

ETUDES HELLENIQUES

HELLENIC STUDIES

Literatures of the Periphery: The Greek Case
Littératures de la périphérie : Le cas grec

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Literatures of the Periphery

Stephanos Constantinides*

Modern literary criticism may eschew canons and labels in academia, but publishers, readers and writers know all too well that creative efforts are pigeonholed politically or aesthetically according to the times. Nothing is written or read in a vacuum. A quick glance at well-known literary critics like Terry Eagleton, Edward Said and Harold Bloom reveals just how subjective and difficult it is to define terms like minority, national, regional and ethnic literature.

In terms of language and identity, post-colonial theorist Edward Said has spoken of textuality as a tool of colonization since the language of the colonizer was the only written or 'literary' language. The national literature becomes a foreign, formal imposition while the oral tradition loses its importance as part of a people's identity. The choice of language remains vital to identity, not just an author's but a people's.

Some of Edward Said's theories may apply to Greek periphery Literature as one of the main characteristics of the Greek Diaspora culture has been its orality. The great majority of Greek immigrants after World War II were poor, under-educated and had emigrated from rural areas. Naturally these people did not have much of a connection with written forms of literature.

On the topic of nationalism, Terry Eagleton, a British literary critic of the traditional Marxist school, insists on the political motivation of national literature because of its ties to the State. Lastly, in defiance of political correctness, American literary critic Harold Bloom bemoans the fact that ethnic and minority literatures, such as feminist, latino, Black-American, are taught instead of the 'western canon' of what Bernard Knox called 'Dead White European Males'. He is not against minority or peripheral literatures in English, in America, but believes that the authors have not attained the level of the "western canon". Students need to be grounded in the classics before approaching anything lesser.

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Given today's literary landscape, where do writers of the Greek diaspora creating modern Greek literature belong? On the edge? In English? In the Greek national pantheon? A literature of the periphery, or periphery literature, operates in relation to two national centres; i.e., one in the host country and the other in the motherland, Greece. The concept of the periphery challenges the traditional view of a literary canon, but nevertheless enables us to consider the social framework within which this literature is produced as well as its aesthetical and ideological patterns.

Interestingly enough neo-hellenic literature has been built up by regional literatures, what one could call literatures of the periphery. Because of the Ottoman occupation, modern Greek literature had no real centre for development, until the formal creation of the Greek state in 1830. However, even then Greek culture continued its development merely outside the newly founded democracy. It is worth noting that the Greek state created in 1830 had a population of only 600,000 people, while approximately three million Greeks lived outside its borders. For a long time, Constantinople, Alexandria, the Ionian islands as well other cities and areas inside or outside the Ottoman Empire continued being more important centres than Athens in terms of developing Greek culture. It is no accident that three of the more important poets of modern Greek letters lived outside the Greek state: Dionysios Solomos, the Greek national poet in the Ionian islands under British occupation; Andreas Kalvos in Italy, Great Britain and elsewhere in Europe; and Constantin Cavafy in Alexandria, Egypt. In fact, the periphery remained more important in terms of culture and literary creation than the centre for some time. It was only after the national disaster of 1922 that the capital, Athens, was definitively imposed upon the periphery. Yet even in the thirties, some of the greatest names in Greek literature — George Seferis, Georges Theotokas, Dido Sotiriou, and Fotis Kontoglou — came to Greek literature with the memories of Asia Minor. The situation changed radically when a new periphery of Hellenism was created by immigration to Australia, Canada, Western Europe (especially Germany), and the United States. This new periphery of Hellenism thus became the diaspora issued from immigration. The writers of this new periphery have been considered as a sub-category and, with few exceptions, have actually been excluded from the corpus of Greek national literature.

Nevertheless, these literatures of the periphery have another centre in the host country; i.e., the national body of the literature of the country where the authors live as first- or even second-generation immigrants. This is considered immigrant literature, and in the Greek case, it is a minor one in relation to the national literature of the host country. In this way, Greek immigrant writers are marginalized as members of minority groups. In host countries, the works of Greek writers and immigrants in general, are placed under the banner of «ethnic» literature and «multicultural» in countries like Australia, and Canada. Greek writers are thus obliged to remain on the periphery of the host country's national literature.

As George Kanarakis wrote, this ethnic qualification is given not only to the works written in Greek but also to the works written in English by Greeks and other immigrants, as far as Australia is concerned. His remark also applies to some extent to Canada and the United States. Kanarakis notes that «in addition those works written in a language other than English are doubly marginalized since, accessible as they are to only a very small proportion of the Australian population, they exist, as minority foreign language works, on the periphery of the periphery»¹ What is more astonishing is that multiculturalism in Australia has contributed, according to Kanarakis, to marginalizing writers of immigrant origin who express themselves in English. As he observed, «before the advent of multiculturalism, writers who were themselves, or whose parents were, migrants from a non-English speaking country, were not marginalized in any way if they wrote in English, but were accepted simply as mainstream Australian writers, even as important figures in Australian literature»². With the advent of multiculturalism and label «ethnic» literature, even those of immigrant origin — that is to say the non-WASP writing in English — marginalization has been imposed. As a result they have been pushed straight to the periphery of Australian national literature.

As mentioned, writers of Greek 'diasporic' literature have two centres: one in the homeland and one in the host country. Consequently, their work is presented in a separate category from that of mainstream writers in both countries. This is a form of double jeopardy, as they remain on the edges of two literatures.

As far as Greece is concerned, little attention is paid to literature written in its diaspora. Only in exceptional cases have Greek writers of diaspora succeeded in earning recognition in their homeland. The most famous case, after World War II, is that of Nikos Kahtitsis (1928-1970) who wrote from Montreal, Canada. This lack of attention is not due to a lack of quality. It may be attributed to the general attitude of the Greek literary establishment. George Kanarakis noted that even «if they do receive attention, however scant, they are often viewed with a paternalistic, even condescending attitude, and judged with different criteria from that used to judge the writers of Greece itself».³

In the case of both the homeland and host country, «ethnic» literature may be considered an «exotic» product and examined from a sociological and anthropological point of view rather than on its aesthetic merits. One may argue that literary merit must be the only passport for the work of the diaspora writers. Of course the criteria for this merit are generally subjective. As Helen Nickas has noted «artistic tastes are decided by those in power and unless there is some dramatic development, which is not likely, the criteria for assessing literary works will remain unchanged».⁴ That is to say the difficulty for Greek diaspora writers to gain a place in the main body of one or the other national literatures. All the more disappointing is the fact that the work of these authors is not judged by the criteria established by those in power. In fact, their works are simply ignored as if they never existed.

Greek immigrants «coming mostly from peasant and rural backgrounds, unlearned and poor, they did not immediately express in writing the wonder, anguish and triumph of their odyssey».⁵ This remark depends, of course, on the host country. In the USA Greek literature appeared essentially after the 1930s, in Australia and Canada later in the 1960s and in Germany, even later. Research on this periphery literature is limited. The exception is may be Australia where Greek scholars in departments of Greek studies at Australian universities began to study the writings of their compatriots very early. Yet, even in the case of Australia, this study was limited inside a kind of Greek university ghetto. Moreover, for a long time in the United States, scholars in chairs of modern Greek literature disdainfully avoided Greek-American writing as a kind of subculture.⁶ Even the Greek-American magazines, promoting modern Greek literature in America, avoided the literature of immigrants for the same reason. In fact they avoided publishing

anything related to its very existence. For these people, Constantin Cavafy was the model of Greek diaspora literature.⁷ Only in the 1980s did some academics of Greek origin show limited interest in this literature. This interest increased a little more one decade later. As George Kalogeras noted, they could at least study this early diaspora literature in relation to the literary production of mainland Greece, in relation to this period when the demotic, the romantic or the folklore style was adopted in Greece.⁸ Today a small group of researchers is working on Greek-American literature, but academic and literary circles in Greece still generally ignore its existence and that of other Greek diaspora literature.

In the early stages, Greek diaspora literature usually reflected the evolution of traditional Greek patterns; i.e., romantic poetry and folklore. Later, especially during the second half of the twentieth century, trends from the literature of the metropolis, e.g., modernism as expressed by the famous generation of the thirties, influenced diaspora production.

One characteristic of Greek periphery literatures is the presence of few writers of prose and many poets. This ratio may be explained by the fact that most writers of the periphery are not professionals in the sense that they cannot support themselves with their literary work. It is not easy for people who are obliged to earn a living in other trades to find the time needed to cultivate prose. Moreover, these writers must turn to self-publication for various reasons. Helen Nickas describes these reasons : «Firstly, the Greek community in Australia is too small to be able to make publishing of literature a viable proposition. It would be excessively optimistic to expect that more than five hundred Greeks in Melbourne (much less in Adelaïde or Brisbane, for example) would be the readers of any writing produced by Greek-Australians. Secondly, many of the works are not 'professional' and therefore do not meet criteria of publishers in the 'centre', either in Greece or in Australia (if translated into English). It is in the difference of criteria that the conflict is revealed between orality and textuality, with the latter being the preferred mode of writing in our times».⁹ Nickas' remark applies to all Greek writers in the periphery. Also, as it is well known, the Greek literary tradition is mainly based on orality and not on textuality.

Another topic of discussion among scholars and writers is the identity of Greek periphery literature. Some claim that this literature includes only what

is written «exclusively in the Greek language, by people usually of Greek origin who, for a long period of time have lived or live permanently outside of Greece and whose works thematically revolve mainly, if not exclusively, around the life of migrants».¹⁰

Nevertheless, others claim that one must also include «writers of Greek origin (and not only) whose themes are Greek»,¹¹ although their language is not Greek. Other scholars consider the Greek language to be the basic criterion of Greek periphery literature but do not absolutely exclude English-speaking writers of Greek origin.¹²

In Greek-American literature, things are even more confused. Some scholars include everything written in Greek or English that considers or reflects the life of Greek-Americans, or their heritage and culture. But others, such as the poet Makis Tzilianos, believe that Greek-American literature can only be texts written in Greek.

Stephanos Constantinides has sought to identify Greek periphery literature¹³ using a number of criteria. The first one and most important is that of the Greek language. As for the writers of Greek origin using another language, he distinguishes between authors of texts referring to «Greekness» in the sense of history, culture, country of origin and diaspora reality, and authors whose writings have nothing to do with these themes. With some reservation, Constantinides admits that the first category could be included in the Greek periphery literature, but surely not the second one.

If geographical criterion is used as to define Greek periphery literature, then it must be considered as part of the national literatures of the countries where the authors live. Based on this criterion, the publications of Greek-Australian authors belong to Australian literature; the writings of Greek-American writers, to American literature. According to many specialists, this criterion is valid but only for writings in the languages of the countries where the authors live. The work of Greek-Americans produced in English thus forms part of American literature.

On the contrary, the geographical criterion does not apply to writings in Greek. George Kanarakis in his article published in this edition, is quite explicit on this point, citing two cases to illustrate his position. The first case is that of the poet Ioannis Papadiamandopoulos «who was born and raised in Greece where he published his first and only Greek poetry collection

Trygones kai Ehidnai (Doves and Serpents) (1878) before settling in France where he wrote in French, under the *nom-de-plume* Jean Moréas, «achieving a place as a poet in French literature». Thanks to his first collection of poems in Greek, he has of course «his place in Greek letters», and «is represented in Greek anthologies and histories of literature». As the well-known Greek scholar Konstantinos Dimaras observed, Moreas has in this way been, «lost for Greek Letters»¹⁴. Contrary to Jean Moreas, Constantine Cavafy born and raised in Alexandria, has nothing to do with Egyptian literature as he wrote in Greek, and the geographical criterion does not apply to him. In accordance with the language criterion, Cavafy is included in Greek national literature. Of course Greeks are not alone in this literary category. Other writers for whom the criterion of language has determined the identity of their work are Samuel Becket (Anglo-Irish origin), Eugene Ionesco (Roumanian origin), Julien Green (American origin) and are considered French authors. It is neither geography nor ethnic origin but rather language that actually determines to which national literature an author belongs.

George Kanarakis also opposes the use of the label «Greek-Australian» literature on the basis of an author's origin, whether their works are written in Greek or in English. He observes that «by assigning such a label we do this body of literature a disservice, as in effect we assign it a peripheral existence—neither Greek nor Australian and thus simply that this literature so designed does not fully belong either to the Greek or Australian national body of literature, and thus is of marginal importance». Kanarakis advances an additional reason against using the label: «it carries in itself the seed of its own destruction». He writes in his article published in the current issue of *Etudes helléniques/Hellenic Studies* :

The term «Greek-Australian literature» presupposes the existence of Greek-Australian writers, but the matter is for how many generations can we consider these writers Greek Australians and at which point do they become Australians of Greek origin. Given that in the last two decades, Greek immigration to Australia has diminished to an insignificant level, it is easy to understand that the term «Greek-Australian» has an expiry date. Nevertheless, there is no reason to believe that the literary writing of people of Greek origin will not continue when this literature will not be known any more as Greek-Australian, since it will be a term not used for its writers any longer, while, on the other hand, the bodies both of Greek and Australian literature will carry on as long as these nations and peoples continue to exist.

In any event, language constitutes the main component of the identity of a literature as it consists of a code leading to a social, cultural and historical reflection of reality. This dialectical relation between the linguistic code and the social reality, poses another problem : How does a Greek linguistic code reflect the American, Canadian or Australian reality — or even the Hellenic one — if of course one accepts that the linguistic code expresses the social and cultural specificity of a country? Even the reference to a global village goes through the particular linguistic code used. As Eleni Torosi put it, «each language works with different images and habits».¹⁵ To paraphrase Cornelius Castoriadis, the writer exists *in* and *through* society — and society is always historical. In the same way as the writer exists *in* and *through* language, and language reflects history and society. Yet which history and which society do Greek authors of the diaspora reflect? The history and society of the homeland, Greece, or that of the host country? Perhaps the answer is both. As a result, we may discover an interesting cosmopolitan dimension in their work.

In conclusion, Greek periphery literature is a separate entity which is difficult to define very precisely. Without a doubt, it remains outside the main-stream literatures of both the home and guest-countries. Excluded and even disdained by the literary establishments of both countries, it is viewed as a “parochial” phenomenon. In reality, there is not one Greek periphery literature but rather different Greek literatures of the periphery. Here, the geographical criterion enter into the equation. We speak of Greek-American, Greek-Australian, Greek-Canadian literatures. In this sense, we could consider Cypriot literature as part of this periphery literature. Within the context of Greek literature, Cypriot literature is also generally viewed as a «parochial» phenomenon by the Athenian establishment. However, Cypriot literature has a dynamic spirit not found in the diaspora literatures. This major difference may be attributed to the fact that Cypriot literature is the product of a society that has its own identity. In a sense it stands as an autonomous literature, as the product of an autonomous society.

Finally, obviously there are essential theoretical and practical problems to examine in the future if we are to explore or cultivate the field of the Greek-periphery literature. Research is necessary to examine the similarities and peculiarities of the broader Greek literature of the periphery.

In this issue of *Etudes helléniques-Hellenic Studies* we focus on Greek periphery literature with articles from the United States, Australia, Canada, and Germany. Reference is also made to Cypriot literature. This special issue embraces variety hence one article presents Greek women writers in Australia, Canada and the USA; whereas, another article raises key questions about the ethnic identity of the immigrant writer.

Of course there are Greek writers in many other countries, for example, France, Scandinavian countries, England, African countries, and former Soviet-bloc countries. However, it was beyond the scope of this issue to present what is going on everywhere. Nevertheless, study of the Greek periphery literature all around the world must one day be achieved as a tribute to these people who work and create under difficult conditions.

Georges Kanarakis in his article presents the perspectives on the literary achievements of Hellenism in Australia and the relation of this literature with Greece and the mainstream Australian literature. After an overview of the Greek and English language literature produced by Greek immigrants and their descendants in Australia the author raised the question of the national identity of this production. He considers the language as the only satisfactory criterion by which we can identify a literary work and also the national body of literature to which it belongs. Concerning the literature of the Greek-Australians he concludes that everything written in Greek language belongs to the national body of the Greek literature and that works written in English belong to the national body of the Australian literature. Furthermore Kanarakis thinks that this is the canon for the literature written by Greeks in general in the diaspora.

Helen Nickas explores the theme of memory in the work of three Greek-Australian poets : Dimitris Tsaloumas, Antigone Kefala, and Yota Krili. The author analyses the three poets in terms of their imaginative dialogue with the past and in terms of the dual vision attributed to the migrant writer. Memory, however, indicates the author, does not imply a spontaneous or natural flow of images as it has to be constructed by inventive and creative writers. The important in these three poets is that they are bilingual, of first generation immigrants, but writing in English, and trying to make their mark within the wider Anglophone literature. She concludes with the words of a critic reviewing Kefalas book of poems, *Absence*, one of the three poets she presents in her article :

It is an old truth : inspiration requires absence rather than presence. Only when something is far away, or no longer exists, does it press upon the imagination and truly belong to the writer. Poetry is not an engagement with the present, but a belated mediation on the withdrawal of presence. Every poem tries to create a world where what has been lost may be found again. Sometimes verse carries with it a little of the pleasure of writing. Yet, not even the most elated of poems wholly disguise the fact that it is a labour of mourning⁶.

Makis Tzilianos presents the state of modern Greek literature produced in the United States. He insists on the importance of the use of Greek. Tzilianos, a poet himself, considers Greek writers those who express themselves in Greek. The Greek-American writers who write in English must be considered, according to the author, as writers of America itself and to compete with the other American writers. The same theme of identity is also discussed by Thalia Tassou who explores the situation of Greek-American writers expressing themselves in English.

Greek-Canadian literature is explored by Jacques Bouchard and Stephanos Constantinides. Bouchard refers to the Greek-Canadian poets of Quebec whose poems he has translated into French. Constantinides, after a brief presentation of Greek-Canadian literature, deplores the lack of studies and research on Greek-Canadian writers.

Niki Eideneier presents the situation of Greek literature in Germany. The author provides a rare, sweeping overview of the scene from the early post-war period to today. She refers to the first generation writers and to the second one, to the 'educated' versus the 'self-educated' from the rural areas. She points out the difficulties Greek writers in Germany have faced in being accepted by not only mainstream German but also mainstream Hellenic literature.

Ekaterini Georgoudaki discusses the dreams and the difficulties of Greek women writers in three countries, Australia, Canada and the U.S.A. Exploring their texts, the author considers that they function as testimonies of immigration and that there is a variety of characters, themes, and techniques in their writings.

Pan Bouyoukas, a Greek-Canadian writing in French, explores the theme of ethnic origin and identity. The author raises the question of acceptance of the immigrant or the “ethnic” writer by the mainstream body of the literature.

In a fragmented article rather than a manifesto, Stephanos Constantinides expresses some heretical thoughts on Cypriot literature and wonders about its place within modern Greek literature.

Obviously there are basic theoretical and practical problems to solve in the future if we are to explore or cultivate the field of the Greek-periphery literature. Research is necessary to examine the similarities and peculiarities of the broader Greek literature of the periphery.

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Littératures de la périphérie

Stephanos Constantinides*

La critique littéraire moderne peut dicter des canons et des principes à éviter au sein du monde universitaire et académique, mais les éditeurs, les lecteurs et les écrivains savent trop bien que les efforts créatifs ne sont classifiés que selon des modes esthétiques et des critères politiques, qui dépendent du moment. Rien n'est écrit ou lu dans un vacuum. Si l'on examine rapidement ce que des critiques littéraires bien connus ont écrit, comme Terry Eagleton, Edward Said et Harold Bloom nous comprenons justement combien il est subjectif et difficile de définir des termes tels que littérature minoritaire, nationale, régionale et ethnique.

Pour ce qui est de la langue et de l'identité, le théoricien de la littérature de la période post-coloniale Edward Said a parlé de textualité comme d'un outil de colonisation vu que la langue du colonisateur était la seule écrite ou langue «littéraire». La littérature nationale devient une imposition étrangère, formelle, tandis que la tradition orale perd de son importance comme partie de l'identité d'un peuple. Le choix de la langue demeure vital pour ce qui est de l'identité, pas seulement comme le choix d'un auteur, mais aussi celui d'un peuple.

Quelques éléments de la théorie d'Edward Said pourraient s'appliquer à la littérature grecque de la périphérie étant donné qu'une des principales caractéristiques de la culture grecque de la diaspora fut son oralité. La grande majorité des immigrants Grecs après la Seconde Guerre Mondiale étaient pauvres, sous-éduqués et avaient émigré de régions rurales. Naturellement ces gens n'avaient pas beaucoup de liens avec les formes de la littérature écrite.

