Valaoritis is “neither a *dogma* nor a closed philosophical system, but an open and constantly readapted *method* of thought and life style” (*For a Theory of Writing*, 24), marked by the Dionysiac element, this avant-garde author was able to establish a particular relation with Greek antiquity, since for him, Surrealism’s basic contribution to Greece was in the 1930s and 1940s that it reintroduced the Dionysiac element: “The Dionysian element intruded in all sectors: existential, esthetic, philosophical, linguistic, or dramatic” (*For a Theory of Writing*, 9).⁹ Thanks to Surrealism, Valaoritis has been intrigued by the ‘other’ Greek legacy, one that stands at the opposite of Attic rationalism. This is the Greek legacy that was brought to light by E. R. Dodds with his seminal study *The Greeks and the Irrational*, first published in 1951. As Valaoritis characteristically states, he aligns himself with the generation of classicists such as E. Rohde, Jane Ellen Harrison, Gilbert Murray, who, like E.R. Dodds, propose a different view of the Greeks, without excluding “madness, visions, night, dreams, the primitive, delirium and

vertigo, the ‘automatic’ gates of Mount Olympus and the chasmal entrance of Hades” (*For a Theory of Writing B’*, 10)¹⁰. For Valaoritis, “this dark side of Antiquity has been bequeathed to contemporary Greece through the oral tradition with almost no interruption since Homeric times or even earlier” (*For a Theory of Writing B’*, 10).

Finding traces of this irrational Ancient Greek legacy in contemporary folklore literature, bequeathed through the Byzantine times, Valaoritis claims that “contemporary Greece is the land of the absurd, the marvelous and the fantastic par excellence” (*For a Theory of Writing B’*, 10).¹¹ Thanks to this dark legacy, Valaoritis states:

Through our so ancient language, we, contemporary Greeks, bear the very heavy weight of traces, resonances and survivals of Antiquity: the nymphs, the Amazons, Meleager and Althaea, the mermaids, the chthonic bull, the pillar that holds the Heaven, the goddess Aphrodite, the grim Reaper, the Giants, the gods and Homer whom still the people of Chios mention.

(*For a Theory of Writing B’*, 11).¹²

Valaoritis’ relationship with the ancients is complex because it does not remain on a pedantic level, but instead, it is a formative relationship, one that constitutes a constant living experience thanks to his embrace of Surrealism in the sense of an ongoing quest for the marvelous, as Surrealists understood it, that is, as “an eruption of contradiction within the real,” (Aragon, 204). The surrealist marvelous is a concept full of multiplicity and variety, linked at times with knowledge, revelation, desire, dazzling, wonder, fear, awe, irrationality and miracle. By confronting the uncanny, the alien, the terrible, the unfamiliar and the desirable, the marvelous is appealing to Valaoritis, located primarily in the language and its liberating potential, which is able to open new realities thanks to an audacious rearrangement of the words and the juxtaposition of the most incongruous images. Through such alchemy of the word, the marvelous is capable of affecting the human sensibility and often challenging and altering the ways of knowing and perceiving the world. And since change of reality was Surrealism’s ultimate goal, the marvelous had the potential to serve as such a transformational tool, because it functions as a kind of inner revelation or truth rediscovered through a process of the beholder’s astonishment and surprise.

It is in this light of odd yet meaningful rearrangement of incongruous images that we should see the image of the Trojan Horse unleashing a chain of heroes of the Greek War of Independence out of its belly in one of the opening quotes of this paper, which is further analyzed in the seminal article “On the Trojan Horse” of the book *Either of the Height or of the Depth*, this time transformed in a cartoon (Image 4) by Swiss-born Peter Schrank in the Global Edition of the *New York Times* from the *International Herald Tribune* of Paris, first published in the Dubliner *Sunday Business Post* in Ireland, showing Nicolas Sarkozy and Angela Merkel looking at a Trojan horse standing on wheels like a toy within the walls of Troy or rather of the European Union, whose flag appears from a castle, while next to it the sign of Euro is like a statue on a pedestal. On the chest of the Trojan Horse a label is hanging reading in upper case letters: “FROM THE GREEKS THANKS AND NO HARD FEELINGS.” Then Sarkozy addresses Merkel as follows: “Nevertheless, I have a bad feeling about this thing,” referring to the Virgilian “Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes.”

SCHRANK
SUNDAY BUSINESS POST
Dublin
IRELAND



Image 4. Peter Schrank's cartoon. With kind permission of the *New York Times*.

Valaoritis goes on and muses about the possible content of the Trojan Horse, as the first sharp opening quote showed, by piling next to the loans and the debt of the Greeks also the enraged heroes of the Greek War of Independence and along with them necessarily all bankruptcies of the Greek history, including, Charilaos Trikoupis, Eleutherios Venizelos, and Metaxas. The list goes on to also include Karamanlis and Papandreou, all of them ready with wooden swords and fake revolvers to bring back Helen of Troy that the Eurozone took from us, and the tamed by the Germans Venus de Milo and slave of the French, the invaluable Parthenon marbles that amount to legendary amounts of money, looted by the British who should return them to the Greek people.¹³

Notice here all the caustic attack of the Europeans in this riveting and witty chain of unprecedented parallelisms from which no one can escape, reminiscent of another work by Valaoritis, the short play entitled “I Kokona i Maro” from the novel *The Broken Arms of Venus de Milo* (2003), performed among the “Monologues” of the Cultural Olympiad in 2003 in Thessaloniki by Maya Lymberopoulou for whom Savvas Patsalides wrote on the *Aggelioforos tes Kyriakes* (*Sunday Herald*), published in Thessaloniki, Greece, on October 26, 2003: “Maya Lymperopoulou, astonishingly theatrical and fulgurant, immerses herself in an inter-textual and intercultural collage from which she resurrected and selectively mocked everyone – from Korais to Engonopoulos. A body on the surface of which an entire nation sighs and the audience justly applauds” (Patsalides, 2).¹⁴

In fact, Valaoritis deconstructs the ancients only to reappropriate them, and Surrealism offered him the audacity to do so. Such is, for instance, Valaoritis' adventure with Homeric language. He becomes the scholar-chemist who sets out to understand the Homeric *Odyssey* through the letters of the Alphabet and devotes an entire study in the acrophonic theory of the composition of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, which became the book *Homer and the Alphabet* (*Ο Όμηρος και το Αλφάβητο*).

As a new Homer, Valaoritis becomes another aoidos that conveys all the dramatic qualities of the book of *the Odyssey* that deals with the Land of the Cyclops. Amongst so many Homeric vivid images that always appear in his world, the image of these gigantic creatures intrude in Valaoritis' poetic imagination, as in the following lines from “The Difficulties of a Child of

a Century” from his English poetry collection *Pan Daimonium*: “The Pelasgians, a pre-Hellenic people / Left thick walls everywhere... Cyclopean” (*Pan Daimonium*, 236). Whether these walls recall the Mycenaean Cyclopean so-called walls or Cavafy’s walls (another decisive influence for Valaoritis), or the insurmountable wall of the Troika, this is primarily a Homeric reference, as is the following call to the Muse (ἑπικλησις) in the same poem included in the *Anthology of Modern Greek Poetry* he edited with Thanassis Maskaleris in 2003: “Help me o Muse to write what took place / In cold blood and passion: I attempt to slip between your legs / But the golden fleece is very thick” (*Anthology*, 237).

How should one react to such lines that abound in Valaoritis’ work and which audaciously revert or deconstruct the quintessence of a canonical text such as the Homeric epics? Humor is for sure at stake here but there is also irony and, more than that, a tragic sense of manhood. This is something that I consider tremendously successful and witty in Valaoritis’ encounter with the ancients: the way he links language to the materiality of the body out of which stems the pitiful status of a mortal.

Such textual weaving that welcomes humor while conveying an intense experience could not be so effective, if Valaoritis did not have a direct contact with the Ancients, a relationship fertilized by his initiation to Surrealism. Valaoritis has an immediate relationship with the figures of the Greek pantheon and mythology. He does not see them as distant or as occasions for moral lessons – he hates such a thing. Equally, he does not worship them in the sense of “hellenolatrea” or “hellenolagneia.” Instead, he stripes them of their sovereignty/deity or abstract quality and brings them down to their essential materiality.

He is fascinated by their very anthropomorphism and their humane quality and they naturally inhabit his creative world. As equal counterparts then, Valaoritis feels as if he had the right to treat them as such and therefore, when needed, he can parody them without remorse. While one could see this as a blasphemous act, for Valaoritis it is a healthy treatment that gives way to new paths of expression. There are numerous other examples of a variety of manifestations of marvelous encounters with the Ancients in Valaoritis’ work to the point that it would not be an exaggeration to say that the marvelous, which is mainly responsible for Valaoritis’ innovative voice, is constantly transformed thanks to the author’s audacious experiments with language.

This voice reflects his assimilation of three cultures and literary traditions, each one of which represents a distinct phase in his career. Valaoritis knows how to readdress the essence of the classical legacy in a new context and thus reach his audience. From the classical Greek tradition to the French, to Anglophone and American influences and, recently, back to the Modern Greek life and culture, Valaoritis dares to fight with his words as a poet and a grand orator, against all those who impose harmful stereotypes against his fellow Greeks. Either directly, or through his new poems that cannot yet be classified, he dares to cry out and become the voice of today’s Greeks whose dreams were stolen:

All we lost it – houses factories
 autos – salaries – our independence – the pension – our holidays –
 benefits – our job – the extra salary of Easter and Christmas
 our hope for the future [...] and debt was left to us – taxes – anxiety
 – humiliation – the job advertisement – despair – and anniversaries
 – birthdays – the celebrations of Christmas and Easter
 nominal celebrations – weddings
 the christenings – funerals – cinema – soap operas –
 memorials divorces –
 Propo the lottery. Loans – bitterness – rent – accounts
 OTE, EYDAP, UTILITIES
 children’s tuition
 their absent books – and
 our Melancholy for the mundane – grief – football!

(“What we lost what we gained”, *Bitter Carnival*)¹⁵

For poems, according to Valaoritis, “are the magnifying glasses through which we can see reality. Small illuminations from a space that is enclosed,”¹⁶ and therefore they are dangerous, I would add, like the belly of the Trojan Horse with which this paper started. For it may erupt at any moment. It would not be an exaggeration then if we see Valaoritis’ surrealist and Bakhtinian multi-faceted writing as another Trojan Horse, metaphorically speaking, whose hidden soldiers are his words and his arguments. After all, he sees himself as another Homer who sings the adventures of the modern *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, as the following poems of his bear evidence:

TROY

How many at sea, how many drowned?
And those who shipwrecked
Returning, expected to see you,
Death alone wouldn't wait.

Remember, the dead on the beaches
Will want to address you, as you pass.
What we built will destroy us
The defeated seem to have won.

This spring... no one knows
The river was flooding my mouth
And the sun held me by the hand

The horses returned without the body.
When we came back that summer,
My god, how the towers had changed color.

(*Anthology*, trans. Thanassis Maskaleris, 230)

Or, the third epigram 'Celaeno' from Valaoritis' "Stigmata (Dots)":

III

Celaeno

Is it my fault if the gods
Give me apples
And mortals give me claws?

(*Anthology*, trans. Thanassis Maskaleris, 232)

Notes

- All translations are mine, unless otherwise indicated.
The original reads as follows: "Τι να περιέχει άραγες αυτή τη φορά ο νέος Δούρειος Ίππος του κυρίου Schrank; Θα κάνω μερικές υποθέσεις. Γραμμάτια, ομόλογα, την *Ιστορία του Ελληνικού Έθνους* του Παπαρρηγόπουλου, του Γκόρντον την *Ιστορία της Ελληνικής Επανάστασης*, καθιζήμενοι στα παγκάκια τους ο Κολοκοτρώνης, ο Πλαπούτας, ο Μάρκος Μπότσαρης, ο Καραϊσκάκης, ο Ανδρούτσος, ο Μακρυγιάννης, η Μπουμπουλίνα, η Μαντώ Μαυρογένους, ο Κανάρης, ο Μιαούλης, όλοι με τα γιαταγάνια τους, και τις πιστόλες, έτοιμοι να ξεχυθούν να λεηλατήσουν την Ευρωζώνη, να εξοντώσουν το Ευρώ...! Μα καταλάβουν την Ε.Ε. στις Βρυξέλλες, να κατασπαράξουν όλους τους Κομισάριους, Επιτρόπους, Τροϊκανούς, να δηώσουν τη Νέα Τροία.» (*Η του Ύψους ή του Βάθους: Πρόσφατα Άρθρα για τον Πολιτισμό στην Ελλάδα της Κρίση*, 101.)

«Άραγες θα μπορούσε, εκτός από εξαγριωμένους και χρεωμένους, να έβγαζε το πορτόνι και μερικούς όπως ο Ελύτης, ο Καβάφης, ο Σεφέρης, ο Ρίτσος, ο Καββαδίας, ο Σαχτούρης,

η Μαντώ Αραβαντινού, Ο Κοσμάς Πολίτης, Ο Ταχτσής, Ο Αλέξανδρος Σχοινάς, για να μείνω στον 2ο αιώνα. Αυτοί όμως πολεμούν με τα λόγια, τη γλώσσα, τις λέξεις, τις έννοιες, τις ιδέες κι όχι με χρηματιστηριακές δοσοληψίες, να φτιάξουν έναν κόσμο διαφορετικό από αυτόν που ζούμε, αλλά και με προεκτάσεις του δικού μας, εκάστοτε αναγνωρίσιμες. Γι' αυτούς είμαστε Έλληνες και όχι για τους ανίκανους, απατεώνες δολοπλόκους ανάμεσά μας.» (*Η του Ύψους ή του Βάθους: Πρόσφατα Άρθρα για τον Πολιτισμό στην Ελλάδα της Κρίση*, 103.)

«Μήπως πάλι προτιμήσουμε τους Τούρκους Ισλαμιστές απ' τους λαίμαργους αιμοβόρους Είναι οι 'λαίμαργοι, 'χριστιανούς' βαρόνους του Βορρά; Ελπίζω όχι, γιατί υπάρχουν οι Βαλκάνιοι και οι Ρώσοι που είναι χριστιανοί, και οι Κινέζοι, οι Ινδοί, οι Λατινοαμερικανοί, οι Γιαπωνέζοι, ακόμα και οι Κάφροι, οι Εσκιμώοι και οι Βουσμάνοι, που είναι λαοί με μπέσα.» (*Η του Ύψους ή του Βάθους: Πρόσφατα Άρθρα για τον Πολιτισμό στην Ελλάδα της Κρίση*, 119.)

- See: <http://englishliteratureumn11.blogspot.com/2015/01/anggi-syahputri.html>. [Accessed on February 7, 2017.]
- See the back cover of Nanos Valaoritis' book *My Afterlife Guaranteed and Other Narratives*.
- See: www.passim.eu/la-crisis-griega-en-vinetas/
- The original reads as follows: "Από τον Όθωνα, τον Πιούριφοί, ως την Τρόικα, οι τέτοιοι φίλοι γίνονται εχθροί όταν αντιμετωπίζουν τους αντίθασους και ξεσηκωμένους Έλληνες – αδιάφορο ποιας ιδεολογίας. Τεμπέληδες, διεφθαρμένους, φοροφυγάδες, αντιμνημονιακούς, πλούσιους, φτωχούς, μισθωτούς, συνταξιούχους, άρρωστους, κλέφτες, απατεώνες, με πελατειακές σχέσεις, ζώντας με δανεικά και παραβαίνοντας τους νόμους που ψηφίζουν. Ακόμα και αυτούς τους τελευταίους προτιμώ γιατί είναι ελληνικής κατασκευής, με μικρό έψιλον. Και από βάτραχος κοσμοπολίτης γίνομαι ταύρος εθνικιστής και μάλιστα μινώταυρος, έτοιμος να καταβροχθίσει έξι και έξι ετήσιους νέους και νέες, που θα μας αποστέλλονται ως φόρος υποταγής, όσο απίθανο και να φαίνεται.» (*Η του Ύψους ή του Βάθους: Πρόσφατα Άρθρα για τον Πολιτισμό στην Ελλάδα της Κρίση*, 119.)
- This excerpt comes from the back cover of the book *Either of the Height or of the Depth: Recent Articles on Civilization in Greece of the Crisis*. It reads as follows in the original: "Είναι γνωστό ότι οι Έλληνες ως λαός συνήθως αναδεικνύονται καλύτερα στις έκτακτες περιστάσεις, όπως και στην αρχαιότητα. Περσικοί Πόλεμοι, εναντίον των Καρχηδονίων στη Σικελία, του ύψους του βάθους ο Πελοποννησιακός Πόλεμος η κατάκτηση του Μεγαλέξανδρου, του ύψους του βάθους οι επίγονοι ανάμεσά τους Έικοσιένα του ύψους, οι εμφύλιοι του βάθους. Ο κατάλογος είναι μακρύς — και πάντοτε σε σχέση με τους ξένους, εχθρούς, βαρβάρους ή μεταξύ μας θα συνεχιστεί η ίδια εικόνα κατά μήκος της Ιστορίας μας." (*Η του Ύψους ή του Βάθους: Πρόσφατα Άρθρα για τον Πολιτισμό στην Ελλάδα της Κρίση*, 219.)
- Here is the original: «Φταίει και η αδυναμία διορατικότητας της πολιτικής ελίτ που αποθαρρύνει την εγχώρια παραγωγή, χάριν μιας ευκολότερης πολιτικής εισαγωγών με υψηλή φορολογία, που προσφέρει προσωρινά έσοδα. [...] Στις παρούσες συνθήκες η δογματική Αριστερά ορθά δίνει έμφαση στη φτώχεια, όμως λησμονεί τους λόγους, πως δεν είναι μόνο οικονομικοί οι παράγοντες αλλά και ψυχολογικοί και πολιτικοί, ένα λάθος επιλογή από το σύνολο της κοινωνίας, λόγω έλλειψης αυτοπεποίθησης και λόγω της προτίμησης του εύκολου δρόμου χωρίς πρόβλεψη των μακροπρόθεσμων αποτελεσμάτων. Σε αυτά δυστυχώς φταίει ολόκληρη η νοοτροπία του έθνους...» (*Η του Ύψους ή του Βάθους: Πρόσφατα Άρθρα για τον Πολιτισμό στην Ελλάδα της Κρίση*, 97.)
- Here is this stanza in Greek from the poem "ΓΙΑΤΙ" written in Athens in June 2009: Απ' τον γήινο χάρτη είναι σθησμένη η Ελλάδα/Κι έγινε πάλι όπως ήταν άλλοτες έναν καιρό/Μια ιδέα και αναλήφθηκε στον γεωμετρικό/Της Ουρανό απ' όπου δεν ξανακατέβηκε. (*Πικρό Καρναβάλι*, 10).
- Here is the relevant reference in the original: "Το διονυσιακό στοίχειο εισέβαλε σε όλους τους τομείς: υπαρξιακό, αισθητικό, φιλοσοφικό, γλωσσικό, ή δραματικό." (*Κείμενα για τον Υπερρεαλισμό: Για μια Θεωρία της Γραφής Β'*, 9).

- 10 The original reads as follows: "... χωρίς επ' ουδενί να αποκλείουν την τρέλα, τα οράματα, τη νύχτα, τα όνειρα, το πρωτόγονο, το παραλήρημα και τη φρενίτιδα, τις 'αυτόματες' πύλες του Ολύμπου και τη χασματώδη είσοδο του Άδη." (Κείμενα για τον Υπερρεαλισμό: Για μια Θεωρία της Γραφής Β', 10).
- 11 The original reads as follows: "Όχι, η Ελλάδα είναι ως επί το πλείστον η χώρα του παραλόγου, του παράδοξου και του φανταστικού." (Κείμενα για τον Υπερρεαλισμό: Για μια Θεωρία της Γραφής Β', 10).
- 12 The original reads as follows: "Μέσω της τόσο αρχαίας γλώσσας μας, εμείς, οι σύγχρονοι έλληνες, φέρουμε το πολύ βαρύ φορτίο από ίχνη, απηχήσεις και επιβιώσεις της Αρχαιότητας: τις νύμφες, τις Αμαζόνες, τον Μελέαγρο και την Αλθαία, τις γοργόνες, τον χθόνιο ταύρο, τον στύλο που συγκρατεί τον ουρανό, τη θεά Αφροδίτη, τον Άδη, τον Χάροντα, τους Γίγαντες, τους θεούς και τον όμηρο, που ακόμα μνημονεύουν οι χωρικοί της Χίου." (Κείμενα για τον Υπερρεαλισμό: Για μια Θεωρία της Γραφής Β', 10).
- 13 The entire list of the content of the Trojan Horse can be found in the pages 101-103 of *Either of the Height or of the Depth*.
- 14 The excerpt in Greek is as follows: "Τελευταίο και μακράν το καλύτερο, το απολαυστικότερο και σπινθηροβόλο 'Η Κοκώνα η Μαρώ'—κεφάλαιο από το μυθιστόρημα του Νάνου Βαλαωρίτη *Τα σπασμένα χέρια της Αφροδίτης της Μήλου* -- με μία Μάγια Λυμπεροπούλου εξόχως θεατρική και απαστράπτουσα, να βυθίζεται με άνεση σ' ένα διακειμενικό και διαπολιτισμικό κολάζ και ν' ανασύρει (και κατά βούληση να διασύρει) τους πάντες, από τον Κοραή μέχρι τον Εγγονόπουλο. Ένα σώμα στην επιφάνεια του οποίου αναστενάζει όλο το έθνος, και η πλατεία δικαίως χειροκροτεί."
- 15 The original reads: "Όλα τα χάσαμε – τα σπίτια τα εργοστάσια | τ' αυτοκίνητα – τους μισθούς – την ανεξαρτησία μας – τη σύνταξη – τις διακοπές μας – τα επιδόματα – τη δουλειά μας – τα δώρα του Πάσχα και των Χριστουγέννων | την ελπίδα μας για το μέλλον [...] και μας έμειναν το χρέος – οι φόροι – το άγχος – η ταπείνωση – η αγγελία για θέση εργασίας – η απελπισία – και οι επέτειοι – τα γενέθλια – οι γιορτές των Χριστουγέννων και του Πάσχα | οι ονομαστικές γιορτές – οι γάμοι | τα βαφτίσια – οι κηδείες – το σινεμά – οι σαπουνόπερες – | τα μνημόσυνα τα διαζύγια – το προπό – | το λαχείο. Τα δάνεια – η πικρία – το νοίκι – οι λογαριασμοί | του ΟΤΕ της ΕΥΕΔΑΠ, των κοινοχρήστων | τα τέλη των σχολείων των παιδιών | τα απόντα βιβλία τους – και | η Μελαγχολία μας για τα εγκόσμια – η θλίψη – το ποδόσφαιρο!" (Νάνος Βαλαωρίτης, «Τι χάσαμε, τι κερδίσαμε», *Πικρό Καρναβάλι*).
- 16 This excerpt comes from an interview Nanos Valaoritis gave at the electronic journal Bookbar: <http://www.bookbar.gr/nanos-valaoritis-pikro-carnavali-i-tou-ipsous-i-tou-vathous/cocktails> «Τα ποιήματα είναι μεγεθυντικοί φακοί μέσα από τα οποία μπορούμε να δούμε την πραγματικότητα. Μικρές εκλάμψεις από έναν χώρο που είναι εγκλωβισμένος.»

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Example of
village life from
1960s.

Source:
NAA, Series
A12111

John N Yiannakis

Curtin University

True Grit: A snapshot from a longitudinal study about Greek Migrant Women in eastern Australia

As suggested by the title, this paper is based on a longitudinal study recently published as a book; *Black Night, White Day* (2015). To try to summarize the 45 years of research that went into that study in a 20-minute presentation (and associated paper), is near impossible, so I won't try. My co-authors Reg Appleyard and Anna Amera dedicated many, many years to this particular study. I'm a late comer to the work. When I first became aware of the project in the late 1980s, it was already over 20 years in the making. Only in more recent years did I become directly involved in the project.

The said book presents the results of a longitudinal study that began in 1964. This was a time when matters of confidentiality and associated legalities were less emphasised than today and when verbal agreements and understandings between individuals were sufficient collateral, rather than the written contracts of today. Though approval was received to undertake the interviews and associated questionnaires, the names of people were changed to help protect their identities and those of their families. Nor was it the intention of this research to identify and chronicle every major event, decision and outcome in the lives of those who participated in the study. Furthermore, it was decided to alter the names of villages and hamlets to help maintain anonymity. Nevertheless, the patience, diligence, and fortitude shown by Appleyard and Amerato complete this distinctive 45-year-plus study is most commendable.

Quoting Appleyard: "Imagine a young woman from a small isolated village in Greece in the early 1960s; unable to speak English and never

having left her home or family. She literally takes her life in her hands as she boards a plane and travels to the other side of the world for a new life in Australia. I remain (some 50 years later) in awe of the courage and sheer grit of the women who embarked on this journey.”

Yet, while women have frequently shown such courage in the migratory journey, they are often relegated to second or even third place when migration is discussed. Until recently, the female migrant was seldom discussed as a person in her own right. Generally, migrant women are invisible and under-researched. Greek immigrant women have been treated no differently. These women tended to be marginalised within the migration discourse with few of their stories, until recent times, recorded or recognised.¹

Contemporary research has, however, become somewhat more discerning in the study of Greek female immigrants, identifying differences in their backgrounds, roles and experiences (here and abroad), while recognising their contributions to Australia’s economic, cultural and political circumstances. There is a growing body of research that seeks not only to explain the reasons for their marginalisation, but provides more insight and discussion about the Greek female migrant and her experiences. The research presented in this study is at the forefront of this fresh direction. With many new settlers still coming to Australia’s shores there are lessons to be learnt from that experience regarding the importance of women to the processes of adaptation in new lands for today’s governments, immigration officials and community leaders.

A recurring theme for many of the women, who were part of this study, and a refrain articulated by many Greek migrants, inspired the title of the book. Beyond the general description of the black, foreign land (*mavrixenitia*), by Greek migrants, the difficulties of adjusting to life in the new society and then waiting for the promise of the new homeland to be fulfilled, is often described and contrasted as the black night; white day. The loneliness, despair, and hard work, often during the black of night, (*mavrinychta*), on the one hand; the growing economic and social stability, the advent of family and home resulting from such hard toil, (*asprimera*), on the other: “δουλεύουμε μαύρες νύχτες για να δούμε μια άσπρη μέρα.” “We work black nights so we can see a white day”. This refrain, I was recently informed, could be heard cited elsewhere by others struggling in their newly adopted homeland back in the 1950s and 60s... namely, the UK. Hence,

while the Greek females of this study settled principally in Sydney and Melbourne, there is some universality in their experiences.

Although Australia’s post-war immigration programme had initially been justified primarily on grounds of defence, the migrant contribution to economic development soon became the programme’s main justification.

Hence, government policies had to meet this situation and led to a significant increase in migration from Greece, triggered by the government’s 1952 decision to “grant assisted passages to tens of thousands of Greeks, many of them heads of young families and unmarried males”.² By 1954, the number of Greece-born persons in Australia had doubled since the 1947 census and trebled by the 1961 census.³ In 1966, 66,000 Greece-born persons were living in Australia.

The 78 Greek women who came to Australia as part of a specific scheme, and whose adaptation is evaluated in this study, were interviewed in Greece prior to their emigration in 1964 and then followed up with interviews in Australia (and in Greece with those who returned) in 1965, 1976, 1990/91 and 2007. Issues pertaining to the participants’ health, life-expectancy or political leanings were not part of this study.

The women emigrated under a programme first devised in 1956 by the Australian government in association with the Government of Greece and the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration (ICEM, now IOM – International Organisation for Migration), designed essentially to even the gender imbalance created by the many single Greek males who settled in Australia during the 1950s and early 1960s.

To help redress the imbalance, single Greek women were trained for domestic work, taught rudimentary English, and sent to Australia (and Canada). The majority of the young women in our research came from mountain villages and small towns (principally from the Peloponnese and southern Macedonia, around Mt Olympus). Their average age was 19. They had acquired little formal education; the median school leaving age being twelve. Forty-five per cent were engaged in “home duties”, and nearly all the others worked mainly part-time as seamstresses/dressmakers, hairdressers or housemaids. Many also worked as shepherds during the summer months.

As an example, one of the women, interviewed in 1964 just prior to departure by Anna Amera, when asked about life in the village expressed bitterness about her family’s poverty and about her own hard life as shepherd, labourer and domestic:

“We are poor”, she said. “We own 150 goats but this is not enough to give us what we need to support ourselves ... There’s always work in the village, and the only recreation is some ‘name days’ that we celebrate, and other festivals ... The poverty made me think about migration as well as the wish to settle my life. I know I’ll have to work hard in Australia but at least I’ll be getting paid”.

In 1964, her village was home to approximately six hundred people, mostly old or children and female. Many young men, married and single, had already left for towns and cities in Greece or had followed thousands of their countrymen to factories in northern Europe. Others had emigrated to America, Canada and Australia. A weekly bus service along a rough, unpaved road was the only connection between this isolated village and the nearby provincial town. No one owned a motor car, and electricity had not yet reached the village.



A mountain hut in the Peloponnese.
Courtesy: R Appleyard



Example of village life
from 1960s. Source:
Source: NAA, Series
A12111

women whether their migratory journey to Australia would fulfill their hopes and the promise of a ‘white day’ or whether hardships and unfulfilled expectations would create a more adverse ‘black night’. For each one of them, the outcome of their decision would vary.

The women were taken to a school at Kifissia, then an outer suburb of Athens, where they enrolled in a ten-week course that included classes in basic English, life in a modern Western society (Australia), dressmaking, deportment, hair care, and hygiene. On completing the course, the trainees boarded a plane for Sydney and another to Adelaide. The majority then travelled from Adelaide by train to Berri, South Australia, where their employment as fruit packers had been pre-arranged.



Home economics class at Kifissia. Source: NAA, Series A12111

Berri was a one-off arrangement for ICEM trainees. The short picking-packing season coincided with our group's arrival and so jobs were arranged before their departure from Greece. For many of these young women, this was an unpleasant – if not life scarring – experience. Whether the women stayed at Berri for a couple of weeks or a couple of months, the vast majority would find themselves residing on Australia's east coast.

Case studies are presented in the final publication to illustrate the cross-section of life journeys experienced by these women. Just as they needed grit and tenacity to cope with life in Greece and to undertake the arduous journey to Australia, they would need these qualities to cope in their new homeland. In a forum such as this I can only provide you with a general overview of our results and conclusions.

Of the original 78 questionnaire respondents from 1964, 55 were interviewed in 2006/07 in Greece and Australia. Most had remained in Australia, while others returned to Greece – some permanently, others only briefly. The majority who had returned permanently did so within the first decade of migrating. The vast majority married, primarily to Greece born men (as hoped for



Young women from Greece arriving at South Australian Riverland hostel by bus, January 1965
Courtesy: Murray Reporter

by the Australian government), others to Australia born Greeks. The 2006/07 survey revealed that only three respondents had separated or divorced. Most of the women who settled in Australia long term resided in Melbourne and Sydney, with a handful living in Adelaide and Brisbane.

The clothing industry provided employment for many of the women. They were typically grouped in sections of factories where only Greek was spoken. Others worked at home sewing garments that were later collected and sold in the marketplace. Both arrangements provided respondents with little opportunity to communicate with non-Greek-speaking persons. Furthermore, the employment and residence environments of Melbourne and Sydney in which the migrants initially settled bore little resemblance to the village and small town physical and social environments that they had left only weeks beforehand. Classes in English were available but few respondents attended the complete courses. However, almost all the respondents emphasised the importance of learning English as soon as possible.

Greek remained the language of communication between spouses for the forty-plus years covered by this study although English was adopted

by their children, and both Greek and English was spoken increasingly between the children and their parents.

Incidence of home ownership and investments in Australia were impressive. As was the finding that, 79 per cent of their children had stayed on to Year 12/HSC or its equivalent. Much time in the latter part of the study was spent surveying and interviewing the children of the women. Detailed results of these encounters are discussed in the book. Of those who went on to further education, 42 per cent completed tertiary courses at universities and Colleges of Advanced Education. A notable achievement when set against their mothers' village/small town life and their own upbringing in inner suburban schools in Melbourne and Sydney.

In our view, this study has thrown new light on the role played by women in international migration. Showing courage, initiative and grit, and often alone at the start of their migratory journey, they not only created homes on arrival but also contributed to the formation of families, communities and, more broadly, to Australia. Furthermore, each new female settler was unique in the experiences she brought and what she contributed to the country. And while they were essentially the anchors who stabilize male migrants, many of whom, if alone, find it difficult to adapt in the host society, they were, as attested in our research, very much more.

Examples of Greek migrant poetry (mid 1960s) inspiring the title of The book *Black Night, White Day: Greece-born Women in Australia Results of a longitudinal study, 1964 to 2007* (translated by A. Amara)

The Foreign Factories by S and P

In the foreign factories
I work night and day
With the hope in my heart
To see a "White (better) Day"

I will return to Greece

I've decided to leave
From the black foreign land
To return to Greece
To see my little house again

Notes

- 1 Palaktoglou, 2013.
- 2 Tsounis, 1988, p. 18.
- 3 Bureau of Immigration and Population Research, 1994.

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Bucolic,
Theophilos

Sophie Iakovidou
Democritus University of Thrace

The Author as Reader: the case of Margarita Karapanou

The publication of the journal and notes that Margarita Karapanou kept during her adolescence revealed an early and acute reader. Beyond her lineage, it is the range and speed of consumption of books (as well as other writers' journals) that determined her literary destiny. What is striking, however, is her reading preferences: steering clear of Greek literature, which she blames for political polarisation, she almost exclusively focuses on foreign writers, mainly English and French-speaking ones – and she always reads them from the original. Such is proved to be also her own “literary citizenship” when she attempts her creative take-off with her first literary book. *Kassandra and the wolf* is namely her own rebirth by means of writing. It is also her proper portrait of the artist in early childhood. I will examine the ways in which she attempts to “correct” her own biography through her own readings. I will elaborate on three dimensions: a) re-writing her childhood, which was proven to be equally fascinating and traumatic, using as a projection screen of her own experiences *The Turn of the Screw* by H. James, a novel haunting her entire work, b) the theory about writing and reading that she develops through another child, daughter of another famous writer in *Kassandra* and c) the way she is led to choose the career of a creative fiction writer over the one of a literary critic or academic.

What persists throughout her life is a constant interweaving of reality and fiction, a tendency to see her life more clearly when reading. This constant sense of unfulfillment, leads to a propensity to flee, to travel;

in brief, what her other great love, Flaubert, attributed in an unrivalled way to Madame Bovary and what forms the overwhelming “bovarism” evident in Karapanou and probably in each real reader and writer.

If we take as a point of departure her last published book while she was still alive, *Mum*, a clear statement, comprising all the above, stands already there as a *résumé* of her life and work:

Σαρτρ, Μποβουάρ, Κνουτ Χάμσουν, Χένρυ Μίλλερ, και τόσοι άλλοι! Πέφτω με τα μούτρα στο διάβασμα. Μου τρέχουν τα σάλια, κλαίω, γελάω, από το πρωί μέχρι βαθιά τη νύχτα. (...) Το χαρτί μυρίζει σαν ξεχασμένη χαρά. Θέλω κι εγώ να πληγώσω το χαρτί, να του βγάλω αίμα. Τη νύχτα διαβάζω με τον φακό. Οι λέξεις πηδάνε χαρούμενες. Το διάβασμα μου έσωσε τη ζωή. Ακόμη και τώρα είναι ο πυρήνας της ύπαρξής μου.

[Sartre, Beauvoir, Knut Hamsun, Henry Miller and so many more! I dive deep into reading. I drool, I cry, I laugh, from morning till deep in the night. (...) Paper smells like forgotten joy. I, too, want to hurt the paper, make it bleed. At night I read with a torch. Words jump happily. Reading has saved my life. Even now, it is the core of my existence].

(Karapanou 2004: 127)

She goes on to say:

Δεν ξέρω πως έγινα συγγραφέας. Ίσως η βαθιά δυστυχία να με ώθησε. Μια μέρα, άρχιζα το πρώτο μου μυθιστόρημα. Έκλαιγα από χαρά, τα δάχτυλα μουτζουρώνανε τις σελίδες. Μητέρα, κι εσύ έκλαψες από χαρά. Τα γραμμένα χαρτιά επιτέλους μας χώριζαν. Εκείνη τη νύχτα δεν είχα εφιάλτες, με κατέκλυσε μια γλυκιά γαλήνη. Είχα γεννηθεί... (p. 128)

[I don't know how I became a writer. Maybe it was deep unhappiness that drove me. One day, I was starting my first novel. I was crying from joy, the tears were smudging the pages. Mother, you too cried with joy. The written pieces of paper were finally separating us. That night I had no nightmares, I was overcome by a sweet serenity. I was born...]

This second birth through writing, this painful yet redemptive secession from the mother, was nevertheless the narration of the chronicle of all that preceded learning to read and write. This is so because Karapanou's first book, *Kassandra and the Wolf*, that bears the dedication “To my mother, Margarita Liberaki”, begins with the chapter “First Day” and ends with “First Day of

School”, where the former narrates the birth of the young heroine and the latter her first day of school, when she starts learning to read and write by syllabizing. At that point, the letters, this bizarre combination of illegible signs and vocal patterns, which represent objects, concepts and feelings lock into words. Words cut into syllables – “it hurts when I cut words in half”, says the child with tears in her eyes– even though this interrupted speech, this difficult rise of the inner language to the surface or the order of Logos, is something that she already knows from her own stutter when speaking in front of important people, and what will later turn into her unique mark on writing with the fragmented style, the few phrases that are left alone at the beginning of the blank page, the sharp episodes and the frequent dots that adjoin in a whole, like leaves of plucked days and read passages that bind into a book. The young Kassandra of the first book might not yet know how to read, but her house is frequented by promising poets, she speaks English as she is raised by an English governess, French as she visits her mother in Paris where she consorts with the offspring of other artists and is looked after by known philosophers during children's parties. The entire network of dark atavistic conflicts within which Karapanou will realize her own difficult creative take-off is already here with its dazzling but constant duplicity. The childhood, equally golden and nightmarish, bountiful and at the same time emotionally depriving, as the child is raised by a whole group of servants and educators but not by her mother and father¹, overprotected and at the same time insidiously promiscuous, since among the serving staff and the parents' intellectual friends lurk molesters, already foreshadows a work, not only the first book but all those that will follow, where nothing is as it seems and opposites will coexist or appear equivalent naturally. More than her descent (she is the daughter of not only Liberaki, but of a failed poet, as she calls her father, and the great granddaughter of the publisher Fexis) it is this perpetual ambiguity that prepared her literary destiny, in its dual – again – sense: as the formation of a reading criterion, *and* as a writing ideal that will always tend towards ambiguity. It is not accidental that her first book, even though it is written in Greek, is first published in English, and is acclaimed by great figures of the international realm like J. Updike, J. Charyn and R. Chandler, while the second, *The Sleepwalker*, wins the award for best foreign novel in France, and the third will dare to bear as its title a complete foreign language expression, *Rien ne va plus*.

Maybe all this external enthusiastic reception was but an old rendez-vous: in her own country Karapanou will be loved by the public, yet the critics², or her esteemed colleagues will never show the same enthusiasm as their counterparts from abroad, whereas the academic critique only recently has begun to delve into her work with increasing interest (Prinzinger 1997, Iakovidou 2008, Voulgari 2008, Nazou 2011).

At the age of 13 she transcribes in her journal a whole passage from a Greek book she had just read – it was *Θύματα ειρήνης* (*Peace's victims*, 1957) in order to show or remind herself of what she *doesn't* like in literature, i.e. descriptive literalism, especially regarding a love scene. A teenager is already a mature reader, capable of putting aside anything that may be related with teenage awakenings (she is in love again with a boy at that time and she admits that the specific love scene excites her, but this doesn't affect her barometer as a reader). A few days or pages before she had devoured *Les faux monnayeurs* by Gide which astounded her. It is rare that one of her recorded days or experiences doesn't include a reading or a film, almost exclusively foreign, French or English, that the young girl always reads in the original. As it was shown by the publication of Karapanou's journal (which in a dramatic or significant coincidence took place shortly before her death) she was an early and acute reader.

The journals that came out as a volume entitled *Η ζωή είναι αγρίως απίθανη* (*Life is wildly improbable*) cover the twenty-year period from 1959 to 1979 (we cannot know if they are the exhaustive publication of all the notebooks and notes that she kept in a chest, which were ordered by someone in the publishing house)³. They start as a teenage journal and end up more as a writer's working notebooks, a kind of "helix", as she noted "because it spirals constantly around itself" (Karapanou 2008: 422). In this sense the amount of readings that parade within them – their range and quantity cannot but be impressive, especially if associated with each age – create a continuous spiralling movement around her already weaved work. Books in which she searched her identity as a girl and then as a woman (*Mémoires d'une jeune fille rangée* by Simone de Beauvoir or *An unfinished woman* by Lillian Hellman); books that offered a view to her recurrent obsessions, both psychic and auctorial (*Les Eaux Profondes* by Patricia Highsmith, which she finds "very constructive"); books in which she found "real human beings" or literary heroes in whom she recognized real friends (*Les Mandarins*

by Simone de Beauvoir or Roger Martin du Gard's *Les Thibaults*); real relationships on the other hand that are fatal or abortive but which she already dreams of transforming into narratives like the ones they resemble (her lover reminds her of the protagonist of Malcolm Lowry's *Under the volcano* and she hopes to convey such an aura to her upcoming book, the *Sleepwalker*); journals, correspondence and novels that cured her writing crises, providing lessons of literary style (like the ones by André Gide or Emily Brontë to whom she returns regularly, especially if she is not pleased with her own literary experimentations); psychoanalytical interpretations of art (*De l'art à la mort* by Michel de M'Uzan) and even mental testimonies that differ from her own, even from those to which she refers in her journals, like those by Violette Leduc, constitute a whole galaxy, her own intimate resort.

"Whoever keeps a diary is a potential writer", she will stress later on in an article dedicated to two of her favourite authors, Gustave Flaubert and Henry James, to whom she never ceases to return, from the beginning and till the end of her life and work. Both of their journal testimonies were not pages of the episodes of a lifetime but rather pages of a work that is yet to be written, or, as Karapanou phrases it much more visually, they resembled "the negative of a film that has not yet reached the stage of processing" (Karapanou 1986: 1125). It would be a futile effort, though, to attempt to discover among the variety of her readings the possible negatives of her own upcoming work. She is clear when she prompts herself in her journal: "I must reread *Under the Volcano* and *Wuthering Heights*. Not to copy, but to smell a little passion. It must be something extremely violent, I have it in me, I must bring it out", she notes as she is already pregnant with the *Sleepwalker* (2008: 324).

If a joy or a love is not something one can return to, or relive exactly as it was, and if violence persists even in the most hypothetically benign relationships, "literature, oddly, makes us taste life more correctly, more fairly. It is this dimension that crystallizes a fleeting motion and conveys it to us wholly, eternally" (1986: 1127). Literature as a form of justice, and especially as a perpetual, imaginary restoration of the disorder and randomness of life with the proper ethics and aesthetics; perhaps there isn't a more concise description of what Karapanou seeks both as a writer and a reader. Though she is supposedly referring here to her beloved Flaubert and James, she is in fact speaking more than ever about herself. Every comment (of a writer

about another writer) is always/already “both for the self and the Other”, it would be almost redundant to repeat it (Clément 1999: 7-24, Ricoeur 1990), as well as the fact that a writer becomes first and foremost the type of reader he or she once was. If it is true that one is not born a woman but becomes one, as Beauvoir said (whose work Karapanou read in completion), then it is even more true that one is not born a writer, but becomes one. And even if the first process is something whose indelible traces of childhood, all that one is subject to since presumably he or she cannot control it, one struggles to rearrange throughout a lifetime the second, the *devenir écrivain*, one can claim it on his or her own terms. One can impose his or her own justice, be born anew and remain there, even if he or she has physically left. The second birth through writing that Karapanou attempted amidst her personal chaos, this creative ejection into her chosen realm, bears her own geography, or better yet her own literary citizenship. If the range and speed of the consumption of books mentioned in her journals bears nothing unnatural for a real writers’ digest, there is nevertheless something rather awry. Karapanou seems to prefer clearly the French-written and English-written literature, while she stands in a “slight angle” towards the Greek-written literature, which she accuses of its political polarization, as well as its “absence of ambiguity” which, according to her, is one of the characteristics of top-level literature (2008: 336). Could this mean that she is less familiar with Modern Greek Literature and thus underestimates it or vice versa? When the writer was asked if she had read *Δύσκολες νύχτες* (*Difficult nights*) by Melpo Axioti, as the book presents similarities with her *Kassandra*, she responded vaguely that she must have read it in the past (Faubion 1996: 221). But, *Kassandra* is somewhat different to Axioti’s young heroine, who is also raised in a rich home but without a mother and in a constant distancing from many aspects of the world that surrounds her, as she is also different to the little girl that is raised in the bourgeois Parisian home of *Mémoires d’une jeune fille rangée*, who already presents anxiety crisis as a denial of the rules that she needs to begin to respect, and who will later become Simone de Beauvoir. And this because within the golden shell that encompasses her, young *Kassandra* moves half as an angel half as a devil in her own house of horrors, a dimension that is totally absent in the two narratives above. Karapanou, like another Alice, walked through the mirror and showed her

own mirror-house to the readers and at the same time she sent a letter to her mother just like the one young *Kassandra* dictates to her grandmother:

VERSE
 «Αγαπημένη μου μαμά, πότε θα γυρίσεις; Θέλω να σε σκοτώσω.
 Σου στέλνω πολλά φαντάσματα
 Δύο μαγικά
 Κι ένα λουλούδι

Κασσάνδρα»

(Karapanou 2001a: 75)

“My Dear Mother, when are you coming back? I want to kill you.
 I am sending you a bunch of Ghosts
 2 magic piggiepig
 And 1 flower

Kassandra”

Karapanou 1975b: 36)

“I want to write a ghost story where ghosts are more real than people”, H. James writes in his *Notes*, and this is exactly what the reader of Karapanou senses when focusing on her characters in order to discern physical figures. “The whole novel *The Turn of the Screw* is incorporated in this exquisite phrase of the *Carnets*”, remarks Karapanou about the above desire of James to make ghosts more real than humans (Karapanou 1986: 1126), which will also be her own way to talk about people who were essential in her childhood. *The Turn of the Screw* will not only be the textual screen for the identification of her own ghosts, but also for their projection, creating thus a palimpsest that could remind us of fan fiction, with James’ heroes going on with their lives as avatars in the life of Karapanou a century later. In case it was a novel and not real life – although the writers, living to a great extent through reading, end up living between reality and fiction or even feeling like living in the latter rather than in the former. This will lead to *Kassandra and the wolf*, which will be attempted by Karapanou with a view to rewrite her childhood. The first dedication ‘To my mother, Margarita Liberaki, with love’ (as if the title or the name was not enough, but the reader should be informed of the relation of the novice writer with the established one), will be followed by a concise first chapter that will be in sharp contrast

with the 'love' expressed in the dedication ("I was born at dusk, hour of the wolf, July, under the sign of Cancer. When they brought me to her, she turned her face to the wall", Karapanou 1975b: 3) but not with the twilight zone in which ghosts or visions make their appearance. Ghosts haunt the nanny of Flora and Miles, the two children-heroes in the *Turn of the Screw* which she manages to decode with the assistance of the housekeeper: it is the nanny's predecessor, Miss Jessel and the servant Peter Quint, who had an affair with the children's tolerance and complicity. "Who corrupts whom remains a mystery, it is the adults who corrupt the children or the other way round", as it is put forward by the young psycho who is proved to be a literature teacher and the heroine's lover in a later testimonial book by Karapanou on mental disease, entitled *Yes* (Karapanou 1999: 47), referring again to James' novel which he, too, finds fascinating (as if the ideal lover is the one who shares with us the same madness, literature, and even the same readings, which he has fathomed with the perceptiveness of a specialised scholar). Besides, in *Kassandra and the Wolf*, Peter is also the name of the housekeeper of Kassandra's grandmother, who often looks after the little girl in the grandmother's absence. Already in the second chapter, entitled "The Wolf", he teaches the girl to read and write seated on his knees and reading with her "the book with the pictures", rendering her thus both a reading subject and his erotic object. Karapanou gives Vassilis, the real servant in her grandmother's bourgeois mansion where she grew up, the name of the hero in James' novel, so that she can talk since the very first lines of her first novel about her traumatic abuse experience with Vassilis – which she will manage to confess many years later in *Μήπως; (Maybe?)*, the dialogic book that resulted from her discussions with F. Tsalikoglou (Karapanou-Tsalikoglou 2006: 166). Is the divulgence of a trauma on paper better protected when covered under the paper of another text? Maybe in this way mental ghosts are better identified as real ones, since their attempt to see the light is enhanced. What is more, it is not by chance that Karapanou gives her heroine the name Kassandra: it is not just someone who foresees misfortune, but also the one who discloses truths the others may not see or refuse to admit.⁴ Such are the difficult truths of literature. And the writer who brings them to the fore takes the place of an impertinent child who, disrespectful to his parents, does exactly what he was told not to do, risking thus being told off in a fierce way, as Georges Bataille points out in *Literature*

and the evil.⁵ At the same time, they transmit to the reader some of the vertigo, the quiver, the dual nature of evil, which is often disguised as good (just as presented through the books of our childhood, in the form of the wolf in Little Red Riding Hood, for instance), disturbing their own beliefs, their own sense of security, their own complacency in reassuring categorizations. Such appears to have been James' main objective upon writing this novel:

Only make the reader's general vision of evil intense enough, I said to myself – and that already is a charming job – and his own experience, his own imagination, his own sympathy (with children) and horror (of their false friends) will supply him quite successfully with all the necessary particulars. Make him think about the evil, make him think about it for himself, and you are released from weak specifications.

(James 1908: Xxi-Xxii, Prinzinger 1997: 104)

Karapanou as a reader took in all the scope of this evil and as a writer she directly dramatized it, highlighting thus the disguised misfortunes of her own biography - «*Dramatize, dramatize!*» as remarkably James prompted himself and the other authors to do. In the chapter "Saint Sebastian" of *Kassandra*, consisting of a bizarre masked ball, the little girl claims and makes the adults give her the missing half of the homonymous painting, depicting the evil ones throwing arrows (p.56); literature as a means of doing emotional justice or as "the finally regained childhood", as Bataille would put it (Bataille 1957). In the same chapter, which narrates one of the little girl's dreams in which the men are dressed as women, Peter is dressed as a nanny (his transvestism makes allusion to H. James' Peter Quint who in the nanny's visions – appearing at dusk – wears someone else's clothes and acts as an actor. Another common trait is that he is also red-haired like Karapanou's Peter); the dream conveys the fantasy picture or function of the servant for her: she sees him as a woman, the closest person to her, namely as a mother (Karapanou 2001a: 167, 171). This gender and role intermingling is elaborated in the chapter "The Lesson", where Peter persistently demands, in an almost extortionate crosstalk, that the little girl should acknowledge and adopt a gender other than the one she feels as her own. At the end of the chapter, due to the pressure exerted by the servant by way of a game, the girl is forced to consent to belonging to the male gender, dropping the knife she was holding – with which she was peeling a banana. Phallic symbols,

identifications, the gender construction, are in such a way weaved on the dense parodic canvas of the text, leaving aside “weak specifications” just like James would do, that Karapanou herself seems to have had to go through a long, painful analysis process in order to grasp their obscure, yet particularly eloquent content. Most probably, the closer a writer gets to the focus of their exposition to a familiar audience, the more they are facilitated in decoding their own work: this becomes obvious through the pages of the diary kept by Karapanou shortly before her book was published in Greek. The book had already been published in English (1974) and French, but it was some time before its imminent publication in Greek (1976), while the writer was submitted in frequent psychoanalytical sessions, when in a dialogue between Ego and Superego in her diary, she admitted:

- «Το μάθημα» είναι το σκότωμα της μητέρας, δεν είναι; Αυτό το βιβλίο, την Κασσάνδρα, πώς τόλμησες να το γράφεις; Σου ξέφυγε, έλα όμως που τώρα πρέπει να το εκδώσεις. Ο αληθινός σου εαυτός είναι άσχημος και πρόστυχος και μολυσμένος. Γι' αυτό είμαι από πάνω να προσέχω μη σου ξεφύγει τίποτα. Θα λες μόνον αυτό που θέλω εγώ, γιατί είσαι κακό κορίτσι.
- Δεν είμαι και τόσο κακό κορίτσι.
- Είσαι γιατί σκέφτεσαι φοβερά πράγματα για τη μαμά σου και γι' αυτό θα τιμωρηθείς. Η τιμωρία είναι πως δεν θα ζήσεις, δεν έχεις δικαίωμα, δεν σ' αγαπάει κανείς.
- Θέλω να ζήσω. Να μην έχω από πάνω μου αυτόν το φοβερό δικαστή.
- Τον έχεις, διότι αν δεν τον είχες αυτό που θα 'θελες θα ήταν φοβερό.
- Τι;
- Να σκοτώσεις τους άντρες όλους, να μένεις με τη μαμά σου, αλλά τη μισείς και τη φοβάσαι, είναι φοβερή, θα σε φάει.
- Είδες; Τσακωνόμαστε. Γι' αυτό έχω κατάθλιψη. Η μαμά είναι ο άντρας μου. Τους άντρες τους θέλω για γυναίκες (..) ή μάλλον αυτή είναι η γυναίκα κι εγώ ο άντρας της, και οι άντρες που θέλω είναι σαν γυναίκες. (p. 312-314)

[- “The Lesson” is the mother’s killing, isn’t it? How did you dare write this book, *Kassandra*? It was a mistake, right, but now it’s time to publish it. Your real self is ugly and grotesque and dirty. That’s why I’m here to see that you don’t disclose anything. You will be saying what I want you to, because you are a bad girl.

- I’m not such a bad girl.

- You are, because you think terrible things about your mum, that’s why you will be punished. The punishment is that you will not live,

you have no right to do so, nobody will love you.

- I want to live. To get rid of this terrible judge.

- You have the judge because otherwise what you wanted would be horrible.

- What?

- To kill all men, to stay with your mum, but you hate her and are scared of her, she is terrible, she’s gonna eat you.

- You see? We are fighting. That’s why I have depression. Instead of allowing me to let out my fears, you’re strangling them. Mum is my man. I want men for women, or to put it better, she’s the woman and I’m her man and the men I want are like women.]

By means of James’ text, Karapanou draws her own cryptogram of gender inscription or rather its *amphoterism*, as well as the overall unbearable distress of her personal life. Besides, the reader gets access here to the whole range of sexually ambiguous characters in her work: the decadent artists in the *Sleepwalker*, who fail to complete their work, plunged in alcoholism and their homosexual or pederastic tendencies (“The one I want has to be really strong to get between me and mum, so that I won’t want her. That’s why I love the losers, I’m not scared of the weak ones”, p. 314-5), the heroine’s homosexual husband who finally kills himself and her man-like friend in *Rien ne va plus*, the definitely inseparable couple of mother and daughter in *Mum* (2004, written three years after M. Liberaki’s death) where the mother still domineers the life – or the imagery – of her daughter even after her death. Despite the disclosure of the events presented later in *Kassandra* – the fact that mother and daughter have the same name is a first sign of an implied incestuous relation as declared by herself (p. 323) – and despite the fact that the analysis she underwent brought to light a big part of this material, Karapanou consciously blocked the process that rendered many other writers of her theoretical background thorough and exhaustive critics of their own work: “I am starting to understand”, she writes down in her diary. “I can’t deny my *other* self, the one that wrote the book. It’s a wild, terribly wild self, it’s going to eat me. I can now see that this self, too, is me (..) A horrible depression. Maybe I shouldn’t read *Kassandra* with a psychoanalytical eye. I have never dared do it. (AND I SHOULDN’T).” (p. 319-320). This direction to herself does not constitute evasion due to the terror involved, it is rather a decision not to sabotage her creative flow,

not to interfere with it. She decides to go out to the abyss in the light of her new writing, with a new book: “Because what is writing? A constant effort to shed light on the horrifying ghosts who live down there. To shed light just for one moment on the faces, to acknowledge and be acknowledged, a twofold display of power.” (p. 324). Original fiction is the most crucial way to get on with one’s dialogue with their parents. Besides, a writer can go on reading, metabolizing the work of others, instead of being the reader of their own work, since “It is not us that read books, the books read us” (Bon-nemis 2009: 6). We can therefore read ourselves through them.

This however is not necessarily the usual attitude of the children of famous writers: they may choose an intellectual career not in order to make studies on the parent’s work⁶ or to make the truth speak in an academic voice, namely straight from the horse’s (child) mouth, but in order to discredit the parent, by dedicating for example studies to the work of their most hated opponent. And this attitude or option is uniquely dramatised in *Kassandra*, as it seems to have been a reality in Karapanou’s direct environment too, while she stayed in Paris with her mother. Thus, writing as a travestied autobiography is also recognized by France, in a chapter that bears this name in *Kassandra*. “France”, who is not the actual country, but a friend of the young heroine and daughter of the writer of *Hippopotamus*, (as she is explicitly delineated in the novel) up ongoing to the opening night of one of her father’s plays, suspiciously asks her mother whether what the heroes just said on the scene wasn’t exactly what her father had said to her mother the night before. “Sure enough, it was Mother and *me* hanging from the roof of the stage, and we had wings on too, and Father was down below, in a mousetrap” (Karapanou 1975: 43) she says to Kassandra with her mouth open and her mother hastens to explain sinisterly that her father represented them as angels because those who live go to Heaven, whilst those who write go to Hell.

Marie-France, Ionesco’s daughter, was truly a friend of young Margarita. Yet by keeping only her second name in *Kassandra*, she alludes metonymically to the experiences and acquaintances of the writer’s childhood in France, reflecting all elements that constitute Karapanou’s personal *bildung*. What is more, “France” offers a whole theory about reading and writing. Reading as a nurturing diet and writing as its immediate, overflowing, disintegrating, profane metabolism, are depicted with grotesque clarity

both in the title of Ionesco’s play that his daughter and wife are attending (which is cryptically called *Rabies and Diarrhea*) and in the way the wife is taking care of her husband’s diet (she prevents him from eating anything that could remind him of alcohol, like vinegar or even lemon!). “When he is writing, my dear Kassandra”, she says to the hostess “I cut a few pages from the Bible and boil them for him with a sprig of celery” (Karapanou 1975b: 44). Thus little Kassandra also cuts, the day after, a few pages from the Bible («The offering of Isaac» in particular, a blatant parody of the misfortune of being a writer’s child), she cooks them with onions:

«Η θυσία του Ισαάκ» πέφτει όλη μέσα στον καμινέ, πάω να σκάσω απ’τη χαρά μου. Βγαίνω από το μπάνιο, ο ποπός μου στον αέρα, ανεβαίνω στο τραπέζι και κοιτώντας τη μαμά φωνάζω: «Μαμά, μαμά, κοίτα! Έκανα μια εντριβή!»

(Karapanou 2001a: 82)

The offering of Isaac pours into the lavatory bowl; I am beside myself with joy. I rush out of the toilet, my bottom bare, and climb on the table, and, looking at Mother, I yell:

“Mother, Mother, I’ve just made a dissertation!”

(Karapanou 1975b: 44)

What «εντριβή» means (a notion unfortunately lost in Germanacos’ translation, despite his highly creative rendering of a passage heavy in connotations) little Kassandra has just learned from the somewhat older France, who, some years later wants to make a thesis on Strindberg (the writer whom her father detested):

Να, παίρνεις ένα βιβλίο και το τρίβεις πάνω σου ώσπου να ξεβάψει και να πέσουν οι λέξεις χάμω. Μετά τις μαζεύεις και τις φτιάχνεις όπως θες εσύ.

(Karapanou 2001a: 80)

“Well, you see, you take a book and go to the middle of a desert or something and then you bury it in the sand for a long time and then you dig it up again and you find that all the words have got mixed up like the sand and then you put them all back in place only this time you put them back anyway you want.”

(Karapanou 1975b: 43)

Whatever lurks unseen in language seems here to have been trimmed through the child’s language and revealed its real nature. The Greek word

“writing”, which involves “touching” (γροαφή/αφή), becomes clearer to the point of rendering metaphorical expressions such as “this book has profoundly touched me” actually literal.

And then the so-called thesis (εν/δια-τριβή), the time-consuming dwelling in the text of the other, until its words fall down and become one’s own property. However, little Cassandra already knows, thanks to her granny, that the theses destroy femininity: “I want to become a policeman and wear a uniform and a gun. You know something, though, you are going to spoil your frocks with all these dissertations and diggings and things” (1975b: p. 43), she says to France, and this constitutes a double strike. She attacks both the bourgeois morality that her granny wanted to impose on her *and* those who think they can continue the dialogue with their family not through the production of their own original work but by commenting on the work of others, finally talking like ventriloquists. The refusal of a potential career as a literary critic, a researcher or a university professor/academic seems to have been a rather early, conscious and brave choice for Karapanou. She remained a frantic, almost bulimic reader whose few but pervasive articles fathom spectacularly certain literary issues or writers, in the same way that her own, richly imaginative literary creation does.