Pour ce qui est du nationalisme, Terry Eagleton, un critique littéraire britannique de l'école de tradition marxiste, insiste sur la motivation politique de la littérature nationale à cause de ses liens avec l'Etat. Enfin, en défiant la rectitude politique, le critique littéraire américain Harold Bloom, déplore le fait que des littératures ethniques et des groupes minoritaires, tels

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les féministes, les latinos, les Noirs-Américains, sont enseignées au lieu du «canon occidental» ('western canon') de ce que Bernard Knox a appelé «Des Blancs Européens Mâles Décédés». Il n'est pas contre l'enseignement des littératures minoritaires ou périphériques en anglais, en Amérique, mais il croit que les auteurs n'ont pas atteint le niveau du «canon occidental». Les étudiants ont besoin, d'étudier les classiques avant d'approcher l'étude de quoique ce soit de moindre valeur.

Etant donné le paysage littéraire d'aujourd'hui, où se situent les auteurs de la diaspora grecque qui créent de la littérature grecque moderne? A la marge? À la littérature du pays d'accueil? Au panthéon national hellénique? Une littérature de la périphérie ou littérature périphérique, opère en relation avec deux centres nationaux, c'est-à-dire, celui du pays d'accueil et l'autre celui de la mère patrie, la Grèce. Le concept de périphérie défie la conception traditionnelle du canon littéraire, mais néanmoins nous permet de considérer le cadre social à l'intérieur duquel cette littérature est produite aussi bien que ses schèmes esthétiques et idéologiques.

La littérature néo-hellénique a été forgée par des littératures régionales, voire des littératures de la périphérie. Ainsi, en raison de l'occupation ottomane, cette littérature n'a pas eu un véritable centre pour son développement, jusqu'à la création de l'Etat grec en 1830. Mais, même à ce moment-là, la culture hellénique a continué son développement principalement à l'extérieur de l'Etat grec. On doit se rappeler que l'Etat grec, en 1830, comprenait seulement 600 000 personnes alors qu'environ trois millions de Grecs vivaient à l'extérieur des frontières. Constantinople, Alexandrie, les îles Ioniennes, et d'autres villes ou régions à l'intérieur ou à l'extérieur de l'Empire ottoman ont continué pendant une longue période d'être plus importantes en termes de développement de la culture grecque qu'Athènes, la capitale du nouvel Etat. Ce n'est pas un hasard si trois des poètes les plus importants de la littérature grecque moderne ont vécu à l'extérieur de l'Etat grec. Dionyssios Solomos, le poète national grec, dans les îles Ioniennes sous occupation britannique, Andreas Kalvos en Italie, Grande Bretagne et ailleurs en Europe et Constantin Cavafy à Alexandrie, en Egypte. En fait, durant une longue période la périphérie est plus importante en termes de culture et de création littéraire que le centre. C'est seulement après la catastrophe nationale de 1922, que le centre, c'est-à-dire Athènes, s'impose de façon définitive sur la périphérie. Malgré tout, durant les années 1930 quelques-uns des grands noms de la littérature grecque comme George

Seferis, George Theotokas, Dido Sotiriou, et Fotis Kontoglou transposent encore dans la littérature grecque la mémoire de l'Asie Mineure. La situation a radicalement changé avec une nouvelle périphérie de l'hellénisme créée par l'immigration aux Etats-Unis, l'Australie, le Canada et l'Europe de l'Ouest, spécialement en Allemagne. Cette nouvelle périphérie de l'hellénisme est donc la diaspora issue de l'immigration. Les auteurs issus de cette nouvelle périphérie ont été considérés comme une sous-catégorie et avec quelques exceptions ont en fait été exclus du corps de la littérature nationale grecque.

Cependant pour ces littératures de la périphérie grecque il existe un autre centre constitué par le corps de la littérature nationale du pays dans lequel les auteurs vivent en tant qu'immigrants de première ou même de seconde génération. Autrement dit, la littérature immigrante et dans notre cas la littérature grecque, constitue une littérature marginale par rapport à la littérature nationale du pays d'accueil. De cette manière les auteurs grecs et les immigrants en général, sont placés sous la bannière de la littérature «ethnique» et dans certains pays comme l'Australie ou le Canada sous celle de la littérature «multiculturelle». En d'autres termes, les auteurs grecs sont marginalisés à la périphérie de la littérature nationale du pays d'accueil. Comme l'a écrit Georges Kanarakis, cette qualification ethnique est donnée non seulement à des œuvres écrites en grec mais aussi aux œuvres écrites en anglais pour ce qui est de l'Australie. Sa remarque s'applique aussi partiellement pour le Canada et les Etats-Unis. Kanarakis a noté que «de plus ces œuvres écrites dans une autre langue que l'anglais sont doublement marginalisées parce qu'elles sont accessibles seulement à une très petite proportion de la population australienne et elles existent comme des œuvres appartenant à une langue étrangère minoritaire, à la périphérie de la périphérie!»¹ Ce qui est étonnant est que le multiculturalisme en Australie a contribué, selon Kanarakis, à marginaliser les écrivains d'origine immigrante qui s'expriment en anglais. Comme il l'a observé, «avant l'avènement du multiculturalisme, des auteurs qui étaient eux-mêmes, ou leurs parents des immigrants venant d'un pays non anglophone, n'étaient marginalisés d'aucune façon s'ils écrivaient en anglais, mais ils étaient acceptés simplement au sein du courant dominant des auteurs australiens, et même comme des figures importantes de la littérature australienne»². Or, avec l'avènement du multiculturalisme et l'emploi de l'étiquette littérature «ethnique», même pour ceux d'origine immigrante - c'est-à-dire les non wasp - écrivant en anglais, la marginalisation a été imposée, les poussant dans la périphérie du corps national de la littérature australienne.

Or, jusqu'à maintenant pour les auteurs de la littérature de la diaspora grecque existent deux centres: celui de la mère patrie et celui du pays d'accueil. Par conséquent, leurs oeuvres sont considérées comme appartenant à une catégorie séparée de celles des auteurs appartenant à la tendance dominante de la littérature des deux pays. Ils sont marginalisés dans les deux cas et poussés dans la périphérie du corps national de chacune de deux littératures.

Pour ce qui est de la Grèce peu d'importance est accordée à la littérature écrite dans sa diaspora. Seulement dans des cas exceptionnels les auteurs grecs de la diaspora réussissent à gagner quelque reconnaissance dans leur pays d'origine. Le cas le plus connu après la Seconde Guerre Mondiale est peut-être celui de Nikos Kahtitsis (1928-1970) de Montréal, Canada. Ceci n'est pas dû au manque de qualité de leurs oeuvres, mais à une attitude générale de l'establishment littéraire grec. Georges Kanarakis a noté que même «s'ils reçoivent de l'attention, ils sont souvent considérés avec une attitude paternaliste, et même condescendante et jugés avec des critères différents des ceux de la Grèce elle-même».³

La littérature «ethnique» aussi bien dans le pays d'accueil que dans la mère patrie est considérée quelquefois comme un produit «exotique» et est examinée d'un point de vue sociologique et anthropologique plutôt que pour ses mérites esthétiques. Quelqu'un pourrait soutenir que le mérite littéraire doit être le seul passeport pour l'œuvre des auteurs grecs de la diaspora. Mais bien-sûr les critères sur lesquels est basée l'attribution de ce mérite sont généralement subjectifs. Comme l'a noté Helen Nickas «les goûts artistiques sont décidés par ceux au pouvoir et sauf s'il y a quelque développement dramatique, ce qui ne semble pas être le cas, les critères pour évaluer les œuvres littéraires demeureront inchangés».⁴ D'où la difficulté pour les auteurs grecs de la diaspora de se tailler une place dans le corps principal de l'une ou l'autre littérature nationale. Ce qui est plus décevant est que l'œuvre de ces auteurs n'est même pas jugée par ces critères établis par ceux au pouvoir. En fait, leurs œuvres sont simplement ignorées comme si elles n'ont jamais existé.

Les immigrants grecs «provenant principalement des milieux paysans et agricoles, faiblement éduqués et pauvres, n'ont pas immédiatement exprimé par écrit le désarroi, l'angoisse et le triomphe de leur odyssée».⁵ Cela dépend, bien-sûr, du pays de référence. Aux Etats-Unis, la littérature grecque fait son

apparition essentiellement après les années 30, en Australie et au Canada plus tard dans les années 60 et en Allemagne encore plus tard. La recherche sur cette littérature grecque de la périphérie est limitée. L'Australie constitue peut-être l'exception où des universitaires grecs dans les départements de grec des universités australiennes ont commencé à étudier les écrits de leurs compatriotes. Mais même dans le cas de l'Australie cette étude était limitée à l'intérieur d'une sorte de ghetto universitaire grec. Aux Etats-Unis pendant longtemps des universitaires aux chaires de la littérature grecque moderne ont évité l'écriture grecque américaine avec mépris comme une sorte de sous-culture⁶. Même les magazines grecs américains qui font la promotion de la littérature grecque moderne aux Etats-Unis, ont évité la littérature des immigrants grecs-américains pour la même raison, en évitant de publier tout ce qui était relié à cette dernière. Pour ces gens Constantin Cavafy était le modèle de la littérature de la diaspora grecque⁷. C'est seulement dans les années 80 qu'apparaît un intérêt limité pour cette littérature de la part d'un petit nombre d'universitaires d'origine grecque, intérêt qui a augmenté un peu plus d'une décennie plus tard. Comme l'a noté Georges Kalogeras on aurait pu au moins étudier la littérature de cette première diaspora en relation avec la production littéraire de la Grèce continentale, pour la période où était adopté en Grèce le style démotique, romantique ou l'ethographie au sens de l'étude des mœurs.⁸ Aujourd'hui il existe un petit groupe de chercheurs qui travaillent sur cette littérature américaine mais les cercles universitaires et littéraires en Grèce, généralement parlant, ignorent toujours son existence, tout comme ils ignorent bien-sûr l'existence de l'ensemble de la littérature de la diaspora grecque, exception faite, ces dernières années, de ce qui est écrit en anglais, en accord avec le canon littéraire anglo-saxon.

En général, au début, la littérature de la diaspora grecque reflète l'évolution des modèles traditionnels grecs, c'est-à-dire la poésie démotique, le romanisme et l'ethographie (étude des mœurs). Mais plus tard, spécialement durant la seconde moitié du vingtième siècle, d'autres tendances de la littérature de la métropole, par exemple le modernisme exprimé dans les oeuvres de la fameuse génération des années 30, a influencé également la littérature de la diaspora.

Une des caractéristiques des littératures de la périphérie grecque est la présence d'un petit nombre d'écrivains de prose et d'une multitude de

poètes. Ceci s'explique par le fait que les auteurs grecs de la périphérie ne sont pas des professionnels, et que de toute façon leur œuvre littéraire ne leur assure pas un moyen de subsister. Il n'est pas facile pour des gens qui sont obligés de gagner leur vie en occupant d'autres emplois de disposer du temps nécessaire afin de cultiver la prose. Aussi ces auteurs sont obligés de procéder à la publication de leurs œuvres par eux-mêmes pour diverses raisons. Comme l'écrit Helen Nickas pour les auteurs grecs-australien, mais qui est tout aussi valable pour tous ceux de la périphérie, ces raisons sont: «Premièrement, la communauté grecque en Australie est trop petite pour être capable de faire de la publication de la littérature une proposition viable. Il serait excessivement optimiste d'espérer que plus de cinq-cents Grecs à Melbourne (beaucoup moins en Adelaïde ou Brisbane, par exemple) seraient les lecteurs de quelqu'œuvre écrite produite par des Grecs-Australiens. Deuxièmement, beaucoup d'œuvres ne sont pas 'professionnelles' et pour cette raison ne rencontrent pas les critères des éditeurs du 'centre', soit en Grèce ou en Australie (si traduites en Anglais). C'est dans la différence des critères que le conflit se manifeste entre l'oral et l'écrit, le dernier étant le mode préféré des œuvres littéraires (écrites) de notre époque»⁹. Comme on le sait, la tradition littéraire grecque se fonde davantage sur l'oral que sur l'écrit.

Une autre discussion entre les universitaires et les chercheurs, mais aussi les auteurs eux-mêmes a trait à l'identité de la littérature grecque de la périphérie. Certains soutiennent que cette littérature comprend seulement ce qui est écrit «uniquement dans la langue grecque, d'habitude par des gens d'origine grecque, qui pour une longue période ont vécu ou vivent de façon permanente à l'extérieur de la Grèce et dont les thèmes des écrits portent principalement, sinon exclusivement, sur la vie des immigrants»¹⁰.

Néanmoins, il y a aussi ceux qui soutiennent que l'on doit inclure également dans cette littérature de la périphérie «des auteurs d'origine grecque (et pas seulement) dont les thèmes sont grecs»¹¹, bien que leur langue n'est pas le grec. D'autres universitaires, considèrent la langue grecque comme le critère de base de la littérature grecque de la périphérie mais ils n'excluent absolument pas les auteurs anglophones d'origine grecque¹². En ce qui concerne plus particulièrement la littérature grecque-américaine, les choses sont plus confuses. Quelques universitaires incluent dans celle-ci tout

ce qui est écrit en grec ou en anglais qui a à faire ou qui reflète la vie des Grecs-Américains, ou leur héritage et leur culture. Mais d'autres, comme le poète Makis Tzilianos, considèrent comme littérature grecque-américaine uniquement le corpus des œuvres écrites en grec, en accord avec la position adoptée par Georges Kanarakis pour ce qui est de la littérature grecque-australienne.

Stephanos Constantinides a essayé d'identifier la littérature grecque de la périphérie¹³ en utilisant différents critères. Le premier et le plus important est celui de la langue grecque. Pour ce qui est des auteurs d'origine grecque utilisant une autre langue, il distingue entre ceux dont les écrits ont à faire avec la «grécité» dans le sens de l'histoire, de la culture, du pays d'origine, de la réalité de la diaspora, et les autres dont les écrits n'ont rien à avoir avec ces critères. Avec quelques réserves, la première catégorie pourrait, selon Constantinides, être incluse dans la littérature grecque de la périphérie mais sûrement pas la seconde.

Si nous prenons le critère géographique comme base de la définition de la littérature grecque de la périphérie, nous devons considérer cette dernière comme faisant partie du corpus national des littératures des pays où les auteurs vivent. Basés sur ce critère, les écrits, par exemple, des auteurs grecs-australiens appartiennent au corpus national de la littérature australienne tout comme les écrits des auteurs grecs-américains appartiennent au corpus national de la littérature américaine. Néanmoins, ce critère s'applique, selon beaucoup de spécialistes de la question, seulement pour des écrits dans la langue des pays où les auteurs vivent. Dans ce cas les écrits, par exemple, d'auteurs grecs-américains en anglais font partie du corpus national de la littérature américaine. Au contraire, le critère géographique ne s'applique pas pour des écrits en grec. George Kanarakis dans son article publié dans cette édition est très explicite sur cette question, citant deux cas pour illustrer cette position. Le premier est le cas du poète Ioannis Papadiamandopoulos «qui est né et a été élevé en Grèce où il a publié son premier et unique recueil de poésie en grec, *Trygones kai Ehidnai* (Tourterelles et Serpents 1878)» avant de s'installer en France où il a écrit en français, sous le nom de plume Jean Moréas, «occupant une place comme poète dans la littérature française». Par sa première collection de poèmes en grec, il a bien sûr «sa place dans les lettres grecques», et «il est présent dans des anthologies et histoires littéraires». Comme l'universitaire Grec, Konstantinos Dimaras l'a observé,

de cette manière «il est perdu pour les lettres grecques»¹⁴. Contrairement à Jean Moréas, Constantin Cavafy qui est né et a vécu à Alexandrie en Egypte, n'a rien à faire avec la littérature égyptienne: comme il a écrit en grec, le critère géographique ne s'applique pas à lui. En accord avec le critère de langue il est inclus dans le corpus de la littérature nationale grecque. Il existe beaucoup d'autres exemples d'auteurs pour qui le critère de langue détermine l'identité de leurs écrits, comme par exemple Samuel Becket (d'origine irlandaise), Eugène Ionesco (d'origine roumaine) et Julien Green (d'origine américaine, qui a écrit en français) et sont considérés comme des auteurs français. Par conséquent, ce n'est pas la géographie, ni l'origine ethnique, mais la langue qui détermine dans quelle littérature nationale les auteurs appartiennent.

George Kanarakis s'oppose également à l'usage de l'étiquette littérature «grecque-australienne» sur la base de l'origine des auteurs, même si la langue dans laquelle leurs œuvres sont écrites est le grec ou l'anglais. Il remarque qu'«en collant une telle étiquette nous ne rendons pas un bon service à ce corpus de littérature, comme en fait nous lui attribuons une existence périphérique – ni grecque, ni australienne – et de cette manière cette littérature ainsi désignée n'appartient simplement pas pleinement ni au corpus national de la littérature australienne, ni à celui de la littérature grecque, et ainsi est d'une importance marginale». Kanarakis avance une raison additionnelle pour laquelle le terme «littérature grecque-australienne» n'est pas valable, «du point de vue philologique et logique et qu'elle porte en elle le germe de sa propre destruction». Il écrit dans son article publié dans la présente édition de la revue *Études helléniques/Hellenic Studies*:

Le terme «Littérature grecque-australienne» présuppose l'existence d'auteurs grecs-australiens, mais pendant combien de générations pouvons-nous considérer ces auteurs grecs comme étant grecs-australiens et à quel moment deviennent-ils Australiens d'origine grecque? Sans doute, en observant que dans les deux dernières décennies l'immigration grecque en Australie a diminué pour atteindre un niveau insignifiant, il est facile de comprendre que le terme «Littérature grecque-australienne» a une date d'expiration. Néanmoins, il n'existe aucune raison de croire que les écrits littéraires d'auteurs d'origine grecque ne continueront pas d'exister quand cette littérature ne sera plus connue comme littérature grecque-australienne, parce qu'il s'agira d'un terme qui ne sera plus utilisé désormais pour ces auteurs. D'un autre côté les corpus des deux littératures,

grecque et australienne continueront d'exister aussi longtemps que ces deux nations et ces deux peuples continueront d'exister également.

Dans tous les cas, la langue d'une manière ou d'une autre, constitue la principale composante de l'identité de la littérature car elle est constituée d'un code qui permet de refléter la réalité sociale, culturelle et historique. Cette relation dialectique entre le code linguistique et la réalité sociale, pose un autre problème: Comment un code linguistique grec utilisé dans la diaspora peut-il refléter la réalité américaine, canadienne ou australienne ou même grecque si, en effet, nous acceptons que le code linguistique exprime la spécificité sociale et culturelle d'un pays? Car même la référence au village planétaire global se fait à travers le code linguistique particulier utilisé. Comme l'écrit Eleni Torosi, «chaque langue fonctionne avec des images et des habitudes différentes»¹⁵. Or, pour se référer à Cornelius Castoriadis et le paraphraser, l'auteur existe à l'intérieur et par l'intermédiaire de la langue et la langue reflète l'histoire et la société. Mais quelle histoire et quelle société reflètent un auteur Grec de la diaspora? L'histoire et la société de la mère patrie en Grèce, ou le pendant du pays d'accueil? Ou peut-être les deux? Dans ce cas nous pourrions découvrir un aspect cosmopolite intéressant dans ses écrits.

En conclusion, la littérature périphérique grecque est une entité séparée, même s'il est difficile de la définir d'une manière précise. Mais, il n'y a pas de doute, qu'elle est en dehors des courants dominants de la littérature du pays d'origine et du pays d'accueil, exclue d'eux, méprisée par les establishments des deux pays. Elle est vue comme un phénomène paroissial. En réalité il n'existe pas une seule littérature grecque périphérique, il existe différentes littératures grecques de la périphérie. Ici, le critère géographique entre en action. Nous parlons de littérature grecque-américaine, grecque-australienne, grecque-canadienne. Dans ce sens nous pourrions considérer la littérature chypriote comme faisant partie de la littérature de la périphérie, même avec ses propres caractéristiques. Avec quelques exceptions, la littérature chypriote est vue aussi à l'intérieur du contexte de la littérature grecque comme un phénomène paroissial par l'establishment athénien. Mais la littérature chypriote a un dynamisme que nous ne trouvons pas dans la diaspora grecque car elle est le produit d'une société ayant son identité propre. Dans ce sens elle est une littérature autonome, comme le produit d'une société autonome.

Dans cette publication *d'Études helléniques-Hellenic Studies* nous présentons un numéro spécial consacré au portrait de la littérature grecque de la périphérie, comprenant des articles provenant des États-Unis, de l'Australie, du Canada et de l'Allemagne. Nous nous référons également à la littérature chypriote. Un article présente des femmes grecques, écrivaines de fiction et de poésie en Australie, au Canada et aux États-Unis. Finalement, un article d'un auteur grec-canadien aborde la question de l'origine ethnique et de l'identité de l'auteur immigrant.

De fait il existe des écrivains grecs dans beaucoup d'autres pays : en France, dans des pays Scandinaves, en Angleterre, dans des pays du continent Africain, dans les pays de l'ancien bloc soviétique, etc. Mais il nous était humainement impossible dans le cadre de la présente édition de présenter ce qui se passe dans tous ces pays. Néanmoins, une étude de la littérature grecque de la périphérie à travers le monde doit un jour être effectuée pour rendre hommage à ces gens qui travaillent et créent dans des conditions difficiles.

Georges Kanarakis dans son article présente les perspectives sur les réalisations littéraires de l'Hellénisme en Australie et la relation de cette littérature avec celle de la Grèce et le courant dominant de la littérature australienne. Après un survol de la littérature écrite en grec et en anglais par des immigrants grecs et leurs descendants en Australie, l'auteur pose la question de l'identité nationale de cette production. Il considère la langue comme le seul critère satisfaisant par lequel nous pouvons identifier une œuvre littéraire et aussi le corpus national de la littérature auquel elle appartient. Au sujet de la littérature des Grecs-Australiens, il conclut que tout ce qui est écrit en langue grecque appartient au corpus national de la littérature grecque et que des œuvres écrites en anglais appartiennent au corpus national de la littérature australienne. De plus Kanarakis pense que ceci constitue la règle pour ce qui est de la littérature écrite par des Grecs en général dans la diaspora.

Helen Nickas explore le thème de la mémoire dans l'œuvre de trois poètes grecs-australiens: Dimitris Tsaloumas, Antigone Kefala, et Yota Krili. L'auteur analyse les trois poètes en termes de leur dialogue imaginaire avec le passé et en termes de double vision attribuée à l'auteur immigrant. La mémoire, cependant, indique l'auteur, ne présuppose pas un flux spontané ou naturel d'images comme elle doit se construire par des auteurs créatifs et

inventifs. Ce qui est important à souligner chez ces trois auteurs est qu'ils sont bilingues, immigrants de la première génération, mais écrivant en anglais, et essayant de faire leur marque plus largement à l'intérieur de la littérature anglophone. H. Nickas conclut avec les mots du critique qui a écrit à propos de la collection de poèmes de Kefalas *Absence*, un des trois poètes qu'elle présente dans son article:

Il s'agit d'une ancienne vérité: l'inspiration requiert l'absence plutôt que la présence. Seulement quand quelque chose est loin, ou n'existe plus, il exerce de la pression sur l'imagination et appartient vraiment à l'auteur. La poésie n'est pas un engagement avec le présent, mais une médiation retardée sur le retrait de la présence. Chaque poème essaie de créer un monde dans lequel tout ce qui a été perdu pourrait être retrouvé de nouveau. Quelquefois les vers portent avec eux un peu du plaisir de l'écriture. Cependant, même le plus joyeux des poèmes ne peut totalement cacher le fait qu'il est le produit d'un deuil⁶.

Makis Tzilianos présente l'état de la littérature grecque aux États-Unis, insistant sur l'importance de l'utilisation de la langue grecque. Tzilianos, poète lui-même, considère comme écrivains grecs ceux qui s'expriment en grec. Les auteurs grecs-américains qui écrivent en anglais doivent être considérés, selon lui, comme des auteurs de l'Amérique elle-même et entrent en compétition avec les autres auteurs américains. Le même thème d'appartenance est également discuté par Thalia Tassou qui explore la situation des auteurs grecs-américains s'exprimant en anglais.

La littérature grecque-canadienne est explorée par Jacques Bouchard et Stephanos Constantinides. Bouchard se réfère aux poètes grecs-canadiens du Québec dont il a traduit des poèmes en français. Constantinides, après une brève présentation de la littérature grecque-canadienne déplore le manque d'études et de recherches sur les auteurs grecs-canadiens.

Niki Eideneier présente la situation de la littérature grecque en Allemagne. Elle fournit un rare survol envoûtant de la scène du début de la période d'après-guerre à aujourd'hui. Elle se réfère à la première génération d'auteurs et à ceux de la seconde, aux «éduqués» et ceux qui sont des «autodidactes»

issus des régions rurales. Elle met en évidence les difficultés des auteurs grecs en Allemagne à être acceptés par le courant dominant de la littérature allemande mais aussi par un courant similaire de la littérature grecque.

Ekaterini Georgoudaki discute des rêves et des difficultés de femmes grecques, auteurs de poésie et de fiction dans trois pays, l'Australie, le Canada et les États-Unis. En explorant leurs textes l'auteur considère qu'ils fonctionnent comme des témoignages de l'immigration et qu'il existe une variété de caractères, de thèmes et de techniques dans leurs écrits.

Pan Bouyoukas un auteur grec-canadien, écrivant en français, explore le thème de l'origine ethnique et de l'identité. D'une certaine manière l'auteur évoque la question de l'acceptation de l'immigrant ou auteur «ethnique» par le courant dominant du corpus de la littérature du pays d'accueil.

Par quelques réflexions plus que par un véritable article, Stephanos Constantinides exprime quelques pensées hérétiques sur la littérature chypriote et s'interroge sur sa place au sein de la littérature néo-hellénique.

NOTES

1. Georges Kanarakis, "Migrant Writing in Multicultural Australia: The case of the Greeks", *Etudes helléniques/Hellenic Studies*, vol.3, No 2, Automne/Autumn 1995.
2. G. Kanarakis, *op.cit.*, p.21.
3. G. Kanarakis, *op.cit.*, p.19.
4. Helen Nickas, "Greek-Australian Literature Between 'majors'", *Etudes helléniques/Hellenic Studies*, vol.4, No 1, Printemps/Spring 1996, p.77.
5. Alexander Karanikas, "Chapter in Ethnic Perspectives in American Literature" New York: Modern Language Association, 1983, p.65-89.www.helleniccomserve.Com/greek_american_literature.html. 72k
6. Giorgos Kalogeras, "H ellinoamerikaniki logotechnia os panepistimiako mathima: Mia protasi", in Michalis Damanakis kai Giannis Mitrofanis, *Logotechnia tis Diasporas kai Diapolitismikotita*, ("La littérature grecque- américaine en tant que leçon universitaire: Une proposition", in Michalis Damanakis and Giannis Mitrofanis, *Littérature de la Diaspora et Interculturalisme*), Rethymno, EDIAMME 2004, p.24.

7. Kalogeras, *op. cit.*, p.24.
8. G. Kalogeras, *op. cit.*, p.24-25.
9. Helen Nickas, "Greek-Australian Literature Between 'majors'", *op. cit.*, p.68.
J. Vasilakakos, *op. cit.*, p.189.
10. John J. Vasilakakos, "Mapping Greek-Australian Literature: a Re-evaluation in the Context of the literature of the Greek Diaspora", in Stephanos Constantinides, Maria Herodotou, *Greeks in Australia, Etudes helléniques/Hellenic Studies*, vol.7, No 2, Autumn/ Automne 1996, p.68.
11. John J. Vasilakakos, *op. cit.*, p.189.
12. John Vassilakakos, *op. cit.*, p.189-200.
13. Stephanos Constantinides, "I Taftotita tis Diasporikis Logotechnias" ("L'identité de la littérature de la diaspora"), in Michalis Damanakis kai Giannis Mitrofanis, *Logotechnia tis Diasporas kai Diapolitismikotita (Littérature de la diaspora et interculturelisme)*, Rethymno, EDIAMME 2004, p.18.
14. K. Th. Dimaras, *Istoria tis neoellinikis logotechnias: Apo tis protees rizes os tin epochi mas (Histoire de la littérature néo-hellénique: Des premières racines jusqu'à notre époque)*, Athènes, Ikaros, 1975, p.350.
15. Eleni Torosi, "Ta Chromata tis Glossas-Magika Symvola", ("Les couleurs de la langue-des symboles magiques"), in Michalis Damanakis et Giannis Mitrofanis, *Logotechnia tis Diasporas kai Diapolitismikotita, (Littérature de la diaspora et interculturelisme)*, Rethymno, EDIAMME 2004, p.92.
16. Hart, Kevin, «Absence: new and selected poems, by Antigone Kefala». Melbourne: *The Age*, 28/11/92, cited by H. Nickas in her article.

The Centre for Hellenic Studies and Research Canada-KEEK is pleased to announce that it has entered into cooperation with the Laboratory of Intercultural and Immigrant Studies (EDIAMME) of the University of Crete and the Post-Graduate Program "Cultural, Economic and International Relations in the Mediterranean", Department of Mediterranean Studies at the University of the Aegean for future publication of its journal, *Études helléniques/Hellenic Studies*. Further details will be available in our next issue.

Le Centre de Recherches helléniques Canada-KEEK annonce avec plaisir sa coopération avec Le Laboratoire d'études interculturelles et de l'immigration-EDIAMME de l'Université de Crète et le programme d'études supérieures de 2^e et 3^e cycles «Sciences Politiques, Economiques et Relations Internationales dans la Méditerranée», Département d'Etudes Méditerranéennes de l'Université de la Mer Égée, pour l'édition de sa revue académique *Etudes helléniques/ Hellenic Studies*. Plus de détails seront disponibles lors de notre prochaine parution.

The View from Down Under: Perspectives on the Literary Achievements of Hellenism in Australia and the Attitude of Greece

George Kanarakis*

RÉSUMÉ

La production littéraire des Grecs d'Australie révèle une histoire de presque un siècle, une grande série de genres, divers thèmes, styles et structures linguistiques et une quantité significative de créations littéraires de qualité variée tant en grec qu'en anglais, la deuxième catégorie se trouvant en constante augmentation. Malgré le fait que cette littérature forme un corps qui peut être évalué selon ses propres mérites, parce qu'elle est écrite en deux langues et s'adresse à des publics différents, elle ne constitue pas un corps littéraire en soi. Le critère déterminant de son identité nationale et le plus compétitif, reste la langue. Par ailleurs, l'attitude de la Grèce face aux réalisations de Grecs d'Australie et en particulier face aux réalisations des écrivains Grecs est caractérisée par l'ignorance et l'indifférence, attitude qui est d'ailleurs la même pour l'ensemble de la littérature de la diaspora. C'est ainsi que la littérature grecque de la diaspora est pratiquement exclue du corpus national de la littérature hellénique.

ABSTRACT

The literary production of the Greeks in Australia reveals a history of almost one hundred years, a wide range of genres, diverse themes, styles and linguistic structures, as well as a significant quantity and varying levels of quality, in both Greek and English-language works with the latter increasing steadily. Although this literature forms a corpus which can be evaluated on its own merit, it is not an independent literary body in itself because of the two languages in which it finds expression and the two linguistically different readerships it addresses. The determining criterion of its national identity and the best contender, among other criteria, seems to be language. Regarding Greece's attitude towards the literary achievements of Australia's Greeks and of the Greek writers of the diaspora in general, this paper reaches the conclusion that Greece is characterized by a lack of familiarization with the literary works of the diaspora Greeks and indifference concerning the inclusion of this Greek-language literature into Modern Greek literature hand in hand with the works produced in Greece itself.

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1. Introduction

Australia, apart from its indigenous people, is a country of immigrants. The presence of Greeks in Australia is the result of emigration not only from Greece itself but also from other lands where flourishing Greek communities such as Asia Minor, Roumania, South Africa and Egypt, had long ago been established.

In today's multiethnic, multilingual and multicultural Australia of 20,200,000 people¹ who derive from more than 200 different ancestries² and speak more than 214 languages, including at least 55 indigenous languages,³ Greeks have not only a noteworthy position quantitatively⁴ but have also made a significant contribution to the economic, social, political and intellectual life of their adopted homeland. Furthermore, the Greeks of Australia also brought with them their age-old tradition of literary expression (oral and written), as well as their love for literature, a genuine cultural and intellectual element of the Greek identity. It must be noted here that the literary creation of the Australian Greeks, despite shared origins and elements of Modern Greek literature, reflects a different character and tone than the literature of mainland Greece, thereby naturally exhibiting an identity of its own.

2. A historical overview

Over the past 100 years, the Greeks have developed a vibrant literary presence in Australia.⁵ Indeed, from a historical perspective the oldest evidence located thus far dates back to the end of the first decade of the twentieth century. It consists of oral poetic compositions. The primary reason for this literary manifestation was that most of the early versifiers came from Greek areas with a long-established oral tradition, as happened with the two first versifiers, Nikos Kallinikos and Nikos Paizis, both from the island of Ithaca.

In the first decade of this literature (1910-1920), oral poetry in Greek dominated, and while this decreased in the following decades, it did not die, especially if one considers the improvised compositions of immigrants of modern times, such as the Ithacan Stathis Raftopoulos, the Cypriot Haralambos Azinos and the Cretan Kostas Tsourdalakis.

The main characteristic of these early oral improvisations is that they were born and developed not in the isolation of the creator's room but out in the community, such as at family celebrations, public social gatherings and in the coffee-houses.

This poetry, of course, for the most part was neither pioneering nor especially demanding. It was unpretentious versification, the technical achievement of which was limited to the traditional rhyming line. Overall, it reflected little lyricism. Apart from any historical and any kind of literary interest, these improvisations have additional significance because of the social role they played in the Greek communities of the time, given the spontaneity, sincerity and enthusiasm of their creators to entertain their audiences or even to make social commentary rather than to pen lasting poetic works. After all, these were the very characteristics that made this literary genre very popular.

This oral poetry also has merit from a philological aspect as it provides the first expression of personal style and signifies the beginnings of the Greek literary presence in this continent of the South.

Correspondingly, in the written form the earliest published works were prose pieces (Greek-language short stories) by the Cypriot George Nicolaides,⁶ which appeared in 1913, two or three years after the first oral versifications and just twenty-eight days after the circulation of the newspaper *Afstralia*, the first Greek newspaper in the Antipodes.⁷

The year 1913 was a turning point for the literature of the Greeks in Australia because of the following four significant events: a) the first evidence of written literature, b) the first known prose pieces, c) the first published literary works, and d) the appearance of the Greek press which also provided a venue for the publication of poetry and prose works.

Two years later the first written although not yet published poetry would be added to the early literary tapestry of the Greeks in Australia. Its pioneer was the Ithacan lyrical poet and man of the theatre, George Paizis. Although his first poems go back to 1915, he started publishing several years later in 1922, in the Sydney newspaper *To Ethniko Vima* (The National Tribune), usually under the pseudonym "Thiakos". Many of his poems remind us of the Romantic School of Athens at the beginning of the twentieth century.

From 1922 the literary body expanded not only because of the increase in Greek immigration caused by the arrival of refugees from Asia Minor but also because of the dramatic events which occurred among the Greek population there at that time. There was also the new cultural atmosphere and dynamic spirit they brought with them. These new immigrants, often educated in the Greek schools of Smyrna and Constantinople, enriched the social, cultural and political life of the Greek communities in Australia with new energy and also introduced new subjects to this literature (the Asia Minor catastrophe, the destruction of Smyrna, the tragedy of the Greek refugees, etc.). It is from among these Asia Minor refugees and other Greek immigrants uprooted because of poverty and political upheaval that a new generation of writers appeared who conveyed new messages and expressed the feelings of the changing times. As a result, the late 1920s and 1930s witnessed the development of this literature in both quantity and quality, especially in prose which expanded from short stories all the way to autobiographies and travelogues.

By this time, a number of writers were consciously investigating, sometimes with impressive sensitivity, broader subjects beyond the confines of the Greek community. In addition, these writers frequently published their texts in the Greek-language press, while some of them forged ahead with publishing works in book form.

In sum, these years saw significant literary events: a) the publication in Australia of the first Greek-language literary book (the short story collection *Istories tis xenitias* [Stories of the Foreign Land] (1932) by the Athenian Homer Rigas, published in Sydney by the publishing arm, "Intellectual Beacon of Hellenism in Australia", of the newspaper *To Ethniko Vima*, b) the development and stabilization of the Greek-language press, a fact which encouraged the further writing of literary works, and c) the appearance of a few writers who for the first time wrote in both languages (Greek and English). Actually, some English-language texts even appeared in Australian publications, such as short stories by Anargyros Fatseas of Kythera in the Sydney periodicals *Woman's Weekly* and *Woman's Day*,⁸ as well as the earliest translation in Australia of Dionysios Solomos' "Hymn to Liberty" published in the Sydney newspaper *Sun* (5 March 1941) and poems by Costas Malaxos-Alexander of Phoenixas, Asia Minor, in *Black Swan*, the Western Australian periodical and in *Pelican*, the newspaper of the University of Western Australia.

In parallel with the traditional themes (*xenitia*, odysseic dream of return to the native land, love for the home country, community characters and life in the new environment, etc.) new subjects appeared.

Similarly, while many writers continued to use traditional forms, new endeavours were made in search of poetic forms not used in the past, such as the sonnet, with the main exponents Theodore Georgantopoulos from Akrata, who composed Greek-language sonnets, and the previously mentioned Asia Minor refugee Costas Malaxos-Alexander, who composed sonnets in English.

The outbreak of World War II had a very strong impact upon the Greek communities of the diaspora, including that of Australia. The heroic struggle of the Greek army against the Axis powers invigorated the patriotic feelings of the Greek writers in Australia and generated new subjects including the united struggle of Greek and Australian soldiers against the common enemy, the fall of Australian soldiers on Greek soil, and the resistance movement against the enemy occupation.

The literary production of the war and early post-war years includes poetry, prose (mainly short stories, travelogues, feature articles in literary style) and some literary translations, mainly short stories and poems from Greek into English and poems from English into Greek. Most noteworthy was the first poetry collection by poet Stathis Raftopoulos, *Eleftherias Apanthisma* [Anthology on Liberty] published in 1943, which circulated in Melbourne.

An interesting characteristic of the first post-war years is the appearance of prose writing for children in the Greek press, especially from 1950 onwards. In 1954 the first school text prepared especially for Greek children in Australia was published in Sydney. Entitled *Didaktika anagnosmata kai diigimata* [Educational Readings and Short Stories] it was written by Anargyros Fatseas, a Sydney resident since 1924, and contained poems and prose pieces written by him on historical, geographical, social and other subjects about Greece and Australia. It also included poems by eminent writers of Greece in the original, accompanied by his own English translation.

In general, during these years, many other works appeared in the pages of Greek newspapers. A general observation regarding the literary efforts of this period is that some interesting and impressive pieces (especially short stories) did make their appearance, but most continued being of traditional form and style and did not succeed in bringing about the much-needed revival.

The year 1952 became a turning point in the history of Greek immigration to Australia because of an agreement signed between Australia and Greece, according to which Australia would assist Greeks who wished to immigrate to this country. The result was a massive exodus of Greeks from all over Greece in the years which followed,⁹ a demographic event which, in parallel, on the one hand generated new vitality for the marked development of Greek literary production in Australia and, on the other hand, significantly increased the reading audience. In general, the writers appear more dynamic and more productive, and, for the first time, we have a broad spectrum of literary genres. The works (poetic and prose) vary from those of traditional form all the way to the purely experimental. In 1954 we also have the first novel, *Daphne Miller*, which was published in Greek in Melbourne by the Cypriot Costas Athanassiadis, who later settled in the USA.

In terms of poetry and prose in the English language, the last few decades have witnessed an exceptional increase and maturity. It is interesting that these works are written mainly by Australian-born individuals of Greek origin who write only in English, rather than by bilingual writers as happened in the past. Some notable contemporary exceptions are Dimitris Tsaloumas and the multilingual Aristides Paradissis, both of Melbourne, and Vasso Kalamaras of Perth. Furthermore, quite a large number of these poetry and prose works (Greek-and English-language) have been published by well known Greek, Australian and international publishing houses.

As mentioned earlier, the first initiatives in children's literature were made in 1950. However this field started shaping into a literary genre during the decade of the 1980s and a small but cohesive number of works in both Greek and English language has appeared ever since.

Thematically, the picture projected has become increasingly multidimensional. With the passing years, the themes of earlier times which derived from the traumatic experiences of immigration, have diminished dramatically, and more Greeks feel socially and psychologically more at ease;

hence they begin to feel themselves to be an inseparable part of mainstream Australian society. As a result, their subjects have broadened impressively, thus moving not only on an Australian level but also on a far-ranging international one.

Despite all this, it must be acknowledged that the flowering of the literature of the Greeks in Australia, especially since the 1970s, owes much to the encouragement and financial support of the official Australian policy of multiculturalism, as well as to the general multicultural climate that it sparked in the entire country.