Those processes, which Didier Anzieu calls “permanent attachment of the ego” (*prothèse permanente du moi*), leave their traces on the supporting and constructive work of her creation-to-be in her diaries. According to Anzieu (1981: 75-76) who regards them as a transformative remain of early sensory stimulations of the infantile stage, which somewhat perpetuate indefinitely the remote mother’s care into one’s inner self, can produce three types of writers: a) the theoretical or intellectual one (like Henry James’ brother, William, American philosopher who conceived the notion of the stream of consciousness), b) the writer who is overwhelmed by intellectual images (thus a predominantly imaginative/fictional writer like H. James himself, who was thought to be “the idiot of the family” because he was constantly making up stories which he narrated), and c) the writer who combines both those types, like Jean Paul Sartre, who was both an intellectual and a writer and whose work was also passionately read by Karapanou –especially his study on Flaubert (*L’Idiot de la Famille*), which seems to have haunted her, as she admits (and wonders about) in *Mum!* (Karapanou 2004: 129). However, the perpetual escape, the feeling of dissatisfaction

“my whole life is no more than infinite, desperate expectation” she writes in her 16th year of age in her diary, p.219) and, along with those, the constant longing, the unattainable goal of the completion of creation, experienced by the artists gathered on the island of *The Sleepwalker* and also the escape to the dream and the conflict with reality (“Is this my eternal damnation? To be in constant conflict with reality, a reality always so different from my dreams?” she keeps wondering in her 21st year of age, p. 262), imagining of oneself as a hero of a novel (little Cassandra imagines that on a nearby island another granny lives, who has kept the books of her childhood and reads to her the *Turning of the Screw* by H. James and Cassandra almost immediately grasps the parallels between, on the one hand, the nanny of the novel, the servant, their perverse relationship with the two kids and on the other hand her own experience), the concept of literature and reading as better than life/reality (in *Rien ne va plus*, the protagonist and her –homosexual– husband have sex and after that they read Proust’s *Le temps retrouvé*, which ends with the phrase “the only life, the only truly experienced life is literature”), all those that Flaubert depicted on Madame Bovary seem to constitute the unbearable bovarism of Karapanou. Maybe, more or less, of every writer –and of every genuine reader. Most probably because it sums up “ways of reading, ways of being” (Macé 2011). Or, according to Barthes in 1978, in one of his phrases that were meant for the work of other theoreticians and writers or even intended to be a frontispiece of their books: «Nous sommes tous des Bovary, des Bovary qui nous laissons mener par des modèles, des phrases et des images comme par des leurres». Emma was to him the character whose life « au sens le plus brûlant, le plus dévastateur, est formée, façonnée (télé-guidée) par la Phrase ». Even « à même le leurre, la Phrase littéraire est initiatrice : elle conduit, elle enseigne, d’abord le Désir (le Désir, ça s’apprend) », but also, he adds, « la Nuance » (Barthes 2003 : 150). It is not accidental that, just before Karapanou wonders in her last book why Flaubert keeps on haunting her, the same images, the same phantoms return:

Μοναξιά... Μετράω τις ώρες.. Η μαμά και ο Μάριο κοιμούνται..
Μέσα στο δωμάτιο ταξιδεύω. Διαβάζω το Gustave Flaubert,
écrivain. Οι φράσεις του Φλωμπέρ.. Σαν τους χτύπους της καρδιάς
μου. Ο Μάριο, μέσα στον ύπνο του, θα έχει ρίξει το χέρι πάνω
στους ώμους της μαμάς, κάτι θα της ψιθυρίζει.. Δεν έχω κανέναν,
μόνο τον Φλωμπέρ.

(Karapanou 2004: 125)

[Loneliness...I'm counting the hours.. Mario and mum are sleeping.. In the room I travel. I read Gustave Flaubert, écrivain. Flaubert's phrases.. Like my heart's beating. Mario, in his sleep, must have put his hand on mum's shoulders, he must be whispering something to her. I have no one, no one but Flaubert.]

Notes

- 1 "I was born a bourgeois, but I prefer *duality*. I had never before reached anxiety so close. It is, after all, an experience. Doubt: a reined crisis", Karapanou will write down in her diary at the age of 21 (Karapanou 2008: 236, underlining is hers. The translation, unless otherwise mentioned, is ours.)
- 2 In her diary she quotes the lines taken from *The Portrait of Dorian Grey*: "When the critics disagree, the artist agrees with himself" (2008: 150).
- 3 According to copy editor Vassilis Kimoulis (*Copy editor's note*, p. 421-2) in the years 1963, 1965-1966 and 1971-1974 the writer did not keep a diary and what ever else saw the light was published free of interventions (on his part—we are not sure, however, if the writer herself is included). At the age of 21, however, Karapanou writes (30-11-1967, p. 235): "When I was ten and I was attending the boarding school of Cours de la Terrasse in St-Germain-en-Laye, I still kept a diary. I still wanted, if possible, to see clearly. I wrote down everything day by day, I did not omit a word"; there is no trace of this diary in *Life is wildly improbable*.
- 4 The name, already in the title, bears the quality of its multiple uses in various areas, from philosophy (where it is first applied by Gaston Bachelard as «Kassandra complex»(1969) in *Le rationalisme appliqué*. Paris : PUF) to psychology, where it is first applied by Melanie Klein to declare the moral conscience of man (whose main function is to warn, often awakening in the others the refusal to believe what they know as true, in the form of defence against the stress and guilt that torment them, see Klein, Melanie (1975). *Envy and Gratitude and other works 1946-1963*, New York: Tavistock) and is further specified by Laurie Layton Schapira to denote the dysfunctional relationships with what she calls «the Apollo archetype», which refers to any individual's or cultural pattern bound by order, reason, truth and clarity. Following Schapira, "What the Cassandra woman sees is something dark and painful that may not be apparent on the surface of things or that objective facts do not corroborate (...). In her frightened, egoless state, the Cassandra woman may blurt out what she sees, perhaps with the unconscious hope that others (especially authority figures) might be able to make some sense of it. But to them her words sound meaningless and blown out of all proportion" (Schapira, L. L. 1988: 65) – just like a child's speech. If these name resonances are combined with the other half of the title, the wolf, their content is further illuminated. One of the latent notions behind this animal is according to the Liddell-Scott dictionary manifested in the expression Λύκων δέειν which means I remain speechless upon seeing a pederast (wolf). This etymology is also mentioned by Prinzing (p. 104). It is note worthy that in the book the speech problem, the stuttering, is a constant feature in little Kassandra.
- 5 Bataille seems to have been a particularly educational source for Karapanou. She refers to him as the source of her inspiration for a theatrical play she prepares on the issue of incest and madness (p. 392-3. We are not aware of traces of this work in what she left behind) but also as a constant influence of which she tries to get rid of as a writer ("I gradually leave behind the influence of Bataille, Carrol, Genet. I enter other 'influence' realms (...) Lautréamont, however, persists", p. 411.)
- 6 Karapanou will only write one penetrating article about Liberaki's work (1984, «Ο μύθος, το θέατρο και ο φόνος» ("Myth, theater and murder") *H Λέξη* 31: 8-13). However, her opinion

of her mother's literary caliber is the following: "What comes after. All books talk about it, without talking directly about it. And here lies the main problem: whether you speak about a slice of bread or about God, this apparition always lies behind your writing. Cavafy had it, that's what made him great. Rita didn't and she never will. *All great people have it*" (p. 331).

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Panayiotis Diamadis

University of Technology

Friends in Crisis: Anzacs and Hellenism

Abstract

Across numerous conflicts in the first half of the 20th century, Australians and New Zealanders were at the side of Hellenism: World War One, the Asia Minor Campaign (1919-1922), and the relief efforts after the Hellenic, Armenian and Assyrian Genocides. Beyond their battlefield record, these Anzacs and others from the Antipodes provided substantial practical and moral support for a people going through successive major crises.

2014 marked the Centenary of the outbreak of World War One, and the commencement of four years of commemorative activity to mark a series of centenaries related to Australia and the Great War. Across numerous conflicts in the first half of the 20th century, Australians and New Zealanders were at the side of Hellenism: World War One, the Asia Minor Campaign (1919-1922), and the relief efforts after the Hellenic, Armenian and Assyrian Genocides. Beyond their battlefield record, these Anzacs and others from the Antipodes provided substantial practical and moral support for a people going through successive major crises. The crises that conflict triggered within Hellenism present some stark parallels with the Crisis within the Hellenic Republic since 2010, and some lessons unlearned.

With a pro-British elected Prime Minister (Eleutherios Venizelos) and a pro-German monarch (King Konstantinos), the Hellenic Kingdom spent the years of World War One mired in a deep political and social crisis,

following the triumphs of the Balkans Wars of October 1912-February 1913. The ideological and strategic chasm between the two men was a major contributing factor to the loss of millions of lives in the Genocide of the Hellenes as well as the loss of territories in Thrace and Anatolia promised to the Hellenic state by the victorious Entente powers. Just as the crisis which has wracked the Hellenic state since 2010, the period 1916-1926 was as much about social and economic strategies as it was about political ideologies.

Throughout the period, Australians and New Zealanders sacrificed time, effort, money, property and, sometimes, their very lives, in order to reach out to people on the other side of the world who were in desperate need. Their experiences provide a very different perspective on the tradition of Australian humanitarianism and the historiography of Hellenism in crisis.

The response to footage of natural disasters such as the Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami of 2004 is a recent example of Antipodean generosity to human beings in need. The inhabitants of *Terra Australis* (the 'Great South Land') and *Aotearoa* (the Land of the Long, White Cloud) were disproportionately generous. The stories of individual Australians and New Zealanders provide powerful testament to the ability of individuals to change the course of history. The involvement of Anzacs, their families and associates 'un-frame' Hellenic history by re-integrating it into its international context.

From 1914 the authorities in the Ottoman Turkish Empire implemented a plan of unprecedented forced demographic change. Known today as the Genocides of the Hellenes, Armenians and Assyrians, the plan called for the physical elimination of the indigenous non-Muslim populations of the Empire as the only means of securing their state's territorial integrity.

Context

At the 1911 Congress of the governing Committee of Union and Progress, chaired by Talaat Pasha, one of the Party's chief ideologues, Dr Behaeddin Sakir declared that:

*[t]he nations that remain from the old times in our empire are akin to foreign and harmful weeds that must be uprooted. To clear our land...*¹

International reaction was immediate to what British Secretary of the Admiralty Winston Churchill labelled an 'administrative holocaust.'²

Relief committees sprang up all over the world. A Joint Allied Declaration, issued 24 May 1915, stated:

*In view of these new crimes of Turkey against humanity and civilization, the Allied governments announce publicly ... that they will hold personally responsible ... all members of the Ottoman government and those of their agents who are implicated in such massacres.*³

Anzacs and tens of thousands of other Allied servicemen, captured on the battlefields of the Near East, became eyewitnesses to the Hellenic, Armenian and Assyrian Genocides. In his diary of 18 August 1915, Able-Seaman John Harrison Wheat, a crewman of the *HMAS AE2*, wrote:

*All the Armenians are driven from the town [of Akroinos, modern Afyonkarahissar, in western Anatolia]. The principle [sic] cause of this is the Armenians are Christians and all the business of the town is carried on by them. There is a very strong feeling against the Christians in this Country. At this time, thousands of Armenians were turned out of these big towns to starve and thousands were massacred.*⁴

A small number of Anzacs became rescuers, saving the lives of those who had survived the massacres and deportations. Most famous of these are the men of the Dunsterforce. Australian officers in this unit, including Captains R.H. Hooper, Andre Judge and Stanley Savige, have left a legacy of written and photographic records of their rescue of some 40,000 Assyrians and Armenians in the summer of 1918.⁵

The 1919 Report of the Commission on Responsibility of the Authors of the War and on Enforcement of Penalties concluded that the Ottoman Empire's treatment of Armenians in its territory contravened 'the established laws and customs of war and the elementary laws of humanity', and declared that Ottoman officials accused of such acts were liable for prosecution.⁶

The response of the Hellenic state was to protest long and loud. The pre-occupation was with events unfolding in Macedonia, not in the East. As the Franco-British *Armée d'Orient* extended its control in Macedonia, friction increased between itself and the authorities in Athens. A key player in this crisis was the Allied Commander-in-Chief Maurice Sarrail (1856-1929), succeeded in December 1917 by Marie-Louis-Adolphe Guillaumat (1863-1940) and in June 1918 by Louis Franchet d'Espèrey (1856-1942).

Sarrail secured the withdrawal of Hellenic forces from Thessalonike, restricted the powers and functions of the Hellenic authorities and proceeded to arrest and deport Central Power consuls and subjects from the city. In practice, Hellenic sovereignty in the region and the country's neutrality were abolished.

In short, while Armenians, Assyrians and Hellenes were being slaughtered by the thousand in Anatolia and neighbouring regions, the struggle between the pro-German monarch and the pro-British politician preoccupied society within the Hellenic Kingdom until the decisive intervention of the French military in June 1917. Survivors who reached Hellenic-ruled territory were effectively abandoned and forced to fend for themselves.

In response to the needs of destitute survivors scattered across the Near East, the Armenian Relief Fund and Save the Children Fund emerged in Sydney and Melbourne between 1915 and 1919. The first chairperson of this combined humanitarian agency was Professor Meredith Atkinson, previously director of tutorial classes at the University of Melbourne. His colleague, Classics Professor Alexander Leeper, served as vice-chairman.⁷

Similar groups emerged across the globe. In June 1916, the Lord Mayor of London wrote to his counterpart in Sydney 'with the hope that you might support us by raising funds, in whichever way you consider best'. The approach from London was inspired because 'we have had so many individual donations from your town'. The stated aim of the Fund was 'for the Restoration of the Armenians to their lands, in towns and villages where the Russians have made it feasible and safe'. The needs of the war were considered a priority and so the proposal was on hold until the successful conclusion of the conflict.⁸

The Armistice came into force on 11 November 1918. Only weeks later, the Lord Mayor of Sydney, J. Joynton Smith, called a public meeting for Thursday 12 December. The purpose was to form 'a Committee to raise Funds for the relief of the suffering Armenian', Hellenic and Assyrian genocide survivors.⁹ The meeting was duly held and a resolution forming the committee under the patronage of the Lord Mayor was adopted. From the outset, the Fund's work was concentrated on the survivors scattered around Syria and Greece. Before the formation of the League of Nations, Australians were deeply involved in what may be described as the world's

first international humanitarian relief effort. This involvement deepened and broadened once the League emerged.

Along with the emergence of international humanitarianism, one of the more positive consequences of the devastation of World War One was the formation of the League of Nations in 1919. Its Covenant stated that its primary goals included preventing war through collective security, disarmament, and settling international disputes through negotiation and arbitration. Protection of minorities and just treatment of indigenous peoples were also important fields of interest.¹⁰

One of the League's strongest advocates in the Antipodes was Henry Darnley Naylor, a classicist and proponent of collective international security.¹¹ Founder of the League of Nations' Union in South Australia, Victoria and New South Wales, Naylor was also a member of the combined Armenian Relief Fund – Save the Children Fund.

In May 1923, an important address titled 'League of Nations: What it is and What it does' was presented by Prime Minister Stanley M. Bruce to a League of Nations Union of Western Australia. 'Touching upon some of the more important achievements of the League', Bruce cited 'the repatriation of 350,000 Russian prisoners, and of large numbers of Greek and Armenian women held in Turkey'.¹²

The effort on behalf of the survivors of the Armenian, Hellenic and Assyrian Genocides was unique and unprecedented. It involved a coordinated effort by people and organisations all over the globe; efforts in which Australia and Australians played pivotal roles. Writing in *The Story of Near East Relief*, James L. Barton¹³ recorded that the Save the Children Fund, the League of Nations, the American Women's Hospitals, the Friends of Greece and the Fatherless Children of Greece Committee were only a few of the diverse groups involved in humanitarian efforts in support of the survivors of the Hellenic, Armenian and Assyrian Genocides from as early as January 1914.¹⁴ In September 1923 the League of Nations' High Commissioner for Refugees, Norwegian Dr Fridtjof Nansen:

*... once more paid a very warm tribute to the magnificent efforts made by the Near East Relief, the All-British Appeal and the 'Save the Children' Fund ... Slowly but surely the Near East Relief and the League of Nations' machinery under Mr Childs have surmounted this great task. His procedure has been admirable.*¹⁵

The Australian merchant vessel *Hobson's Bay* was a key part of the 'machinery' Nansen referred to. It made a number of voyages to the eastern Mediterranean, laden with relief supplies donated by Australians to the Near East Relief (NER). Rev. Dr Loyal Lincoln Wirt, an American Congregational minister and the International Commissioner of the NER, described one such shipment. With half the original cargo left with the Australasian Orphanage at Antelias, Syria (now in the northern suburbs of Beirut, Lebanon), the *Hobson's Bay* proceeded to Constantinople (modern Istanbul). They were immediately met by the local NER Director, Dr Jacquith. As Wirt later recalled, Jacquith said:

Do you remember St. Paul's vision and the cry from Macedonia, 'Come over and help us'? You are no saint and probably do not resemble St. Paul in the least – except perhaps in stature – but here is a message for you. It came in the same way St. Paul's did – by wireless. And he handed me a radiogram. It was indeed the same cry.

The radiogram was from a NER post at Alexandroupolis in western Thrace: 'Ten thousand people driven from Eastern Thrace are here, starving to death. They have been overlooked in the food distribution. Some are dead, many are dying. Can you send flour?' Jacquith informed his colleague that the local NER had already 'stripped our warehouses and taken from our orphans to provide for the new outbreak at Smyrna. Have you brought anything that can be used in this emergency in Macedonia?'

Wirt responded positively, for the *Hobson's Bay* still had 4,000 bags of Australian flour stowed away, 'given for the express purpose of meeting some such emergency'. As Wirt later recorded: 'Time was precious; moments meant lives.' Within a few hours, the flour had been transferred to a steamer and was on its way.

*It passed tragic Gallipoli, where many brave Anzacs from Australia and New Zealand had laid down their young lives, face to the foe. And now the unhappy victims of this same foe were to be fed with bread from their homeland, as if to complete the work for which they died. Anzac bread!*¹⁶

This anecdote highlights two key factors of the story of the relief efforts on behalf of the survivors of the Hellenic, Armenian and Assyrian Genocides. First, the direct association with Gallipoli, something so pronounced that even Americans were commenting on the relationship between the

Genocide survivors and the Anzacs. Secondly, the regular reference to the Christian faith, arguably the main element that bound the survivors and their rescuers.

These factors are also very pronounced in Australian media reports on the relief efforts, as well as on the cooperation between the various Australian agencies involved in Armenian, Hellenic and Assyrian relief efforts. During a speech delivered at a League assembly in Geneva, Switzerland, in September 1924, Mrs. Allen referred to 'the women of Australia': having started a fund for the women and children refugees of the Near East, are the members of the Lord Mayor's Armenian Relief Fund, 279 George Street, Sydney. Lady David, Lady Sulman, Miss Jessie Webb, M.A., of Melbourne, and Mrs. Ernest Bryce, are at the head of this movement, and are working in conjunction with members of the League of Nations Union.¹⁷

At the following year's general assembly of the League of Nations, a substitute delegate, Mrs Eleanor Vokes Irby MacKinnon, was invited to speak from the tribune. Better known as the foundation secretary of the Australian Red Cross Society, the subject of MacKinnon's address was her work in helping to found the Australasian Armenian Relief Fund in 1922.¹⁸

A national conference of representatives of the relief committees from all over Australia was convened on 14 December 1922. A national executive committee was formed, with Rev. James E. Cresswell, a Congregational minister from Adelaide, as National Secretary of the Australasian Armenian Relief fund.¹⁹ During an epic voyage throughout the Near East in 1923, in which he visited Syria, Greece, Georgia and Armenia, Cresswell presented, on behalf of the Australasian Fund, a complete ambulance, which he handed over to Dr. Mabel Elliott, of the American Women's Hospital, which did the medical work of the Near East relief at Athens.²⁰

Dr Alexander Leeper, Master of Trinity College and Professor of Classics at the University of Melbourne was deeply touched by the plight of the Hellenes and Armenians and became a driving force behind the Australian movement for their relief for almost a decade.²¹

Amongst the associates of Leeper who became involved in the mission to save the survivors of the Armenian, Assyrian and Hellenic Genocides were Joice NanKivell Loch and Jessie Webb.

A classical scholar at the University of Melbourne, Jessie Webb had been named 'Australia's alternative woman delegate at the League of

Nations' Assembly in September' 1923.²² While in Hellas, Webb became acquainted with the work of Danish relief worker Karen Jeppe, rescuing captive Christian women from harems and forced marriages throughout Syria and Turkey.²³

Upon her return home in 1924, Webb appealed to Australia's women 'who live in such free and happy conditions', to show 'practical sympathy with Karen Jeppe's undertaking'. At a welcoming reception organised by the National Council of Women in Victoria, Webb described how the abducted Armenian women were:

*...forced to live in the desert under conditions which were totally opposed to that which they thought right, and so horrible were their experiences, that few of them had any affection for the children born to them in such misery.*²⁴

The scholar of classical Hellenism, born on a station near Tumut in the New South Wales Snowy Mountains, urged her audience at the Lyceum Club to send contributions for Jeppe's work, 'however small', via Miss Alice Michaelis, international secretary of the Victorian NCW branch. The funds were used by the Aleppo-based Jeppe in the rescue and rehabilitation 'of Armenian women of the peasant type who had been carried off from their happy homes by the Turks and Arabs'.²⁵

Edith Glanville was another pioneer of the relief effort for the genocide survivors and of Jeppe's work in particular. The first female justice of the peace in New South Wales and founder of the Australian branches of both the Quota and Soroptimist clubs, Glanville had lost her son, Leigh, at Gallipoli. Many years later, she adopted an Armenian orphan, a boy, whom she raised in the family home in Haberfield in inner western Sydney. He remained in that home until his own tragic passing in a traffic accident in 1986.²⁶

Honorary Secretary of the Lord Mayor's Armenian Relief Fund between 1922 and 1926, Glanville was a regular visitor to the Near East in the inter-war period. Following one of these voyages, she founded the Australian Friends of Armenians, whose purpose it was to raise funds to support Jeppe's rescue mission.²⁷

This is not an exhaustive list of the Australians involved in the first truly international relief effort in history. It provides a synopsis of the depth and breadth of the Australian involvement, as well as the diversity

of organisations that collaborated in pursuance of the common cause. This sets the scene for the work of the most important Australian involved in the effort to rescue and rehabilitate the survivors of the Hellenic, Armenian and Assyrian Genocide survivors: George Devine Treloar.

The leader of the League's Commission on Refugees, Nansen is credited with establishing the League's principle that helping refugees anywhere was a worldwide obligation. It is this principle upon which he acted immediately. On 18 or 19 September 1922, Nansen received a cable from Constantinople, from the League of Nations' High Commissioner for Refugees in Greece, Colonel Procter, advising him that a humanitarian disaster was developing all around the Aegean Basin.²⁸ In Nansen's own words: 'There appeared to be no machinery capable of dealing with this avalanche. ... The death rate was appalling, reaching some 1,500 per week'.²⁹

In the aftermath of the holocaust of Smyrne (modern Izmir) in September 1922,³⁰ the League of Nations had agreed to Dr Nansen's written request that the High Commissariat for Refugees already in Constantinople be funded to assist the tens of thousands of Hellene and Armenian refugees arriving there from all over Anatolia. Nansen was allocated 100,000 Swiss francs by the League, while Great Britain and other countries added big donations.³¹

Within weeks, Nansen was in Constantinople. On 6 October 1922, he appointed a young Australian, George Devine Treloar, recently demobilised from the British army to be the League of Nations' Refugee Organisation commissioner in north-east Hellas.³²

George Devine Treloar

Born in Ballarat, Victoria, on 23 April 1884, Treloar was educated at University College and St Patrick's College until 1900. Following an accident in the gymnasium, he worked as a bank clerk in Ballarat for five years, then as a jackeroo in western Victoria and a farmer in Western Australia. In 1909, Treloar appears to have been recruited by the Julius Knight Theatre Company, gaining a reputation for successfully playing the 'villain' roles. One review declared Treloar 'is considered one of the finest swordsmen on the Australian stage'. Sometime in 1910, the rising star seems to have been enticed by an offer from the Oscar Asche company. Treloar spent the next few years

commuting between Australia and London, as in May 1911, he is reported by the *Morning Bulletin* in Rockhampton, Queensland, to be 'a leading man' in a coming production, 'direct from the Aldwych Theatre, London'.³³

The outbreak of World War One in August 1914 found Treloar performing in England. One report stated that he dropped his profession without hesitation immediately the war cloud burst to play his part in the greater "game".³⁴ He volunteered for active duty in mid-1915, at first 'in an aviation corps', finding his way into 28th Battalion, The London Regiment (Artists' Rifles). His service secured him a transfer to the elite Coldstream Guards, a rare honour for a non-British-born soldier.³⁵ Buried twice by shellbursts on the Somme and almost bullet-riddled at Ypres, he was awarded the Distinguished Service Order and the Military Cross 'for frontline service,' ultimately achieving the rank of Major.³⁶

In the months following the Armistice, Treloar was recruited to the British Mission to the anti-Bolshevik 'White' Russian armies. This was part of a half-hearted attempt by the Allied Powers to suppress the Bolshevik takeover of the Russian Empire. Following the withdrawal of the British Mission, Treloar served with Baron Wrangel's 'White' army in southern Russia.

When they were defeated, 150,000 anti-communist Russians withdrew across the Black Sea to the relative safety of the Zone of the Straits, then under British occupation. Treloar was evacuated from Sevastopol in November 1920, finding himself amongst the last to leave.

Without formal appointment, he appears to have become de facto commander of a camp for some 3,000 Russian refugees at Tuzla on the Propontis (Sea of Marmora), where Treloar remained until April 1922.³⁷

So it was that before he witnessed the plight of the Hellene, Armenian and Assyrian Genocide survivors, Treloar had seen great suffering by civilian populations as tides of battle and oppression overwhelmed them and drove them in every direction. It is with that background that this Australian soldier came to be responsible for thousands of genocide survivors.

League of Nations' Post

Writing in 'History's Greatest Trek', an extensive *National Geographic* report on the so-called 'Exchange of Greco-Turkish Populations', Melville Chater described the destruction of Smyrne (Smyrna, modern Izmir) in early September 1922 in the following terms:

*... the initial episodes of the Exchange drama were enacted to the accompaniment of the boom of cannon and the rattle of machine guns and with the settings painted by the flames of the Smyrna holocaust.*³⁸

A few weeks later, the Australian officer was issued with a British passport. The Hellenic military authorities at Prousa (modern Bursa) issued a visa on 15 October 1922 for Treloar to travel to Constantinople. He passed through the military control point at the port of Moudania (modern Mudanya) on the southern shore of the Propontis (Sea of Marmara) two days later, on 19 October. His destination was the port of Raedestos (Rodosto, modern Tekirdag), on the shore of eastern Thrace. Treloar's assignment was to report to Nansen on the condition and prospects of the genocide survivors in eastern Thrace.³⁹

A few days later the Greco-Turkish War concluded with the Armistice of Moudania (modern Mudanya). The League foresaw the dreadful problems that were emerging, as the leader of Turkish Nationalists, Mustafa Kemal pressed for the expulsion of all non-Muslims from his Republic of Turkey.⁴⁰

At the end of October 1922, Nansen drove out to the Evros River to witness the evacuation of eastern Thrace by 250,000 - mostly Hellenic - Christians. He reported that he estimated that there were at least 750,000 Hellene refugees, mostly women and children, scattered over mainland Hellenas, eastern Thrace and the Aegean islands.

*When at night we came on top of a hill, I thought I saw a whole city before me with its thousands of lights - it was their camps spread out over the plain, camp-fire by camp-fire, and there they were sleeping on the ground without shelter of any kind.... They do not know where they are going and will find no shelter when they come...*⁴¹

At the request of the Hellenic government and with the approval of the League of Nations, Nansen tried to solve the problem of the Hellenic and other refugees who were pouring out of their ancestral homes east of the Evros (Maritza) River. Nansen's efforts saved about 1,250,000 Hellenes and approximately 150,000 Armenians, Assyrians and anti-Kemalist Muslims in territory controlled by Mustafa Kemal's forces. Nansen was instrumental in the rescue of tens of thousands of genocide survivors who had returned home at the end of the war in the hope of rebuilding their shattered lives. These hopes were cruelly dashed by Kemal's declaration.⁴²

As the ‘Compulsory Exchange of Greco-Turkish Populations’ drew to a close in 1925, the League invited Nansen to save the remnants of the Armenian people from extinction.

According to his Nobel Peace Prize nomination, he drew up a political, industrial, and financial plan for creating a national home for the Armenians around the city of Erivan (modern Yerevan). The League failed to implement the plan, but the Nansen International Office for Refugees later settled some 10,000 Armenian Genocide survivors in Erivan and another 40,000 in Syria and Lebanon.⁴³

Treloar’s Assignment

Treloar spent most of October 1922 in eastern Thrace, gathering an appreciation of the problems. Treloar’s immediate superior, Colonel Procter, had created an account holding five million drachmae to procure necessary provisions for refugees, in particular grain. This sum did not provide Treloar anywhere near enough provisions for the survivors.

Shortages brought about by the war were exacerbated by the difficulties of an overwhelmed and poor quality road network, and an early winter. The correspondent covering the Helleno-Turkish War for the *Toronto Daily Star* of Canada, Ernest Hemingway, described the scene:

*In a never-ending, staggering march the Christian population of Eastern Thrace is jamming the roads toward Macedonia. The main column crossing the Maritza River at Adrianople is twenty miles long. Twenty miles of carts drawn by cows, bullocks and muddy-flanked water buffalo, with exhausted, staggering men, women and children, blankets over their heads, walking blindly along in the rain beside their worldly goods.*⁴⁴

Treloar’s headquarters were initially established in the regional centre of Komotene, in the middle of the west Thracian plain, in December 1922. These problems meant that the Australian League of Nations’ ‘commissioner’ was unable to provide the planned feeding stations along the route into western Thrace. Treloar moved the mission directly to Alexandroupolis (the closest major centre to the new border 40 kilometres away) in order to do the best possible for the survivors there, as well as for those who arrived each day.

The League of Nations endeavoured to maintain feeding stations all over the country. Food, blankets and clothing were handed out to women and children, exactly rationed by the use of identity checks. Dr Kennedy (Chief Administrator of the Save the Children Fund in the Near East) sent a cablegram to the Victorian branch: ‘Cannot over-emphasise need of clothing. Can you make special blanket appeal?’ This call echoed one by Henry Morgenthau ‘now chief commissioner of Greek refugee settlement for the League of Nations’.

*... half a million without warm clothes, fever-sodden, inadequately fed. Bulk are in Macedonia and Thrace, where severe winter conditions now exist. Many in tents, and housing accommodation inadequate. Gifts of blankets and warm clothes would be most welcome, and would save many lives.*⁴⁵

Treloar’s immediate task was to settle tens of thousands of Hellenic Genocide survivors in western Thrace. Though the actual number he was responsible for is unknown, approximately 108,000 individual survivors were resettled under Major Treloar’s jurisdiction in western Thrace and eastern Macedonia.⁴⁶

Treloar’s responsibilities extended to western Thrace (the areas around the urban centres of Xanthe, Karagatch, Komotini, Alexandroupolis, Didymoteicho, and Soufli), as far west as the port of Kavala in eastern Macedonia, though Treloar had few responsibilities for refugees who were permitted to remain in the urban centres themselves.