In conclusion, viewing the literary creation of the Greeks in Australia from its first hesitant steps at the beginning of the twentieth century until today, we see it has expanded from a one-dimensional body of oral poetry of exclusively community content to a multidimensional Greek-and English-language literary presence, which is increasing steadily and significantly. In addition, this literature is constantly enriched by the influences and the literary vitality of Australia and by the unbreakable ties with the literary tradition of Greece, but also by international events and movements. It thus finds expression in a variety of genres within a broad spectrum of themes, styles, linguistic structures and ideologies. Moreover, it is more and more appreciated in Greece, in Australia and in other countries of the Greek diaspora, appealing to an increasingly international audience, as well.

3. The national identity of the literature

An overview of the literature produced by Greek immigrants and their descendants in Australia, in the past as well as in the present, leads us to an understanding of its historicity (almost one hundred years of active presence), quantity, range in genres, and diversity in themes and styles, and, obviously, different levels of quality, including works of acknowledged merit.¹⁰

In addition, this overview has revealed that this literature constitutes a corpus with its own idiosyncratic characteristics,¹¹ and one which sustains research, independent study and analysis.¹²

Following this conclusion, the issue which naturally arises is the determining criterion or criteria of national identity for this corpus of literature.

For this, a preliminary but essential point is that any literary text is written essentially for communication purposes – since the conscious or subconscious intention of a writer is to convey a message to his readers – and that communication is achieved only by the establishment of a direct link between the writer himself and the reader, that is the literary text which, in reality, becomes the act of communication between these two poles.¹³ In the same way, a body of literature can achieve its purpose only when the messages infused by the writer into his text are received and comprehended by the reader through this communication link. Therefore, the determining criterion of the national identity of a literature cannot be other than the medium which interlinks these three components – the writer, the literary text and the reader.

Since “literature is made of language”¹⁴ and communicated through language, addressing only those readers who share that same linguistic code,¹⁵ we are inevitably led to the realisation that it can only be *language* which establishes the necessary communication channel and which ultimately defines the national identity of the literature itself.

Indeed, the power of language is such that not only is it a shaping force of every literary text but it also shapes the creator of these texts himself. All writers, as individuals, are shaped linguistically, as well as culturally and psychologically, by the language of their social environment, because language becomes an integral part of one’s psychosynthesis and underlie emotions, attitudes and actions, thus helping to shape the whole, as well as a view of life and of the world as a whole.¹⁶ Language also interlocks writers with the linguistic and cultural roots and heritage of their people, binding them thus with the people who share that same language.

Any other criteria, such as themes or settings of the works, the writer’s place of origin, emotional ties with a country, the environment or the period of time in which he/she lives and writes, etc., cannot link the writer directly with readers because they are not a main communication medium in themselves. Therefore, although contributing, these cannot be considered as determining criteria of the national identity for the above mentioned purpose.

Furthermore, themes and settings are in no way the exclusive domain of any writer or of any national body of literature. On the contrary, anyone, of any nationality, can choose to write on any subject which may appeal to him and set his work in any part of the globe (as for example Patrick White, the Australian Nobel Prize-winning author, who wrote in Australia but set a number of his works in Greece), of the universe or, indeed, even in a non-existent fantasy land. Therefore, it is obvious that themes and settings alone cannot possibly determine the national identity of a literature.

In the same way, the writer's place of origin, environment, length of time he resided at a certain place, or even emotional ties with any country add to the richness of the texts by providing themes and a wealth of experience on which the writer can draw, but they function merely as stimuli and influences, remaining unvoiced ideas unless they find expression through a particular language, and are able to be communicated to the reader.

From the above we can conclude that the most satisfactory criterion by which we can identify a literary work and also the national body of literature to which it belongs, is language.

Finally, in this age of expanding globalisation one last aspect relevant to this discussion also merits consideration. With the increasing awareness and acceptance of the role of the «world languages» (with English the main contender)¹⁷, perhaps future studies of the world literatures will see a much larger and encompassing framework of classification based not on the limitations of geography, nation, ethnicity, culture, themes, etc., but on the linguistic code.

The future may well see literatures grouped according to the languages in which they are written, i.e. English-language literature, French-language literature, Greek-language literature, etc. These groupings would be based on the linguistic codes used by the writers, and they would indicate the reader's accessibility to the writings in that language, because of the knowledge of that language rather than because of national, cultural, geographical and historical criteria. This is not to say that the latter criteria do not deserve recognition. Such a classification could be diachronic and would override factors such as culture change, altered national boundaries, dramatic historical events, etc. It would also bypass the need to distinguish between

literatures as being metropolitan, mainstream, colonial, diasporic, immigrant, hyphenated (e.g. Greek-Australian, Canadian-French, Mexican-Spanish), etc.

4. The case of the literature of the Greeks in Australia

The next point logically arising in this discussion is the national identity of the literature created by Greek immigrants and their descendants in Australia. One of its characteristics, as has already been stated, is its dual linguistic identity (Greek and English). Indeed, a part of this literature — up to now the larger — written in the Greek language, and the other part increasingly in English. It is worth noting that the first part seems to be the domain of the first generation Greeks educated in Greece and the second part mostly by their children who are mainly Australian educated, although there are a few cases who have given us literary works in both languages.

Therefore, in spite of the fact that this corpus of literature can be examined on its own merit — just as, say Marxist or feminist writing can — it is not and must not be seen as an independent body of literature. On the contrary, because this literature appears in two languages, and also because the most determining criterion of its national identity is language, the national identity of a work is unavoidably determined by the language in which it is written. So, the writer who chooses to express himself in the Greek language, and as a result addresses exclusively the Greek readership, definitely binds his works to the literature of that language, i.e. he is doing Greek literature.¹⁷ This is ratified by a number of leading scholars in Greece. For example, among others, Professor P.D. Mastrodimitris, in his definition of the object of Modern Greek philology, states that Modern Greek works are “the literary works of Modern Hellenism written in the Modern Greek language”.¹⁸ Similarly, the eminent critic and historian of Modern Greek literature Professor Alexander Argyriou points out emphatically: “[...] a prose piece of creative imagination written in Greek does not need an additional argument to prove its (Modern) Greekness. Its identity is secured by the language in which it is written”.¹⁹ In the same spirit (referring particularly to the literary production of the Greeks in Australia) the philologist and linguist Nicholas Contossopoulos, former Director of the Centre for the Compilation of the Modern Greek Language Historical Dictionary (Academy of Athens), in one

of his articles wrote categorically: "It is, logically, unimaginable a Greek-language piece of literature written by a Greek immigrant in Brazil to be studied by the history of Portuguese-language written literature. This work belongs to the Greek-language production..."²⁰

Moreover, not only do these works in Greek, and those of the Greek diaspora in general, belong to Greek-language literature, but they also exhibit an expression and a tone, and introduce new settings and themes. Together they bring a new dimension to and enrich the literature of Greece itself with the intellectual and cultural mosaic of global Hellenism.

Following the same line of reasoning, the works written in English unquestionably contribute to Australian literature. Australian writers, both of Greek and non-Greek origin, concur with this. For example, the award-winning writer Angelo Loukakakis has written: "My contention is that Australian Literature means – or ought to mean – anything written in English in the way of prose or poetry by any persons who care to call themselves Australian, whether they are in residence or expatriated. It does not matter whether they have exotic surnames. Nor does it matter what they choose to write 'about'".²¹ Similarly, the literary editor and noted poet Robert Adamson wrote: "When I say Australian literature [...] I mean literature written by people who live here and write in English".²²

As with the contribution of the Greek-language writers to Greek-language literature, similarly the English-language works by people of Greek origin bring a new tone and a new dimension to the mainstream Australian literature.

An apt example which illustrates the above taxonomy is the case of the Greek poet Ioannis Papadiamantopoulos who was born and raised in Greece where he published his first and only Greek poetry collection *Trygones kai Ehidnai* [Doves and Serpents] (1878), which garnered him his place in Greek letters and, accordingly, he is represented in Greek anthologies and histories of literature. After this lone Greek-language collection of poems, according to the noted scholar K. Dimaras, "Papadiamantopoulos is getting ready to become Moréas, and soon will be lost for the Greek Letters".²³ Settling in France, for the rest of his life Papadiamantopoulos wrote in French, under the nom-de-plume Jean Moréas, achieving a place as a poet in French literature. Here, it is also worth mentioning the two independent

excellent monographs by Robert Jouanny, Professor at the Sorbonne on the work of Ioannis Papadiamantopoulos – Jean Moréas, dedicated to him one as “*écrivain grec*” and the other as “*écrivain français*”.

In the case of those bilingual writers of Greek origin, it is obvious that they contribute to both literatures. In other words, the Greek-language works belong to Greek literature and the English-language ones to Australian literature. With reference to this particular subject, Nicholaos Contossopoulos states briefly and clearly: “When a literary person writes in more than one language (like Solomos who wrote in Greek and in Italian), his works belong to the corresponding language of each work”.²⁴

However, there is a trend in Australia, regardless of whether it is in agreement with the principles of philology or not, to name any literary works written (whether in Greek or in English) by a person of Greek origin living in Australia “Greek-Australian” literature. By assigning such a label, we do this body of literature a disservice, as in effect we assign it a peripheral existence – neither Greek nor Australian – and thus imply that this literature so designated does not fully belong to either the Greek or the Australian national body of literature, and so is of marginal importance.

By this criterion, for example, Constantine Cavafy, one of the most renowned and influential poets in Modern Greek literature, who was born and lived in Alexandria, Egypt and wrote in Greek, should be considered as having done “Greek-Egyptian” literature, something which is unheard of! Similarly, the Russian-born Vladimir Nabokov, who lived and wrote (in English) in the United States, should be considered as having written “Russian-American” literature, or the Polish-born Joseph Conrad who lived in England and wrote in English, should be considered as having written “Polish-British” literature. Accordingly, Michael Pieris, Professor at the University of Cyprus, expresses courageously his antithesis to “combinations of the type Greek-American, Greek-Australian, Greek-German, Greek-Canadian, Greek-Russian, etc. literature” pointing out that “this did not happen even in the nineteenth century when even more valid historical reasons existed which one could adduce, but also there were more powerful peripheral writing personalities”.²⁵

However, there is an additional reason why the term “Greek-Australian literature” is not valid, both from a philological and a logical point of view and that it carries in itself the seed of its own destruction.

The term “Greek-Australian literature” presupposes the existence of Greek-Australian writers, but the matter is for how many generations can we consider these writers Greek Australians and at which point do they become Australians of Greek origin? Unquestionably, observing that in the last two decades Greek immigration to Australia has diminished to an insignificant level,²⁶ it is easy to understand that the term “Greek-Australian” has an expiration date. Nevertheless, there is no reason to believe that the literary writing of people of Greek origin will not continue, or that in the future it will not even increase, although, thinking logically, the time will come when this literature will not be known any more as Greek-Australian literature, since it will be a term not used for its writers any longer, while, on the other hand, the bodies both of Greek and Australian literature will carry on as long as these nations and people continue to exist.

5. The attitude of Greece

One final but not less important point regards Greece’s attitude towards the literary efforts and achievements of Australia’s Greeks. There is no doubt that the literature of the Greeks in Australia – like any literature of Greeks in the diaspora – does not develop in a vacuum. In the particular case of the Greeks in this country, this has developed under the constant geographical, socio-cultural, intellectual, historical, literary, linguistic and other influences, on the one hand, of Australia – the environment where the writers of Greek origin (especially the English-language ones) live and work, and on the other hand, of Greece – the place of origin from where the writers (Greek-language ones) carry with them all the characteristics mentioned above or with which they are endowed by their parents (regarding the Australian-born ones).

Of course, there is no doubt that the less assimilated the immigrant writer is to the new society, the more attached in sentiment and in memory he is to his native land, while the more assimilated he is to his new social environment, the more his subjects and even his style approach the new literary creative reality.

Regarding Greek-language literature in particular (not only of Australia but of the diaspora as well), what is noticed is that it has preserved all the main qualities of the neohellenic literature of Greece, while the writers themselves always have tried to maintain close contact with the literature and trends of the metropolis.

However, in this hard struggle the Greek-language writers of Australia and of the diaspora in general, have been engaged and at the same time they make tremendous efforts so that their endeavours and their talent are evaluated and recognised by the intellectuals in Greece, and their works to be published or to be included in anthologies in Greece. Unfortunately Greece itself pays little, or no attention at all, to works written beyond the boundaries of the metropolis! The surprising point here is that this lack of interest, evaluation and recognition of the literary works written by Greeks in Australia, or in other countries as well, is due not to their lack of quality but basically to the indifferent or condescending attitude of Greece itself towards the endeavours of the Greeks of the diaspora in general.²⁷ After all this is also strongly implied in the frequent subcategorisation of these works under labels, such as “immigrant literature”, “literature of the diaspora” (“diasporic literature”), etc., a clear suggestion that it is not considered as having status and value equal to the metropolitan Greek literature, something not found in Australia towards its writers living abroad.²⁸ Admittedly, this unfortunate mentality of Greece is partially due, in Manolis Yialourakis’ words, to the fact (especially when judging a work belonging to the past) that “[...] it is not enough for one to place it in its period and to evaluate it according to aesthetic criteria. He must identify himself with this”.²⁹ Of course, there have been a few, comparatively rare, cases of diaspora writers, such as Constantine Cavafy of Egypt, Nikos Kahtitsis of Canada and Nikos Calas of the USA who have gained a place in Modern Greek Letters, with their works included in school anthologies in Greece,³⁰ but these are exceptions to the canon.

This disheartening attitude of Greece towards the Greek writers of the diaspora and their works most probably derives from a general attitude towards Greek immigration, a subject which is today officially considered *passé*. After all Greece, in particular for the past few years, is seen as a country which receives immigrants and refugees, something admitted, even

reluctantly, by the Greeks of Greece itself. Finally, no matter what the influencing reasons, some scholars, such as Professor Ioannis Hassiotis, even argue that “[the literary production of the Greeks abroad] is a chapter of the history of contemporary Greek literature which has not been paid attention to by our philologists to the degree it deserves”.³¹

The above discussion leads us to the obvious conclusion that Greece needs to change its attitude towards the writers of Greek origin who live and work outside Greece. Actually on at least two key points:

- a) complete familiarization with the literary works written by Greeks abroad, and
- b) complete and equal integration of the Greek-language part of this literature into Modern Greek literature hand in hand with the works produced in Greece itself.

After all, thanks to its particular, idiosyncratic characteristics and qualities the literature of Hellenism in Australia, like that of the diaspora not only enriches the literature of Metropolitan Greece by making it more robust and multi-leveled, but also constitutes an integral element of the main trunk of the Greek-language literature to which it rightfully belongs, contributing notably in its turn to the latter's international prominence and prestige.

NOTES

1. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (*Population Clock*, Canberra [<http://www.abs.gov.au>]), the estimated resident population of Australia on 30 January 2005 was 20,254,585.

2. Australian Bureau of Statistics, *2015.0 2001 Census Reveals Australians' Cultural Diversity*, Canberra, 17/6/2002 [<http://www.abs.gov.au>].

3. Australian Bureau of Statistics, *1996 Census Dictionary. Section One: 1996 Census Classifications (Language Spoken at Home – LANP)*, Canberra, 3/7/1996 (updated 9/3/2001) [<http://www.abs.gov.au>] and Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Year Book Australia 2003: Population Languages*, [Canberra], 24/1/2003 [<http://www.abs.gov.au>].

4. According to the Australian census of 2001, there are 375,703 people of Greek origin in Australia, that is about 2% of the total population, or about 400,000-460,000 if we add first, the Greek Cypriots and second, the Greeks who emigrated to Australia from countries other than Greece.

5. For a diachronic study of this literature (Greek-and English-language) from its first appearance early in the twentieth century, as well as biographical information on the writers and an anthology of their works, see George Kanarakis, *I logotechniki parousia ton Ellinon stin Afstralia* [The Literary Presence of the Greeks in Australia], (Series: Studies, No.1), Athens: Institute of Modern Greek Studies, 1985 and by the same author *Greek Voices in Australia: A Tradition of Prose, Poetry and Drama*, Sydney: Australian National University Press, 1987 (rpt. 1991), and *Opsis tis logotechnias ton Ellinon tis Afstralias kai Neas Zilandias* [Aspects of the Literature of the Greeks in Australia and New Zealand], (Series: O Ellinismos tis diasporas, No.2), Athens: Grigoris Publications, 2003, ch.1.

6. George Kanarakis, *George Nicolaides: A Cypriot Page in Australian Hellenism*, (Series: Library of the Cypriot Diaspora, No.2), Nicosia: Presidential Commissioner's Office, 2003 [Bilingual].

7. Nicolaides' short stories appeared in the Melbourne newspaper *Afstralia* (Australia) his first story ("The aeroplane") published in the fifth issue on 4 July 1913. Also, for more information about the newspaper *Afstralia*, as well as its editor Efstratios Venlis, the father of the Greek press in Australia, see George Kanarakis, *In the Wake of Odysseus: Portraits of Greek Settlers in Australia*, (Series: Greek-Australian Studies Publications, No.5), Melbourne: RMIT University, 1997, p.62-83 and *O ellinikos typos stous Antipodes: Afstralia and Nea Zilandia* [The Greek Press in the Antipodes: Australia and New Zealand, (Series: Hellenism of the Diaspora, No.1), Athens: Grigoris Publications, 2000, p.25, 53-57 and passim.

8. Anargyros Fatseas also had English-language poems and short stories published in Greek newspapers and magazines of Sydney and Melbourne.

9. While in the period June 1952-July 1953 1,979 Greeks emigrated to Australia, in 1953-1954 they increased to 5,361, in 1954-1955 to 12,885 and in 1964-1965 to 17,896 (Department of Immigration, *Australian Immigration: Consolidated Statistics No.3, 1969*, Canberra: Government Printing Office, 1969, p.36). Although from 1971 the number of new Greek arrivals declined significantly, it is estimated that from 1950 until now they reached 250.000 persons (Kanarakis, 2000, p.46).

10. In the run of the years, there have been a number of English-and Greek-language writers (Australian-born and immigrants) who have been awarded prestigious prizes, the former in Australia and the latter in Greece, while several of their books have been published by Australian and Greek companies.

11. However, mainly because of lack of familiarity, sometimes there have been opinions expressed to the contrary from some sources in Greece. For example, the anthologist Renos Apostolides states in a letter to this writer dated 29 January 1986, "Of course, I don't see how a Modern Greek literature with a character of its own could develop there. Moreover, in-depth Modern Greek education does not function on our people there, and Australian life seems that either it does not inspire them or it does not have essential elements".

12. For a more detailed examination of this matter, see George Kanarakis, "The Literature of the Greeks in Australia: A Study of Its Identity and Development", in A. Kapardis and A. Tamis, eds., *Afstraliotes Helenes: Greeks in Australia*, Melbourne: River Seine Press, 1988, p.41-51.

13. See, among others, Michel Riffaterre's works *Essais de stylistique structurale*, Paris: Flammarion 1971 and *La production du texte*, Paris: Seuil, 1979.

14. M.A.K. Halliday, *Language as Social Semiotic: The Social Interpretation of Language and Meaning*, London: Edward Arnold, 1978, p.11.

15. Michel Riffaterre, "Criteria for Style Analysis", *Word (USA)*, 15 (1959): 157.

16. This finds most apt expression in Ludwig Wittgenstein's philosophical principle "The limits of my language mean the limits of my world" (*Tractatus logico-philosophicus* (transl. Thanasis Kitsopoulos), (Series: Philosophy – Sources, No.20), Athens: Papazissis Publications, 1978, p.110 [principle 5.6]) [In Greek]. Following the same train of thought the Australian Professor Sneja Gunew, now at the University of Vancouver, writes indicatively: "The way we think is entirely produced by the *language* in which we think. [...] Paradoxically, it is *languages* that speak us." ("Discourses of Otherness: Migrants in Literature", in Radha Rasmussen and Henning Rasmussen, eds., *Prejudice in Print: The Treatment of Ethnic Minorities in Published Works*, Melbourne: Centre for Migrant Studies, Monash University, 1982, p.49 [Conference proceedings, 20-22 November 1981]).

17. The subject of the national identity of literary works, unavoidably leads to the interlinked subject of the literary identity of the writers themselves. On this, the well known Greek-born writer Theodore Kallifatides, who has lived in Sweden for years now and writes in Swedish, in a interview he gave to Antonis Fostieris and Thanassis Niarchos for the Athenian journal *I lexi* [The Word] stated indicatively: "I believe that the writer's identity is, finally, language. [...] Therefore, the immigrant writer who stopped writing in Greek, without being cut off from the Greek society and language, certainly he cannot be placed completely in the main trunk of the Greek literature. [...] A Greek, yes, but not a Greek writer" ("Ta provlimata tis glossas kai i elliniki logotechnia tis diasporas" [The Problems of Language and the Greek Literature of the Diaspora], *I lexi*, No.110 (July-August 1992): 451, 452, 454).

18. P. D. Mastrodimitris, *Isagogi sti neoelliniki philologia* [Introduction to Modern Greek Philology], Athens: Papazissis Publications, 19762, p.23.

19. A. Argyriou, "To thema tis ellinikotitas stin pezographia mas" [The Subject of Greekness in Our Prose Writing], in D.G. Tsaoussis, *Ellinismos – Ellinikotita: Ideologikoi kai viomatiki axones tis neoellinikis koinonias* [Greeks – Greekness: Ideological and Experiential Axes of Modern Greek Society], Athens: Bookshop of "Hestia", I.D. Kollaros and Co., 1983, p.192.

20. N.G. Contossopoulos, "Problimata logotechnikis kai glossikis patrotitas" [Problems of Literary and Language Paternity], *Social Incisions* (Koinonikes Tomes) (Athens), Vol.6, No.60 (December 1994): 453.

21. Angelo Loukakakis, "A National Literature", *The Bulletin Literary Supplement* (Sydney), Vol.104, No.5372 (5 July 1983): 60.

22. Manfred Jurgensen and Robert Adamson, *Australian Writing 1988*, Ringwood: Penguin, 1988, p. xi.

23. K. Th. Dimaras, *Istoria tis neoellinikis logotechnias: Apo tis protes rizes os tin epochi mas* [History of Modern Greek Literature: From the First Roots to Our Time], [Athens], Ikaros, 19756, p.350.

24. Contossopoulos, 1994, p.453-454.

25. Michael Pieris, *Apo to mertikon tis Kyprou (1979-1990)* [From the Share of Cyprus (1978-1990)], Athens: Kastaniotis Publications, 1981, p.402.

26. As mentioned previously (fn. 9) Greek immigration to Australia started declining since 1971. In the period 1970-1975 25,040 Greek arrivals were registered, while in 1985-1990 3,740 (Bureau of Immigration Research, *Australian Immigration: Consolidated Statistics No. 16, 1989-1990*, Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1991, p. 21, Table 10), only 280 in 1993-1994, 187 in 1995-1996, 155 in 1996-1997, 111 in 1997-1998, 142 in 1998-1999 and just 99 (for the first time after World War II below 100!) in 2003-2004 (Kanarakis, 2000, p. 141 fn. 38; Kanarakis, 2003, p. 72 fn. 31; *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 November 2004, p. 1).

27. Regarding this point see also George Kanarakis, "Migrant Writing in Multicultural Australia: The Case of the Greeks", *Études Helléniques/Hellenic Studies* (Montreal), Vol.3, No.2 (1995): 19.

28. It is a fact that Australia does not segregate its writers who reside and work in other countries from the main body of its national literature. Examples which come to mind are, from past decades, George Johnston and Charmian Clift (both lived for several years on Greek islands where they also wrote some of their works) and from contemporary times, Lily Brett and Shirley Hazzard (both have lived in the USA), David Malouf (he has lived for a number of years in Italy) and others.

29. Manolis Yialourakis, *O Kritikos N. Kazantzakis* [N. Kazantzakis the Critic], Athens: Diodos, 1981, p.9-10.

30. For the first time prose pieces and poems of Greek-language writers of Australia and Germany were included in the 1996 anthology-reader *Ta helidonia* [The Swallows] (Part III) for the elementary school students in Greece of Years Five and Six, published in Athens by the State Organisation for the Publication of Textbooks.

31. Ioannis Hassiotis, *Episkopisi tis istorias tis neoellinikis diasporas* [Review of the History of Modern Greek Diaspora], Thessaloniki: Vanias, 1993, p.185-186.

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Re-Deeming the Past: Personal and Cultural Memory in Greek-Australian Poets.

Helen Nickas*

“Memory is the mind’s greatest theatre.”

Octavio Paz

RÉSUMÉ

Cet article explore le thème de la mémoire-personnelle et collective - dans l'œuvre de trois poètes grecs-australiens: Dimitris Tsaloumas, Antigone Kefala et Yota Krili qui ont émigré aux antipodes dans les années 50, ont écrit en anglais, et ont tracé plus largement leur marque dans la littérature anglophone. Ces trois auteurs sont analysés en relation avec leur dialogue imaginé avec le passé qu'ils achèvent en «construisant» plutôt qu'en se remémorant simplement leur passé. La diaspora comme espace de dislocation procure une place privilégiée d'où ils peuvent négocier ou dérouler les complexités du passé, qui «est une série des passés remémorés et imaginés, chacun dans un état constant d'argument et de flous comme: des passés privés, des passés familiaux, des histoires, des traditions culturelles». Tous ces auteurs, de différentes façons, sont très conscients de l'importance de la mémoire en tant qu'instrument qui leur donne la possibilité de se remémorer le passé. Le sens de la perte dans leurs écrits est profondément rédempteur, et comme nous l'avons déjà observé, «c'est précisément dans ce qui est remémoré de temps en temps par la mémoire» que leurs forces majeures se situent. Dans le travail de Tsaloumas, Kefala et Krili, nous reconnaissons que cette différence, le positionnement des Grecs en tant qu'«autres» du fait de leur appartenance aux Grecs de la diaspora en Australie, leur offre l'opportunité de voir avec un autre œil, avec la vision double, qu'on attribue à l'immigrant.

ABSTRACT

This article explores the theme of memory – personal and collective – in the work of three Greek-Australian poets: Dimitris Tsaloumas, Antigone Kefala and Yota Krili who migrated to the Antipodes in the fifties, wrote in English and made their mark within the wider Anglophone literature. These three writers are analyzed in terms of their imaginative dialogue with the past which they achieve by ‘constructing’ as opposed to simply reminiscing about, their past. The diaspora as a space of dislocation provides a vantage point out of which they can negotiate or untangle the complexities of a past, which is “a series of remembered and

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imagined pasts, each in a constant state of argument and flux: private pasts, family pasts, histories, cultural traditions. "All three writers in different ways are very conscious of memory as a tool which enables them to re-deem the past. The sense of loss in their writing is profoundly redemptive, and as already observed, "it is precisely in what is redeemed from time by memory" that their major strengths lie. In the work of Tsaloumas, Kefala and Krili, we recognise that their 'otherness' as diasporic Greeks in Australia, offers them the opportunity to see with (an)other eye, with the 'dual vision', attributed to the migrant.

Living and writing in the diaspora means inhabiting that space variously defined as 'a culture without a country' (Barkan and Shelton: 5), or a space which contains anything but '... a scattering of seeds [from a mother tree] capable of growth on distant soils' (Papastergiadis: 151). From a literary writer's perspective, Zeny Doratis-Giles likened her life, during the times of multicultural fever in Australia, as being "... in a caravan on the edge of Australian suburbia and be at the one time, inside and outside the action; able to look out from my special vantage point at the certainties of this [White, Anglo-Celtic] society." (Nickas 1992: 187) In other words, Giles recognised the 'otherness' of her situation as a diasporic Greek in Australia, but welcomed it as something which offered her the opportunity to see with (an) other eye: the 'dual vision', which Homi Bhabha attributes to the migrant. (Bhabha: 5)

All writers in a diaspora have a home somewhere else. In order for them to make sense of their present situation, they have to examine their past. Diasporic writers look forward by going backward. In order to do that, they employ memory, or *mneme* which, according to the dictionary, is defined as recollection; remembrance; recovery of one's knowledge by mental effort. *Mneme* is the opposite of *lethe* (or *lismonia*, in demotic Greek), which is, to forget. In some cases of diasporic writing, *lethe* may be more important than *mneme* and it is often employed intentionally, in order to forget the past. Or, in some cases, *mneme* is used as 'in memory of'; to keep alive the remembrance of something, or to keep a record of what deserves to be remembered.

Memory, however, does not imply a spontaneous or natural flow of images or facts. It has to be 'constructed' by inventive and creative writers. The diaspora as a space, which a literary person inhabits, can be a very 'productive' space, a vantage point, like Giles' caravan in suburbia, out of

which writers can negotiate or untangle the complexities of a past. As Liam Davison observes, memory involves an «ongoing dialogue with the past – not with one past but with a series of remembered and imagined pasts, each in a constant state of argument and flux. Private pasts, family pasts, histories, cultural traditions... Always there is a sense of the presence of the past...» (Davison: 6) This imaginative dialogue with the past, however, must also ring true. While one can claim that all writers speak of the past and use memory to reconstruct or re-invent it, diasporic writers construct pasts which do not bear any resemblance to that of the majority of readers in the country in which they live and where they are likely to be read. This fact actually makes these writers more interesting. By ‘remembering’ a past unknown to most, they invite comparisons and reflection.

To the title of this paper then: “Re-deeming the Past”. My hyphenation of the verb indicates an emphasis on ‘constructing’ as opposed to simply reminiscing. The dictionary’s entry for redeeming gives us the following: to recover; to reclaim; to rescue; to reconsider; to rejudge. This is what diasporic writers do. And, in particular, this is what poets do. As Octavio Paz has stated in his book, *The Other Voice*: “Poets have been the memory of their peoples. Homer sang of the deeds of a heroic age and told of what took place many years before.” (p.115)

The three Greek-Australian poets treated herein all ‘sing’ of their origins, albeit in multifarious ways, but all three are the finest exponents of the art of ‘re-deeming’ the past for our pleasure and edification, comparison and reflection. They are: Dimitris Tsaloumas, Antigone Kefala and Yota Krili. The commonalities among them are, first, geographical. All three have their origins on the fringes of the Greek world: Tsaloumas is from Leros near the Asia Minor coast; Kefala from Braila, Romania (from where she then went on to another fringe – New Zealand – before finally settling in Australia), and Krili from a small village in the Peloponnese. Second, they came to Australia/the Antipodes in the fifties: Kefala first to New Zealand in 1952, and to Sydney, Australia in 1960; Tsaloumas to Melbourne in 1952 and Krili to Sydney in 1959. Third, Tsaloumas, Kefala and Krili belong to the category which we loosely call ‘first-generation’ writers, meaning that they were not born in Australia but came at a later stage. English is therefore not their native tongue. Yet, all three do use English (either exclusively or intermittently) as their language of expression. This group of writers is

similar to that in America (and Canada, I may add), which is described by Karen Van Dyck as those authors who fall “between languages and cultures, either in the sense that they lived and wrote in more than one language, both English and Greek, or that they used the cadences, idioms, or syntax of one language in the other.” (Van Dyck: 188) Among such writers we can distinguish Stratis Haviaras, Olga Broumas, Smaro Kamboureli, Irini Spanidou, just to name a few.

This so-called first-generation of writers in Australia is, typically, dominated by writers who were *unwilling* migrants, forced to leave their home for political or economic reasons. All three experienced, to varying degrees, the consequences of events in the forties in Europe and Greece, such as war and persecution, while Krili also experienced the poverty-stricken rural life of the fifties. It is often claimed that there is too much sadness expressed by so-called ‘migrant’ writers; that they don’t feel at home in the country where they live. Germaine Greer claims that this is something endemic to ‘Australian’ culture: “The problem is that we’re not at home. We always think of using the country as if it existed for an ulterior motive,” and what’s more, claims Greer, “We hate this country [Australia] because we cannot allow ourselves to love it. We know in our hearts’ core that it is not ours.” (Greer: 7) This kind of concern, while obviously a valid one, especially in white Australia’s relationship with the land, is often expressed (by mainstream critics) with a kind of impatience about an inability to ‘snap out of it’ and embrace the new. However, in the case of new immigrants from non-English speaking countries, the problem lies elsewhere. It is true that most of the first-generation immigrants from Greece imbued their writing with much sadness and nostalgia. Their writing – mostly poetry – was looking back, either as documentary evidence or ‘singing’ in the old folk tradition. This is a standard process, considering the circumstances of their migration. Nonetheless, their writing is useful not only in sociohistorical terms but also as a means of ‘cultivating’ the mother tongue outside Greece.

The three writers chosen in this paper, are treated in terms of their *imaginative* dialogue with the past.

Dimitris Tsaloumas

... there hovered in the background demanding, insistent, resentful, the old forsaken world, haunting an ever-deepening perspective, forcing comparisons, providing standards, offering wisdom.

Dimitris Tsaloumas, "The Distant Present".

Tsaloumas arrived in Australia in the early fifties to escape persecution on his island from the local gendarmerie for his leftist views and activities. Arriving in Melbourne in 1952, Tsaloumas immersed himself in study, work and a new family, keeping little contact with the Greek element for more than a decade. Despite having had two poetry collections published in Greece before leaving, he did not begin writing again until 1963. Forty years later, he is still writing (in Greek and English) and has been the recipient of many prestigious awards for his poetry.

Geographical and cultural dislocation of the self forms the basis of this poet's work. Despite the fact that over the past twenty-odd years he has been writing a plethora of poems not all directly connected to the theme of a 'home' elsewhere, the experience of exile most certainly continues to inform and shape his work. Indeed, it is this very characteristic of Tsaloumas' poetry that Australian critic Judith Rodriguez found early on as the most interesting and valuable in his work: "A Greek poet must come to terms with his past and his present... Maybe this is the generation [Tsaloumas' generation] in which the anatomy of past and present can be better appreciated in our arts". (Rodriguez: 146) However, if social reality is what might be expected from such a poet, it will be sought in vain. As has been often observed, Tsaloumas is not a writer of the 'migrant' experience, but there is in his work "a desire for evocation, of *Mneme* as against *Lethe*." In his work, "exile means to 'inhabit' outside the limits of a prescribed geographical space... A traveller between spaces, histories, cultures and languages..." (Bellou: 162)

In order to evoke rather than realistically depict a past, Tsaloumas explains that he concentrates on two key aspects of his situation in Australia: distance and isolation, which have had an enormous impact on his work as a poet. In addition, Gillian Bouras (an Australian writer who experienced migration in reverse, by going to live in Greece), recognized Tsaloumas' emotional state:

“In trying to settle in the new world of Australia, Tsaloumas, like so many others, was haunted by the old... The deeper he penetrated into his new world, the more insistent and obsessive the shadows of his other life became and, in the end, the more significant.” (Bouras: 234)

This deep loss felt throughout his work is, of course, not of the melodramatic kind. He fights a nostalgic construction of the past through an extensive use of irony, a tool which checks any excessive sentimentality that the characters and speakers in his poems may be feeling. Even in his earlier poems, as the following example indicates, there may be at first a recollection of an idyllic island life only to be deflated by the ironic last three lines:

Temptation

In the middle of my brain, in the yard, a plum-trees
tands, open in bloom like an April window.
A yellow-beaked blackbird, jacket collar up,
swings on the Easter-vigil bough.
The colour on the flagstones in blossom.

With the books heaped on the floor
and winter jobs unfinished, I think again of seas,
of island neighbourhoods, of cornpatched hills.

The Book of Epigrams, p.179

Tsaloumas, as Australian poet Margaret Scott has noted, is an ‘exile’ as well as an ‘explorer’ of the migrant condition. (Nickas 1999: 97) He presents us with a wider, more complex view of his situation by not just looking back with nostalgia, mourning the loss of a past gone for ever. The poet checks himself constantly by dispassionate looks at past and present, providing many different perspectives on the experience of migration. Or he employs various personas, rendering his poetry polyphonic and multifarious. Through personas such as that of the ‘hypochondriac’ in the poem below, the poet reflects on the past:

The poets who, singing in bygone ages,
extolled immortal love, and the prophets
who heard God's voice from the scaffoldings
of the world, never knew the depression that is ours
who, locked up the whole day,
study the woodworm in the cavities of time.

("Observations of a Hypochondriac 10" *The Observatory*, p.5.)

The sense of loss, so profoundly expressed, is also redemptive. As Jena Woodhouse observes: "... while the realisation of loss may seem complete and final [in Tsaloumas' poems], it is precisely in what is redeemed from time by memory that one of Tsaloumas' major strengths as a poet lies... In his poetry, memory is not something hampered by nostalgia but an active, vital, shaping force." (Woodhouse: 194) The poem below illustrates this:

Eighth Poem

A small marble-wind of March
goose-pimpling the softest flesh
past barriers of yielding
pear-blossom.

From so many spring-cleanings
a minimum of rescued things,
a sprig of green smile and
chamomile sleep of old men
in pine wood sanatoria —
minimal comfort
in the austere azure of your eyes
the sterile sky.

"A Rhapsody of Old Men", *The Observatory*, p.103

Tsaloumas speaks of the past as essential baggage which would assist him in his life away from home. As he poignantly states: "I gradually realised that wherever one goes, the *City* truly follows, that whatever I saw and experienced in the wide world could only be made meaningful by reference to the microcosm of my island years. It was as though I had packed into my suitcase all that was necessary for me to build the rest of my days on..." (Tsaloumas, *Meridian* 2000: 72) And this is obviously what he does best, as Bouras observes: "The fine poetry of Tsaloumas, the result of much careful and persistent digging with his pen, makes us see that the pattern results from the weaving of two realities. This can only happen when the past is excavated and the present examined..." (Bouras: 239)

Digging for *language* is also one of the most significant functions manifested in Tsaloumas' work. While most writers who never left their country of origin write in their own native language and, one would assume, in a natural and automatic way and not using memory consciously, Tsaloumas states that "his main symbol for his poetic activity... is the falcon drinking." (Tacey: 189) He describes the falcon as 'a rapacious, greedy bird' which drinks '...at the stone-trough/hard by the spring of language'. (in his *Falcon Drinking*, p.44)

Living away from the home country where his native Greek is spoken means that memory for Tsaloumas involves *remembering* language by delving into the recesses of the mind. He did this for many years when he was writing poems in Greek (1963-1983). He did not use the Greek which is spoken today in Greece as he had not much contact with it. Instead, he dug up the language from his unconscious, thus keeping it, in a sense 'pure', not 'tainted' by the 'Europeanized' language of today, as Stathis Gauntlett has found. (Gauntlett: xviii) A look at any of his Greek-language poems will attest to this.

In addition, Tsaloumas is "a Greek... who had acquired early in his life deep resources of language which he hoarded like prized treasure." (Philip Grundy: 172) Konstandina Dounis has found this to be true in his Greek collection *The House with the Eucalypts*, where "one can 'taste the salt'"; more over, "This is a world of winds and shadows; their ethereality, their transcendence underlining this 'fluidity of the senses' that the poet has cited as being the precinct of the exile, the synaesthesia used throughout serving to poignantly highlight this." (Dounis: 202-3)

Tsaloumas used the language of his formative years in Greece in order to write several volumes of poems until the early eighties. But then, the issue of 'language' became a complex, intellectual dilemma. While he chose English, he did so with a deep sense of betrayal which he rationalized by saying that a divided life can only be expressed in two languages. To switch languages is, however, an impossibility for most. This accounts for the small number of Greek-speaking writers of the diaspora who have written in the language of the 'host' country. Most of those who migrate as adults rarely switch to writing in the host language.

Even though Tsaloumas has been writing in English since the mid-eighties, the same themes and preoccupations can be found in his English poems as in his Greek poems: the past is omnipresent. As John Barnes aptly points out: "As Tsaloumas came to English so late in his life, it is perhaps not surprising that age and memory are so central to his English poetry. 'Within the ribs/of this cage all song is memory, all praise/regret,' says the speaker of 'Portents'". (Barnes: 214)

Tsaloumas has also been using English (a non-native language) as a means of distancing himself from his subject matter. English gave Tsaloumas the distance or the perspective he needed to write about the past. So one can only agree that writing in a non-native language 'lends clarity' to his poems. English must also have a liberating effect, of which Stratis Haviaras also speaks: "I feel freer outside of Greece to write... America is large... you can expand and extend yourself." (Wallace: 36) The use of English as a distancing tool, coupled with the geographical and temporal distance from the place and the particular event, help to achieve a credible result: "Distance lends clarity to perspective; it sharpens one's perceptions..." has been repeatedly claimed by Tsaloumas. (Nickas 1999: 34)

In the poem "Anniversary" (in the collection *Exile*), geographical and temporal distance, but also the use of non-native language, turns the memory of a horrific experience into art. Again, we can refer to Haviaras, whose family's experience in Greece was a harrowing one. He said that "... the experience [of evil] was so banal... [as in *The Banality of Evil*] that it didn't even lend itself to prose. I wrote poetry instead, which veiled things." (Wallace: 36) In the following poem by Tsaloumas a childhood memory of a horrific war-time episode becomes a redemptive work of art:

Anniversary

(Battle of Leros – November 1943)

We both laughed that time
when I stepped off the back gate
above the stony ditch into the dark
and the dead soldier's gut,
who lay ripening like a fig
in the off-season heat of those
late autumn days.