Refuge

Throughout his time in Hellas, George Devine Treloar documented what he saw with his camera, leaving a remarkable collection of photographs. These photographs portray undeniable hardship and misery, although these Thracian refugees actually had a few days in which to gather some possessions onto a wagon.

In that respect they were luckier than many from Anatolia who had to pick up anything they could carry and leave virtually immediately, with far lesser chances of survival.⁴⁷

One striking feature of Major Treloar’s writings and photographs is the disproportionate numbers of women and children compared to adult men.

At the time, he wrote on the back of one print: ‘Smyrna refugees in Athens showing proportion of men, women and children – the men were killed or held prisoner by the Turks – hence reason why so many women with children are unable to support themselves’.⁴⁸

The League of Nations’ Commissioner had a keen eye for the human dimension of what he was experiencing. Some of his most tender images show a mother and daughter having erected some troughs to shield their cooking fire from the winter wind. In another, a father consoles his baby daughter, while the women of the family heat a large cooking pan and small children chat. Some families sheltered under bed frames or mattresses lain across rough piles of sacks and boxes of possessions.

Treloar’s most dramatic photographs illustrate how survivors arrived directly onto beaches, rather than at ports or wharves. In the foreground of one photograph, a man has collapsed into sleep, an empty cigarette packet behind him. In the centre a woman holds her hand to her head in a state of despair. Some arrived without footwear, others seem to have arrived with nothing at all.

Resettlement

Writing in *National Geographic* in November 1925, Melville Chater recorded:

*Colonization had to start from the ground up, with surveying and motor plowing, for neither land maps nor boundaries existed in Macedonia, and the soil had been so long untilled that animal power was insufficient to break it.*⁴⁹

Major Treloar reported to the Governor-General of Western Thrace in November 1922 that his focus was on settling survivors on the land as productive farmers.

*Our plan foresees the settlement [of] new villages, under tents of the Hellenic Government, assisting those being settled to erect dwellings for themselves as rapidly as possible so that the tents may be evacuated for use in the settlement of other refugees in other villages.*⁵⁰

Treloar noted that
The principle of giving without receiving is erroneous. Under this system, the refugees adapt rapidly and are becoming, very simply,

*parasites, losing every desire to work and are rapidly reaching the conclusion that donated relief is a right from merciful God. Exchange in the form of work is of benefit whenever this is possible. No relief of any kind should be extended to those who refuse to work or to move where there is a possibility of finding work.*⁵¹

Winter had set in, with its freezing temperatures and no plant growth. Hemingway recorded, ‘Thrace a barren difficult plateau – scrub oak – Greek soldiers ‘sheik’ hats, weather beaten faces but looking like Austrians’.⁵² Although the Muslims of western Thrace were exempt from the ‘Compulsory Exchange of Greco-Turkish Populations,’ some left voluntarily for Turkey, leaving farmsteads and town houses for some of the destitute Christians. These were inadequate for the housing of the incoming multitude.

Drawing on his own agricultural experience, Treloar’s work was concentrated in developing potential farmland in an area between Komotene, the coastal town of Porto Lagos and east to what is now the town of Aratos.

Again drawing on his own experiences in rural Australia, Treloar tried to enthuse and direct the refugees to fend for themselves as much as possible. ‘No relief of any kind should be extended to those who refuse to work or to move where there is a possibility of finding work.’⁵³ Treloar was determined that as much of the fertile land should be put to use as quickly as possible.

As Treloar recorded in his 12 April 1923 report to Nansen (written in Komotene), in the preceding six months, the League of Nations team had established a number of new villages. The Australian officer has been credited by tradition with laying out the plan of the villages’ streets and lots, a distinguishing feature that separates refugee settlements from pre-existing ones.⁵⁴

*“Our first settlement was established at Mourhan Tchiflik”, modern Parademe, “and consisted of refugees from Altintash”, a small town in eastern Thrace.*⁵⁵ *A former Ottoman estate known as Kirlik Kiri was split into two new villages: “the first with refugees from Asia Minor, Greeks and Armenians, and the second with Caucasian and Pontos Greeks”. These are now Roditis and Thrylorio respectively, a few kilometres south-west of Komotene.*

“Three more settlements have been established at Phanar (modern Phanare), Tepe Chiflik and Orta Kishla (modern Porpi), and contain refugees from Eastern Thrace”. Considering winter was setting in,

Treloar's next sentence is stunning: "All the refugees in the above places are accommodated in bell tents. The remainder of the refugees on our strength are settled in farm houses in Urumbeyli, Biatli (modern Pagouria), Anakeuy, Mezhele, Ortadji (modern Aphrosia) and Haskeuy". He also mentions "Songourlou" (modern Mikro Kranovouni) and "Kir Chiftik", populated by "most of the families from our old camp in" Alexandroupolis, "Caucasian Greeks in the former and Thracians in the latter".

The low rise upon which one village was established, named Thrylorio, was described as 'a bare hill' by one elderly survivor. The location was probably selected due to the location of a spring still called 'Mother of the Waters'. Life was 'grim in the first season, as we came with nothing and had nothing'. The land around Thrylorio was allocated in family plots: a house and about three hectares of land. Using seed secured by Treloar, they set about growing maize, wheat and barley for food and tobacco as a cash crop. Planting, harvesting and threshing was done by hand. Hand-mills ground the grain into flour. By late-1924, they had established their own Agricultural Cooperative, which is still in operation. Sale of the tobacco and surplus grain provided cash for the purchase of modern agricultural equipment.⁵⁶

Some regard the survivors who ended in western Thrace as the fortunate ones. The survivors in north-east Hellas, under Treloar's responsibility, were recipients of relief supplies (flour and blankets) from Australia; the Hellenic Government was also moving quickly to make farming land available.

The influx of Hellenic Genocide survivors from Pontos (the Black Sea coast of Anatolia) and ethnic Hellene refugees from the Russian Caucasus continued through 1924. They arrived by sea, often after a harrowing period in extremely unhealthy conditions in camps around Constantinople. Many spoke an archaic dialect unintelligible to either officials or other Anatolian survivors, adding to the challenges the League and the Hellenic state encountered.

Housing

The influx of refugees was so enormous and so swift that the establishment of even basic shelter and public health was a tremendous challenge. The centre of some towns such as Drama in eastern Macedonia became

squalid camps in which diseases raged. The situation was exacerbated wherever housing vacated by Muslims was not immediately made available to the needy. The League of Nations' Commissioner for Refugees made strenuous efforts to secure as much as possible of the housing vacated by Muslims and Bulgarians for the needs of the survivors.⁵⁷

As early as April 1923, Nansen was able to report that the League of Nations' High Commission for refugees had settled eleven new villages in western Thrace and with the spring season commencing, they were well on the way to self-sufficiency.

As the emergency began to pass in 1924-25, the crisis accommodation began to be replaced with more substantial stone and mud-brick dwellings. Bricks were laid within a timber framework and faced with stone blocks. These were then roofed with sun-dried tiles. One of these early houses was for Treloar himself. He used the Australian slang word 'shack' to describe his quarters, presumably because it was quite small. From his photographs, it appeared to be built with rendered mud bricks, and had a tiled roof. Treloar has been credited by tradition with laying out the plan of the village streets and lots. A grid of straight streets concentrated family-related groups in each street. Thrylorio today resembles an Australian suburb, with each house standing on its own separate lot, often with trees or a vegetable garden. A unique part of the region's heritage, a handful of these early houses remain today, though in a dilapidated state.⁵⁸

Health Issues

Many of the survivors were suffering from infectious diseases, such as smallpox, typhus and cholera, as well as from dysentery. At one stage, the Hellenic Government suspended the admission of refugees, and parts of the resident population became reluctant to assist in caring for such infectious people.

Ensuring sanitation, refuse disposal, and water supply for these settlements was difficult. Provision of clean water was a considerable challenge. As the refugee population grew, it was difficult to prevent natural supplies of water from becoming polluted.

The undrained mosquito-breeding Marshes [near Komotene and to the north-west towards Drama] brought malaria, and the gargantuan

family had to be dosed with 15 tons of quinine. Drought came, and 50,000 cultivators (farmers) must be rehabilitated with a \$1,000,000 worth of grain and forage.⁵⁹

Malaria was not officially declared eradicated in Hellas until 1974, following an intensive national campaign that began in 1946. This program included drainage works as well as mass spraying of houses.⁶⁰

Cottage Industries

Treloar's 12 April 1923 report to the League of Nations carries striking echoes to the current socio-economic crisis in Hellas, with some equally striking proposals to resolve the issues.

We are not coping with a famine, but with an unemployment problem, of so vast a nature that if help of the proper constructive kind is not forthcoming the country will be brought face to face with the possibility of famine and ruin. Over one fourth of the entire population is without work or any prospect of it unless organized help is given to them and to the Greek Government.

Drawing on his experiences in Victoria during the 1890s Depression, in World War One, in post Bolshevik Revolution Russia and amongst the 'White Russian' refugees who fled the Soviet victory in the Russian Civil War, Treloar was a great believer in helping people help themselves.

A mere feeding program can only delay the fatal day. A constructive policy, under which the Greek Government is helped to place refugees on the land or organize town and village industries etc., is the only sound one. The possibilities are all here. We have proved it in this area.

Once emergency supplies of food and shelter were secured, small-scale 'industries' were founded, a means of earning an income and encouraging self-sufficiency amongst the survivors. These new businesses included charcoal burning, brick making, lace making and embroidery, carpet weaving, as well as the planting of 16,000 mulberry trees with a view to later production of silk.⁶¹

It is confirmed by the efforts, unfortunately so poorly supported, of those who are now endeavouring to imitate our policy, and by the hearty praise and enthusiasm of every member of the Government and Relief Organizations who have visited our area.

Every farmer established means not only one whole family saved from hunger and moral degeneration but one more family made independent and the State has gained a new producer who will indirectly help to support those still unproductive.

A sizeable proportion of the survivors and refugees were illiterate, rendering it especially difficult to introduce them quickly to modern technology, whether in farming or industry.

Treloar obtained as many tools as possible, including axes. At marine locations such as Lake Vistonida, inland from Porto Lagos, where there were suitable trees, he had those experienced in ship building commence the construction of fishing vessels. He recorded that all the plans for the boats were drawn in flat damp sand, as was the custom on the Anatolian coasts.

By far the most economically valuable of these fledgling industries was carpet weaving. Drawing on traditions dating back centuries, Treloar, and fellow Australian relief workers Sidney Loch and Joice NanKivell Loch, initiated weaving carpets on hand looms, and with hand-knotting in some cases. Australian wool was particularly favoured for its fine quality.⁶²

The Lochs were based at Ouranoupolis ('City of Heaven') in the Halkidike Peninsula in central Macedonia, a small distance outside Treloar's sphere. Until 1922, it was a malarial swamp on the north coast of the Athos Peninsula, the easternmost of the three 'fingers' of Halkidike. Sidney Loch became a regular visitor to the monasteries of Mount Athos, a short walk from the new settlement. His drawings and photographs of illustrated manuscripts in the monastic libraries became the basis of the designs the women and girls wove into their 'Pirgos Rugs' One example of the rugs the Lochs designed – named 'Creation' – is now part of the collections of the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney.⁶³

The development of carpet weaving in northern Greece was remarkable. The Refugee Settlement Commission Vice President reported in 1927:

In the vicinity of the urban settlements a large number of factories of various kinds have sprung up. Of these, the most numerous and the most important are the carpet factories. In this industry the refugees are expert and it has been introduced since their arrival. The industry is increasing very rapidly, and in the year 1927 the exports of Greek carpets to America were valued at over half a million pounds sterling.⁶⁴

Hellenic Australians

Fifteen months after his appointment, George Devine Treloar married Kathleen May Douch in Constantinople on 27 December 1923. Her father, William Douch, had been employed as an engineering consultant to the Ottoman Turkish government. Held as civilian internees during World War One, the Douches remained in the city until the late-1920s, when they moved to England. Living a few hundred kilometers away in Thessalonike, Mrs Treloar had lost her first-born children (twins) in 1924. A daughter, Elizabeth, was born in September 1925, followed by John a year later.

A few months after John's birth, the family moved to Constantinople. Major Treloar sailed ahead, back to Australia, arriving at Fremantle on 29 April 1927.⁶⁵ His wife and children stayed on in Constantinople, then lived briefly in England. Largely because of the impact of the Great Depression, the family was not reunited in Australia until February 1935.

On his return home, Treloar delivered public lectures on 'War adventures and other stories' and spoke of conditions in Kemal's 'new' Turkey and the difficulties for foreigners.⁶⁶

A politically active individual, he also became a passionate advocate of the rights of returned servicemen.⁶⁷ Treloar became a radio commentator in Perth, broadcasting under the pseudonym 'The Archer,' a career that lasted until 1949.⁶⁸ A range of careers, trials and tribulations – personal and professional – lay ahead for Treloar who passed away in Perth on 29 November 1980.⁶⁹

Legacy and Commemoration

The work of Major George Devine Treloar has been marked in many ways over the last nine decades. Some of the decorations Treloar was presented with during his career include: Distinguished Service Order and Military Cross (Great Britain); the Orders of St. Vladimir with Crossed Swords and Bow; Order of St. Stanislaus, and Order of St. Anne (Czarist Russia) and the Order of the Rising Sun (Japan).⁷⁰ The Hellenic state conferred the Gold Cross of the Knights of the Order of the Redeemer (or Saviour) upon George Devine Treloar in January 1923. The decoration was presented by the Governor of the Diocese of Thrace, Mr Spyros Dasios.⁷¹

Both Treloar and Procter had new settlements named in their honour. The one nearer to Komotene was initially named Proktion. The unfortunate

sounding name, soon led to a change to Broktion or Vroktion.⁷² In 1980, it adopted its current name, Roditis. A few kilometers along the road to Alexandroupolis, the next village was originally named Trelorio. Again, due to its unfortunate connotations (*trelor*, crazy), this was adjusted to Thrylorio (derived from (*thrylos*), legend).⁷³

Australian Jewry

Members of the small, thoroughly assimilated, Australian Jewish community played key roles in the Armenian, Hellenic and Assyrian relief effort 1915-1930s. Prime examples were Sir Samuel Sydney Cohen and Miss Dora Cohen (no relation). Sir Samuel served as Honorary Consul for the Hellenic Kingdom in Newcastle (March 1905-1915) and Sydney (1915-1923).⁷⁴

Sir Samuel later played a similar role in the rescue of German and Austrian Jews from Nazi persecution in the years before the outbreak of World War Two. Miss Cohen was, for many years, Secretary of the Lord Mayor's Armenian Relief Fund, New South Wales Committee.

To enable country visitors to see examples of Armenian needlework, the committee of the Lord Mayor's Armenian Relief Fund arranged a special Easter display and sale at the Civil Service Stores yesterday. Specimens of the handiwork of the orphans at Beirut, and of the inmates of the hostel at Aleppo, were on show, and included articles such as tray and supper cloths, runners, table centres, and handkerchiefs, showing exquisite drawn-thread work, crochet, and embroidery. Beautiful tinsel brocades were an example of the colourful embroidery, the latest work done by the Armenian refugees in Persia. Miss Dora Cohen, secretary of the fund, reported that sales had been very satisfactory.⁷⁵

She was an integral member of the group of prominent Australians involved in raising funds and supplies for the rescue of the survivors of the Hellenic, Armenian and Assyrian Genocides.

While a small number of the orphaned children and skilled migrants who were saved later migrated to Australia, there was no policy or even substantial discussion for the settlement of survivors in the Antipodes. The official policy was one of promoting the migration from the British Isles and northern Europe, while refusing to permit the migration of those 'born in Asia', unless they were deemed to be 'Caucasian'. This 'White Australia

Policy⁷⁶ was the cornerstone of government policy for the next six decades, shaping Canberra's response to genocide survivors and political refugees in particular.

From the 1920s until her death, Edith Glanville was a strong advocate of bringing Armenian, Assyrian and Hellenic Genocide survivors to Australia. Throughout the inter-war period, her endeavours to develop large-scale migration were thwarted by domestic political concerns and the preoccupation with maintaining a particular 'racial' mix in this country.

Conclusion

This paper brings together a number of threads of interwar Australian history. It develops a panorama that challenges the established narrative of Australia and Australians being insular and insulated. Instead the Commonwealth and her people were deeply interested and involved in events far from our shores.

The unprecedented common humanitarian cause that was the effort to rescue and rehabilitate the survivors of the Hellenic, Armenian and Assyrian Genocide survivors, as well as *Shoah*, brought together Australians from all walks of life: government, commerce, the military, philanthropy and more. This paper also brings the tradition of Australian humanitarianism into a fresh perspective.

Antipodean generosity did not suddenly emerge in the 1980s with the famine in Ethiopia and other natural disasters. Through diverse organisations such as the League of Nations, Near East Relief, Save the Children Fund, and locally established Armenian Relief Funds, Australians contributed (per capita) more generously than any other country to the effort to save those who had lost virtually everything.

Australians played key roles in rescuing survivors of the Hellenic, Armenian and Assyrian Genocides as well as those who faced Nazi terror. Still active after World War Two, in one Letter to the Editor, Edith Glanville described Hellenes as 'great-hearted people' who 'will be an asset to the agricultural life of this country'.⁷⁷

The stories of individual Australians form powerful testament to the ability of individuals to change the course of history, particularly in times of crisis.

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Antonios Litinas, Maria Palaktsoglou, Maria Shialis, Michael Tsianikas, Cecily Wright

Flinders University

Accepting the blogging challenge: Modern Greek Language Teaching at Tertiary Level

The late 1990s and the early 2000s marked the advent of Web 2.0, also known as the read/write web, which enabled web users to generate and share their own content online. Blogs were one of the first tools which made it relatively easy to publish on the web in this way (Gillmour, 2006). They came into existence during the late 1990s and were initially referred to as weblogs until the shorter version 'blog' was introduced in 1998 (Armstrong & Retterer, 2008).

Since the early 2000s, the educational merit of Web 2.0 authoring in the format of blogging has been widely promoted. In the higher education context, blogs have been used successfully for a wide range of purposes including to develop learner autonomy and intercultural competence (Lee, 2011); to increase student motivation to learn from peers via online interaction in the form of blog comments (Yang & Chang, 2012); to support students during internships and placements (Chu, Chan & Tiwari, 2012); 'to develop literary, communicative and digital skills' (Neira-Piñeiro, 2015: 555); to create an inclusive, communicative learning environment (Kim, 2012); to achieve reflective learning (Muncy, 2014) and as part of an assessment process in which student blogs were tracked 'with the aim of improving self-reflective processes and providing feedback' (Ion, Cano & Ferrer, 2014: 238).

With regard to university foreign language courses specifically, blogs have been incorporated into courses for a variety of purposes. They have successfully complemented traditional face-to-face environments by providing



The Olive Harvest,
Theophilos

a ‘parallel asynchronous learning space’ (De Andrés Martínez, 2012: 209); contributed towards the enhancement and improvement of writing skills (Vurdien, 2013; Jiang, 2012; Cordella & Normand-Marconnet, 2011) and increased students’ motivation to write for a broad audience and improved their writing fluency (Lee, 2010).

Our approach to blogging

‘The application of blog technology itself does not guarantee the success of learning outcomes’ (Lee, 2010: 225). There is no one approach to blogging which has effectively achieved the outcomes listed above. Each instance of blogging in an educational context takes on its own identity according to why it is the chosen tool. Blogs are a very flexible online environment which can be configured to meet a wide range of learning needs.

Flinders University in South Australia offers a fully online Modern Greek program which includes twelve language topics.¹ Within these language topics we have chosen to trial a learner-centred approach to blogging as a means of authentic assessment. We encourage students to write reflectively in their weekly blogs. Our decision to assign an element of assessment to the blogging task is supported by the approach of De Andrés Martínez (2012) who found that it was ‘advantageous to assign an element of assessment to the reflective [blogging] task as an incentive for participation’ (De Andrés Martínez, 2012: 210). In further support of this approach, a study conducted by Asoodar et al. (2013) found that two of the factors which encouraged students to blog in an English language course were that it was an assessment requirement and that the course facilitator provided comments on the students’ blog posts. Taking into account that ‘an educational blog is always the result of a teacher-initiated request’ (Alm, 2009: 208), with students being asked to produce or participate in a blogging activity as part of their studies, it may be considered somewhat of a challenge to put the learner at the centre. At Flinders University we accepted that challenge and what follows is a description of the characteristics of a learner-centred approach to blogging and its use in our context as an authentic assessment tool. Positive results and identified challenges will be described in the context of a third-year Modern Greek language topic and suggestions for the future will be made.

Learner-centred blogging

The results of a study documented by Lin (2015) support the effectiveness of learner-centred blogging for language learning. But what exactly is a learner-centred approach and how can it be linked to authentic assessment? Kang et al. (2011) describe a learner-centred approach as one in which learners have more control over classroom content with the balance moving away from the teacher making all the decisions about content and towards the student. By involving students in writing about what they think and receiving feedback, learner-centred blogs can empower students (Kang et al., 2011). According to Avci & Askar (2012) it is a characteristic of learner-centred blogging that the instructor gives positive feedback to students regarding their comments and posts comments for discussion. De Andrés Martínez (2012) reminds us that learner-centred principles are linked to experiential learning and personal reflection and can lead to lasting knowledge transfer. This further supports a learner-centred approach to blogging in which the student controls the content and the teacher takes on the role of facilitator.

Blogging as authentic assessment

According to Gray et al. (2010), Web 2.0 authoring must meet the expectations of good practice in assessment generally to be acceptable as part of learning and teaching in universities. Thus, at Flinders University, we have trialled an authentic assessment approach which is characterised by focusing less on the product of learning and more on the process (Lam, Williams et al., 2007; Blake, 2009; Oskoz, 2005; Liang & Creasy, 2004; Leone, Leo et al., 2010). Ishihara (2009) includes reflective writing as one of the characteristics of a learning environment in which the instructor uses authentic assessment tools. Learner-centred blogs which encourage students to reflect on their learning are included in the Modern Greek language topics as a means of authentic assessment. Each student’s blog counts towards the 15% allocated for participation. Students are asked to keep a learning journal in the format of a blog and expected to demonstrate quality and consistency of learning reflection and evidence of regular review of learning activities and learning materials. Each student is asked to provide their teacher with a link to their blog. At third year level students are expected to

practice writing in Modern Greek to help develop fluency and it is suggested that each blog entry should be at least 3 or 4 relevant sentences.

Reflective blogging in the context of Flinders University Modern Greek language topics supports an authentic assessment approach by facilitating the sharing of information and expectations, providing a platform for written communication with a purpose and by facilitating individual teacher-student interaction and feedback. The blogging platform also allows the teacher to observe student progress towards the educational aims of the Modern Greek language topic both in terms of the development of their ability to produce complex written texts and by considering how each student reflects on their understanding of the learning materials and their ability to complete the learning activities. This reflective writing can also provide information which is useful when evaluating learning activities and materials.

Positive observations

Dynamic assessment is an authentic assessment approach which is of specific relevance to foreign language learning as it allows for intervention during assessment (Antón, 2009). This intervention can take place synchronously, as is practiced in Flinders University Modern Greek language topics when assessing speaking during virtual classroom sessions² or asynchronously, as is appropriate for the assessment of writing in blogs. Dynamic assessment in our blogging context is focused on improving student learning, using each individual student's knowledge as the starting point and providing individualised feedback to take each student to the next level of language understanding and use. This assessment approach is characterised by the teacher commenting on each student's blog individually. The teacher's comments do not take the format of marking the student's writing as correct or incorrect. Instead, with the intention of taking the student to the next level of understanding, the teacher writes using more advanced grammar, syntax, style and register than the student is currently demonstrating. This encourages the student to move towards a more advanced writing style in the next blog entry and provides a model for him/her to do so.

In order to evaluate the dynamic assessment approach to writing we used the blogs of six students of a third-year Modern Greek Language topic (Beginners level) at Flinders University. In the context of this particular topic, the dynamic assessment approach to writing was successful in im-

proving the grammatical and syntactical structure of some students' writing.³ The individual oral and written feedback increased student motivation and confidence resulting in them becoming more motivated to maintain their reflective blogs without being reminded. This is consistent with the findings of Alm (2009) whose study indicated that reflective blogging increased the learner's sense of autonomy and improved their perception of language awareness and development.

Challenges

It is widely thought that it is important for blogging activities to have a purpose which aligns with course objectives and allows students to demonstrate their progress towards expected learning outcomes (Gray et al., 2010; De Andrés Martínez, 2012 and Lee, 2011). In the context of our Modern Greek language topics the blog is not a place to complete writing tasks or assignments. Students are not assigned a topic to write about or asked to use certain vocabulary or write in a particular genre other than the reflective style. The reflective blogging task is learner-centred because it involves students in writing about their own personal learning and opinions. The task aligns with the expected communicative outcomes of the topic according to which students have the opportunity to reproduce learned writing patterns and structures to reflect on their learning and express their opinions. The criteria by which their reflective blogs are assessed towards each student's 15% for participation in the topic are as follows:

- Quality and consistency of learning reflection.
- Evidence of regular review of learning activities and learning materials.

From the student perspective there is not a lot at stake if they choose not to blog; part of 15% of their total marks for the topic is not a lot to forgo. Thus, it is a challenge to engage students in creating and maintaining the reflective blog. The challenge is to make them realise that blogging in this way has advantages for them, that they are not blogging for the teacher, or to get good marks, but rather to improve their own writing and to have a record of their improvement throughout the duration of their studies. Frequent and meaningful feedback makes students feel supported and encouraged in online environments.⁴

It is early days for many of our students with regard to blogging and it is hoped that they will become more widely engaged in our learner-centred approach to blogging once they come to realise that it is an environment in which they will receive regular individualised feedback. Whilst such intrinsic motivation is preferable in the university setting it cannot be overlooked that students could also be motivated to participate in the reflective blogging activity by increasing the part of their total marks for the topic allocated to the blog. For example, students in Chinese foreign language course responded positively to the 20% assessment weighting allocated to a web-diary task (Jiang, 2012). Likewise, Cordella & Normand-Marconnet (2011) acknowledge that blogging in a foreign language is a complex task for which 20% might even be considered too little to allocate for assessment.

In the early stages of including blogs in Modern Greek language topics students have not been keen to share their blogs with each other or to make their writing public. Blogging in an educational context is a new experience for many of them. They are understandably tentative about receiving feedback from other students. Consequently, in the initial stages, each student's blog has been shared only with the teacher. Students also appreciate receiving the teacher's feedback externally to the blog, as a personal email or, at times, in the face-to-face environment. They were reluctant for their writing to be publicly corrected as comments attached to the blog. A study conducted by Domalewska (2014) indicates that we should not be surprised by the students' reluctance to share their blogs and welcome feedback from each other. The study was conducted in the context of a foreign language course in which blogging was being examined as 'a technologically enhanced support to develop interaction and interrelatedness among learners' (Domalewska, 2014: 1). It was found that students were not motivated or confident to interact with each other in the foreign language and that they felt uneasy about commenting on other students' blog posts, preferring to use their native language to comment, share experiences and develop rapport (Domaleska, 2014). Findings such as this will need to be taken into account as we consider the future of blogging in our Modern Greek language topics. Should students be asked to share their reflective blogs and encouraged to read and make comments on each other's blog entries or would a class blog with shared access and a different purpose be a more appropriate platform for this? The findings of Lee (2011) are useful in this regard

and indicate the value of different kinds of blogs for different purposes. Lee (2011) found that 'students perceived that contributing to different types of blogs empowered them to become autonomous learners as they made the informed choice of being self-regulated by working individually and collaboratively with others' (Lee, 2011: 96).

Many of those who write about blogging in the higher education context acknowledge that some students might have a limited knowledge of blogging technology.⁵ Gray et al. (2010) make the point that, despite being of the NetGeneration,⁶ some students might need practice and support to begin using tools such as blogging websites and that deeper learning, such as that which is required in a university setting, cannot take place if students are required to spend a lot of time learning the basics of a tool. Given that some students of Flinders University Modern Greek topics were reluctant to blog online and preferred to submit a paper version of a reflective journal we must consider it a possibility that some of our students need more practice and support to create and maintain a reflective blog.

An analysis of the content in each of the six students' blogs suggests that they were challenged by the task of writing reflectively in Modern Greek. It is possible that their linguistic proficiency was not sufficient for them to do so confidently. Thus, it is a challenge to provide the guidance they need to be able to do this. Most of the students wrote recounts of what happened in face-to-face sessions or described the learning materials used (See Appendix 2). This was in response to the guidance provided by the teachers and was seen as an appropriate starting point. Some students wrote more detailed reflections, recounting what they had learned and describing what they could now do as a result of their learning (See Appendix 3). There was little reflective writing in terms of what the writer enjoyed, found difficult or was looking forward to and only one student reflected on the standard of his/her performance, writing about mistakes and suggesting how practice might improve his/her performance (See Appendix 4).

Discussion and recommendations

Reflective blogging is definitely worth pursuing as a means of authentic language assessment. Flinders University aims to produce graduates who can apply knowledge, communicate effectively, work independently and collaboratively and connect across boundaries. Reflective blogging,

as described in this paper, can go a long way towards developing these qualities. However, blogging as an assessment task poses many challenges. The expectation that students would blog reflectively, writing in Modern Greek, is one of these challenges. We discovered that blogs were not highly effective as an assessment tool because many students did not create or maintain them. With the blogging task only worth part of 15% of each student's total marks for the topic it is probable that the students who did not participate preferred to focus on other more highly weighted assessment tasks.

Bartlett-Bragg (2003) describes a 5-stage blogging process which provides a useful framework for considering the future of reflective blogging language topics. These steps can be summarized as follows:

Step 1 – Create a blog

Students create a blog in class and start recalling and recording learning events and expressing their feelings. Teachers encourage participation and provide structured questions as guides. Students share the addresses of their blogs (optional). Writing is not assessed in terms of quality or quantity but the teacher 'drops by' to read blogs occasionally.

Stage 2 – Introspection

Some class time is allocated to blogging. Students continue to record learning events. They begin to pay more attention to their feelings and start to evaluate their learning experiences. The teacher provides structured questions as a guide. The students start to move away from consciously writing for the teacher and start to consider a wider audience.

Stage 3 – Reflective monologues

Students become more aware of the reflective process and are less reliant on the structured questions. Students take more responsibility for their entries based on suggested topics for consideration, and are encouraged to predict future learning based on past experiences. Some class time is still allocated to blogging but students begin to make more frequent entries to their blog during the week. Some students will resist reflection and deep learning. This may be noted in their blogs. The expression of emotions relates more to learning events and is not directed to the teacher and other readers. Students show signs that they are writing for themselves and some students start to write very thoughtful short paragraphs, sometimes posing questions.