That was fifty-four years ago,
too long a time you might say
for any stench to endure. Yet though
I've discarded my boots since
and washed my feet clean,
it has established itself in cavities
within the porous soul —
a standard, so to speak, by which
all smell and flavour's judged,
degree of pungency and smoothness
of sauce and condiment
or fragrance of woman's flesh.

A conquest surely, though that night
we laughed the way youth does
at things beyond its speech,
and maybe this boast can now be made
because words age tough, their touch
too coarse for the silk thread
into the maze back.

Yet as I write
a rose, brother, a big red rose
burns on his livid cheek
and I think of you in its glow
and hear sweet voices singing

that could be angels in the trees.
For nothing stirs abroad
on this bleak night but leaves,
and the ditch is full of rain.

Stoneland Harvest, p.133

Distance, clarity and wisdom are often words used by critics when referring to Tsaloumas' poetry. If, according to the ancients, wisdom comes after much suffering, then Matt Simpson speaks of wisdom in Tsaloumas as possessing an eye which is, in turns "compassionate", 'tearful'... Sometimes searing with pain... Always it is a living human eye, one educated by suffering..." (Simpson: 228) Tsaloumas' wisdom can be found in his balanced, considered approach which gives all the complexities of the exilic situation and makes his work stand out. The following poem (from his collection *The Barge*) exemplifies Tsaloumas' ability to express, in artistic terms, the "... sense of separation from the source of one's very being", to use the poet's own words. (Tsaloumas, Meridian: 72)

Conflict

Strange that in the native heart
of this unending summer
there should be another land,
and that this land should abide
where the mind fades
into a greyness,
like the monstrous continents
of antique maps with plants
and beasts unseen before
in the worn margins of the parchment.

Often this land moves out
of that far vagueness
into the light, precise and sharp,

to claim dominion
 over these regions of older truth.
 And then the day divides in strife,
 and broken marbles,
 split mirror ikons, shift around
 seeking perfection.
 Like a judge in fair detachment
 I sit to match them as I can
 and probe the ways of arbitration.
 But long before the session ends
 the continent begins to drift
 back into greyness,
 leaving the heart of summer to beat
 in a void of absence.

(The Barge)

Finally, for poets like Tsaloumas, language can also work as a distancing tool, but in reverse. In the last ten years or so, Tsaloumas has been spending half of the year in Greece, on his native Leros, and the other half in Melbourne at his beachside home. The effect on his writing has been that he writes English poems in Greece and Greek poems in Australia. In order to 'remember' the past, he needs distance: "... distance lends clarity..." is what he keeps repeating whenever asked. The latest collection by Tsaloumas, which is exclusively in Greek and titled *Paratiriseis Ypochondriakou B'* [Observations of a Hypochondriac B'], consists of poems which he wrote in Australia. But while this book was being produced in Athens (Sokolis, 2003), Tsaloumas was already at work, on his balcony at his house in Leros, writing in English for his next poetry collection to be published in Australia.

Antigone Kefala

*What if...
we forgot who we are
became lost in this absence
emptied of memory...*

“Coming Home”, *Absence*, p.86

Antigone Kefala, who was born in Braila, Romania, could be described as the quintessential diasporic writer having never lived in Greece except for a short period in the late forties, as a child of a refugee family from the Greek diaspora. From the fringes of the Greek world, she arrived with her family in antipodean New Zealand in 1952. For Kefala, the concept of ‘home’ was problematic. Born in Romania of Greek parents, she knew that Romania was not ‘home’ even though she spoke its language like a native. In that country, people like her were referred to as ‘Greeks’. As a child, she fled with her family to Greece in the late forties, but Greece was a foreign country: she had never visited it before and she knew its language imperfectly. There, people like her family were referred to as ‘aliens’ and kept in refugee camps. In New Zealand, she experienced a totally different culture to any of those she knew in Europe but had to learn its language (English) and live within, but also outside, its Anglo-Celtic culture. There, people like her, were referred to as ‘refugees’. Finally, in Australia, where she has settled since 1959, she moved perhaps a step closer to Europe, geographically and culturally (if we consider the mass migration of southern Europeans to Sydney). Yet she did not become an ‘Australian’. An Australian was of white, Anglo-Celtic descent, so Kefala did not fit in this category either. In Australia, people like her were referred to as ‘aliens’, ‘New Australians’, and later, ‘NESBS’ (Non-English Speaking Background), ‘ethnics’ or ‘multiculturals’.

All the above suggest a state of a perpetual *lack* of belonging. She was always disconnected from her past, and nothing around her reminded her of it. So in her work, the past is a constant presence, through memory. Her sadness – as is the case of Tsaloumas – is of a more considered, intellectual and imaginative kind. The title of her latest poetry publication is *Absence*, while a great many of her poems bear titles such as ‘The Alien’, ‘Memory’,

'Wayfarers', 'The Promised Land', 'Crossroads', 'The Place', and several others. The antipodes, which England and then Europe used as a dumping ground, is ironically named by Kefala as 'Promised Land'. But in her fairy tale, *Alexia*, the eponymous heroine shows that she has descended on a metaphoric 'underworld', where, paradoxically, she must try to survive. What will save this protagonist is memory. If she forgets, like Persephone, she will not be able to return. In this work, the 'mythical' island (New Zealand) where Alexia arrived with her refugee family, is not just a country of 'lotus eaters', but as her musician brother remarks, a country of 'resonance eaters' (p.70) So keeping the idea of 'home' alive, and the connection with a more 'civilised' past, becomes of the utmost importance to the protagonist.

All the above clearly supports Elizabeth Gertsakis' observation that "... she fulfils outright the *colonial condition* as woman, refugee and newcomer." (Gertsakis: 7) But, of course, Gertsakis goes on to examine Kefala's poetry beyond "these nominal observations", and finds that there is in it a constant evocation of death. (p.22) This certainly colludes with the idea of the antipodes as an underworld. There is a voice in Kefala's work which seeks to find meaning in a meaningless world. This duality can be better illustrated in the following passage:

... For there were always two inside. The one that moved and laughed, cried and was angry, had attitudes and demanded things and was stubborn in wanting... And there was the second one. The one that undermined every effort towards an involvement. The one that dwelt somewhere at the roots of my being and knew with an absolute certainty that everything was futile...

The First Journey, p.39

This motif of duality is reiterated in Kefala's work and provides a kind of balance, whether in her poetry or her 'poetic' prose works (a fairy tale, short stories and novellas). Alongside this, there constantly seems to be an effort to find optimism. Kefala has repeatedly stated that optimism is needed by any migrant if he/she is going to survive. (Nickas, 1992: 229) Seen in its totality, Kefala's work forms a long, discursive narrative of memory. The main story tellers in her narrative are the adolescent Alexia and the adult

Melina. Kefala also uses other story tellers like Aunt Nikki who tells the story of the past, or aspects of the past which Alexia or Melina do not know. A key element in all her narratives is the status of the characters as refugees, first in Greece and then in New Zealand. Being a refugee seems to have had a lasting influence on her work. For example, the orphanage used as refugee barracks in Sounion, Greece, is imprinted in the narrator's mind:

“... the memory of this place that I carried with me for many years afterwards. Sombre, the sound of the wind in the high trees, the view of the open sea, and the small scraggy trees on the hill near the chapel where I was trying to memorise my ancient Greek texts, ‘Ekastos anthropos...’

We were thrown suddenly into this claustrophobic place, waiting in long queues for food... always an acrid smell rising out of it...

In the dormitories we were separated from other families by blankets... Narrow spaces that were constantly divided to make room for more refugees. The civil war had started up north.

Summer Visit, p.87-88

The above scene is repeated, in various forms, in Kefala's poetry and prose; the uprootedness from home; arriving in Athens and living there as refugees for two years. In her poem “The Place”, she recounts the story of the refugees being ‘selected’ for emigration to more ‘accommodating’ countries: “Bidders, in markets for flesh/untouched by the taste of the coffee...” (The Place”, *Absence*)

Kefala's writing is about journeys, revealing constant shifts in time and place. She writes as if with the fear that if her tale is not told, the past will be obliterated. She is a bridge maker, connecting past and present. In her novella, *The Island*, set in the New Zealand of the 1950s, the narrator is unable to comprehend the inhabitants' emphasis on the present, instead of on the past. This issue of the past's importance is explored in detail in the

following passage, where Melina, the central character, talks about her boss Erik Gosse and his kind of 'work':

He was doing research at the time for a book on the people who had come to the Island, in mythical times, in the big canoes... He spoke of his theory with which he was trying to revolutionise the attitude of the country to its past. He claimed that in order to understand history, one needed a type of vision that only people placed at the crossroads could provide. That is, people who lived between cultures, who were forced to live double lives, belonging to no group, and these he called "the people in between". This vision, he maintained, was necessary to the alchemy of cultural understanding.

It was a limited hypothesis, he agreed, useful maybe only in a country such as this, in which only now were they beginning to take an interest in their past. But not quite yet, so obsessed was everyone with the future, bringing up their children as if nothing had gone before them, so that they ate and imagined that no one had eaten before them, and they built houses as if no one had built before them. Each generation that began here lived fanatically with the idea that it marked the start of the road.

The Island, p.36

And another space in *The Island* where the past is examined is in the family's kitchen:

We are in the kitchen making coffee. We speak constantly of the past, the distant past, the family. None of us remembers very much of the old life, we have been on the move for so long, changing places, leaving behind all the objects that would have been a tangible proof of their existence.

Everything from the past now an unplaced, mysterious story we have been telling each other. But now that the older generation had gone, the past had become more fluid, at ease with itself, nostalgic. It had lost the set positions it seemed to occupy before, when formed by actual experiences, hurts, everyone locked in brutal events that had coloured their reactions.

The Island, p.52

The younger characters in Kefala's works are constantly surrounded by family and friends whose past, as Melina's mother states, was "... here to torture us all the time." (p.56), or "Today we looked at photographs... (p.74)

In contrast to the new country in *The Island*, where the inhabitants' emphasis is on the present, in "Summer Visit", which is about a visit to Greece, the narrator marvels at how people view the past there: "Here, the everyday relates constantly to the past, you hear them asking: 'What did the ancients do? The reference point.'" (p.60) In Greece, the narrating protagonist appreciates the way Greeks there view the past as "... something that feels infinitely familiar. It is as if one can see where one has come from and where one is going..." (p.61)

Recounting of dreams is also an essential part of the narrative in Kefala's work. Dreams are an integral part of the story. "The past that we could revisit in dreams..." (p.107) The narrative is a complete story, not just through the conscious mind and words, but the unconscious, reflecting the protagonist's troubled existence: "... the nights were full of dark, agitated dreams." (*The Island*, p.124)

An exilic existence involves 'human frailty': "Their [the exiles'] memories cannot sustain them in the present, and the poem ["Memory"] depicts a sense of human frailty which is apparent in Kefala's poetry as a whole." (Michelle Tsokos: 57) The past, when 'retrievable', also seems to provide real 'sustenance' for the poems' speaker: "... we feasted on the past" ("The Place", *Absence*). The word 'feasting' of course suggests that the speaker is looking not just for sustenance but for fulfilment and pleasure.

The whole collection of poems in *Absence* implies a lack. The past, the home and homeland are all missing. There is also real fear about loss of memory in so many of the poems. Memory is vital in keeping the past alive. The speaker in the poems relies on memory for sustenance, for making the connections with the past. Where she lives, there are no reminders of the past back in Europe. The fear of memory loss is expressed most evocatively in the following poem:

Coming Home

What if
 getting out of the bus
 in these abandoned suburbs
 pale under the street lights,
 what if, as we stepped down
 we forgot who we are
 became lost in this absence
 emptied of memory
 we, the only witness of ourselves
 before whom
 shall the drama be enacted?

Absence, p.86

Kefala moves from memory of a past connected with her family and herself, to the importance, or the universality, of memory as a tool against forgetting, against *lethe*. The narrator in “Conversations with Mother” ponders humanity’s persistence not to be forgotten by posterity. Upon seeing a documentary on the pyramids in Egypt, the narrator remarks:

This persistent, overblown desire to make something that
 will outlast us, be eternal, live in time, extend us, this
 struggle against death, our fragility, leaves in the long run
 only images painted in a dark tomb...

I was always so aware of how ephemeral we are, was telling you [mother] then, I was afraid that when I touched something it would disappear under my hand.”

“Conversations with Mother” (*Summer Visit*, p.105)

There seems to be an existential angst about the impermanence of the human condition. Kefala expresses not just her fears but humanity’s fears of its fragile and precarious presence in the universe. It is a fear that we will leave no trace behind us. Memory is vital then in keeping the past alive, in re-deeming the past for posterity, even when knowing how futile that may be. Our whole life, Kefala seems to be suggesting, is a fight against oblivion, against nothingness. This is evident too in her noticing of all the statues in parks: “... I felt closer to understanding why people have always built statues. The reassurance of a human body in the middle of the trees, the ability to bring to life by some direct, palpable means, someone that has gone.” (p.112)

Similarly, when the narrator meets a Greek from Limnos at the cemetery, her thoughts embrace the universal fear about impermanence:

Who knows where we are coming from, what race we are, if any race at all, moving on to a land, building a set of narrow truths, like a fence that will sustain us in this hopeless, terrible, magnificent enterprise that is our life? From nowhere to nowhere, passing on this folklore to one another, making a past out of it, a science, an art, anything that will help us survive, anything out of this desperation at being annihilated that we feel constantly. (p.115)

In Mary Zournazi’s interview with Kefala (*Foreign Dialogues*), Kefala describes her position as a writer outside Australia’s mainstream literary activity: “... I have already travelled through many cultures and I am always standing by the roadside.” (p.46). This seems to me awfully similar to Giles’ “caravan on the edge of Australian suburbia” and I have the feeling that while Kefala may lament being in such a position, in *literary* terms she should not regret that one bit.

Yota Krili

"Let us not allow the dead to be killed".

(Epigraph in Y. Krili, *Triptych*, p.80)

Yota Krili and Dimitris Tsaloumas share a common experience in having been high school teachers for a large slice of their lives in Australia. Ironically, both taught English to Australian children. In her own writing, however, Krili uses language not as a distancing tool but as a connecting tool or bridge by writing her poems in both Greek and English, either in parallel form or sometimes English first and then Greek. This is obviously an ability cultivated over many years, a pleasurable and satisfying task, as well as a right which she exercises in multicultural Australia.

Herein I discuss her poetry book *Triptych*, "a spiritual journey" as Vrasidas Karalis has aptly called it. *Triptych* consists of three groups of poems, reminiscent of the Byzantine tradition and the triadic form. An epigraph, chosen by the poet for the second group of poems titled "Memories", reads: "Let us not allow the dead to be killed". This epigraph poignantly indicates the poet's sense of obligation to resurrect the past and to honour it by immortalising it. Her writing is a process of remembering through language, images and experience. Her personal memory of people, places and events in her native Arcadia in the Peloponnese ultimately translates into cultural memory of a long gone rural life in Greece.

Having lived away from Greece since 1959, the Greek language is not natural or automatic for this author. Also, due to the geographical distance from where the mother tongue is spoken daily, Krili has to reach deep within the recesses of her subconscious for the language of her formative years. Just as Tsaloumas has to do, Krili re-invents the Greek language by creating a form which is purer and closer to the experiences she recounts. Krili is the creator of memorable images of rural life in Greece, helping to immortalise a time for ever gone. As Helen Koliass comments, her poetry is "marked by striking images." (Introduction, *Triptych*, p.6) Metaphor is a powerful tool of her craft, often transforming sociopolitical comment into memorable images. In a long poem titled "The Seasons", Krili does more for rural women through her powerful and striking images, than she would through wordy protestations about women's hard life in rural societies: "Women

carrying huge loads of hay/on their backs, moved like giant tortoises.” (p.92)
On the other hand, far from being gloomy about women’s hard life, Krili also depicts the rural woman in a positive light as provider of sustenance, a universal human experience. The images of the ‘mother’ sensitively reconstructed in the three poems, which follow below, attest to this:

The Cheese Maker

My mother
worked the churn at the crack of dawn.
Milk’s anguish, granular butter
we were waiting like fledglings
and scoffed down the slices of bread
covered with the thick fresh cream
sprinkled with sugar.

(p.102)

The Weaver

A warp like a river
our mother rolled on the loom’s beam
and in the long, serene winter nights
fed her dreams with the fast flying shuttle.

(p.105)

The Gardener

When the swallows returned
she would work and rework the moist soil
of the garden into a fine texture
and lay each seed like a baby in its crib
whispering magic spells.

(p.106)

There is something timeless and ‘profoundly true’ in the above images and Anna Couani has aptly commented that “Memories” (the second group in *Triptych*) “is a magical part of the book filled with clear and limpid images from the poet’s childhood in the village ... where nature is blooming and abundant ... like a beautiful Bruegel painting.” In fact, in viewing some of those paintings by Bruegel after having read Krili’s poems, one is struck by the truthfulness and authenticity of both works.

Krili depicts “time-honoured activities associated with the life cycle and the changing of the seasons...” as Helen Kolas has also observed. (Introduction, *Triptych*, p.7) It has to be said that if these rural scenes were not recorded by Krili’s generation, they would be lost since life in countryside Greece has diminished and what remains has changed drastically. The present rural environment no longer allows the creation of folk songs such as those which enrich Krili’s poems. Despite having been an inner-city dweller for more than forty years, Krili shows a deep understanding of the rural landscape. Her evocative descriptions of village life also reflect the poet’s preoccupation with the problems of the world and indicate her concern for the degradation of the natural environment. In writing about rural life from her present perspective, Krili is not unlike Dimitris Tsaloumas, who has found that distance from a place gives the ability to write with more clarity.

While the poems in the group titled “Memories” collectively give us the story of rural life in Greece, there is one narrative poem in the book titled “Portrait of a Woman” (*Triptych*, p.150) which depicts, at a first level, the poet’s mother, but which extends beyond the personal memory to a collective memory making her mother a symbol of rural life. This poem is also an evocation to the lost mother who is dead but resurrected through memory by an appreciative daughter.

In this poem, the daughter sees her mother not only as her own mother, but as a product of a long patriarchal tradition and culture. Memory in this poem is given through a feminist consciousness:

Portrait of a Woman

She was born before the dawn
of a bloodthirsty century
in a village perched on the limbs
of an Arcadian mountain
guarded by the country chapels
of four stern male saints.
Girls were not registered at birth
but that year was marked
by the war of 1897.
A deserving daughter
pliant and diligent;
hard toil became her halo
from the age of three
a mother to her mother's children.

(*Triptych*, p.150)

Krili powerfully delineates the history of rural women in Greece: marrying very young, becoming mothers to their mothers' children, becoming servants to their fathers and brothers, not receiving the nurturing and love they needed because women were not valued in their culture. The following lines may further illustrate this point:

She used to say
"God gave me only two children."
The girls did not count
fate had cheated her.
She taught her daughters to be obsequious
to venerate the men
who lorded over the household.

(p.152)

The daughter-narrator in this poem remembers what it was like not receiving love and affection from a mother who was steeped in the male traditions of the village and who, unwittingly, propped up the very system which oppressed her as well as most women of her time. In this kind of environment daughters were considered a burden.

The above poem offers a resolution at the end whereby the mother and daughter metaphorically 'find' each other. This is when the daughter visits her mother, who is by then 83 years-old, and tells her of her divorce and her new independent status. The mother does not disapprove: "Good on you, my daughter! I could never have done such a thing myself/ I lived in hard times', she said wistfully..." (p.154)

In the above poem about her mother, as in "The Seasons" and many other poems in *Triptych*, Krili makes vital connections with the homeland and its rural past. This is not nostalgia for some idyllic past. Rather, these poems are a poetic evocation, a hymn and a tribute to the life of women in earlier times. These women are omnipresent in our lives today through memory. From the 'living archive of cultural memories', Krili employs memory in order to validate the experiences of her mother's generation; to re-connect past and present, urban dwellers with rural ones, an element missing in many younger writers who are often eager to see modernity as an erasure of the past." (Nickas, Introduction in *Triptych*, p.10)

Krili's poems on the mother (and the village) reflect a need to make, or remake, the important connection with our beginnings, proving that the bond between the daughter and her mother who gave her life is an all powerful one.