Stage 4 – Reflective dialogue

No classroom time is allocated for blogging but classes discuss possible blogging topics and issues. Students learn to reflect more deeply taking into consideration their style of expression and intended audience. They are expected to be self-directed bloggers and responsible for their own content. As a result, some students stop blogging and might need to spend more time at Stage 3. Students have developed their own blogging voice or style.

Stage 5 – Knowledge artefacts

Students no longer publish personal knowledge only but are able to reflect on knowledge and provide guidance to others to enhance their learning. Students start to read and comment on each other's blogs and are aware of the broad reach of blogs as authors and readers. Their writing shows critical thinking and deep reflection.

Reflecting on our blogging experience and considering the literature about blogging and this five-stage process in particular, the following recommendations can be made for the next trial of reflective blogging in Flinders University Modern Greek language topics.

- Allocate at least a 20% assessment weighting to the reflective blogging task.
- Continue to provide individual personalised feedback to students.
- Make sure students are familiar with blogging technology i.e. they are able to create and maintain a blog.
- Provide students with learning activities and materials to increase their proficiency to write reflectively in Modern Greek.
- Allocate some class time to blogging for most of the semester.
- Provide structured questions to guide students in the initial stages of their blogging experience and facilitate discussion of possible blog topics and issues once questions are no longer required.
- Encourage students to read and comment on each other's blogs once they are blogging at an advanced reflective level.

It is anticipated that an approach incorporating the above elements and keeping in mind Bartlett-Bragg's (2003) 5-stage blogging process as a framework will result in a more effective use of blogging as an assessment tool and will also enhance students' written skills in Modern Greek.

Appendix 1

Thursday, 26 March 2015

Week 4

Τέταρτη εβδομάδα

Αυτή την εβδομάδα, αρχίσαμε ένα νέο θέμα που ονομάζονται φυσικά φαινόμενα. Μάθαμε για τσουνάμι, ηφαιστεια και άλλες φυσικές καταστροφές. Νομίζω ότι τα ελληνικά μου έχουν σίγουρα βελτίωση αλλά έχω ακόμα πολλά να κάνω πράξη.

Week 5

Late post again! I am falling way behind with these ... -_-

Πέμπτη Εβδομάδα

Αυτή την εβδομάδα συνεχίσαμε να μελετάμε τα φυσικά φαινόμενα. Μιλήσαμε για τα δάση και τα πολλά είδη φυτών και δένδρων που έχουν εκλείψει πλέον. Συζητήσαμε για τις δασικές πυρκαγιές και πως αυτές επηρεάζουν την Γη. Μάθαμε επίσης για τα καιρικά φαινόμενα που ονομάζονται Ελ Νινιο και Λα Νίνια. Αυτή την εβδομάδα η γραμματική ήταν δύσκολη.

Monday, 11 May 2015

Week 6

Έκτη Εβδομάδα

Αυτή την εβδομάδα συζητήσαμε για την διατήρηση της άγριας ζωής και πως την αντιμετωπίζουν οι άνθρωποι στην γή. Επίσης, μάθαμε για τους σεισμούς και τι πρέπει να κανουμε αν γίνει ένας σεισμός. Είχαμε και το δεύτερο τέστ αυτή την εβδομάδα. Δεν ήταν δύσκολο αλλά μου φαίνεται έκανα ένα ηλίθιο λάθος. Σε ένα ερώτημα, έπρεπε να αλλάξουμε το ρήμα στον μέλλοντα χρόνο. 'Αλλάξα τα ρήματα σωστά αλλά δυστυχώς τα άλλαξα όλα στο πρώτο πρόσωπο. Κατάλαβα το λάθος μου αφού τελείωσα το τέστ!

In this example, it is obvious that the length of the entries is increasing every week.

The student was encouraged, both orally, in class, and in writing, with comments on the actual blog.

The interesting thing about this blog is that by week 6 the student is reflecting on his/her learning process and makes notes on things he/she should and could do better.

Appendix 2

The screenshot shows a blog interface with three entries, each representing a week. Each entry has a date badge (MAR 19, MAR 14, MAR 6), a title 'Εβδομάδα 3', 'Εβδομάδα 2', and 'Εβδομάδα 1' respectively. The text of the entries is in Greek. Below each entry, there are social media sharing icons for G+, Tweet, and Like, and a button to 'Add a comment'.

In this blogging the student is mentioning and writing mainly about what he/she learned each week and was taught during the lecture. He/she also mentions his/her feelings about the learning process.

Appendix 3

Posted on November 3, 2015

Αυτή την εβδομάδα στα Νέα Ελληνικά, μάθαμε για τη σημερινή τέλεια, τέλεια το παρελθόν και το μέλλον τέλεια τεταμένη ΕΧW που χρησιμοποιούνται στην παρούσα τέλεια εικόνα χρησιμοποιηθεί σε προηγούμενες τέλεια και fa εικόνα στο μέλλον τέλεια τεταμένη. Στη συνέχεια πήρε σε ζεύγη και έγραψε ένα διάλογο χρησιμοποιώντας λέξεις από το λεξιλόγιο. Στη συνέχεια πέρασε από το λεξιλόγιο και την εξοικείωση με τις λέξεις που μπορεί να μην γνωρίζουν. Στη συνέχεια έπρεπε να κάνει τους διαλόγους χρησιμοποιώντας διαφορετικές λέξεις. Έχουμε τελειώσει το μάθημα με τις συνεχείς προτάσεις Αν thlyosei ο Γιάννης fa

Posted in Uncategorized | Leave a reply

Semester 2 Modern Greek Week 10

Posted on October 13, 2015

Αυτή την εβδομάδα στα Νέα Ελληνικά, μπορούμε εν συντομία μίλησε για τρία συνεχή αξιολόγηση. Στη συνέχεια κοίταξε μια συνομιλία ανάμεσα σε δύο ανθρώπους να μιλούν για διακοπές και πού πάει. Μάθαμε επίσης για την προ Χριστού και μετά Χριστού στα ελληνικά. Έμαθε για πρώτη, δεύτερη, τρίτη αποδεχθεί τις ελληνικές παραλλαγές. Κοιτάξαμε ένα πέραςμα για την πρωτεύουσα της Μακεδονίας, Πετράλωνα. Μάθαμε επίσης για το Διον τον τόπο όπου ο Μέγας Αλέξανδρος έκανε sacrifices. Spilaiο petralonhai ένα αρχαίο σπήλαιο στην Ελλάδα και κοιτάξε. Κοιτάξαμε των Ολυμπιακών Αγώνων και πήγε μέσα από το λεξιλόγιο. Στη συνέχεια ανέφερε αν το κάναμε ή δεν θέλουν οι Ολυμπιακοί Αγώνες να συμβεί στην Ελλάδα. Ακούσαμε ένα ελληνικό ροκ μουσικό βίντεο, ήταν ιδιαίτερης σοβαρότητας. Έχουμε τελειώσει το μάθημα, κοιτάζοντας την γραμματική, fa exeiς, fa EXW. Όπως και στο παρελθόν ενεστώτα και το μέλλον ενεστώτα. Σε συνέχεια με μερικά παραδείγματα σε ποιινές.

Posted in Uncategorized | Leave a reply

Semester 2 Modern Greek Week 2

Posted on August 5, 2015

Αυτή την εβδομάδα στα Νέα Ελληνικά Διάβασα δύο διαφορετικές passages του κειμένου και έγραψε κάτω από λέξεις που δεν κατάλαβα. Μάθαμε κυρίως για την τρίτη ηλικία, όπως σε άτομα που είναι ηλικιωμένοι και τα προβλήματα που περνούν από εκείνη την ηλικία. Έγραψε επίσης μία πρόταση χρησιμοποιώντας τρία λόγια για τους ηλικιωμένους και έγραψε πολλά νέα λέξεις που δεν ήξερα. Εξετάσαμε επίσης δύο βίντεο σχετικά με το Λόττο και τη γραμματική για την εβδομάδα.

Posted in Uncategorized | Leave a reply

Semester 2, Modern Greek Week 1

Posted on July 31, 2015

Αυτή την εβδομάδα στη σύγχρονη ελληνική, ήμουν το μόνο άτομο στην τάξη δεδομένου ότι ήταν μόνο εγώ, έχω διαβάσει τις σκέψεις για δύο ανθρώπους να συνομιλεί, και ζήτησε Αντωνίου για οποιοδήποτε λέξεις που δεν ήξερα Πήρα επίσης να κάνετε ερωτήσεις όπως το πώς να πω τα εκατοντάδες, τα στοιχεία και άλλες λέξεις που δεν ήμουν σίγουρος για τότε που ήμουν η μόνη στην τάξη. Ας ελπίσουμε ότι την επόμενη εβδομάδα θα υπάρξει ένα υψηλότερο ποσοστό συμμετοχής

Posted in Uncategorized | Leave a reply

In this example the student seems to be very keen from the beginning. The entries are long. From the first entry, he/she reflects on the difficulties he/she found. The problem is that even though there is a bit of progress in language, he/she did not pay a lot of attention to the comments. The result is that there was no dramatic progress grammatically and syntactically.

Appendix 4

Monday, 11 May 2015

Week 6

Έκτη Εβδομάδα

Αυτή την εβδομάδα συζητήσαμε για την διατήρηση της άγιας ζωής και πως την αντιμετωπίζουν οι άνθρωποι στην γη. Επίσης, μάθαμε για τους σεισμούς και τι πρέπει να κάνουμε αν γίνει ένας σεισμός. Είχαμε και το δεύτερο τέστ αυτή την εβδομάδα. Δεν ήταν δύσκολο αλλά μου φαίνεται έκανα ένα ηλίθιο λάθος. Σε ένα ερώτημα, έπρεπε να αλλάξουμε το ρήμα στον μέλλοντα χρόνο. 'Αλλάξα τα ρήματα σωστά αλλά δυστυχώς τα άλλαξα όλα στο πρώτο πρόσωπο. Κατάλαβα το λάθος μου αφού τελείωσα το τέστ!

Posted by [user] at 21:44 No comments:
 Recommend this on Google

Week 5

Late post again! I am falling way behind with these ... :-)

Πέμπτη Εβδομάδα

Αυτή την εβδομάδα συνεχίσαμε να μελετάμε τα φυσικά φαινόμενα. Μιλήσαμε για τα δάση και τα πολλά είδη φυτών και δένδρων που έχουν εκλείψει πλέον. Συζητήσαμε για τις δασικές πυρκαγιές και πως αυτές επηρεάζουν την Γη. Μάθαμε επίσης για τα καιρικά φαινόμενα που ονομάζονται Ελ Νινιο και Λα Νίνια. Αυτή την εβδομάδα η γραμματική ήταν δύσκολη.

Posted by [user] at 21:43 No comments:
 Recommend this on Google

In this example, we can see the progress both in syntax and in grammar within a week. The student started uploading lengthy entries reflecting on his/her learning.

Notes

- 1 At Flinders University a topic is a subject that forms part of your course. A full-time first year student will normally enroll in 4 topics in each semester, depending on their course requirements.
- 2 This approach to speaking assessment is explained more fully in our previously published paper (C. Wright, A. Litinas, M. Palaktsoglou and M. Tsianikas, 2015) Modern Greek at tertiary level: applying innovative methods of effective assessment and delivery online, in: M. Tsianikas, G. Couvalis and M. Palaktsoglou (eds), "Reading, interpreting, experiencing: an inter-cultural journey into Greek letters", *Modern Greek Studies(Australia and New Zealand)*, 251-274.
- 3 Refer to Appendix 1 for an annotated student work sample.
- 4 Brooke, 2013; Deusen-Scholl, 2015; Ernest, Heiser & Murphy, 2013; Liu, 2013; Tudini, 2015 and Zumor & Wahed, 2015.
- 5 Asoodar et al., 2013; Bartlett-Bragg, 2003; De Andrés Martínez, 2012 and Lee, 2010.
- 6 Net Generation is a term used to refer to young people who have grown up in an environment in which they have been constantly exposed to computer-based technology.

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George Couvalis

Flinders University

Telling the truth through lying about lying in Lucian's true stories

Abstract

Lucian of Samosata's *True Stories* (alethondiegematon) is, in part, a parody of Greek allegorical writing and of Greek allegorical interpretation. The parody works through a bizarre narrative that has been said to be the world's first science fiction story. Before the narrative begins, Lucian announces that he is lying, but is more honest than other liars because he tells you that he is lying. Lucian then plays on various paradoxes without committing himself to a paradoxical content. Using a Gricean account of meaning, which distinguishes between semantic and pragmatic meanings, I explain how Lucian evades paradox while satirising pseudo-profound paradox mongers.

Introduction

Lucian of Samosata was a Syrian satirist who wrote in Greek in the late second century CE and who satirised many philosophers and historians. The target of his satires was often religion or superstitious belief, including the Christian religion. A number of his satires are directed at philosophical or religious claims to profound knowledge that are wrapped up in incredible stories or obscure texts.

True Stories (alethondiegematon) is his most famous work. It was very widely imitated. It inspired *Gulliver's Travels*.¹ Its central portion narrates a voyage in which Lucian does various preposterous things that are described

in very realistic detail. In the narrative, Lucian goes to great lengths to show his credibility. However, it includes depictions of outlandish sex with mysterious vine women, being taken by a typhoon to the moon, a battle between the kings of the moon and the sun, visits to the dead in the isles of the blessed and the wicked, living for months inside a whale, and so on.

Before the narrative, Lucian begins *True Stories* by saying that just as athletes need relaxation, so too those who study texts need relaxation to put them in better trim for future labour. It would be appropriate for them to take up reading that is not just pure amusement, but provides a little food for thought. The present work is something of that sort. They will find it enticing not only because of its novelty and humour and because he tells all sorts of plausible sounding lies, but also because everything in the story parodies (eniktai) old poets, writers and philosophers who wrote much that is monstrous (terastia) and mythological.² He would cite them by name, but you will recognise them. Soon after he says:

1) *“On encountering these I did not blame them for their lying, as already it was habitual even for those professing philosophy. What I was stunned by was they could get away with writing nothing true (oukalithes). So, due to my vainglory (kenodoxia), I wanted to leave something behind, lest I alone be left without a portion of the freedom to invent myths (muthologeineleutherias). As I had nothing to tell that was true (I had nothing happen to me worth telling), I turned to lying more honestly (eugnomonesteron) than others. And if (k’an – kai an) I tell the truth, I tell the truth in this one respect: I say that I am lying. If I believe I escape censure, it is by confessing (omologon) that I say nothing (ouden) true. I write of events that I have neither seen, nor had happen to me, nor have learned of from others; they are neither in any way real (mite olosonton) nor are capable of coming to be. You should in no way (mudamos) believe what you encounter.”*

Lucian’s voyage then begins. Commentators agree that various philosophers, historians and travellers are being parodied in the story. Here are some crucial passages that I will discuss later:

2) At one point in his voyage through the clouds, Lucian and his crew sight Cloudcuckooland in the distance. He says that this “made me think of Aristophanes the poet, a wise and truthful man whose writings are

distrusted without reason” (1, 29). (Cloudcuckooland is the city the birds build in the sky in Aristophanes’s *The Birds*).

3) In the course of his voyage, Lucian visits the Isle of the Wicked, on which the wicked are punished for their deeds in life. We are told that the greatest punishments are undergone by those who lied in life, and those who wrote untruths, such as Herodotus. Lucian says “Seeing them, I had good hopes for the future. For I was aware of (sunepistamin) never having told a lie” (2, 31).

4) At the end of the text, Lucian sails to another land. The standard text ends with “What happened in the other land, I shall tell you in succeeding books” (2, 47). This is, of course, a lie. There are no other books.

Lucian’s Underlying Message

What exactly is Lucian trying to say through *True Stories* - in particular, passage 1?

Georgiadou and Larmour, who wrote the standard commentary in English on *True Stories*, think one of its central aims is to parody the then fashionable allegorical interpretation of texts, particularly by neo-Platonist philosophers.³ In particular, he is parodying allegorical interpretations of voyage narratives as voyages of the soul.⁴ In addition, they think various allegorical myths in Plato are parodied. They distinguish Lucian from other allegorists by saying that:

“The vital difference is, of course, that allegorists like Porphyry are seeking the “truth” which can be discovered behind or beyond the text’s surface, while, for Lucian, the secondary meanings undermine the validity of allegorical interpretation, through their relentless parody of specific poets, historians and philosophers. The truth to be discovered behind or beyond Lucian’s text is that these authors – far from conveying the truth, allegorically or otherwise – lie”.

(Georgiadou and Larmour, 1998: 12)

I think they are on the right track. We can all learn a great deal from their very detailed analysis of what is being parodied in various episodes of *True Stories*. However, their remarks about secondary meanings are vague as to how Lucian achieves his aims. They do not tell us what primary meanings

and secondary meanings are. I will try to be more precise. Further, although they point out that Lucian alludes to various paradoxes, they do not explain how exactly he exploits them to make his parody effective. I will try to explain in some detail how he exploits paradoxes.

Lucian's play on paradoxes

Commentators agree that Lucian plays on paradoxes in passage 1. Which paradoxes is Lucian playing on?

Initially, Lucian is playing on the liar paradox, which was well known in antiquity. Epimenides the Cretan is supposed to have said that Cretans always lie intending what he said to mean that all Cretans always speak falsehoods.⁵ This amounts to him having said that everything he says is false. To understand why this is a paradox, consider that a fundamental law of logic in standard logic is that it is impossible for any well-defined indicative sentence to be false and true at the same time. However, "I always lie", meaning "I always speak falsely", must be capable of being both false and true at the same time; for, if it is true, it is false.

Lucian's statement appears to be more straightforwardly paradoxical, for by saying that he is lying he seems to be saying "this sentence is false", which implies that the sentence must be both true and false; for, if the sentence is true it is false, and if it is false, it is true.

At first sight it looks like he is playing only on the liar paradox in passage 1. However, as Georgiadou and Larmour say, Lucian's play also alludes to Socrates's speech in Plato's *Apology* (Georgiadou and Larmour, 1998: 1, 57-58). Socrates there appears to say that unlike others who speak as if they know something, he knows nothing. He also seems to describe himself as superior to them because he knows that he knows nothing (21D).⁶ Lucian is describing himself as superior to the other liars because if he escapes censure, it is by confessing that he says nothing true. The scholiast on passage 1 also thinks that Plato is the target of the remark that lying has become habitual even to those who profess philosophy (Georgiadou and Larmour, 1998: 13). The remark seems to refer to the passage in the *Republic* (*Politeia*) in which Socrates recommends that rulers produce a noble (*gennaion*) lie for the benefit of the polis (414b-c) So we can take Lucian to be playing on an apparent paradox in Socrates's speech in *Apology*. If Socrates is saying

"I know that I know nothing" this is paradoxical, because, if I know that I know nothing, then I know something; so the sentence is necessarily false. I may know nothing, but I cannot know that I know nothing. However, Socrates's paradoxically false sentence is a noble falsehood, like Lucian's lies, so it is more honest than other lies.

The remark about honesty leads us to a similar paradox. When Lucian declares himself to be more honest than the other liars because he is telling the reader that he is lying, he apparently cannot be honest because he must be lying when he says it.

Lucian invents what seems to be yet another paradox when he says "you should in no way believe what you encounter". If we follow his advice because we believe him, then we believe something we encounter, namely, his advice. This means that if we follow his advice, we cannot be following his advice.

All of these apparent paradoxes result from self-reference. Not all self-referential statements are paradoxical but it is easy to produce paradoxes through self-reference.

Strategies for interpreting Lucian

In analysing the text, one strategy seems to be to argue that Lucian is not really prey to any paradox, because, in ordinary language, "I am lying" is scope ambiguous, and Lucian only means it to apply to the voyage narrative. To explain the point: unlike in formal logic, in ordinary language we would not indicate explicitly whether "I am lying" is only intended apply to the narrative or also to itself; that would have to be decided by context, and we can see from the context of the sentence that it is not intended to apply to itself.⁷ On this interpretation, Lucian exploits the scope ambiguity to jokingly suggest that he is writing something paradoxical when in fact he is not. This seems to get some purchase if we compare 1 with 3. In 3, Lucian has lied about having visited the isle of the wicked (which he knows does not exist) while saying that he is aware that he has never told a lie. It is his behaviour in narrating what he has done which is inconsistent with his claim. It is what philosophers call a pragmatic self-contradiction, a contradiction between what someone says and what she does. But that is not a paradox. Lucian is just lying in saying he has never told a lie.

Nevertheless, the view that “I am lying” applies only to the narrative is far too simple as an interpretation of Lucian’s intentions. For instance, passage 2 is revealing. Lucian describes Aristophanes as truthful in a passage that talks about Cloudcuckooland as if it is real. But if all the narrative is simply false, then the claim that Aristophanes is truthful must also be simply false. A more plausible way to interpret the passage is that Aristophanes is truthful in the same sense as Lucian; that is, as a satirist. Aristophanes lies in depicting Cloudcuckooland, so that he is not wise and truthful in that way, but he does not lie as a satirist. To produce a more subtle interpretation of the text, we must give up the view that Lucian only intends statements like “I am lying” to apply only to the narrative. As we will see, Lucian can be plausibly interpreted to be applying such statements to themselves, but not in an obviously incoherent way. A fairly precise way to understand how Lucian does this is to use the distinction between the semantic and pragmatic content of people’s utterances. This distinction has been spelt out in some detail by Paul Grice and his followers, the so-called neo-Griceans, in their analysis of conversations (Grice, 1989: 22-116; Huang, 2014: 27-83).⁸

The Gricean account

According to Griceans, the semantic content of a sentence is constructed out of the conventional semantic meaning of the component words organised according to conventional grammatical rules. The pragmatic meaning of a sentence uttered in context is the meaning the speaker intends to convey, which cannot necessarily be read off from the semantic meanings of her sentences. Grice calls such meanings “conversational implicatures” to distinguish them from the implications that follow strictly from the semantic meaning of a sentence. On the Gricean account, understanding the pragmatic meanings of a speaker, particularly an original speaker who is speaking by using metaphor or analogy, involves theorising about the speaker’s intentions. Grice in particular holds that this is tricky business; though he thinks even highly original speakers implicitly follow some maxims that we use in understanding them. We assume they are implicitly following the maxims even when they appear to violate them when the violation is obvious. Such apparent violations are called “floutings” by Grice (Grice, 1989: 30).⁹ I do not want to list the maxims, as most of them are not important here. Instead, I want to provide a sketch of what a full Gricean

analysis might offer. Let me start by explaining the Gricean view through an example:

Suppose you ask me how I am, and I say “up shit creek in a barbed wire canoe without a paddle”. That sentence semantically says that I am up shit creek etc. However, it is clearly false that I am literally in that situation. So, if you are to understand me to be rationally answering the question, you must understand me to be saying something different. Grice puts the maxims into categories such as quality and quantity. A key Gricean maxim I am flouting is the maxim of quality. Grice explains the maxim of quality in the following way: “Under the category of quality falls a supermaxim – “try to make your contribution one that is true” – and two more specific maxims:

- 1) Do not say what you believe to be false
- 2) Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence” (Grice, 1989: 27).

As you are to understand me to be flouting, but not rejecting, the maxim of quality, you will infer that I am talking by using a kind of analogy.¹⁰ If I actually were up shit creek etc., I would be in a very bad situation and unable to get out of it. You could then infer that the pragmatic implicature of my utterance is that I am in a very bad situation and I cannot get out of it. That is what I implicate, although the semantic meaning of my utterance by no means implies it.

Of course the above example is a little weak because in the Australian vernacular the sentence now conventionally means being in a very bad situation that you can’t get out of. So perhaps that meaning has now become part of the conventional meaning of the sentence. To fully understand the import of a Gricean analysis, put yourselves in the shoes of someone hearing the first person to produce the sentence. She would have to theorise about what was meant by this bizarre utterance. The original pragmatic implicatures of sentences tend to become conventional though not semantic, meanings, as what was original becomes a cliché.¹¹

How Lucian evades paradoxes

Grice produced his account to explain features of conversations. However, the account is easily adapted to deal with written texts. We can assume that the author of a written text is in a kind of conversation with an audience in which she is following the maxims. Let’s turn to Lucian.

When Lucian says “I am lying” and apparently intends this to refer to itself, what can he mean? Interpreted purely semantically, it seems that his statement must be both true and false, which is incoherent. He is apparently not trying to speak the truth and so apparently violating the maxim of quality. He is also apparently violating the maxim of manner, which tells us to be perspicuous (Grice, 1989: 27). Nevertheless, these apparent violations are so obvious that we can take Lucian to be flouting these maxims. For Grice, this means that we can take him to be implicitly following the maxims. As what Lucian is saying, interpreted only semantically, is false and makes no sense, we need to understand him pragmatically.

It can be true that Lucian is lying in his narrative as well as in saying that he is lying. He is telling deliberate falsehoods. None of the things in the narrative happened to him. He is honest in telling you the truth about this. Of course, if he is lying even in saying that he is lying, then he is also telling the truth in that very statement. He is lying about lying because pragmatically in the narrative he is telling what he thinks is the truth about the obscurantist allegories of philosophers etc. He is telling us that he thinks they lie or fudge the truth. So, bizarrely, it is consistent for Lucian to declare that he is lying through much of *True Stories*. It is only true semantically.¹² It is false pragmatically because he is trying to tell the truth in what he implicates. (Note as well that Lucian doesn’t actually tell you semantically that he is telling the truth in saying that he is lying. He says “And if I tell the truth...” He *may* be telling the truth pragmatically. Then again, this conditional itself might be negated because it is a lie, which would leave room for him to be telling the truth pragmatically about far more than the fact that he is lying).¹³

So Lucian is evading the liar paradox by saying something semantically true but pragmatically false. It is an evasion rather than an outright contradiction since he has not produced something both semantically true and false, which is the point of the paradox. He is, in a way, lying by producing an apparent paradox that pretends to be a real one. The underlying point in producing an apparent paradox may be this: various philosophers talk paradoxically as if they are producing something profound, when it is contradictory nonsense. (Rather like the modern pseudo-profound Derrida). Lucian is, however, producing an apparent paradox that masquerades as a real one to parody these lying philosophers.

Similarly, when Lucian says “You should in no way believe what you encounter”, he means that you should not believe the lying semantic narrative, but the statement also applies to encountering the statement itself, so you should not believe it when it is applied to Lucian’s pragmatic meanings. You can believe his pragmatic meaning that philosophical allegorists talk obscurantist nonsense.

To see the force of Lucian’s critique, we can turn briefly to the neo-Platonist philosophy of Plotinus. On Porphyry’s account, Plotinus’s views are riddled with various paradoxes about the one (to en). For instance, we are told that the one is more fundamental than what exists and explains it. It is beyond being. This means that something that does not exist still somehow explains. We are also told that the one can’t even be said to be “the one” as it is utterly simple, even though Plotinus seems to say an awful lot about it. On Plotinus’s account, the one can only be properly grasped in an indescribable mystical experience (which means that, conveniently, Plotinus doesn’t have to properly explain it or properly answer unsympathetic critics). Of course, Porphyry was writing about Plotinus some time after Lucian, but it is reasonable to think that the obscurantist groundwork had been prepared for Plotinus by his neo-Platonist predecessors.¹⁴

Let me say a little more about passage 1. In his introduction to *True Stories* Lucian is lying in other ways than the ways I have described. He describes himself as having written the text due his empty/worthless (keno) desire for reputation (doxia), and as telling the truth in only one respect, in saying that he is lying.¹⁵ It is semantically a lie that he is only motivated by vainglory, for pragmatically he shows himself to be motivated by the desire to expose fraudulence of the kind Socrates exposes in some of Plato’s dialogues. He is exposing various liars who produce supposedly profound allegories, or supposedly profound allegoric interpretations of tales that are nothing but tales. He is showing their pretence to expertise to be based on nothing (it is a form of kenodoxia) by telling a tale whose pragmatic meaning is that they are lying in various ways, a tale that is apparently more “authentic”, and more imaginatively constructed, than their favourite tales. So he is indeed lying. That is semantically true. He is also misleading us by suggesting at the outset that we are going to avoid hard tasks and engage in relaxation in order to prepare us for something more serious. He is more serious than many of those who pretend to be serious. So he is also

misleading us about the task he is setting us. Nevertheless, he is an honest liar, or at least a more honest liar than the other liars.¹⁶ As David Hume observed in the eighteenth century, Lucian “though licentious in regard to pleasure, is yet, in other respects, a very moral writer” who “cannot, sometimes, talk of virtue, so much boasted, without betraying symptoms of spleen and irony” (Hume, 1998: 53).

In concluding my comments about passage 1, let me warn the reader that I am not saying that Lucian intends “I am lying” to apply to *all* of *True Stories*. When, before passage 1, he tells us that he is parodying various lying historians, poets and philosophers, that is what he is doing. When he tells us that he is producing something novel and humorous, that is also what he is doing. Part of the point of sketching a Gricean analysis of *True Stories* is to emphasise that we must attribute intentions to Lucian that make best sense of all parts of the text in context. This means that we cannot simply assume that there is a kind of bracket around all of the text to which “I am lying” applies. The point of Gricean pragmatics is to capture what a straightforward logical analysis fails to capture, not to think that pragmatics works in exactly the same way as semantics.

Interpreting some other passages

What about some of the other passages I cite? There is no contradiction in them, though many of them are obviously lies. In passage 2, Lucian says that he is sailing through the air close to Cloudcuckooland. Now of course, this is a lie, as he is not sailing through the air and there is no such place as Cloudcuckooland. He also describes Aristophanes, the inventor of Cloudcuckooland as wise and truthful. Aristophanes too is semantically a liar and untruthful. He describes preposterous situations. Lucian is lying (semantically) when he says that Aristophanes is wise and truthful. However, I take it that Lucian is pragmatically telling us that Aristophanes is pragmatically wise and truthful. What Aristophanes is getting at through lies about Cloudcuckooland and the like are important truths.¹⁷ (Of course, the force of the “if” in passage 1 seems to mean Lucian might be getting it wrong in passage 2; but then again it may be negated by Lucian indicating that it is a lie).

In passage 3, Lucian is in part sending up Plato’s *Republic* (*Politeia*), for the reference to the Isle of the Wicked is a reference to the myth of Er at the

end of *Republic*. Lucian is, of course, lying in saying that he is aware of never having told a lie; for the whole story of the visit to the Isle of the Wicked is semantically a lie. Is Lucian pragmatically trying to say that he is saying the truth here? Perhaps not. This passage just fits his claim at the beginning that he is more honest than others because he tells you that he is lying. There may be a more subtle point here. Sunepistamin sounds like what Socrates says in the *Apology* about his wisdom in knowing that he knows nothing. He there uses *sunoiea* for his peculiar knowledge. Lucian has recently left Socrates and others behind on the Isle of the Blessed when he arrives at the Isle of the Wicked. Perhaps the pragmatic point is that, like Socrates, he is more honest than Plato because he admits that he is lying, whereas Plato pretends to profound knowledge through the myth of Er.