In conclusion, as is amply illustrated in the work of all three poets, the past is imaginatively constructed and re-deemed for us. Kevin Hart's comments below, taken from his review of Kefala's book of poems, *Absence*, seem to encapsulate the essence of all three writers and their poetry:

"It is an old truth: inspiration requires absence rather than presence. Only when something is far away, or no longer exists, does it press upon the imagination and truly belong to the writer. Poetry is not an engagement with the present, but a belated meditation on the withdrawal of presence.

Every poem tries to create a world where what has been lost may be found again. Sometimes verse carries with it a little of the pleasure of writing. Yet, not even the most elated of poems can wholly disguise the fact that it is a labour of mourning.”

Hart’s description of Kefala’s poems as a ‘labour of mourning’, colludes with Kefala’s expression of fear about losing memory and “forgetting who we are”. But as long as poetry continues to be written, there is no fear of forgetting ourselves. We had better not, at any rate, for as Octavio Paz states, “if human beings forget poetry, they will forget themselves.” (Paz: 160) Diasporic poets perform the task of remembering with a greater sense of responsibility so that the act becomes a matter of sheer survival. Through them and their writing, we gain optimism.

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The State of Modern Greek Literature in North America

Makis Tzilianos*

... However, for many years we know that Cronos dined with the flesh of His children; he spits out the bones and we sprout immigrants...

Helen Floratos-Paidousi

ABSTRACT

The following article offers a brief overview of the Greek-American immigration experience as an introduction to Modern Greek Literature produced in the United States. The author looks at the situation from a passionate, personal perspective as he stresses the different types of immigrant, the linguistic struggle of second-generation Greek-Americans and the role of the Orthodox Church within the community. A writer/translator himself, the author concludes with a plea for more study of Greek-language literature produced in America or other English-language countries. The names of several key authors and some extracts are provided.

RÉSUMÉ

Pour mieux contextualiser la littérature de la diaspora hellénique aux États-Unis, cet article fait un survol rapide de l'immigration grecque depuis le XIX^e siècle jusqu'à nos jours. D'un point de vue personnel, empreint de sa passion, l'auteur traite des thèmes tels la nature de l'immigration, la lutte pour la survie de la langue grecque parmi les enfants de la deuxième génération et le rôle de l'église orthodoxe dans la communauté. Il présente les auteurs les plus importants et quelques extraits poétiques. En guise de conclusion, l'auteur, qui est écrivain et traducteur aussi, lance un cri de cœur pour l'étude et le rayonnement de la littérature grecque créée en Amérique du nord et dans d'autres pays anglophones.

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Greek Immigration to America

The Greeks began immigrating to the US in significant numbers around the middle of the nineteenth century. They originally arrived with the label 'Levantine'. At the turn of the twentieth century, the independent Greek state with its efforts of nation building, made Greece a European nation, and its inhabitants were accepted as Western Europeans. With the easing of American immigration laws, communities were established in western Florida, for example the sponge gatherers in the Tarpon Springs area. By the end of World War I, Greece was a respected modern nation, poor but rich in history and culture. A large merchant marine fleet was the pride of the Hellenes, although many of its ships were flying foreign flags. After the defeat in 1922 of the Greek army in Asia Minor, Greeks concentrated on the tip of the Balkan peninsula, abandoning their "Great Idea". The population expansion of the thirties, together with the two million refugees from Asia Minor after the population exchange, made living conditions difficult, so many sought refuge at sea. As a result, seamen's meager but consistent wages were sent home to support extended families. Others chose to head for the United States in search of the American dream.

During World War II, the Greek sea expertise was used to transfer goods and war materials to the Allies from America to England with rewards of compensation for the danger. Many of these seamen now found ways to immigrate to America. Others came from Greece as legal immigrants, a salvation for the starving Greek farmers and workers because of the destruction left by World War II. Later the transport of wheat for Northern Europe involved the risky Transatlantic crossings. In Canada and the US, Greek manpower filled in factories and railroad yards. Hence, the Greeks established themselves in the Western Hemisphere as seamen or manual labourers. After World War II, Greek shipowners transported oil from the Middle East. Despite the fact that Washington was cautious about immigration, men and women were permitted to stay as workers if they married American citizens. In this way they could obtain early citizenship without facing quota restrictions on the entry of their relatives. It is worth remembering that the main desire of most immigrants was to bring over their relatives. The Orthodox Church soon followed.

By the end of WW II, Greek immigration reached its zenith. Just before the Greek Junta in Greece, a stream of educated and highly skilled Greeks

arrived on the North American continent, in American or eastern Canadian cities, seeking better employment opportunities. Although the first Greek immigrants of the early twentieth century were not highly skilled or educated, their children often rose up the ranks in various sectors.

In the late 1960s, after the American-backed Junta took power in Greece, a second wave of educated Greek immigrants came, regardless of their political beliefs. These new immigrants did not mix easily with the older wealthier immigrants, who feared Communism and other progressive ideas. The newcomers were independent, for unlike their predecessors, most already spoke the language of their adopted country before attaining immigrant status. They were also better skilled and more readily employed. Whereas the first immigrants had sought an identity by working on church councils; later immigrants were proud of their Hellenic heritage, but to considered the Church of ceremonial value only.

Some of the newcomers were free thinkers and some kept their mother language including talented writers who wrote creatively in their native Greek. Their writings reflect how this Greek population possessed a culture and literature based on its daily pains, struggles and efforts — first for survival and then for identity. For many of them, Greek identity is retained mostly through language rather than through Christian Orthodoxy.

The Cyprus conflict, for instance, was one of the themes that generated revolutionary poetry. The message of the seventies resounded: "let Cyprus be free". In short, there is a half a century's worth of writers in North America. Note they were working outside of any school classification or any ten-year cycle, as is commonly accepted in mainland Greece.²

Who and Where Are the Writers?

This presentation highlights the writers *expressing themselves in Greek*, who seek to perpetuate the language in America and who live among the ethnic Greek-speaking neighbourhoods within major urban centres. This means that we are defining a literature written in Greek although perhaps translated into English. Most writers and poets live in New York City, while others reside in San Francisco, Chicago, Los Angeles, Boston as well as in parts of Texas. These are cities in which they can earn a living from other trades,

since writing cannot support them. Their literary contribution thus comes from a hobby that fills their leisure time while fulfilling their need for expression in Greek.

The published or unpublished Greek Writers in America are legion; however, statistics show that over 500 books have been published in the last 50 years. Below is a quick list of those writing in Greek in the United States. These writers express a full gamut of ideas and emotions including nostalgia, cultural stances and their immigrant lives. At times bitter, at times philosophical, most are not pious. Some may feel piteous for being immigrants, cut off from their homeland; hence they describe their new surroundings, compare old and new customs, make adjustments, but are not lethargic in the Christian sense of turning the other cheek. They walk along without bending to fate, without whimpering. Instead they stand up and work — work hard and successfully in this famous melting pot. Some may say it is admirable that they speak and write in Greek. Indeed, they are proud of their past, their origins, their language, the Greek way of their daily lives on American soil.

Individually, either in prose or poetry, the Greek writers in America have their preferences, either in traditional or free (modern) writing, in poetry. Their narrative in novels covers such subjects as:

- immigrant experiences (Vana Kontomerkou, Dionysis Kontarinis);
- the seaman's life (Gabriel Panagiosoulis);
- daily Greek-American life (Theano Papazoglou-Margari, Eleni Paidoussi, Giannis Michalakis D. Tsamoulis-Nedas, Petros Livaditakis,);
- memories of their previous life in Greece (Dimitris Diamantis, Lili Bitá, Regina Pagoulatos).

Others chose to express themselves in plays, either dramas or comedies with Greek or universal themes (Giorgos Giannaris, Dionysis Maravegias, Makis Tzilianos). Others have penned essays on art (criticism) or history (Giorgos Giannaris, Nikos Spanias, Rigas Kappatos, Regina Pagoulatos, Dimitris Moustakis).

Still others have produced satirical verse and essay-chronicles, for example, D. Georgopoulos, Theodosios Athas, and Nikos Tzanaios.

Lastly, many writers especially in New York have translated works from English or Spanish into Greek. This is the case for Theodoros Giannakoutis, Rigas Kappatos, Theodosios Athas and Makis Tzilianos. There are also essays on Greek *belles lettres* written by Giannis Antonopoulos, Giorgos Giannaris, and Arnakis, K. Tsirpanlis, to name but a few.

There are also several Greek literary magazines (quarterlies) circulating in the US: For many years the bilingual *ATHENE* was published in Chicago. *The Argonaut* had 3 yearly large issues in New York by Ziogas and Babis Malafouris. There is also *The Hellenism of America* in NYC, and recently *New Hesperia* in NYC. The Greek dailies *Atlantis*, *Proini* and *National Herald* have published Greek literary works as well, and there are still others published weekly or monthly like *Kampana*, and *Eseis*.

A Taste of the Modern Greek-American Literary Tradition

To savour Greek-American literature, one could sample the poetry of the last half of the twentieth century. Note that poets of this period belong to the generation of immigrants who arrived after World War II. Given the usual space limitations, only a few could be presented here, in English. These poets represent the breadth of themes and styles of Greek-American poetry. Some highlight their Hellenic heritage while others do not.

Here is an extract from the work of Theodosios Athas (Lynaïos), who wrote for freedom.

*Here, it does not have an Angelos Sikelianos
here it does not have a Madonna and Icons....
Here it does not have equinoxes
with poles the day of Easter
and the name day of St. Demetrios*

Here it has 365 faithful copies of the day Naught
(Songs of the season of silence)

Not to be missed is the Nikos Spanias, the poet *maudit* who reaveals a certain existential anguish.

*Frequently, his face and his eyes
Were red by drinking.
Frequently he was seized by a desperation
So great like a chasm of earthquake on his chest
From where two flowers of March were trembling.
His luck was favorable
And he desired to have deep feelings
Like in the "ode to the moon"*

(Dionisios Solomos).

Quoted at the beginning of this article was Eleni Floratos-Paidoussi, whose work shows her social sensitivity.

*I renounce the sacrificial lamb the seared plastic entrails the
acrid odor of Dionysian orgies the lethargic Pnyx (from where
Solon was banished) I renounce the cymbals
the anthems of the Atlantic Alliance imported waves of
stereophonic nausea rock and roll bog (the little black pupil in
Little Rock, Arkansas still haunts me).*

(First Person Singular: Ten Poems)

This is a sentimental example from the poet-writer Rigas Kappatos.

*My father at 83 years old makes deliveries.
He takes flowers to their recipients.
Confessing, he tells me how much he loves the flowers,
those huge perfumed bouquets of many colors,
or the oversized pots that he carries in his arms.
My father got old.
My father lessened.
and I am saddened tonight that I have remembered him.
I bring him to my memory and then I lose him.
I see bunches of flowers to go by themselves
from street to street, slowly,
to turn the corners in tired pace,
to climb the bushes at the bus-stops
conveying an emptiness,
an absence.*

(For my father at his 83 years)

Georgos Giannaris is yet another poet who observes the human condition.

*Our house for security was built without windows.
Only the roof in the middle
Had a round opening above the hearth.
Through there the rain,
The wind, the sun and God were commuting.
The birds passing over
Were casting dung on the hearth. And there was peace.
Today an airplane imitated the birds...*

(Unfinished letter from a Vietnamese Boy)

Regina Pagoulatos versifies her sharp wit.

*There is nothing new
just old things
wearing a coat of newness
the cloak of today's world.
Brass beds
and wicker chairs
are now in fashion.
Hatred as old as man
is camouflaged
in philanthropic institutions.
The dove of Peace
is caught in line-twigs
by the merchants of death.
And in my child's first love
I live my own again.*

(From the collection *Pyrrhios*)

In this example, Antonis Decavales describes his nostalgia.

*At eight in the evening, properly humble, I went
With movements harmonious and restrained
Poured into the prototype of fear,
With a landscape of devotion on my eyelids,
All as was shown me with much circumspection
By the last mirror:
The kissing birds on my belt buckle,
Whatever of my chest might be revealed
Arranged in the image of unfaithfulness,
A slight fragrance of narcissus
On my earlobes; I went
At eight in the evening
With a small sheaf of papers soaked in sin
To the dreadful encounter with judgment –
But found that the god had gone
On one of his honeymoons.*

(From the collection *Nimule-Gondokoro* 1949)

Other poets came to the US after World War II and belong to the first generation. Their themes have to do with their condition in their new country, the nostalgia of Greece, and especially the sensibility which results from the social and physical environment and from what is going on around the world, e.g., the peace movement, anti-colonial struggles, antiracist and feminist demonstrations. They are influenced by traditional poets like Palamas and Varnalis, and the modernists, especially Cavafy, Elytis, Seferis. Among these Greek-American poets are Persa Varsa-Paraskevopoulou, Carmen Karka, Panos Vozikis, Loucy Marouletti, Makis Tzilianos, Georgios Skoularikos, Yota Stasis, Christopher Agritellis, Spiros Darsinos, Lili Bitá, Dionysis Maravegias, Polykarpos Kyriakou, Stathis Gourgouris, Orestis Varvitsiotis, Dimitris Dolios, Georgios Koutoumanos, and Nikos Alexiou.

Of course, there are many more poets involved in groups in Chicago, New York, Washington, Boston, and elsewhere in the USA, like D.E. Valakos, Nitsa Kappa, Sp. Milios, Nikos Laidis, John Ntellas, Giannis Kalogiannis, Leonidas Stellakis, Kostas Karkatsoulis, Theodoros Giannakoulis, Christos Tsiamis, Dinos Siotis, A. Maskaleris, Giorgos Chouliaras, Nikos Korkidis, Despina Vlachos, and Kostas Efkarpidis.

The Greek Language in America Today

Today, the Greek population of the North America continent has reached three or more million people. This population supports many Greek daily or weekly newspapers and daily radio programs. They network daily with other Greek-speaking individuals, who are exasperated by the indifference of Greeks who are losing their identity. They are frustrated with the Church's attitude which puts language aside and tries to save through the Orthodox faith alone³. They ask the following basic question: Why has Greece entrusted the education of Greek-Americans to a religious organization that lies outside Greek borders?

Mainly because it was *Greek* Orthodox. A Church in the United States is a non-profit cultural organization whose purpose is to spread the "word," i.e., the New Testament. It is unconcerned with the preservation of the Greek language. Yet for Greeks in the United States, religion and ethnicity remain intertwined. Originally, the immigrants enabled the Greek Orthodox

Church to establish itself, purchase real estate and prosper. The language which united the immigrants is fading out. The recent creation of the SAE (The World Council of Hellenes Abroad) will not save the Greek ethnic element abroad.

The Greek language is fast losing its ethnic element. We are not worried about the language and culture of ancient Greece. They do not need any modern guardian to survive as Americans have kept and adopted the works of ancient writers in translation (together with the original texts) word by word as their own western culture, whether in science, medicine, philosophy, literature or theater, the libraries, the universities, and their own home with a set of encyclopedia. It is modern Greek that needs help. Today, first and second generation Americans of Greek descent speak little or no Greek either in their daily routine or in their homes. This is particularly evident where mixed marriages are involved. Due to the need to mix with other ethnicities and earn a living in a melting pot like New York, the only Greek they might hear is in the church psalms. To aggravate an already sad situation, the psalms are often sung in American English, instead of Greek, in order to attract more people to church services.

Last but Never Least, Literature

Although modern Greek writers in America are few, their works form the capital or heritage of the Greek presence in America. These authors and poets will become modern guardians of a "Greek heritage" in America.

However, the contribution to modern Greek literature by writers in the USA is underestimated by both homeland and American Greeks. Most academics of Greek origin or educators involved in Greek studies at the Universities fail to appreciate the value and power of the American literature in Greek.⁴ Such academics may lack the knowledge or confidence to introduce little known writers into the curriculum; moreover, such a step may not be advantageous to their careers. In Greece, American-based writers using Greek have been underrated because judged not by their writing but by the work they do to earn a living. Most Greek-American writers are self-taught, have no affiliation to any school and pay to publish their work for no profit. Since these writers do not belong to any Athenian group, their

work is not yet accepted in the Athenian literary journals. Basically, the Greek writer in America is not judged by his merits or his historical place, but by whom he may happen to know.

How can the work of Greek writers in America be maintained as an ethnic literature if there are no means and ends to promote this literature?⁵ It is a true dilemma as Greek-Americans are increasingly alienated from the very language in which this literature is written. This leads to the rarely asked question: Will the broader society ever recognize the Greek-American writer as its poet or writer? Perhaps, but only if his works are translated some day. However, Greek American writers who write in English must be considered as writers *of America*, not as Greek writers *in America*. The example of Geoffrey Eugenides springs to mind immediately.

Do these writers continuing in Greek have the stamina to compete in the broader competitive English language? Only time will tell. Regardless of the future, Greek writing in America must be recognized as a historic fact for it expresses the beginnings of a large group of immigrants before they started to be absorbed into the greater faceless American society. One could try to compare Greek literature in America with the Jewish or Latino literatures which began as immigrant literature and have blossomed in the US. There is also the example of a healthy Italian-Canadian literature. There are obvious similarities in terms of a writer choosing Greek, Yiddish or Spanish, respectively, over English. However, various differences, such as the broader Shoah literature, and Chicano or Tex-Mex hybrids, as well as the difference in population age and size, prevent any truly quantitative comparison or further discussion here.

Regardless of future assimilation of Greek immigrants, twentieth century Greek literature in America remains a historical fact that will endure. Let us hope that as a powerful expression of modernity, it will overcome the obstacle of the interests of the Greek Orthodox Church in America and that the future Greek State will indeed incorporate it into a broader definition of Greek literature.

All in all, it is high time that literature in Greek, be it a literature developed in the USA and Canada⁶, or even elsewhere in the English-speaking world, be included in university courses and promoted wherever possible. Otherwise, we may soon be discussing the archeology of a distant Greek literature in America.

NOTES

1. The Greeks were not in the US immigration quota for they were considered Ottomans under Turkey's yoke.

2. The Egyptian Greeks did not follow the Greek examples of the homeland's as Cavafy proved to be independent of any influence of his period; he followed the British admiration for anything Greek in the arts of the present and future. He did not care what the Greeks considered art then. While the English world was admiring the "Grecian Urn" or the vast steps of the "Ozymodias", in Greece, Drosinis, Poet and general secretary of culture in Athens, promoted the simple childish poetry.

3. Even the Greek immigrant, by not having any connection daily with his tongue, isolated in his daily endeavor to survive, little by little forgets his language.

Thus, for example, in 2003, the Archbishop Dimitrios after the Greek Parade on Fifth Avenue, said in an interview on Greek TV (in Greek), has the freedom to speak of "Orthodoxy parades". What he did not see was a magnificent Greek parade of about 100,000 people marching from all walks of life. He did not see that these proud marchers carried blue and white flags. The tired immigrant, hearing it, had no way to object and no ability to react.

In 2004, on the Greek language celebration day (30 January), the Archbishop spoke in front of the Greek representative (Under-Secretary of Culture) in English rather than in Greek. Instead of celebrating the Greek language, he showed a film about the return of the Hierarchs' bones to Constantinople, from the Pope of Rome, so that Greek language day became a 'human remains day', in the basement of his Cathedral in NYC. Unfortunately, the modern Greek State did not find this odd.

4. Of course, much of the writings are not worthy of publication, especially some poetry by people who think that rhyming words create poetry and songs or the acceptance of a letter in any daily newspaper make writers of prose. Professional literary researchers have never bothered to look for the real literature written by the immigrants in America and Canada. In addition, the Greek Ministry of Culture never cared to assess the quality of this literature. The Ministers come and go, spend their time in receptions, and never go out of their way to discover who are the keepers of the Greek language in America. The Church does not smile upon the writers in Greek who do not comply with the Church's interests and the Clergy's respect.

5. In October 2003, the University of Crete, which is also the Greek Institution that is responsible for the elaboration of education material in Greek for the children of the diaspora, had a conference on Greek literature abroad. At the conference, a

discussion took place on which texts of this literature, could interest these children in learning Greek. The Institution published an anthology with literature created by writers living overseas, in the children's societies.

6. Similar studies have been made in Australia by Dr. G. Kanarakis, Dr. Helen Nickas and others, and to a lesser extend in Canada and Dr. Evangelos Mantzaris in South Africa. In the USA this field is virgin and still untouched. Language researchers and Americanists have made studies of writings in English by Greek Americans, e.g., Dr. G. Kalogeras. However, writing in English or on Greek themes does not imply that this is Greek literature in America. We return to the problem of definitions.