Passage 4 gives the game away about Plato more clearly. The scholiast on the passage calls it “the biggest lie of all” in the margin (Georgiadou and Larmour, 1998: 232). I take it to be not only a semantic lie, but for it to involve a pragmatic lie as well - which is intended to tell a “deeper” pragmatic truth. Plato ends *Republic* with the myth of Er, which is a trip by Er to the land of the dead, and which is supposed to be revealing of the afterlife of the divine and immortal soul. Lucian, by contrast, ends with a lie in which he implicates that he will tell you something even more profound than Plato (he has already been to the Isle of the Blessed and the Isle of the Wicked and so has outdone Er), but tells you nothing. Nevertheless, he is more truthful than others because he doesn’t tell you a supposedly profound lie. He ends with a lie that implicates at a “deeper” level that perhaps there are no profound religious meanings by showing that he doesn’t know any better than others what the truth is on these matters.

Conclusion

We have seen that if we understand Lucian in a Gricean manner, he evades some paradoxes. Does he evade paradoxes altogether? Can he still be justly accused of himself using obscurantist allegories to criticise all obscurantist allegories? Is he at least committing a suspect pragmatic self-contradiction? After all, it is often unclear what he is getting at, and, if Georgiadou and Larmour are right, he is often so subtle or obscure that even many readers in his time would have had trouble understanding him.

Further, if Georgiadou and Larmour are right, he sometimes produces deadpan allegorical interpretations of works of art as prefaces to works like *True Stories*; and he does it for the sheer fun of showing he can do better than serious allegorical interpreters (Georgiadou and Larmour, 1995). Is he both offending logic and committing the moral offence of hypocrisy? To deal with this issue, we can ourselves dig up Lucian to accuse him of hypocrisy and crimes against logic, just as Lucian accuses himself elsewhere of having dug up an old dog (palaionkynon), the Cynic philosopher/satirist Menippos “who bites unexpectedly because he grins when he bites” (Lucian, 1921: 147).¹⁸ Logic and Frankness (parrhesiades) will be the prosecution, and Truth will be the judge.¹⁹ Lucian will, as usual, represent himself; illustrating the old adage that a man who represents himself in court has a fool for a counsel. It will start something like this:

Logic appears before the court; Truth presiding. Logic wears no make up, but has a striking natural beauty respectably clothed in axioms and theorems.

Logic: Lucian of Samosata, you are accused of undermining logic by producing a lying allegory attacking all lying allegories. Do you plead guilty?

Lucian: Dear Logic, I have always admired your simple elegance ...

Logic: Stop! No verbiage. We know you consorted with that slut Rhetoric in a sham marriage (Lucian, 1921). You haven't given up her tricks. This is a trial before Truth, with Logic and Frankness prosecuting. Guilty or not guilty?

Lucian: But I was trying to save Philosophy from seductive paradox mongers! A parody is a kind of reductio of their allegorising to absurdity. Very respectable; and not rhetoric!

Logic: “A *kind* of reductio”! Did you, or did you not, commit a paradox? A real paradox, not a pretend one like one of those absurdly elaborate murders we see on crime shows.

Lucian pauses.

Lucian: Guilty and innocent too. A parody takes up what it criticises, but it is implicating that ...

Frankness: A weasel as well as a paradox-monger! You pretend to be producing an unadorned reduction to absurdity, but you wallow in allegory for the sheer fun of it!

The reader can continue the dialogue.

Notes

- Swanson points out that the title seems to be an oxymoron (Swanson, 1976: 4). Georgiadou and Larmour say that Polybius defines diegema as “history without truth” (Georgiadou and Larmour, 1998: 1). “True fables” might be a more direct translation of the title Lucian intended, though it is too obvious to capture Lucian’s subtlety. (Both Swanson and Georgiadou and Larmour mistakenly quote the title as alethiediegemata, but translate it correctly. This seems to be a typographical error, as the most reliable manuscripts quote the title as alethondiegematon (Lucian, 1972: 82)).
- Georgiadou and Larmour point out that eniktai is from romainissomai, speak darkly, but that the evidence is that it was often used in the ancient world to mean “parody” (Georgiadou and Larmour, 1998: 5-6, 23, 53).
- It was once common to argue that Lucian was merely producing arcane comic texts that imitated the style and interests of the Greeks of the fifth and fourth centuries BCE. However, scholarship has since made it clear that many of Lucian’s targets are fashions and figures of his own time. See particularly Jones, 1986.
- For a brief history of neo-Platonist allegorical readings of Homer, which go back to at least the fourth century BCE, see Lambertson, 1986.
- The most famous reference to Epimenides’s remark is in Paul’s *Pros Titon 1/Epistle to Titus 1* in the *New Testament* (Paul, 1983: 740). Paul there does not mention Epimenides by name. Epimenides may well have not intended to say anything paradoxical.
- Careful readers of *Apology* will notice that Socrates does not quite say that he knows nothing. Lucian shows that he is aware of two interpretations of Socrates’s speech in *Hermotimus*, 48 (Lucian, 1959). Nevertheless, in *True Stories* he seems to allude only to the inconsistent interpretation, which was often attributed to Socrates from at least the time of Cicero (Fine, 2008).
- This seems to be the strategy in Swanson, 1976.
- I cannot here discuss the debate between neo-Griceans and some of their critics. However, I think the neo-Griceans have adequately replied to their critics; for some details see Chapman, 2009 and Huang, 2014. I do not here want to commit myself to a particular neo-Gricean account.
- For an interesting account of the subtle uses of flouting, see Henry, 1996.
- It is important to understand that Grice does not mean that the inference involved is like an inference in formal logic. The inference Grice thinks we make is like what philosophers of science call an “inference to the best explanation”, which is an informal inductive inference. Someone making such an inference about a flouting is trying to understand an intention by making best sense of what a rational agent might mean pragmatically. Chapman, 2009 makes clear how important intentions are in Grice.
- In Grice’s terms, “I am up shit creek etc.” now conventionally implicates I am in a bad situation that I can’t get out of. That I am in a bad situation etc. is not part of the semantic meaning of the sentence because it is not the meaning that the parts of the sentence have when put together in a conventional grammatical form.
- Of course, if it were *wholly* true semantically true, it must also be false, and then Lucian would in fact be saying something paradoxical. We must take the pragmatic implicatures of the text to

limit the semantic meaning. So even the semantic meaning is being restricted pragmatically. To properly explain what is going on in Lucian, the Gricean account would need to be expanded.

- 13 Lucian is playing on an additional complexity, which is that he cannot really said to be lying because he does not intend to deceive. If he did intend to deceive he would not say “I am lying”. Speaking falsely is not lying. This, of course, is another way in which he is more honest than the other tellers of falsehoods. Then again, he is perhaps being deceptive in calling it lying when it is not. Some recent accounts of fiction stress that many of them involve pretence. On this view, Lucian may be pretending to lie, which is different from lying. Pretence theorists have usually sought to incorporate Gricean elements into their accounts. For such an account, see Henry, 1996. In my view, we get a more elegant and satisfactory account of what Lucian is doing by using a straightforward Gricean view. This is because *True Stories* is not just a fiction, but a fiction with an apparently non-fictional introduction. However, I have no space to pursue the issue here.
- 14 For a much more sympathetic account of Plotinus and neo-Platonism, see Gerson: 1994.
- 15 The origin of the word kenodoxia itself needs to be understood in a Gricean manner. Constructed from keno and doxa, it is clear that it initially semantically meant empty glory, but pragmatically means a desire for glory based on worthless achievements. However, what would have initially been its pragmatic meaning became conventional. Then, perhaps, it became its semantic meaning.
- 16 A recent film about “The Amazing” Randi, a stage magician who has spent much of his career exposing psychic frauds, has the wonderful title “An Honest Liar” (Measom, 2014).
- 17 Rosen, 2016 points out that Lucian’s shrewd and complex understanding of Aristophanes’s techniques was very unusual in the Roman imperial period.
- 18 Lucian puts himself on trial in *The Double Indictment* for offences against both Rhetoric and Dialogue (Lucian, 1921).
- 19 Parrhesiades (Frankness/Lucian) is under attack by famous past philosophers in “The Dead Come to Life or the Fisherman” (Lucian, 1921b). Naked Alethia (Truth), who is always modest and slipping away, ends up being his advocate. Syllogismos (syllogism) has trouble summoning the philosophers to a proper trial.

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The Olive Harvest,
Theophilos

Konstandina Dounis

Snapshots of Hellenism: Positioning the Self within the Diasporic Space that Informs the Frame¹

Prologue

In the European summer of 1989 I found myself in Greece in the village that my parents hailed from. I had been to Greece several times before with my family but this was the first time that I had travelled there on my own. Almiropotamos, as this small village on the island of Evia is actually called, is made up of two distinct parts: there is the main part of the village, literally perched on the side of a mountain, and housing the school, the church, the medical centre and most of the homes; and then there is the seaside section that houses the dwellings and taverns of the fishermen and their families. A steeply descending road leads from the ‘upper village’ to the ‘lower village’ as the two sections are called by the locals, and a thirty-minute brisk walk conjoins the two.

It was on one of these solitary walks that the revelation occurred. I had reached slightly beyond the half-way mark when I stopped at the low stone wall that closed off one of my father’s plots of land – a huge olive grove, extending literally as far as the eye could see, that had been handed down from one generation to the next for as many years as anyone could remember. It even had a name. Korpeseza. A word that encapsulated the bilingual nature of the village composed, as it was, of a fusion of Greek and Albanian words – a legacy of the Ottoman Empire.

And so there I was. To the right of me, notions of longevity through tradition and complexity of language. I turned around to see the centuries-

old houses on the mountain, their gaze enveloping me in the reassurance of their being throughout the proverbial mists of time. In front of me was the outstretched sea, forming an alliance with the sky in that intoxicating fusion of blue upon blue. And I knew, at that moment, that I was experiencing a point of profound connectedness that would forever haunt me.

Shortly after, I returned to my homeland, Australia. I was born in Melbourne and have an unstinting love for this city. I excitedly told my parents about these revelations and informed them that I was determined to return and build a house on this ancestral plot – a ‘home’ that we could, periodically at least, ‘return’ to. Their reactions surprised me. My father’s memories of this particular stretch of land were quite painful ones. He tended the sheep there throughout his childhood. Like many of the children, he had no shoes during the war years and wore old motorcycle tyres wrapped around his feet. The land there was riddled with thorns and no matter how tightly he strapped on his makeshift shoes, his feet would always be pricked. My mother nodded in agreement, pointing out that this area was arid and was also prone to bitter winds. Although they loved their homeland, they couldn’t conceive of this area as ‘home’ in the way that I did.

How bitter sweet was the realisation: that my parents, endowed with the wisdom that a life of hardship inevitably engenders, intuitively understood the notion of imaginary homelands long before their theoretically-inclined daughter did.

*

First snapshot: physical terrains

I grew up in the 1960s and 1970s within that parallel diasporic space known, at that time, as the Greek Orthodox Community of Melbourne. It was a distinct enclave within a wider Australian postcolonial milieu, the defining features of the latter of which were an endemic mono-culturalism and mono-lingualism. For the wider – what we might term ‘mainstream’ – Australian society, the Southern Europeans of the post-1950s mass migratory wave were the ‘not quite whites’, while the Greek immigrants, sensing the host country’s condescension at best and racism at worst, set about building networks that entailed schools, community groups, churches and sporting groups. The situation reflected an amalgamation of Castles’ ‘other

definition’ and ‘self definition’, the Greek community’s minority status thus a firmly entrenched reality of the time.² Greece was the eternal homeland, while the possible return there was a constant topic of discussion and, at times, heated debate at family gatherings. Indeed, my parents were the most ‘settled’ of our large circle of family and friends, their migration to Australia having an air of permanency about it from the start.

In my parents’ household references to the homeland were heartfelt in their nostalgia, yet ever tempered by a biting realism with regard to the intricacies of its landscape. My father, for example, would often relate the anecdote about the days of Creation when God, not knowing what to do with a huge surplus of stones and craggy rocks, unceremoniously dumped them on Greece! The inherent beauty of the landscape was no doubt lost on a little boy of five who had to traverse these rocks daily on his trek up a mountain to tend to the family’s sheep and goats. This image of Greece as a beloved homeland but an inhospitable physical terrain was then replaced by the effusive patriotic verses we had to learn off by heart at the Friday afternoon Greek school – verses dripping with more adjectives and superlatives than I reasonably knew how to pronounce. Indeed, in keeping with Castle’s minority community appellation, a symbiotic relationship was actively cultivated in these afternoon Greek schools between the learning of the Greek language and an obsessive patriotism towards the Greek nation state. This was further reinforced by our attendance at the Greek Orthodox church every Sunday, our even more religious attendance at the Greek team’s soccer matches on a Sunday afternoon, Greek movies on a Sunday night, obligatory Greek dance, wedding or baptism on a Saturday and Greek dishes for every evening meal.³ And so, ‘home’ was irrevocably aligned with being *Greek*.

Day to day school life, however, was irrevocably aligned with being *Australian*. My parents had bought a fish and chip shop in an area of Melbourne that, quite unbeknown to them when they initially bought it, was quite a comfortably middle-class one. I was the only Greek girl in the whole school. My fate was sealed. My two realities were utterly distinct, like two Venn diagrams with an indiscernible point of overlap. At school we raised the Australian flag every Monday and sang, with hand on heart, the then national anthem, ‘God Save the Queen’. I loved reading and writing in the English language. I selected an Australian football team and barracked for

it with all my might. I had sandwiches for lunch like all the other children. I played sport and took part in choirs and plays.

Imagine my surprise, then, when in Grade 6, I chanced upon the following in the books in my school's library:

Papa once went to Greece,
And there I understand
He saw no end of lovely spots
About that lovely land.
He talks about these spots of Greece
To both Mama and me
Yet spots of Greece upon my dress
They can't abear to see! ⁴

*

The isles of Greece, the isles of Greece!
Where burning Sappho loved and sung,
Where grew the arts of war and peace,
Where Delos rose, and Phoebus sprung!
Eternal summer gilds them yet,
But all, except their sun, is set...⁵

Despite my teachers' warnings to my parents about all the linguistic influences at home impeding my successful acquisition of English, I actually became a voracious reader from a very young age; rather than go out to play, I would often sit in the library and read during lunchtimes.⁶ These poems destabilised the world as I knew it. They constituted a palpable a point of connection between my Greek and Australian environments. Moreover, in the case of the latter poem, it was almost as effusive as the Greek poems I recited at Greek school events. What I was too young to realise at the time, but which became abundantly clear upon recalling these two poems all these years later, is that they are not so much the flattering descriptions of actual physical attributes of an admired landscape, as much as they are characteristic responses of the times to a foreign landscape. This episode can now be perceived against the backdrop of a wider, more dominant, cultural context. As Saadi Nikro has noted, 'although at the time the Australian landscape was still entwined in a language of race and cultural imperialism, with the

teaching of history in schools largely reflecting and constituting the imperial project of white settlement, it was beginning to be questioned and explored in both intellectual and artistic forums'.⁷

Even the most cursory overview of the biographies of Edward Lear and Lord Byron, reveals that they appeared to have a genuine and positive appreciation of the countries around the Mediterranean. However both men were the products of the 'Grand Tour of the Continent' mindset⁸, the influence of which manifested itself in disparate ways. This could range from the relatively benign, 'travellers carry with them not only their trunks but also their emotional, social, cultural and educational baggage...their backgrounds and their particular interests inform both their expectations and what they actually observe'⁹ through to the more insidious context of Said's *Orientalism* which pervasively contends that 'without examining Orientalism as a discourse one cannot possibly understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage – and even produce – the orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period'.¹⁰ Although Lear's poem is in the form of an amusing children's ditty, 'the spots of Greece/grease' echo a sort of derogatory underlying subtext, ably reinforced by the use of the homonym that aligns hard to remove grime with the Greek landscape. Meanwhile, Byron's impassioned ode primarily concerns itself with ideals of freedom emanating from ancient Greece – in the 1800s the country was under the yoke of the Ottoman Empire and very much part of the Orient, as opposed to the Occident - within the glow of bygone glories.

It would be many years before I would find descriptions of the Greek landscape that conveyed its idiosyncratic beauty in a way that captured my perception of it during my own travels there.¹¹ The Durrell brothers, Lawrence and Gerald, come immediately to mind.¹² As do a number of mainstream Australian writers – Charmian Clift, Beverly Farmer, Martin Johnston, Jena Woodhouse, Gillian Bouras and Robert Dessaix, to name a few - who have written about their experiences of Greece either as tourists, through their association with a Greek partner, or as expatriates, providing vivid descriptions of the physical landscape in the process.¹³

It is hardly surprising, then, to find that first-generation Greek-Australian women writers have written evocative descriptions of their homeland. The following poem by Dina Amanatides is a prime example:

Her beaches
are blue sheets
where boats of the mind
travel on the satin
of endless time.

Her islands
are exquisite brush strokes,
scattered diamonds
throughout the seas...

Her mountains, her hills,
and all her plains,
adorned in the morning dew,
are praised and blessed.¹⁴

It is significant to note that such descriptions from first generation-Greek-Australian writers are not the creative offerings of the detached observer; the writers cited throughout this thesis primarily hail from rural communities thereby having an intimate relationship with the physical landscape, arising out of cultivating land that had been in their family for generations. Besides which, summarily dismissing these works as 'dominated by nostalgia'¹⁵, is to totally ignore two important considerations. Firstly, in reacting to the physical terrain of Greece through their creative writings, they can be actually be perceived as situated within the Australian literary tradition. As noted by Shé M. Hawke in her essay, 'The Ship Goes Both Ways', such 'transnational literary production (is) a crucial part of Australia's polyvocal literary history'.¹⁶ Secondly, to dismiss these writers as being preoccupied with an idealised past, is to disregard the enormous body of literary work that depicts, in painfully vivid detail, the events that drove them to leave their homeland in the first place. Besides which, in the case of Greek-Australian women's writings, 'recollection is not the passive imitation inspired by antiquarian zeal, it is active recreation...belonging to the activity of concurrent actual production'.¹⁷

Second snapshot: re-visiting homelands

For many Greek-Australian women writers, finally reuniting with their beloved mothers and extended family members back in Greece is as much about reassembling the fragmented bits of self as it is about reconnection with their motherland. Antigone Kefala has a wry take on this – focusing on the subtleties of this reconnection physically, bodily – when she notes that:

*...every time I come here, it is as if I enter, rediscover a physical ancestral line, the streets full of shorter people with warm skins, moving with Father's walk, waiting at windows like Mother, a nervousness in their gestures, a quick way of throwing their heads, nodding, opening their papers, something that feels infinitely familiar; it is as if one can see where one has come from and where one is going...'*¹⁸

For many first-generation immigrant women finally reuniting with their mother after thirty or forty years means re-acquainting themselves with a woman they barely know. In her epic poem 'Portrait of a Woman', Yota Krili paints a vivid picture of the convergence of gender, class and cultural threads, the entwining of which has served to constrict women throughout time:

She was 83 when I visited her.
Her eyes were bleary but still
she was agile and sturdy.
She was my mother but I did not know her till then.
She had no time to mother her girls.
She loaded the table with fruits of her garden
spread her woven blankets on the beds
opened her chest and offered me her heirlooms
some were meant to be my dowry.
She enchanted my daughter
with her spinning of songs and folktales
yet was perplexed by the state of my marriage.¹⁹

Ioanna Liakakos' novel, *In Pursuit of the Rose*, centres on the protagonist, Vasso, who migrates to Australia for a better life in the 1960s.²⁰ She settles, and eventually marries, in Melbourne, the result of a love match with a fine young, hard working fellow compatriot. However, their happiness and

progress are thwarted at every turn by the husband's acutely felt nostalgia for their homeland. Although Vasso misses Greece, she expresses an oft-cited desire to have been born in Australia, particularly after her four children were born here. Moreover, she intuitively understands the impossibility of return, the subtlety of which echoes William Safran's contention:

...diaspora consciousness and the exploitation of the homeland myth by the homeland itself are reflected not so much in instrumental as in expressive behaviour. It is a defense mechanism against slights committed by the host country against the minority, but it does not – and is not intended to – lead its members to prepare for the actual departure for the homeland. The 'return' of most diasporas (much like the Second Coming or the next world) can thus be seen as a largely eschatological concept: it is used to make life more tolerable by holding out a utopia - or eutopia – that stands in contrast to the perceived dystopia in which the actual life is lived.²¹

Unfortunately for Vasso and her children, her husband's yearning for home starts to manifest itself as clearly discernible depression and so they make the difficult decision to resettle in Greece.

The whole enterprise proves disastrous for them, both financially and emotionally. The years in Australia have changed them, turned them into hard-working citizens with a sense of responsibility and contribution. These changes are imperceptible in their adopted country in that they are surrounded by countless other immigrants whose transformation mirrors their own. In Greece, their reflection proves elusive. Indeed, they find their Greek counterparts to be lazy and somewhat amoral. After a year of incessant endeavour, they come to terms with the bitter truth that their departure is inevitable. With fifteen years of life-savings squandered chasing a dream, Vasso and her husband, with four young children in tow, return to Australia and set about rebuilding their lives. They buy a milk-bar reasoning, as so many other immigrants had done before them, that they would be able to work while still looking after their children. However, low profit margins necessitate her husband working in a local factory, leaving Vasso to run the shop single-handedly, as well as cleaning and cooking in the house at the back. They never make the money that they lost in Greece during their ill-conceived repatriation, but their children all become educated and marry well, the incisive point being made that:

Everyone on this earth sacrifices something. Some give their all to their homeland, some to a grand idea, others to a great love, while others give their all to their family. We sacrificed everything for our children. Perhaps because our parents sacrificed nothing for us. They sacrificed everything for their homeland.²²

This novel illuminates many issues, but two are fundamentally important within the context of the migration of Greeks to Australia. The protagonist articulates the point again and again, that very few migrants became wealthy through their exile. Most immigrants only managed to eke out a modest standard of living, any savings accumulated the result of endless hours of overtime, strict budgeting and never-ending deprivation.²³ This deprivation rarely manifested itself in terms of the needs of their children – rather it manifested itself in the parents denying themselves even the most scant 'luxury'.

The second point is one that is elucidated throughout. Namely, that migration resulted in a more ecumenical stance towards people of other nationalities. This was not just a stance of graciously embracing difference, but a mutually understood, fundamental strategy for survival.²⁴ The multiculturalism that we take for granted in Australia today arose out of the working classes in the 1950s and 1960s when immigrants from every corner of this earth worked side by side in industrial conglomerates, the necessity for communication leading to a mutual exchange of idiosyncrasies, of language and customs.²⁵ Whereas Vasso and her husband felt negligible affinity with their Greek counterparts in Greece who had entered a sort of quasi-middle class stratosphere, they felt completely comfortable with their fellow working-class immigrants – although of a different ethnic and religious background, their common bond emanated through a shared worldview:

That morning, before leaving for work, Yanni said to Vasso, "When I get home from work tonight have the children ready. You be dressed and ready too. We're going to visit Halill and Maro. We'll leave at about eight."

Halill and Maro were a young couple whom Yianni had recently met at work. He was Lebanese, she was a Greek-Cypriot hunted out of her country after the brutal Turkish invasion of Cyprus. They lived in a flat that was so tiny that it could pass for a doll's house. They were always smiling. Their youth seemed to fill them with joy.

*Halill opened the door. Halill, the Muslim, welcomed these Greek Christians into his home, happy and with open arms. Maro showed them to their seats. They started to talk in English, to drink tea, to munch on biscuits, to talk animatedly, expressing their thoughts, their worries, making their troubles lighter. Their children were playing happily too, enjoying the company, having fun. No one had built a wall between them yet; no one had managed to make them aware of their different background, different religion...*²⁶

Third snapshot: recurring palimpsests

Second-generation Greek-Australian women writers have also written insightful evocations of the Greek landscape. If the 1950s and 1960s were characterised by the ‘tyranny of distance’, this new millennium is plagued by what Nikos Papastergiadis has referred to as the ‘tyranny of proximity’.²⁷ One of the more fortuitous byproducts is that there is a greater facility for travel back to Greece, transnationalism facilitating the longevity of the diasporic connection through successive generations.²⁸ Such visits do not merely constitute a sort of detached sojourn to the parents’ homeland but entail an opportunity for the contextualisation of memory; enabling the superimposing of one’s own experiences of family mythologies over the neon-bright realities of present-day landscapes. Eugenia Tsoulis highlights this in the following passage:

*I had returned many times, to pick up the pieces drifting around my memory, walking through the streets of Psillalonia, trying to find my bearings, the lemon tree in the garden, the whitewashed cottage with the red tiled roof, the yoghurt man, the horse that left the droppings we would gather for the vineyard, the hill with the paper kites flying wild above blue fields of irises. And not showing any disappointment that nothing here had remained the same, I would drive down the hill towards the mountains of Missolongi looming like dark protective sentinels across the bay...I drove around the streets, searching space behind one apartment block after the other, blocking the view to the sea, no vineyard close by or in the distance, my past blocked out forever.*²⁹

In her prose piece, ‘Visiting the Island’, Anna Couani paints a vivid portrait of the ancestral island Castellorizo, in the process establishing that ‘discourses of marginality such as race, gender...geographical and social

distance, political exclusion, intersect in a view of reality which supersedes the geometric distinction of centre and margin’.³⁰ Situated in precarious isolation from the plethora of other islands in the Mediterranean and just a stone’s throw away from the mainland of Turkey, its strategic geographical position has ensured a turbulent and often violent history at the hands of a succession of invaders, culminating in its virtual annihilation when ‘the British burned down the island’ - for all the hotly contested and mythologically inspired reasons. However, the incessant array of marauders did not succeed in decimating its social fabric to the extent that mass migration and the advent of globalisation managed to do. Into this complex narrative depicting social desolation, physical beauty and cultural formations informed by entrenched patriarchal structures, Couani interweaves her own position, encapsulating the impossibility of any vague notions of an ‘objective’ stance; through her use of metafiction ‘she is artfully unsettling traditional distinctions between reality and fiction and expos[ing] the arbitrary notion of boundaries’³¹:

*...the narrator (who is the writer) is no less touched by the immediate situation and no more able to achieve a distance on it than any of the other players in it. This narrator is here on the island at the time of writing – making friends, doing the washing, taking out a calculator to convert drachmas to dollars and like many others, visiting the place where the family came from. Still, after generations, stung by the events which tore the place apart. At the more personal level, the female narrator, no longer young and dewy but young enough to be expected to conform, finds herself as a tourist sitting amongst groups of men all day while the local women remain virtually unseen, at home doing the housework perhaps or holding court in private with other women or in family groups. The narrator, deprived of female company and constantly negotiating the obstacles thrown up by the men on the passage through town. The men, like everywhere, posted like sentries at the public meeting place between cultures.*³²

A number of currently emerging third-generation Greek-Australian women writers are the offspring of bicultural relationships forged across transnational divides, Melissa Petrakis highlighting her Irish mother’s and Greek-Australian father’s serendipitous meeting precisely within the currents that globalism generates:

*My mother travelled halfway round the globe to meet my father on a beach, in the sunshine of a Melbourne summer. It is part of our family mythology that my parents had to each travel from one hemisphere to the other, had to travel halfway round the globe, to find one another. This is my blueprint for love.*³³

Second- and third-generation offspring tend to visit Greece often and, in some cases, even successfully resettle there.³⁴ In Jeana Vithoulkas' novel, *Love Begins with an A*, the mother is devastated when her three daughters eventually decide to resettle in Greece. In the case of the protagonist Fiore, what begins as the pursuit of the imaginary homeland, the seeking of the ancestral home 'from whence it all began', transforms into a fulfilling quest to create a space for herself within a milieu that she comes to perceive through a singularly realistic lens.³⁵ There seems to be an endemic pull, a primordial urge, to rediscover oneself within a space that signifies linguistic and cultural lineage. Within the gossamer of this nexus of past and present, ancestors exert their right to be, the cognizance of which can surprise you even in the most unlikely of circumstances:

I look down at the fish on my plate,
its lifeless eyes stare into the distance.
Our host nods encouragingly at me,
but I don't know the proper Greek to explain,
in Australia I only eat fish fillets.
How can I tell a Greek fisherman's wife
that I have never deboned a fish?
I look down at the fish, and raise my knife.
Somehow, I know to cut out the spine first.
All the bones are laid on a plate for the cats,
and although the fish is wrought with tiny bones
I don't swallow one.
I look to my mother as I finish,
she is coughing up her third bone.
And I think absent-mindedly,
that my ancestors may once have eaten
the same dish.³⁶

Fourth snapshot: atavism and diasporas

This phenomenon of going to the ancestral homeland has always been a feature of this country's Greek-Australian reality, particularly from the eighties onwards. The mass migration of the fifties and sixties, and the hard work that accompanied it, eventually resulted in a certain degree of monetary comfort that allowed for a trip back home. These trips then became a prominent feature of the lives of second-generation offspring who were inevitably mesmerised by the allure of the Greek landscape, the visual impact heightened by the fact that it was rarely mentioned at community gatherings, the focus of conversation being the painful memories of the war years. And so, after growing up listening to many unutterably sad stories of hunger and deprivation and general bleakness, the breathtaking effect of the first glimpse of the idiosyncratic blue of a Greek sea and sky was a feast for the senses.

In her short story, 'Every Daughter her Mother', Vicki Fifis portrays a complex amalgam of the beauty of the terrain with an ever-increasing awareness of her identification with it. She gives a heartbreaking account of the hardship she experienced as the daughter of a mother suffering from mental illness. Many years later, she visits Greece for the first time and starts to understand the feelings of dislocation that exacerbated her mother's anguish and heightened paranoia:

The road reaches toward your village, a village with stone houses, engulfed in green mountains and a lake. Another world, another time. Stepping back in time. The silence. The stillness. The peace. So isolated. The tears erupt like a raging river. A transformation – the past is released; the pain and the grief are the bridge that leads to the new, over the river of fear.

I have never seen a place of such beauty in all my life. Staring with a child's wonder and amazement, I study the view that surrounds me. A few houses, a church, and a coffee shop. I am consumed with 'agape'. The purest love.

*I light a candle for you in Ayio Nikola, filling the church with the warm light, which shines from your own heart. I wander off for a bit on my own and stand silently, feeling your presence and approval. The mystery that entangles you begins to dissolve.*³⁷

In ‘Peloponnese Sunset, Angela Costi has encapsulated the essential eroticism inherent in this landscape, relentlessly intoxicating the visitor until landscape and desire are one:

How can you be lonely, you make love to this
environment, the hills have slopes you can swoon on
they have views you can open your thighs to
they have Venetian structures ready for you to take
with one open gasp, they have seas
that melt your gaze, the colour of lilac
if it was blue and black crosses on white churches
reminders of sacred sensuousness
reminders of honey skinned almond eyes
the touch of madness and of chance.³⁸

Is it any wonder that countless second-generation Greek-Australian women, who went to Greece on a holiday, ended up in a relationship there. Moreover, many of these relationships resulted in these women relocating to Greece permanently.³⁹ Apart from the intoxicating landscape, there was another much more prosaic reason for this phenomenon. The girls growing up in the 60s and 70s in Australia’s Greek diasporic communities were repressed by the social mores that the parents held from pre-war, rural Greek life. The patriarchal system in place meant that going out was difficult, forming romantic relationships, impossible. Back in Greece, however, the people left behind, particularly those who had relocated to the large metropolises of Athens and Thessaloniki, had moved on. They were gratefully embracing more liberal ways of thinking and living. For second-generation Greek-Australian girls, going to Greece on their own was, literally and metaphorically, a breath of fresh air. They went out with a vengeance and formed romantic entanglements, unencumbered by the dreaded admonition they were used to in Australia. Predictably, these relationships were sometimes happy and long-lasting, and other times, disastrous and short-lived. In *Love begins with an A*, for example, Jeana Vithoulkas literally goes through the entire spectrum of possibilities. Fiore has a number of relationships during her sojourn in Greece, ranging from the truly horrible, through to a happy encounter with Mihalis who proves her equal in terms of intelligence and outlook and with whom she could actually contemplate a future.⁴⁰

Epilogue

Many years later, I experienced the untold joy of travelling to Greece with my daughter – just the two of us. We stayed in the upper village and on the second day there we couldn’t wait to walk to the seaside section, to take in the beautiful scenery at our leisure, followed by a swim. We stopped at the low stone wall and I told her about my feelings there many years ago. My daughter looked around her and said that although the association of this landscape with her grandparents moved her, she felt “those sorts of connected feelings at the beach near our home in Melbourne”. She then went on to say that one day, she might take this walk with her daughter or even her granddaughter. That they’ll stop, just as we did, at the low stone wall and talk about what the spot meant to all of these generations of people. We walked the rest of the way in silence, enveloped in a sort of mutually acknowledged need for quietude...

Notes

- 1 This article draws from my doctoral thesis focusing on Greek-Australian women’s writing entitled, *The Shadow and the Muse*, (English & Greek Departments, La Trobe University) particularly that of a small section of the second chapter on the notion of ‘motherlands’.
- 2 Stephen Castles & Mark J. Miller, *The Age of Migration*, Hampshire, 2009, pp. 34-35.
- 3 See Konstandina Dounis, ‘Greek School’, ‘The Greek Cinema’, and ‘Soccer at Middle Park, *Poems for my Mother*, Melbourne, 2009, pp. 31-33; p. 36. For a comprehensive overview of the Greek movies shown in the 1960s and 70s, see Peter M. Yiannoudes, *Greek Cinema Across Australia: Behind the Scenes*, Melbourne, 2010. For an entertaining account of Greek celebrations as carried out in Australia see Zeny Giles, *Wedding Dance*, Dangar, 2009.
- 4 Edward Lear, ‘Spots of Greece’, *The Nonsense Verse of Edward Lear*, (ed. John Vernon Lord), London, 1984, p. 222.
- 5 Lord Byron, ‘The Isles of Greece’, *The New Oxford Book of English Verse*, (ed. Helen Gardner), Oxford, 1972, pp. 575-576.
- 6 We spoke Greek and Albanian at home. It is easy now, in this new millennium, to be critical of the stance of these teachers, however it should be remembered that, in the 1960s, bilingualism was not the theorised phenomenon that it is today. In fact, over the last 20 years, Australia has produced world authorities in the field of bilingual education. The mass influx of Southern European immigrants after the 1950s caught teachers off-guard. Although one or two of my teachers might have been motivated by a post-Second World War xenophobia (my initial prep teacher, for example), I have such wonderful memories of my primary school teachers generally that I rather think they were motivated by a sincere desire to see me learn English and progress well with my studies. In other words, they did their best with the meagre resources they had at their disposal. Noted bilingual theorists have included Jo Lo. Bianco, the late Michael Clyne and one of the pioneers, the late Marta Rado. In relation to how under-prepared Australian teachers in the 1950s were for the massive influx of non-English speaking immigrants, see Joy Damousi, ‘Ethnicity and Emotions: Psychic Life in Greek Communities’, *Journal for Modern Greek Studies in Australia and New Zealand*, Vol. 14, 2010, p. 17.

- 7 Saadi Nikro, 'Antigone Kefala: Translating the migratory Self', (eds Vrasidas Karalis & Helen Nickas), *Antigone Kefala: a writer's journey*, Melbourne, 2013, p. 164.
- 8 For Edward Lear, see Michael Pratt, *Britain's Greek Empire: Reflections on the History of the Ionian Islands from the fall of Byzantium*, London, 1978, pp. 169-171; for Lord Byron, see David Stanford Burr (ed.), *The Love Poems of Lord Byron*, New York, 1993, pp. vii-xv.
- 9 Lucy Pollard, *The Quest for Classical Greece: Early Modern Travel to the Greek World*, London, 2015, p. 2 & pp. 151-187.
- 10 Edward W. Said, *Orientalism, Western Conceptions of the Orient*, London, 1978, p. 3.
- 11 My first experience of the beauty of the landscape in Greece was in 1970 when my family and I spent a year there. Correspondence lessons from Australia were arranged for me and so I did not miss a year of school. We lived in an old stone cottage with my paternal grandparents in the village my parents hailed from. We visited Greece a number of times after that for short stays, the diasporic connections thereby kept very much intact.
- 12 Gerald Durrell, *My Family and Other Animals*, London, 1959. Lawrence Durrell, *The Greek Islands*, London, 1978.
- 13 See Charmian Clift, *Travels in Greece: Mermaid Singing & Peel me a Lotus*, Sydney, 1995; Beverley Farmer, *Milk*, Melbourne, 1983; Martin Johnston, *The sea-cucumber*, St. Lucia, 1978; Jena Woodhouse, *Eros in Landscape*, Milton, 1989; Gillian Bouras, *A Foreign Wife*, Melbourne, 1987; Rober Dessaix, *Corfu*, Sydney, 2001.
- 14 Dina Amanatides, 'Hymn for Greece', *Dreams of Clay, Drops of Dew*, (Transl. by K. Dounis), Melbourne, 2011, p. 181.
- 15 Con Castan, *Conflicts of Love*, Indooroopilly, 1986, p. 77.
- 16 Shé M. Hawke, 'The Ship Goes Both ways: Cross-Cultural Writing by Joy Damoussi, Antigone Kefala, Eleni Nickas and Beverly Farmer', *Journal of Modern Greek Studies Association of Australian and New Zealand*, Sydney, No. 14, 2010, p. 88.
- 17 Paul Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay*, London, 1987, p. 349. In this book, Paul Carter is examining, amongst other things, the relationship between Australia's indigenous peoples and their landscape, however many of his observations can be readily applied to immigrant writers.
- 18 Antigone Kefala, *Summer Visit*, Artarmon, 2002, p. 61.
- 19 Yota Krili, *Triptych*, Melbourne, 2003, p. 154.
- 20 Ioanna Liakakos, I., *In Pursuit of the Rose*, (Transl. By K. Dounis), Melbourne, 1998, (Greek: *Για ένα Ρόδο, για ένα Μίγλο*).
- 21 William Safran, 'Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return', *Migration, Diasporas and Transnationalism*, (eds, Steven Vertovec & Robin Cohen), Cheltenham, 1999, p. 375.
- 22 Ioanna Liakakos, op. cit., p. 186.
- 23 See Gillian Bottomley, 'The Export of People: emigration from and return migration to Greece', Centre for Multicultural Studies Occasional Papers, 1984, p. 14, for an interesting analysis of the ramifications of the centrality of factory work in the mass migratory wave of the 1950s and 1960s.
- 24 For a thought-provoking discussion about this struggle for survival, see James Clifford, 'Diasporas', *Migration, Diasporas and Transnationalism*, op. cit., pp. 224-225.
- 25 My late father, Theodoros Dounis, provided invaluable insight into this cross-cultural communication on the factory floor. Apparently, in the 1950s and 1960s the conditions under which workers carried out their duties were generally appalling. Many factory owners did not ensure the safety of their workers, were only concerned about profit margins, and knew well that the immigrants themselves would not complain as they desperately needed the work. And, as my father pointed out, with little or no English and no interpreters in sight, who were they going to complain to? This led to a fundamental camaraderie, manifested in the exchange of food, customs, ideas and the learning of basic words in each others' languages. This linguistic exchange was actually instrumental in keeping new workers safe in terms of the proper working of the machinery, taking a lunch break, finding out that overtime was paid and not a mandatory part of their work allotment etc. For a comprehensive overview of this, see George Zangalis, 'In the Factories and Unions', *Migrant Workers and Ethnic Communities*, Melbourne, 2009, pp. 429-476.
- 26 Ioanna Liakakos, op.cit., p. 201.
- 27 Nikos Papastergiadis, 'Cultural Identity and its Boredom', *Complex Entanglement: Art, Globalisation and Cultural Difference*, London, 2003, p. 169.
- 28 Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch & Cristina Blanc-Szanton, 'Transnationalism: A New Analytic Framework for Understanding Migration', Steven Vertovec, & Robin Cohen (eds), *Migration, Diasporas and Transnationalism*, op. cit., p. 34.
- 29 Eugenia Tsoulis, 'A Place Called Melitsa', *Mothers from the Edge*, (ed. Helen Nickas), Melbourne, 2006, p. 179.
- 30 Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G., & Tiffin, H., *The Empire Writes Back*, London, 2002, p. 103.
- 31 Gayle Green, 'Feminist Fiction and the Uses of Memory', Greene, G., 'Feminist Fiction and the Uses of Memory', *Signs*, Vol.16, No.2, 1991, p. 293.
- 32 Anna Couani, 'Visiting the Island', *Retelling the Tale*, op. cit., pp. 354-355.
- 33 Melissa Petrakis, 'A Family Mythology', *Mothers from the Edge*, op. cit., p. 201.
- 34 Once again, there is a dearth of research about this topic of second/third-generation Greek-Australians re-settling in Greece. Although this is a relatively common feature of transnational diasporic connection, the only substantial documentaion pertaining to it is to be found in Greek-Australian literature. The ever-reliable Gillian Bottomley has made passing comment on this phenomenon, herself acknowledging how little this has been explored. See Gillian Bottomley, *From Another Place: Migration and the Politics of Culture*, Cambridge, 1992, p. 100. I suspect that the Greek Crisis of the last eight years or so, and the mass exodus of repatriated Greek-Australians back to Australia, will eventually lead to renewed interest and research in such transnational movements within the prism of diaspora.
- 35 Jeana Vithoulkas, *Mothers from the Edge*, op.cit., pp. 120-121.
- 36 Sophie Avramoudas, 'My Ancestor's Village', in Write4fun, *Empowered*, Bundall, 2008, p. 609.
- 37 Vicky Fifis, 'Every Daughter her Mother', *Mothers from the Edge*, op. cit., pp. 114-115.
- 38 Angela Costi, 'Peloponese Sunset', *honey and salt*, Melbourne, 2007, p. 15.
- 39 For an overview of this phenomenon of girls from the Greek global diaspora visiting Greece, many on a regular basis – some even moving there permanently, despite being born elsewhere – see Georgina Tsolidis, 'Living Diaspora Back Home – Daughters of Greek Emigrants in Greece', *Women, Gender and Diasporic Lives: Labor, Community and Identity in Greek Migrations*, (ed, E. Tastsoglou), Plymouth, 2009, pp. 181-196. As Tsolidis notes, 'these women have identities that are not constrained by national boundaries and move within and between communities, as these exist transnationally', *ibid.*, p. 196. For a detailed analysis of this phenomenon as it pertains to the Greek-American experience, see Anastasia N. Panagakos, *Romancing the Homeland*, op. cit., a doctoral thesis that marries the exceedingly personal with sociological research. Panagakos cites her body as the locus of her connection with Greece: 'nowhere else in the world could I be recognized as my father's daughter by my looks alone', *ibid.*, p. 198.
- 40 Jeana Vithoulkas, *Love Begins with an A*, Melbourne, 2003, pp. 318-319.

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Tasos Leivaditis (1922 - 1988)

This Star Is For All Of Us

Translated by N.N.Trakakis
Australian Catholic University

For Maria

I

Night came quickly.

The wind came from afar, reeking of rain and war.

The trains hurriedly passed by, full of soldiers
whom we just managed to glimpse from the windows.

Great iron helmets barricaded the horizon.

The wet asphalt road glistened. Behind the windows
the women silently cleaned some dried beans.

And the footsteps of the patrol officer
seized the silence from the road and the warmth from the world.

Turn your eyes towards me, then, so that I may see the sky
give me your hands so that I may get hold of my life.
How pale you are, my beloved!

It seemed someone was knocking on our door at night. Your mother,
dragging her thick wooden sandals, went to open.
No-one. No-one, she repeated. It must've been the wind.
We huddled together. Because we knew
we knew, my beloved, that it wasn't the wind.

Thousands of people were dying outside our door.

See how our neighbourhood has been ruined, my beloved.
The wind enters and exits through the crevices of the houses
the walls are soaked, swollen, then collapse.
Where did so many of our neighbours go without saying goodbye
leaving their stone benches half-whitewashed
and their smiles half-finished?
As soon as someone turned the corner we wouldn't see them again.
We'd say "Goodmorning" and all of sudden the evening had arrived.

Where are so many children going?
And that blond umbrella merchant who would sing in the morning
was executed
and the kiosk worker who would hand us the change with a smile
was executed
and the boy who would weigh our coal – remember him?
he was in fact executed.
His cart lay overturned in a corner.

Their loved ones will now look at the night straight in the eye
each will, like a dog, bury their head into their beloved's shirt and smell it.

And the postman who would open the windows with his voice
was executed.
So take your red lips away from me, Maria.
I'm cold.

Today against every wall life is being executed.

My beloved
I love you more than I can say with words
I'd want to die with you, if you were ever to die
and yet, my beloved
I couldn't
I couldn't love you any longer the way I used to.

We closed the door behind us and we were cold
we closed the windows and were colder still
and as I turned to look at your eyes
I saw her eyes: the eyes of my neighbour whose four children were killed
and as I reached out to find your hand
it was as though I were stealing bread from the hands of the hungry.

You embraced me
but I was looking over your shoulder at the road.
And when we wanted to talk we suddenly fell silent.
We could hear from afar through the open window
the steps of those condemned to death.

How can our blanket continue to dispel such bitter cold?
How can our door protect us from all this night?
People cast their great shadows amongst us.
What will become of us, my beloved?

My beloved, are you listening?
No, it's not the wind, it comes from further away
you'd think thousands of feet were descending upon the road
thousands of hobnail boots pounding the asphalt.
Where are they going? How could they be leaving?

How could I live far from you, my beloved?
How could I light a lamp if it wasn't to see you?
How could I look at a wall if your shadow won't pass over it?
How could I lean on a table if your hands won't rest on it?
How could I touch a slice of bread if we won't share it?

But that noise grows louder with time.
There's nowhere to sleep. No place to sit.
No, it's not the wind, it comes from further in the distance.
Tear up our bedsheet, my beloved
cut your dress and stop up the crevices.

People hurriedly toss all their belongings into a sack
because their entire belongings are no more than
some bread, a memento and their love of life.
They then embrace each other and disappear into the night.

We stay behind. Where do we stay? Why do we stay?
How could I open a door if it wasn't to meet you?
How could I pass through a doorway if it wasn't to find you?
No, I couldn't live far from you, my beloved.

But today at every corner people await us.
Give me your lips for a moment. And prepare my sack, Maria.

II

It was as though even the last memory had been extinguished from the
earth.

The wind would blow our tents away
we'd put them up again, only for them to be blown away again.
The fog walked with a limp over the stones.
Large black barbed wire barricaded the sky.
Night was falling across the entire camp. We wanted to see
but it kept getting darker. The world kept moving further away.
We wanted to listen
but the wind kept blowing. The steps of the sentry kept getting nearer.

Where is the smile that will assure us that we exist?
Where is the voice that will prevent us from getting lost in the night?
We wanted to remember
but we had many dead to bury.

After fatigue duty it was lights-out.
And then came the flashlights, the machine guns, the screams
then came fear
from the outposts we could hear them shouting in the night:

Halt!
and our hearts beat faster as they shouted again:
Halt!

You thought you'd die
perhaps you were already dead
so engulfed were we by night and rain
by the wind
and the wounded
you suddenly sensed a hand fumbling in the dark
and clasping your hand.

And it was as though the first hope had been born on earth.

The southerly drives us mad every day.
Pales are broken by the wind
– you'd think they were exhumed bones.
We carry large stones from the mountain
we carry on our backs the large grooves made by rifle butt blows
in the evening we sit in the tent and mend our singlets
we say a joke or two
we scoop out with our eyes the bottom of the mess tin.
And we're surprised that our arms have become strong like a heavy pair of
boots.
The sentry stood outside for a moment and yawned.
Peter smiles as he rips out the lining from his jacket and binds our wounds
old Matt has two calm eyes and three murdered sons
and Elias says: "I'll find a way to play the harmonica"
thus says Elias: "I'll find a way to play the harmonica"
even though they've cut both of his arms.

We then change topic.
And you feel that the world cannot fit in this tent that's full of holes
but how will your heart manage to fit within the world?

In this way each night the lamp would wipe away our day.

In this way the rain wipes away each day our footsteps from the ground.

Whenever they take one of our comrades
we get his clothes ready and give him our hands.
We then place his mess tin to one side.
It's growing dark.
The empty mess tins quickly multiply in the corner.

One man would've liked to cough, simply because he doesn't know what to say
while another stands for an hour looking at the footprints
left by the shoes of that man
who will never return.

Truly so many comrades
beside the same lamp and the same hope
before the same bread and the same death
when we were cold they cloaked us with their eyes
when we were hungry they apportioned us their heart.
And when we were about to die they spoke to us of life.

Then, we too were able to die.

That comrade of ours had a brown beanie
and they brought him to us wounded when night was falling
when his mother would be lighting the lamp
and the crickets would be singing in the hedges of his country.

They had tortured him for days. When we took off his boots
they were full of blood. We sat next to him
without speaking
we ran our fingers through the earth, without speaking
we could only feel our hearts puncturing
as though from a fork forgotten in a coat pocket.

Then it began to rain and we felt that he would die.

He turned and looked at us. One by one. Farewell Thomas!
And that which your eyes seek from us, we pledge it to you, Thomas.
We will never betray your eyes.

And suddenly in the eyes of our comrade who was departing so simply
I rediscovered your eyes, my beloved.

Yes, my beloved
I could now find you everywhere.
I lit the lamp and trembled, just like when I lit it for you
I shared the bread with my neighbour as though I were sharing it with you
and as I reached out to grasp someone's hand, I found your hand
and as I stooped to listen to some voice, I found your voice.

Those who separated us are the same ones now returning you to me.

And I found you in the silence, in a star, in our resolution
in that battered calendar left me by my neighbour before passing away
in a flask whose meagre water chirped like your laughter
I found you in our lit cigarettes which glowed in the dark like your tears
I found you in our despair, in our hope, in a short scarf
one half of which was worn by a comrade the moment he was executed.

I found you again all those nights when I didn't know if I'll see you again.
And when in the evening I'd lie down in the freezing tent
and listen to the rain
I would dream
and I'd find you.

I found you, my beloved, in the smile of all future people.

III

Yes, my beloved. Long before I met you
I was waiting for you. I was always waiting for you.

When I was a small boy and my mother would see me sad
she'd bend down and ask, "What's wrong, my boy?"
I wouldn't respond. I would only look over her shoulder
at a world bereft of you.
And when I was practising with a slate pencil
it was in order to learn how to write you songs.
I would lean against the window when it was raining because you were run-
ning late
I would gaze at the stars at night because I was missing your eyes
and when there was a thump at my door and I opened it
there was no-one there. Somewhere in the world, however, was your heart
and it was thumping.

That's how I lived. Always.
And when we met for the first time – remember? – you opened your arms
to me so tenderly
as though you had known me for years. Well of course
you had known me. Because before you came into my life
you had lived for a long while in my dreams,
my beloved.

Do you remember, my love, "our first big day"?
That yellow dress suited you
a simple and cheap dress, and such a pretty yellow.
Its pockets embroidered with large brown flowers.
The sunshine upon your face suited you
that pinkish cloud at the end of the road suited you
and that faraway voice of the itinerant tool-grinder– it suited you.

I'd put my hands in my pockets, I'd take them out.
We walked without talking. What could one say anyway

when the world is so bright and your eyes so large?
A boy on the street corner was hawking his lemonades.
We shared one between us. And the swallow that suddenly brushed past
your hair,
 what did it say to you?
Your hair is so beautiful. The swallow must've said something to you.

The hotel was small and located in an old suburb near the station
where in the glare of the sun we saw them shunting the trains.

Truly that spring, that morning, that plain room of happiness
your body which I held naked for the first time
the tears which I couldn't in the end hold back
– how they suited you!

Ah, our home was warm back then
our lamp was joyful
the world was vast.
The smell of fried oil emanated from the kitchen.
I bent down, my love, to kiss your flour-coated hands
and my lips became covered in flour. I then kissed you on the mouth
and your lips became covered in flour too.
We looked at each other and laughed.
Spring bade us good evening from the open window. A girl in the house op-
posite was singing.
How lovely it was to be alive!

Then came the rain. But I'd write your name on all the frosted windows
and so our room was clear and cloudless. I held your hands
and so there was always sky and trust in life.
Do you remember when I'd kneel down in the evening to take off your shoes?
How embittered I was by your shoes! always sorrowful they were and worn
at the edges
maybe they were even letting in water, my love
but you'd never say anything. You'd only smile.
You'd then silently look down to mend my old jacket.

Your bowed neck: a blooming almond tree branch.

No, the wind won't take you from my arms
nor will the night
no-one will take you. Do you hear? Do you hear?

That was when the days knew nothing of the mist
when the sunset would empty an apron full of oleanders into our yard.

Do you remember one evening when I was combing your hair
and you were looking at me in the mirror and softly singing something?
Your hair is as black as a night sky, through your mouth breathes the whole
of spring
in your hands I always laid my heart.
Your eyes
oh, what can I say, my love, about your eyes
when your eyes are as beautiful as all the songs of the world put together
when your eyes are as big as the biggest hope?
Your eyes.

Whenever you smiled a dove would fly through our darkened room
a golden cloud would journey through the sky whenever you smiled.
Whenever you smiled I forgot about the leaking roof, I forgot about the
holes in the floor
I'd even say: look, any moment now
from these holes great red roses will sprout.

Everything was possible in the world, my love
back then
when you smiled at me.

Do you remember that night when we were looking at the sky for hours?
I felt you trembling in my arms.
"Oh stars," I said, "make our love luminous
make my beloved happy.
Oh stars, oh fair stars, see to it that she and I die together."

And so that night
amongst the stars we were joined forever in wedlock.

Ah, I'd like to kiss your father's hands, as well as your mother's lap which
gave birth to you for my sake
to kiss all the chairs you touched with your dress as you passed by
to hide like an amulet on my breast a small piece of the bedsheet you slept
in.
I could even smile
at the man who saw you naked before I did
I'd smile at him, seeing that he was granted such limitless joy.
Because I, dear, owe you something more than erotic desire
I owe you song and hope, tears and again hope.

In the briefest moment with you, I lived all of life.

You knew how to surrender yourself, my love. You would surrender yourself
completely
and you would retain nothing for yourself
other than the worry as to whether you had completely surrendered yourself.

As you undressed the leaves in a distant forest rustled
the sky cleared in a flash as you undressed.
Like an armful of white flowers were your underwear on the chair.
And then nothing else but our love
nothing but you and I
nothing but the two of us
and neither yesterday
nor tomorrow
nothing but the present
nothing but you and I
now, now
together
now together
always together
two together...

Afterwards I placed the bedsheet on you.
 "I'd like our child to take after you," I said.
 "No," you replied. "I'd like our child to take after *you*."

Then they broke our door down.
 We had to go our separate ways, Maria,
 to separate so that people separate no more.

I placed my hand on your belly to farewell our child.
 Goodbye. Goodbye.

Our child, Maria, must take after all the people
 who vindicate life.

IV

Now night will arrive abruptly.
 People on the streets will be in a hurry. Women
 will shut their doors in fear and will embrace their children.
 But the famished faces of the children will cast a black shadow on the wall
 like the shadow of bread.
 You will be sitting on that same low bench of ours
 the roof always leaking
 from an old bedsheet you'll stitch together the little clothes of our child
 you will patch with your bitterness the emptiness of separation.

I wonder if the sky we'd look at from the window still shines.
 Does the small peach tree in the yard continue to blossom?
 Workers would now disappear one-by-one from the nearby machine shop.

But when there's a knock on our door at night
 your mother will no longer be afraid.
 She will simply light the lamp so that those condemned to death don't lose
 their way
 she will then blow on the fire so that the dead keep warm
 and you will open the door with sure hands and hear in the night

that loud noise
 that relentless marching in the distance.
 Because now, dear, you know
 because we know.

Thousands of people defend the world
 and our love.

Yes, my beloved,
 it is for these few and simple things that we fight
 so that we might have a door, a star, a bench
 a joyful journey in the morning
 a peaceful dream at night.
 So that we have a love they can't defile
 a song that we can sing.

But they break down our doors
 they trample upon our love.
 Before we begin our song
 they kill us.

They're afraid of us and kill us.
 They're afraid of the sky we look upon
 they're afraid of the stone bench we rest upon
 they're afraid of our mother's spindle and of our child's primer
 they're afraid of your arms that know how to embrace so tenderly
 and how to toil in so manly a way
 they're afraid of the words the two of us say in hushed tones
 they're afraid of the words we all together will say tomorrow
 they're afraid of us, my love, and when they kill us
 as corpses they're afraid of us even more.

I love you more than words can say.
 All joy lies in your eyes, the whole of life in your hands
 all the world lies on a wall upon which your shadow falls in the evening.
 No, I couldn't live far from you, my beloved.

But we have a capacity to love and to part ways
that will forever remain ours
that is something no-one can take from us.

That is love, that is war, that is our faith in life.

Goodbye, then, goodbye.
So that your eyes may always be cheerful
goodbye
so that the beautiful times we had are not forgotten
goodbye
so that the night doesn't frighten us, so that the sky is not stolen from us
goodbye.
So that injustice in the world finally comes to an end.

We might also be killed, my love. But who will notice?
Thousands of people die every day
without a name
thousands of women suddenly awoke in the morning
and found themselves forever alone.
Children are given neither caress nor bread. Goodbye.

Perhaps I won't return.
Someone else will lock his arms around your warm body.
Don't forget me.
But no, no, my love, you must forget me.
You must completely surrender yourself to him
just as you once surrendered yourself to me.
Only when both of you happen to hear battle cries and stand in the middle
of the road
looking at our flags unfolding in the sun
then
oh, then, remember me – remember me for a moment – one moment only.

And then grab his hand and set out
advancing towards the future.

Come, then, wipe your eyes, don't cry. My God, what beautiful eyes!
Remember, by the way, one night when we were sitting by the window
in the distance a gramophone was playing and we listened without talking?
You said: "Even though we don't have a gramophone, and even though they
didn't put that record on for us,
that slow song is ours. And this night is ours.
And that star over there is our captive." That's what you said.
Taken aback, I said: "You speak like a poet, my love."
You put your lovely arms around my neck
and kissed me. In the way only you know how to kiss.

Come, then, don't cry.
That's the spirit, that's how I like you – smiling.
We will live, my beloved, and we will win. Whatever they do
we will win.

One day we will meet again.
We will then buy a gramophone of our own
and we will have it playing all the time. Yes, my love,
we will also sit by the window, close to one another.

We will meet again one day.
And then
all the nights and all the stars and all the songs
will be ours.

V

I'd like to shout your name, my love, at the top of my voice
so that the builders on the scaffolds hear it and kiss the sun
so that the stokers in ships learn of it, so that all the roses draw breath
so that spring hears it and arrives more quickly
so that the children learn of it and have no fear of the dark
so that it's spoken by the reeds on riverbanks and the turtle doves on fences

so that the capital cities of the world hear it and repeat it with every one of their bells
so that it's talked about by washerwomen in the evenings as they massage their swollen hands.

I want to shout it so loud
that no dream in the world will sleep again
and no hope will die any longer.

So that time hears it and never touches you, my love.

And see,
it's no longer the two of us within our love.

Within our love my deceased mother ascends a white hill
and gathers in her apron the morning rays
within our love pass all of our neighbourhood's murdered children singing serenades
within our love all the withered maidens no longer sigh
they too boast a smile, a flower and a young man to whom they will give themselves
and that neighbour's mute child is able within our love to sing
within our love a lamp shines upon the humble
within our love a loaf of bread steams up for all the hungry
within our love lies a dewy branch
a sparrow
a harmonica
within our love all the dead are no longer unknown
indeed we call out to them as their mothers did by their first names
within our love thousands of people march with flags
one man falls down, others instantly rush to raise his flag
and they are forever marching, forever advancing, forever moving with battle cries
– within our love.

And suddenly, my beloved,
it's as though we never parted.
Who could possibly part the two of us!
Even with this great sea between us
we are near one another
so that even if I were to move slightly over this entire sea
I would touch your hair. I would find your lips.
It's as though we are before an open window
in our home, on a bright morning in May.
Look, look, my beloved,
the women of the neighbourhood have come out to whitewash their stone benches.
Why are they whitewashing them? What are they waiting for? They await something.
We await too.
And Spain awaits.
Good morning women!

And over there, my love, there in the corner, behold the arrival of spring
behold those young men beckoning us with sickles
and the young women behind them tying in bundles the rays of the sun
look, they're beckoning us. Everything beckons us. Good morning!
And those people down there at the horizon, hoisted on a huge building site
perhaps they're constructing a new dam wall or maybe a memorial to our dead.
Perhaps they also want to collect an armful of stars for their lovers.
Good morning!

And there, in the distance, very far away
behold that little old woman knitting while sitting on a doorstep in Asia.
Do you know what she is knitting, my love? She is knitting the small socks
our daughter will wear tomorrow.
Good morning to all you distant brothers of mine!
Come along and I'll introduce you to my beloved. Tell me, isn't she beautiful?
I love her, my brothers, like life and like song. Even more so.

Good morning sky! Good morning sun! Good morning spring!
 Come, then, and I'll introduce you to my beloved.
 Good morning happiness!

And when we die, my beloved, we will not die.
 Seeing as people will behold the same star we beheld
 seeing as they will sing the song we loved
 seeing as they will be drawing breath from a world that you and I
 dreamed up
 well then, my love, we will be more alive than ever.

Seeing as people will find us every moment
 in peaceful bread
 in just hands
 in eternal hope,
 how, my beloved,
 could we ever have died?

Nikos Karouzos (1926 - 1990)

Ode Nocturnal and Neolithic to Kronstadt (1987)

Translated by Vrasidas Karalis
 University of Sydney

Stuttering universals as
 Reality limps and as
 Freedom huddles in white-nested affectionless ice
 We supplicate for redemptive thaw.

(Let's see if Spring will sustain our dreams.)

ONE SAILOR: How is the mind softened at the Urals?
 ANOTHER SAILOR: What's your point? I don't understand.

The phone moulds; Eudaimonia

--Full power to the Soviets! That's all.

Правда

--Can you cut a rose from the word
 'rose'?

--Ask them this question.

Правда

--Which logic begins with them? [A third sailor.]

--I see something else; the logic of power is perpetuated.

INDEED

--We'll die or we'll bring revolution to its meaningfulness!

--That's all.

I yearned for the minerals my speechless

Mammalian sacredness

And revert to the sleep that saves me

It is the easy death

A crumbling clock

With nothing before and nothing after;

I didn't come I won't go I will stop.

--Power is the diarrhoea of History.

--In my village, it's called arse-loving.

Правда

--Gennady, you rhyme with Hades.

--I enunciate terror. And in the end what do you think ideals are? They are flouraround the fish before being fried.

--Where is our truth?

--In the revolution.

THAT IS THE TRUTH

--Listen to my yester night's dream. It was as if I was up in Olympus. Jabbering goddesses eternally mocked the greed of circularity, with a most obscene moon just further above. --Path of ambiguation; I process the unknown--, said I. And suddenly they appeared in front of me out of the murky bronze and the mindless iron, Hephaestus and Aphrodite, bleeding nudities. 'What did you imagine', Hephaestus told me. 'This secretly married and brash woman is responsible; deep down she is Hera the nymphomaniac; she is espoused to power exuding the sheen of impeccable morality.' I woke up, disturbed.

You butterfly, enslaved to light; wings and fluff

In extraversion.

Jupiter the dissolute holds inalienable thunderbolts

Unfired yet

Satisfied with visions of stupidity

Presiding over all cosmologies.

And the face of Phaethon's horses against

The void foaming with cosmic matter.

Quickly, an ambulance for King Lear!

We exude fragrant madness.

The brakes aren't working; immersed we are in

Zeno's divisibility.

ANNA (coming closer): Any news from reality?

NIKOLAY (picking up the phone): In the next stroke, the time will be 17 and 21 and three seconds.

GENNADY: Ah, bugger! You can only count cigarettes but not smoking.

NIKOLAY: I am afraid, comrade. And the assault is imminent. Lenin Is enmeshed with destiny.

--Very expensive stitching.

--Tellurian frenzy.

--Phallocide.

--Utopia.

--But we refuted the forest.

-

-Motherly rains...Oh wretched...

Look at the miserable sun! A disease
 In the firmament of the sky.
 Yet, what?
 Stellar sparks of solidarity again
 With nil consequences;
 I remember once in Tzia a certain donkey
 Devouring glittering daisies;
 Success of solitude; that's always
 The situation.
 Getting over your nerves verbatim.

--I am arrested by a truth: I surrender. Another one clutches me. I surrender to this one too. Rushing through mental rawness. I say: the blood of fleas and immediately smell of rum.

--You veer off. But my eyes claimed the unity of vision; the emptying of tragedy. I never succumbed to contradictions. I flow interstitially, but no!

--Unbridled imagination.

[That day I was born by myself; I had no biological precedent. I crawled to the shack of elementary mathematics. Therein shining I hearkened bones.]

Insolent light, you, impotence of Eros!
 What to say ... The poet is the psychiatrist of his self
 With pure alcohol.
 Mainly I would say, a god-dripping and ascending wasp.
 It will turn blue again.

--But there is another Eros, the sexual one.

--To no avail... If you like, he will add some ice-cubes
 To my melancholy.

[Memories unforgettable since I remember myself; beauty is not an easy thing despite being so contagious through words and theories. And opti-

mism, that eel: it slips to the next stage always. Olives ask for sorrowful soil...The drama of quality.]

I wish I never existed;
 The heartbeat is dark; a vagabondage.
 Even if I recently called life the objection of the worm
 Still within me desperation smoulders
 Chaotically.
 Either beast or saint, the only cost is absence.
 With teeth and nail in the fire amongst turbulent cinders
 Years and years
 I created my stature blooming sublimity
 Without consultation
 Malevolent dream-books and foggy oracles.
 I never considered risks; I became ashes.
 I believed in chrysanthemums I swore in the grass
 And as affectionate wind roars out of rainy
 Conclusions
 I re-emerge in the red ruins of the sun
 And recount my sanguine kidneys.

--We cry without pentagram; vultures are swarming in the
 Air whirling geometry impeccably. We conquered the smallest word
 SOVIET—

--Alas, comrades, fantasioloxia!

--Heteroloxia of the party; a sailor contradicts.

PLEASANT CEMETERY; WE THE EXECUTED STILL LIVE.

Deep in the Finnish Gulf.
Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common.
 Deep in the Finnish Gulf.

--I am thinking of walking briefly. Until the kitchens. Two three days now that I haven't seen the little chook; she works as a cleaner, Anna. Any work here brings you to ecstasy here.

As the sun hunches and becomes
 The mucus of light
 I ascend red with the psychical glasses of sadness
 Playing second voice to matter
 Staunchly defending causality
 against
 this vulgar Universe.

--Either asleep (pax) or awake (croax) swiftly I am named *moriturus*.

--That's about it. Are you interested in my last dream? I took my typewriter to the dentist's. 'A rotten tooth?' he asked me. I don't know what happened next, but the doctor told me calmly: 'Bring her back next week.' I took her in my hands and proceeded to the elevator. Then the typewriter screamed; 'I will go by myself!' and fell down some winding stairs which nevertheless were gigantic orange peels.

--Meanwhile we were biting our nails deeply. And we heard *weltanschung* resonating with loosened bells [Imprimatur.]

--But it should ...

...
 ...
 ...
 ...
 ...
 ...

Thrombotic foliage; I dine
 With the flowers;
 I cross through the weddings of shrubs
 Conflagrating my writing through inarticulate
 Dawns

And by lying upright I am unfortunating
 despair.

[We approach oxygen. 'One day, Nasreddin Hodja was asked: -- is the sun more useful or the moon? -- The moon, said the Hodja, because the sun comes up when it dawns. While the moon lights the world when the night falls.' (From the French.)
 With visual logic we would shine incomparably. Would you say no?)

Frequently I claim that my kidneys will overcome.
 Yet I constantly tutor myself in horror
 Every night I ponder that no! I won't
 Wake up:
 Every morning I cough up phlegm suffering
 A wild nausea which is never completed
 And I shudder
 Certain nights with voluntary blackness certain nights
 Of enormous bloodthirsty moons
 So that I will totally deplete my white
 Hair till the apocalypse.
 I never remember thyme that wouldn't always
 Exude its fragrance
 Under mountainous suns evocations of memory.
 I don't know what my liver does I don't know
 What my heart does
 I am plagued by guilty vision and accelerated
 Penury
 Consonants I carve and pronounce vowels horrific.

--Religious affair. And now time is not the tape-recording of eternity. Science is trumpeted; all counted. But it is impossible to pinch the sea. History ultimately converses with statues; is it not so?

My typewriter is called a piano;
 From the other bank, it orchestrates our death;
 It beautifies Trotsky's signature.
 And Zinoviev from the other side on the same keys

In red chasuble
 in blue tunic
 conspires the pleasure of our liquidation.

--Well, I remember a sky-rock in the motherland. Like this one, I was thinking, Lenin is creating beauty; like this big rock out in the country.

--Sometime you called clear skies machination.

--I guarantee no word.

--Imagination devastated us.

--But the shining also consecrates us.

--But what is shining?

[The man in costume and loud necktie who comes out at the centre of the church between the chanters and recites the 'Creed' – what blabbering, o God; what foamy mindlessness!]

--Who decided about our corpses?

--Our visions are brimming. Enriched we are with immortality.

--Bridegrooms, the rodents of hope.

[We all shine in Kronstadt. In this most proud geography.]

Death is small
 Love is tall.
 No sun shaking its

midday yellow
 In dark vermin; no terror!
 One way or another we die.
 And the lamb constantly lowers into indefatigable
 Grazing.
 God, inter-god; my angelic abysses; horrible song
 Yes and no;
 As it dances with grace and ugliness
 The ultimate question;
 Violence is
 The midwife of History
 Or is it
 The ever new
 Infant of History?

(Dance makes you dizzy.

But we deserve a song.

Tempests roar since ever

To spread

Wings and so the sea can fly

In the active heights.)

--But if the truth won't become bald, it will never mature...

A SAILOR (sneezing): That's what I call truth.

(Laughing): Sneezing: total rejection.

In loud memorials of devouring and innocent barbarity with flocks
 of birds in the lowly skies until the early rains take over until the
 autumn barrel of urine rains.

It must have been last year. Semantic reveries; the torture of cough-
 ing; a skeleton internal.

My poor lungs have no strength

And life hovers around as life does and in all sorts

Of truth.

It must have been last year.

And then in the dense forest follows serenity a look alike
 To the stuttering of existence
 The ultimate silencing with the bright swellings
 Like the swift-talking waters in the foliage
 Like the youth of birds, the unknown, the angel-eyed youth.
 We don't wait in the pit we wait not in Hades
 Neither in numberless snakes nor innumerable vipers
 Only in a frightening scale which weighs under oath
 The incorruptibility of matter.
 My bones desire their freedom from my flesh.

[It's getting dark in the text. Precipitation of dusk: maturity.]

--If the ice thawed; if the Spring caught up with them...

-- There would be any outcome?

-- For further reflection.

--Maybe decide to discuss?

[The steps of the newly-born Buddha were counted to be seven, and seven days later Queen Maya died. Time flows and one night *Siddhartha monte a cheval et les Dieux font un tapis de leurs mains sous les sabots de cheval pour qu'il puisse abandonner la ville sans etre etendu ni vu de personne*. The secret animal fires up in the jubilant darkness *sous un arbre de pipal*. Neither wealth nor woman anymore nor his own child; he left everything behind; he abandoned all for better or worse (sun and moon). An enormous nudity; in the beginning, tortuous; eating *un grain de riz par jour*. When the illumination came, he was reborn.]

My chest, I never filled you with coins and when
 The sun ignores its departing beauty
 Acts impeccably
 And when also it pours
 A darkening into so much inflammation and touches

The nocturnal clitoris.
 Terrified little candles on the graves; the night
 Wind frightens them.
 With a branch of vine tree over me vast blueing
 I enjoy the sculptural finesse.

[Proletarians
 Expectarians]

Flowers recline lymphatic rain
 And in my breathing breathes
 the infertile presence
 I learn my wings
 My teacher is the wind
 It betroths the gum tree amidst the impenetrable white
 Leafage
 There are no limits to the eloquence of the Crucifixion
 Or to the orange colour that blinded me
 In phosphorescence
 But I disinherited language
 I collect no indulgences I dawdle in savagery
 Those burning scarlet decades
 Of global mentation
 And jump out of the cauldron of destiny
 Seething bubbles.
 Moon of mine gouged eye I muse
 On your whiteness.

[Poetry is an old rag; let's call it torments on shoes. Not bad. Do we perhaps see the revolution refracted? Has it really lost its way?]

--Blackness excels.

--What do you mean?

--Close your eyes: all forms disappear;
if you open them they are all back.
That's all.]

--Give me as a memento the definition of power.

--According to me it is the irradiation of the
beast.

--Tick tock; tick tock; tick tock --

--But why are you making fun of me now comrade?

I never surrendered to numbers or other

Cymbals

I never called humanity a beautiful species;

But it is true; in the craggy solitude flying

Looks like acquittal and our mind always

De-scales the Poseidon of oceans a prickly

Deception

Within the bitter timetables of agony;

The full-moon is a spectre and the senseless sun above

The instigator of my shadow ceaselessly.

You are kidding! --the sun, gentlemen, is indebted to us;

Without doxologies!

All blossoming jubilate *sen masse* and despite surrendering to

Scenting

To myrrh to motherhood to insouciant jasmines

Nevertheless I was always annoyed by the hours of Socrates

Before his luscious death

And the imperiously bellowing thunders arresting the midnight

The boyars of heaven

With merciless swords gleaming swords

Disembowelling the night.

Well as for me, I, dazzled, dilating galaxies with my hand

And ascend oneirically

Suspending the real and barely remembering

That artery of the invisible
The braid of smoking in anodyne
Altitude. Here, we all persist.

--Anna, what is happening?

--The offensive has begun.

--Anna, farewell! We will die.

--Nikolay, I loved, totally.

--Another time; it will happen again, Anna.

[...*et les Dieux font un tapis* this time with ice under the soles of the comrades
from the opposite side; so that they cross over, oscillating.]

and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.

KRONSTADT.

Vrasidas Karalis

University of Sydney

Nikos Karouzos (1926-1990): a Christian poet between nihilism and tragedy

Very few things exist in English on Nikos Karouzos, despite the excellent translation of his work by Philip Ramp (Shoestring Press, 2004). Yet his poems are amongst the finest in modern Greek literary tradition and constitute some of the most significant experimentations with grammar, versification and meaning in post-war Greek poetry. While Karouzos never achieved the popularity, or the literary iconic status attributed to other poets like Yannis Ritsos, Tasos Leivaditis, Manolis Anagnostakis and more recently Kiki Dimoula, his poetic idiom is quite distinct, embodying a strange mythography of death, nihilism, faith, doubt, rebellion, fatalism and love for life, all fused in one and all turned against each other. Unlike other poets, Karouzos kept publicity and state recognitions away from him, mocking prizes and awards, taunting all bureaucratic committees and challenging any ministerial or governmental authority on matters of poetry and art.

His approach was a mixture of contempt towards all self-serving art coteries that dominated literary scene and an almost romantic mentality of a poet maudit which determined his total war against everybody with the complete rejection of all forms, directly or indirectly, of official recognition. During the last years of his life, his social persona took on prophetic rage and Bakunian negation, characterised by a relentless critique of the establishment and of all those poets who slept with the enemies of poetry in order to acquire fame and money.

Yet despite the deeply theatrical behaviour, his self-inflicted demise gave to his work a profound maturity and humanism. Karouzos was the

son of a priest and his early poems resonate with the liturgical incantation of psalms, enlivened by biblical imagery and occasionally by sublime religious, almost mystical, immediacy. Around the late sixties however he went through a debilitating spiritual crisis, indeed through an existential fall of Dostoevskyan dimensions, from which he never recovered. From the transfigured world of the resurrected Jesus, he fell into the silent immensities of space that terrified Blaise Pascal and terrorised Søren Kierkegaard. The miraculous cosmos of a Mediterranean Christian which celebrated the phenomenal brilliance of luminous surfaces started becoming darker and ominous and most importantly losing its material transparency. The horizon of his work shrunk and the sharpness of his vision disappeared. A corrosive nihilism started taking over his language: grammar and syntax became disjointed and dislocated, sentences lost their structural completeness and images became over-condensed and opaque.

In the eighties, the spiritual crisis was exacerbated by many other problems (drinking and cancer) while his poetry developed an incredibly profound tone of a mournful elegy full of prophetic fury and luciferian fatalism. The specific time and place in the history of the country also played a significant role in this transmutation of his doxological, post-Easter poetry, to an Augustinian theologia crucis, a poetry that un-founds the intelligibility and the shapeliness of the experienced world into shards and fractions without connections and links amongst them. The only thing that the poet could do was to revive analogical imagination, create in language the events that would re-found and re-institute a topos for their restoration to their former completeness.

The poem we translate here is an anarchist oratorio, with antiphonal structure and choral stasima interrupting an imaginary dialogue between probably a man and a woman in the last hours before the anarchist rebellion of the sailors of Kronstadt, March 1921, was crushed by the Red Army and the mythical hero of the Soviet revolution, Trotsky himself. Musically, it is based on Johann Sebastian Bach's Oratorios, especially the Passion According to John, one of the works deeply admired by Karouzos. In the poem, Karouzos also introduces himself as a dying organism who dreams of his liberation from political oppression, social malaise or the burden of his own decaying sick body. A fusion of Soviet political vocabulary, the language of

the Gospels, the traditions about Buddha (in French) linked by a continuous meditation of human mortality create a kaleidoscopic poem full of unexpected power, expressive immediacy and fascinating energy.

The poem has, probably, its implied origin in a very popular book on the Kronstadt rebellion written by Volin or Vsevolod Mikhailovich Eikhenbaum (1882-1945), *The Unknown Revolution* (1947). The Greek translation of the book had the status of a minor cult book in politics as it revealed the oppressive character of the Russian revolution since its inception and counter-revolutionary role of respected figures like Lenin and Trotsky. Volin developed a systematic critique of the official Marxist Communist Party which evolved into a significant counter-theory, what he called 'synthesis anarchism'. His synthesis anarchism tried to deal with the question of the individual and its position within collective action and social engagement, so that the individual would never lose its centrality and primacy under the Machiavellian worship of impersonal social structures. Karouzos intertwines the discussions and the style of proclamation as we find it in Volin's syncopated prose style with a passage from Luke's Acts about the life of early Christians and excerpts from the early life of the young Gautama, exploring the meaning of anarchism as the only way in which humility and acceptance can become the true basis of human solidarity and the only foundations of political society.

The result is an intensely dramaturgic text in a polyphonic style, structured around 'unknown and even unsuspected events', a book for the dead and the dying, dialogi mortuorum, framing an anarchist ontology of social action and human individuality. The old believer and the contemporary nihilist struggle in the language and the semantics of the poem: Karouzos fills the text with paradoxical contradictions and semantic conflicts, articulated through intense linguistic compression, which makes his verses on some occasions post-semantic or indeed post-lingual, entering the world of thinkers like Emil Cioran and Samuel Beckett.

He was already treated for cancer and the details of his struggle with his own body can be detected in the poem itself. At the same time, the whole poem becomes a statement of profound disillusionment and disenchantment with all political projects and ideologies, denouncing all those forces and individuals who were so easily seduced by power (having of course in mind the recent political failure of socialism in Greece). Amidst the hell of

lost causes, the poet salvages the dignity of language and therefore the ability of the human mind to envision new mythographies and give fresh narratives about its own existential adventures.

When he died three years later, his poetry had acquired the brevity of a pre-socratic fragment and the immediacy of a political slogan. If there is another poet like him, probably it must be Dylan Thomas, a poet consumed by drinking and destroyed by the passion of language. His poetry reads like an amalgam of Paul Celan, Rainer Maria Rilke, Friedrich Holderlin fused with Osip Mandelstam, Stephane Mallarme and William Blake. Karouzos struggled persistently and painfully with his own demons so that in the end he became one of the demons of his own being: his own voice was one of the other voices which his own poetry captured in his prolonged, tortuous and exhausting wandering through the opaque and dangerous underworld that his country had become in the eighties.

But his last poems retained an uncompromising rage against a society without ideals, a history without redemption and a world without horizon. The only thing, as it always happens, that remained undepleted in him, as to every poet, was the richness, complexity and heterogeneity of Greek language. From Homer, through the early archaic poetry of Sappho, to Sophocles and the Gospels, as well as the language of Romanos the Melodist and the demotic songs but also the highly personal idioms of his two grand masters, the self-divided national poet Dionysios Solomos and the prose-writer Orthodox pietist Alexandros Papadiamandis, Karouzos saw Greek language as an ethical battleground between two powerful forces, meaning and death. His inner battle was so total and fundamental that in the end it became obvious that death was the only meaning.

As Heraclitus would have said in his most revealing fragment, ἦθος ἀνθρώπου δαίμων, 'a man's character is his fate', which the demon of their own unpreparedness and innocence was the fate indeed of a whole generation of dreamers and idealists who were crushed by the corruption of language and the usurpation of all projects for social renewal by opportunistic technocratic elites. After 1987, a new dimension emerged in Karouzos' verses; his nihilism was transformed into a tragic sense of life, as his battle with his body became a hopeless conflict with the inevitability of dying. His surrender to an inscrutable Fate that could not be questioned or combated made his final verses pulsate with tragic irony, resignation and

abandonment that we only find in the tragedies of Sophocles. Cancer, like in the novel by Alexander Solzhenitsyn *Cancer Ward*, became for him a call from god, an invitation to another way of being, both terrible and sublime, beautiful and destructive, a catastrophe and an ultimate reconciliation with mortality.

After the publication of this poem, Karouzos released some of his most poignant and angry denunciations of life: 'I rage at the sunset with my cherry-coloured-brain'. His last poems are fragmented, spasmodic, incomplete. The Ode Nocturnal and Neolithic to Kronstadt stands as one of his most ambitious, visionary and apocalyptic works. In an era of diminished expectations and of the minimal self, it deserves more attention.

Recommended Reading:

Nikos Karouzos (2004), *Collected Poems*, translation by Philip Ramp, London: Shoestring Press.

(Note: I would like to thank Nick Trakakis for his insightful comments on the translation.)

Contributors

Carole M. Cusack

carole.cusack@sydney.edu.au

Carole M. Cusack received her Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Religious Studies and English Literature from the University of Sydney in 1986. She later graduated PhD in Studies in Religion in 1996 and Master of Education (Educational Psychology) in 2001. She has taught in Studies in Religions since 1989, first as a casual tutor and lecturer, and from 1996 as a full-time staff member. She became professor in 2013. She has published in religious studies, popular culture and religion and new expressions of religiosity through the internet and its cyber-cultures.

George Couvalis

george.couvalis@flinders.edu.au

George Couvalis teaches philosophy at Flinders University. His research focuses on ancient Greek philosophy with special emphasis on Aristotle and Late Greek philosophers. His publications also include essays on Plato, John Philoponus and David Hume.

Panayiotis Diamadis

pxdiamadis@riverview.nsw.edu.au

Panayiotis Diamadis holds a doctorate from the University of Sydney and has been working in genocide studies for the

last fourteen years. Currently a Director of the Australian Institute for Holocaust and Genocide Studies, he teaches Genocide Studies at the University of Technology, Sydney. His research has been published in peer-reviewed journals including the Genocide Perspectives series, the Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society, and The Sydney Journal. His research focuses on the genocides of the Hellenes, Armenians, Assyrians and Jews between the 1910s and the 1940s: the events, rescue and responses to these cases, their impacts and legacies, and the politics of denial.

Konstandina Dounis

konstandinadounis@gmail.com

Konstantina Dounis has published on Greek-Australian literature and women's poetry. She currently works on the memoirs of Greek-Australian women.

Anthony Dracopoulos

Anthony.Dracopoulos@sydney.edu.au

Anthony Dracopoulos is a senior lecturer with the department of Modern Greek and Byzantine Studies at the University of Sydney. He has published extensively on the works of G. Seferis, C.P. Cavafy and Greek Modernism. His latest publication is the study: *C.P. Cavafy: The Open Work* (2013).

Athanasia Glycofrydi-Leontsini

aleon@ppp.uoa.gr

Athanasia Glycofrydi-Leontsini, Professor Emerita of Modern European and Neohellenic Philosophy at the Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Philosophy, Education and Psychology, School of Philosophy, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. Following her PhD thesis on *The Epistemological Foundations of Thomas Reid's Aesthetics* (Athens, 1988), she has published many books in Greek, among them: *Neohellenic Aesthetics and the European Enlightenment* (Athens, 1989), *Neohellenic Philosophy: Persons and Problems* (Athens, 1993), *Neohellenic Philosophy: Moral and Political Questions* (Athens, 2001), *Systems of Fine Arts in Neohellenic Aesthetics* (Athens, 2002), *Aesthetics and Art: Critical Reconsiderations* (Athens, 2006), *An Introduction to Aesthetics* (Athens, 2008), and *An Anthology of Translated Ancient Greek Philosophical Texts* (2 vols, Athens, 2009), a secondary education textbook. She has participated in many Conferences and Congresses and has published many papers mostly in Greek and English.

Sophie Iakovidou

sophie_iak@yahoo.fr

Sophie Iakovidou is Assistant Professor in Modern Greek Literature with the Democritus University of Thrace. She has published on modern Greek writers,

modern Greek poetry, children's literature and gender studies.

Vrasidas Karalis

Vrasidas.Karalis@sydney.edu.au

Vrasidas Karalis holds the Sir Nicholas Laurantos' Chair in Modern Greek Studies at the University of Sydney. He has published extensively on Byzantine historiography, Greek political life, Greek Cinema, European cinema, the director Sergei Eisenstein and contemporary political philosophy. He has also worked extensively as a translator (novels by Patrick White) and the theory of the transcultural translation. He has edited volumes on modern European political philosophy, especially on Martin Heidegger, Hannah Arendt and Cornelius Castoriadis. His recent publications include *A History of Greek Cinema* (2013) and *Greek Cinema from Cacoyannis to the Present* (I.B. Tauris, 2017).

George Vassilacopoulos

G.Vassilacopoulos@latrobe.edu.au

George Vassilacopoulos lectures in Philosophy at the University of Melbourne. He has published books and articles in European philosophy, political theory, critical race and whiteness theory and the history of Greek-Australian political activism. George Vassilacopoulos is the author of *Monumental Fragments: Places of Philosophy in the Age of Dispersion*, Melbourne: re.press, 2013.

Together with Toula Nicolacopoulos, they are the co-authors of *The Disjunctive Logic Of The World: Thinking Global Civil Society With Hegel*, Melbourne: re.press; *Indigenous Sovereignty and the Being of the Occupier*, Melbourne: re.press, 2014; *Hegel and the Logical Structure of Love*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999; and *From Foreigner to Citizen: Greek Migrants and Social Change in White Australia 1897-2000*, (Greek), Melbourne and Pireas: Eothinos, 2004.

Toula Nicopacopoulos

Toula Nicolacopoulos is a senior lecturer in Philosophy at La Trobe University in Melbourne, Australia. She is the author of *The Radical Critique of Liberalism*, re.press, 2008. With her co-author George Vassilacopoulos, she has published books and articles in European philosophy, political theory, critical race and whiteness theory and the history of Greek-Australian political activism, including *Indigenous Sovereignty and the Being of the Occupier*, re.press, 2014 and *The Disjunctive Logic of the World: Thinking Civil Society with Hegel*, re.press, 2013.

Dimitris Paivanas

dimpa61@ath.forthnet.gr

Dimitris Paivanas has studied Greek and Modern Greek Literature at Melbourne University and has taught Modern Greek Literature at Melbourne and La Trobe Universities during 1984-1993. He has

published articles in the weekly Australian newspapers as well as in literary periodicals in Australia, USA and Greece. In 1997, he published a book of poetry and prose titled *Monyeloi kai dioptres*. He received his doctorate from Birmingham in 2008. His monograph on the work of Thanassis Valtinos appeared in 2012 (Estia Publications).

Maria Palaktsoglou

maria.palaktsoglou@flinders.edu.au

Maria Palaktsoglou is a Senior Lecturer in Modern Greek language and culture at the Department of Language Studies, Flinders University, and the Director of Studies and the Coordinator for first year topics in Modern Greek. She has an MA (1996) and a PhD (2002) on Greek Literature from Flinders University. Her areas of research are: twentieth century Greek literature and literary criticism and Greek-Australian migration in Australia. She has published one book and a series of articles on literature and migration and has taken part in many National and International Conferences both in Australia and Europe. She is currently involved in several projects such as *Migrants' belongings*, *Migrant Domestic servants*, and *Migration Experiences through Blogging*.

Vassiliki Rapti

raptiv@icloud.com

Vassiliki Rapti is Affiliated Faculty in the Department of Writing, Literature and Publishing, Emerson College, where she teaches literature, classical reception, women's writing and ludic theory. She is also co-founder and Chair of the Ludics Seminar, Mahindra Humanities Center at Harvard University. She received her Ph.D. in Comparative Literature from Washington University in St. Louis in 2006. She is the author of *Ludics in Surrealist Theatre and Beyond* (Ashgate, 2013) and other books. Her publications and research interests center upon comparative drama, avant-garde theatre and performance, Surrealist drama and ludic theory and performance. Her work has been published, among others, in *Text and Presentation* (2004 & 2005), *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*, *Charioteer*, and *Scientific Journals International*. Dr. Rapti co-founded and co-edited the journal *Theatron* (2002–2004). For her research and teaching she has received numerous awards, grants, and distinctions.

Sophia Sakellis

ssstrans@bigpond.net.au

Sophia Sakellis completed her primary, secondary and tertiary education in Greece, obtaining a degree in Physics from the University of Patras and, subsequently, a Master of Science from the Uni-

versity of NSW in Sydney, where she also worked as a Tutor while doing research in Astrophysics. She obtained a two-way, English into Greek & Greek into English, NAATI Professional Accreditation (Level 3) in 1997 and has been a full-time freelance Professional Translator since. More recently, Sophia has taught Advanced Greek at the University of NSW, Translation at Macquarie University, and has also completed a Diploma of Language Studies and a Master of Arts by Research at the Department of Greek and Byzantine Studies of the University of Sydney where she is currently a PhD Candidate. Her area of research is Gender Psychodynamics in Films by Contemporary Greek Female Directors.

Nick Trakakis

Nick.Trakakis@acu.edu.au

N.N. Trakakis is Senior Lecturer in Philosophy at the Australian Catholic Philosophy. He works primarily in the philosophy of religion, and his publications in this area include *The God Beyond Belief: In Defence of William Rowe's Evidential Argument from Evil* (2007), *The End of Philosophy of Religion* (2008), and (as co-editor, with Graham Oppy) *The History of Western Philosophy of Religion*, vols 1-5 (Acumen, 2009). He also has a strong interest in literature and poetry: he has edited *Southern Sun, Aegean Light: Poetry of Second-Generation Greek-Australians* (Australian Schol-

arly Publishing, 2011), and has published several collections of poetry, the most recent being *From Dusk to Dawn*. His translation of Tasos Leivaditis, *The Blind Man with the Lamp*, was published by Denise Harvey Publications in 2014.

Michael Tsianikas

michael.tsianikas@flinders.edu.au

Michael Tsianikas is Professor of Modern Greek at Flinders University. He has published extensively on modern Greek, comparative and language studies. Amongst his publications *Homo Tremulus: Enthusiasm, Trembling, and Spirit* (2011), *Kavafis' Photo-Mind and Other Texts* (2007), *The Fingers on the Skin: Critical Texts for Literature* (2003), and *Flaubert's Trip to Greece: One Stop After the Orient, One Stop Before Literature* (1997).

John Yiannakis

J.Yiannakis@exchange.curtin.edu.au

John Yiannakis was born and educated in Perth, Western Australia. He is a Research Fellow and Historian at Curtin University. He recently completed researching Greek migration and adaptation to W.A. since 1947, and the History of Dentistry in Western Australia. Two major books resulted from this work: *Odysseus in the Golden West* and *A History of Dentistry in Western Australia*. In 2009 he also contributed an article to and edited a special

edition volume about the Perth locale of Northbridge.



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