Questioning Greek-American Literature

Thalia Tassou*

The Greek language was neglected by the Poseidonians,
Mingling for so many centuries With Tyrrhenians, Latins
and other foreigners. The only thing ancestral that
remained Was a Greek festival, with beautiful rituals With
lyres and flutes, competitions and garlands. And it was their
habit at the end of the festival To talk to each other about
their customs of old And to repeat the Greek names That
few of them still recognized. And so, their festival always
ended sadly Because they remembered that they also were
Greeks, They, too, were once members of Greater Greece.
O, but how they had declined now, how they had changed,
Living and speaking like barbarians, Cut off-o cursed
misfortune!-from Hellenism.

Constantine Cavafy

Greek-American Literature is perhaps the most important Greek periphery literature. Unfortunately, it has not been studied systematically, so our knowledge about it remains rather limited. As one scholar noted:

No scholar can know for sure, at this stage of research, how many Greek Americans can qualify as writers by virtue of having published worthy poems, stories, or essays. In the 126 issues of "Athene" magazine, the leading American journal of Hellenic thought, a couple hundred more or less minor authors were represented during the twenty-seven years of publication from 1940 until 1967. Many others have published in Greek newspapers, written privately printed booklets, and so on. The Greek press has often published poetry and short fiction. These scattered and rather slight works may have some value for term and seminar papers – that is, if one can locate them to begin with; they have not as yet been gathered and cataloged at any central location. Even many books by the forty or so relatively important Greek-American authors are so long out of print that they cannot be readily assigned as texts. In time, no doubt, the archives of

* Writer

Greek Americana will be as complete as money and effort can make them. Then, on microfilm and through inter-library loans they will be available to students throughout the country¹.

Greek scholars in the United States, unlike their Australian counterparts, undervalued and underestimated their compatriots' creative work. Only these last years has there been any effort to research and study Greek-American literature.

Of course, for many years Constantine Cavafy was seen as the only poet of the diaspora worthy of interest. Even today, scholars usually focus on writers using English. Those who wrote or write in Greek are generally ignored. Besides, there is confusion over language because the tendency is to call Greek-American literature everything written by people of Greek descent. This characteristic also contrasts with the Australian experience. Is it really necessary to distinguish between those writers belonging to mainstream American literature, who only by their origin have Greek, and those who have strong bonds with Greece, Hellenic culture and the American-Greek Community? Is Elia Kazan therefore a Greek-American writer? Even if we consider some of his characters Greek, are we going to consider Greek every writer creating Greek personages? If we take his ethnic origin as a criterion, then why not consider Jean Moréas who wrote in French as a Greek poet?

For certain scholars, some Greek-American but also some from mainland Greece, it is hard to see writers like Irini Spanidou or Olga Broumas as part of American literature only. Yet is it enough to consider Broumas a Greek poet because she "links herself with the goddess of the Hellenic age"?² The case of Broumas and Spanidou is complicated by the fact that both were born in Greece, where they received their education in Greek. They went to study in the United States as young women and adopted English. There is, of course, the interrelation of Greek and American culture in the poetry of Broumas and in the prose of Spanidou. Moreover, Broumas, who was born in Siros, Greece, wrote her first collection in Greek. That linguistic fact reminds us that Jean Moréas also wrote his first collection of poems in Greek before becoming a French poet. Broumas attended the University of Pennsylvania (B.A. in architecture, 1970) and the University of Oregon (M.F.A. in creative writing, 1973). She has taught at many colleges and universities. There can be no doubt that today Broumas has established

herself as an American poet. She made the passage from Greece to America and from Greek to English. Spanidou, arrived in the US in 1964, settled in New York, and published her first novel *God's Snake* in 1986. She too adopted English as her language of expression. The story begins and ends in Greece and in a way evokes her childhood there. Again, is this enough to characterize the author as a Greek writer? If we consider the criterion of relationship with Greek culture and Greece as one of the characteristics of an ethnic literature, we could include her in a corpus of Greek-American literature, but in no way we can include her in the national body of the Greek literature. Here the answer is evident: the language of that literature as a national literature would necessarily be Greek.

There are other cases of Greek-American writers which are more clear and do not present the dilemma of categorization. One example is Byron Vazakas. He was born in the US, writes in English and has little to do with Greek culture and Greece. His is a clear-cut case of a mainstream American poet. Others, such as Antonis Decavalles and Paul Nord, for instance, have written in both languages and we could consider them both Greek and American poets. There is, of course, the case of all those who wrote in Greek only. Normally they would belong to the national body of Greek literature. This is the case of Nikos Spanias, the poet "maudit", Eleni Païdousi, Theano Margari-Papazoglou, and others. The problem with Greek-American authors writing in Greek is that they are marginalized or even not accepted as part of the national body of Greek literature. Seen as writers of a periphery literature, they receive little attention from the Athenian literature establishment.

Karen Van Dyck refers to those authors and suggests «to focus on the critical categories of immigration and translation. Whereas categories such as nationality, ethnicity or language usually divide literatures, those of immigration and translation thematically and formally unite them. They make impossible the fetishization of a pure, national literature which informs so much of Greek and Greek American criticism. Such categories allow all sorts of hybrid texts to come to the fore. Not only is Greek American literature, as one might expect, thematically and formally structured by the experience of immigration and the practice of translation». In a sense some authors live «between languages and cultures, either in the sense that they lived and wrote in more than one language, both English and Greek, or that they used the cadences, idioms, or syntax of one language in the other».³

In the same category we have also Nicholas Kallas (1907-1988), an important author of the famous generation of the 30s. He wrote first in Greek, but his mature writing notably essays and art criticism, was in English. This gave him an important place in American culture. A non-orthodox Marxist, surrealist, modernist poet and essayist, Kallas was born in Switzerland and raised in Athens. He lived in Paris during the 1930s until 1939 when he moved to New York. Stratis Haviaras is another case of a Greek-American writer who wrote in Greek before settling in America in 1967 to escape the repressive military régime in Greece. Haviaras published four collections of verse in Greece and wrote novels in English once established in the US. His novels have earned him a place in mainstream American Literature.

We must, therefore, deal with writers who use English, although it is not their native tongue. There is a parallel situation for some Greek-Australian authors who also use English as their language of expression. Helen Nickas called them «loosely first generation writers, meaning that they were not born in Australia, but came in a later stage».⁴ This is the case in the States of Spanidou, Broumas, Decavalles, Kallas, and Haviaras. We can find similar cases in other parts of the diaspora, for exemple Vassilis Alexakis in France or Theodoros Kalifatidis in Sweden. These authors opted to write in the language of their host country. What is peculiar is that we have other Greek writers who made the opposite choice. In the United States, for instance, the poet Nikos Spanias was able to compose in English but did not. A Canadian example, Nikos Kahtitsis put some poems to paper in English before even leaving Greece, but once he had settled in North America, he decided to write his novels in Greek.

The situation is different for writers born in the United States and thus belong to the second or third generation. This is the case of Harry Mark Petrakis (b.1923). In his novels, Petrakis has created characters from the Greek-American diaspora, especially from the Chicago area. He portrayed the Greeks who tried to integrate American society without losing their Hellenic soul. To some extent, Petrakis is the Greek writer of the American diaspora expressing her dreams, ambitions and struggle for survival; however, he is also a writer of the American mainstream.

Obviously there are essential theoretical and practical problems to examine in the future if we are to explore or cultivate the field of the Greek-American literature. Research is necessary to examine the similarities and peculiarities of the broader Greek literature of the periphery.

NOTES

1. Alexander Karanikas, «Chapter in Ethnic Perspectives in American Literature», New York : Modern Language Association, 1983, p.65-89. [www. Helleniccomserve. com/greek_american_literature.html](http://www.Helleniccomserve.com/greek_american_literature.html).72k.
2. Stanley Kunitz, Foreword Notes in Olga Brumas, *Beginning with O*. New Haven, Ct. : Yale University Press, 1977. See also, Alexander Karanikas, op. cit., p.6-7.
3. Karen Van Dyck «Grek Poetry Elsewhere», in *Gramma*, Vol. 8, 2000, pp.81-98.
4. Helen Nickas, in her article in the present issue, p.35.

Greek Immigrant Authors in Germany

Niki Eideneier*

*Finally one day I made up my mind. To grasp the tiny table
to place it next to the window
to install my typewriter on it enabling
the thought to penetrate the pillage of the silence writing...*

Georges Lillis ¹

RÉSUMÉ

Traditionnellement l'Allemagne n'était pas un pays d'accueil d'immigrants mais bien de travailleurs invités (*Garstarbeiter*) dont plusieurs étaient d'origine grecque. Certains sont même devenus des écrivains exemplaires d'une littérature que certains appellent «d'immigration» parmi d'autres appellations. L'article qui suit nous offre un rare survol de la scène littéraire de la diaspora grecque en Allemagne depuis l'après-guerre jusqu'à nos jours. De plus, l'auteur traite des différentes appellations données à cette littérature des immigrants présents dans le paysage littéraire de l'Allemagne et de la Grèce.

ABSTRACT

Germany may not be considered a country of immigration but it has certainly been a country of guest workers (*Garstarbeiter*). Many of these were Greek immigrants who were writers or became writers. Their literature has been called 'immigration literature' among other labels. This article considers the various labels and describes the Greek immigrants active in the literary landscape of Germany and even Greece. The author provides a rare, sweeping overview of the scene from the early post-war period to today.

Introduction

The Federal Republic of Germany is a country of 357,027 square kilometres and 82 million people. This study focuses on the image presented

* Publisher

by the Federal Republic of Germany, hereinafter called Germany for the purposes of this article, and its non-native population after the Second World War and more specifically from 1960 onwards. The Popular Republic of Germany was a separate and a more or less inaccessible state to immigration until Reunification in 1989.

Even today, immigrants remain concentrated in the western regions of Germany, where heavy industry has traditionally dominated and employed most of the *Garstarbeiters*, or so-called foreign guest workers. The term comes from the original contracts which stated that these labourers would soon return to their countries of origin. The «invitation» extended to this massive number of foreign workers once was necessary as the native labour force could not meet the needs of Germany's rapid economic reconstruction after World War Two with the implementation of the Marshall Plan. It is estimated that, during the 1960s, the number of «imported» workers employed either legally or illegally surpassed five million in what was called Western Germany.

The Greek-German agreement «For the employment of Greek workers in Germany» was signed in March 1960. Some 800,000 Greeks worked under this agreement in the German factories; their numbers stabilized at 406,000 in 1974, according to official documents², which is estimated to be the peak of the whole period.

This immigration of Greeks took place mainly for both economic and political reasons. We have to remember that the post-Civil-War, post-Cold-War climate prevailed in every corner of the Greek nation, and the situation was certainly no better during the seven-year military dictatorship. The new political immigrants in co-operation with their compatriots, who had come to Germany before them, became active opponents of the Greek junta.

Afterwards various changes occurred, such as the massive return of Greek immigrants to their native country during the 1974-1979 period because of the economic crisis in Germany but also because of the collapse of the junta in Greece. This was followed by the 1981 accession of Greece to the European family, which enabled free population movement. Nowadays, the demographic picture of the reunited Germany is as follows: out of a total population of 82.4 million people, 75.1 million possess German citizenship,

1,948,000 Turkish citizenship, 362,700 Greek citizenship, and other ethnic minorities share the rest.³ Among the 75.1 million people holding German citizenship, there is of course a high percentage of foreigners who have obtained citizenship because of marriage with Germans or acceptance as landed immigrants. The German immigration law has gradually been amended. In this latter broad category are children resulting from 'mixed marriages' and others who for various reasons have double citizenship. Nevertheless, the exact number in this category is difficult to establish. In spite of German naturalization, those with foreign origin do maintain, even partially, their ethnic awareness and specific cultural identity.

The following reasons may help explain this cultural difference: the Federal Republic of Germany was never a country of immigration in the classical sense of the term, such was Canada, Australia and the USA. However, even if this were the case and even if it could be defined demographically as a country of immigration, Greek immigrants could not and would not be able to be massively naturalized in it, since in reality they had not been cut off from their motherland. The lack of great geographical distance, the separation of families and frequent and easy communication with the motherland made things easier. For example, nowadays television and radio replaced the experience of the early years of immigration, which consisted of waiting at the railway stations on Sundays for the arrival of trains and their newspapers from Greece. The arrival of e-mail which serves mainly the younger ones and lately, very inexpensive air fares which permit the frequent mutual visits, and secondary residences, all these facilitate Greek cultural maintenance. Many of the Greek immigrants have the economic possibility to return and re-establish themselves in Greece, but do not because their children and grandchildren have been established more or less permanently in Germany. There is another reason for the imperfect and incomplete adaptation and social integration of the Greeks in German society: the Greek government's educational policy. This policy bows to the pressure of the parents but also to partisan interests and insists on a solely Greek education. Moreover, the curriculum is not adapted to the realities of German society; that is to say, it is the same curriculum as in Greece. Obviously there are serious consequences on the psychological and academic development of the young children of immigrants.

Greek Literature in Germany

Neither numbers nor statistics shed much light on a literary landscape; however, this brief historical and topographical sketch of the recent migration from Greece was necessary to frame the conditions in which a specific literature arose. That literature is generally defined as follows: «Immigration literature is a literature that has been the result of the arrival of foreign workers to the Federal Republic of Germany. It is written in German or the writer's mother tongue and explores the reasons of the personal immigration, mainly through their experiences and what they have lived in the Federal Republic of Germany»⁴.

More becomes clear about the life of immigrants in Germany and conditions before their arrival, for example, their reasons for immigrating are not only economic but also political. At this point, immigration literature is mixed with the literature of exile, and travel itself is essentially the frame these writers are using, whether they are producing a work of fiction or a documentary.

The themes they treat differ from those of the majority of their Greek colleagues but still draw their source from Greek literature and deal with the post-war atmosphere of Greece, which they consider as the main reason of immigration. Other themes abound including nostalgia; alienation; separation from relatives; division of the family; difficulties of adaptation in their new country, exploitation from compatriots and others, hostility they are facing from locals; transfer of political passions from the motherland to the Greek communities abroad; lack of contact with the new neighbours, which dealt with the creation of ethnic ghettos-Greeks with Greeks, Turks with Turks. Hence, we witness an idealisation of the Greek way of life, but also a black and white sketch of reality. There is also, of course, the linguistic aphasia, to which at least the first generation of immigrants was condemned. Yet, this becomes the theme that guides and forms their literary expression. It is a realistic form of writing, with transgressions, however, especially in the fields of poetry and humour with a touch of conscious hyperbole towards derision.

Before continuing, we must ask ourselves if there were Greek immigrant writers; in other words, people who had been writing and publishing before their departure from Greece and their long or temporary sojourn in

Germany with other immigrants. However, we will focus on the writers created by immigration itself. Those writers left their home in order to work hard. They knew that very well, even if they consoled themselves that it was sufficient to bend in order to pick up the money lying on the streets and that in a maximum of one or two years time they would return home. Of course, that was foreseen by Germany's immigration policy. Newcomers signed two-year contracts initially since Germany was not a «country of reception of permanent immigrants», despite the fact that in the course of events, the Germans realized that it was not in the interest of their country's economy to experiment continuous change, given the difficulties of social and linguistic adaptation. Greeks experienced profoundly disdain, injustice, discriminatory treatment, poor housing, bad treatment from colleagues, contempt from the opposite sex, and all other consequences which come along with being uprooted and installed in a foreign country without enough information about the conditions, the language or culture that they would face.

Nevertheless during the dictatorship in Greece, we find the temporary presence in Germany of certain writers, especially those who chose to exile themselves abroad, such as Vasilis Vasilikos, who was then living in Italy and for a certain time in Western Berlin. Other examples include Periklis Korovesis or the poet Fontas Ladis, who wrote the verses of the song of Mikis Theodorakis' *Grammata apo ti Germania (Letters from Germany)*. However, their presence was combined mainly with visits for political purposes. They sought either to meet friends from Greece who were also self-exiled in Germany or to create contacts with the Greek Editorial Board of the Radio Station of Bavaria and the Radio Station *Deutsche Welle*. The programs of those stations adopted a vehement position against the junta and were regularly informing the Greeks of both Germany and Greece. They often invited Greek authors in exile to their programs, thus further sensitizing their numerous listeners to the situation in Greece.

In spite of that, these visitors do not seem to have drawn serious inspiration from the life of Greek immigrants. Perhaps one exception is Vasilikos in his *Magnitofono I (Tape recorder I)* and *Magnitofono II (Tape recorder II)*. Yet, both these books remained more or less unnoticed. Other more important subjects were absorbing them and political action as well. The first important voice came from Hungary. It was the voice of the great

novelist Dimitris Hatzis (1914-1981) who wrote the novel *To diplo Vivlio* (*Double Book*) (1972).⁵ Note that he had also resided in East Germany. Its subject was the life of a Greek worker of the AOUTEL Company in Stuttgart. The main character relates his life in first person to a writer who in turn reports it to his readers combining it with the life of the hero during the post-war and post-civil-war periods in Greece, thus explaining also the reasons of immigration. Some have contested the authenticity of its content, since it is the story of a story and not the experiences of Hatzis himself. Nevertheless, this book remains a truly sensitive masterpiece, especially because the author had experienced immigration first hand under. *Diplo Vivlio* certainly constituted one of the main books read by upcoming Greek writers in Germany and contributed significantly to their literary education. Yet, other writers from mainland Greece had also been dealing with the subject of the new massive immigration and its consequences. At a point when the official Greek institutions and their policies seem to have forgotten the immense human potential lost without presenting any reaction and later seen only as a source of foreign currency, a correcting factor of its wretched economy, some authors concentrated their energies on the orphan families left behind or the evacuated villages of northern Greece or the returning immigrant, who ill and tired comes back with his old Mercedes, a sad remnant of the high hopes of departure. Key examples from this category include Petros Markaris with his theatrical work *Oi filoxenoumenoí* (*The Guests*) not yet published in Greek though produced at a theatre in Thessaloniki; Yiorgos Skourtis, with his one scene play *O metanastis* (*The immigrant*); Lili Zographou with her novel *Theodoula antio*, (*Theodoula, good bye*); Maro Douka with her novel *Sa fotoromantso* (*Like a photo love story*).⁷

The First Generation

The first Greek immigrant anthology with fiction texts, but mainly poetry, which had been previously published in special revues or anthologies containing texts of foreign writers of various ethnic origins had been published in German and in Germany with the title *Dimitrakis '86 – parakalontas gia mia patrida – (Dimitrakis, Praying for a Country '86)*⁸. Also included were characteristic texts on the immigration of Greek writers from the mainland. Overall the existing texts of Greek immigrant writers were few

and difficult to find, but also they did not correspond to literary criteria.⁹ On the issue of literariness, it is in my opinion a very young literature and because of that, one can't judge all the texts with the same criteria. What is important is the personal itinerary of each writer, which the reader and the critic must take into account. There exists more mature texts and less mature ones, in order not to use the terms «good» and «less good».

Already in 1977 the writer, scientist, sociologist and immigrant himself, George Matzouranis had returned to Athens and published there the book entitled, *Mas lene Gastarbeiter*¹⁰ (*They call us Gastarbeiter*). This book used interviews or personal testimonies of the Greeks of Germany. In its preface, he notes that of the Greeks who migrated to Germany 85% were farmers and only 7% were urbanites. Their educational level was low in that fewer than half of them had completed their basic education. On the other hand, they constituted Greece's best human capital. Some 90% of those immigrants were in the 18-to 35-year-old bracket and their health was excellent. This book was later republished and completed with the title *Ta paidia tou Notou* (*The Children of the South*) and then followed by *Opou ki an eimai xenos* (*Wherever I am I feel like a foreigner*), which included interviews of immigrants returning to their homeland. Since it is a dictated text, it follows the oral tradition of the Greek people. It is a direct, simple document with astonishing sincerity and the real literary qualities of a fairy tale.

Indeed, the tale as well as the demotic song became the literary tools and baggage of the first immigrant writers, which they carried naturally, given that these were what they had heard in the agricultural society of their youth. Some of these self-educated poets even had the courage to publish their own poems by their own means. This was the case for Manolis Filippakis (Dusseldorf), Leonidas Hasiotis (Bielefeld), Vagios Fasoulas (Furth) Stavros Stavriniadis (Heinsberg). The latter immigrated first to Holland and, in 1966, he came to Germany. In a pure literary vein, Stavriniadis has under his belt a small collection of short stories, *O Lohias Bekovits* (11), (*Sergeant Bekovits*), participation in various anthologies of fiction, a long autobiographic novel in manuscript form. Another interesting example is Fanis Fantenis who wandered the seas of the globe, ended up in Berlin, published in Greece and has been listed under the category of literature of immigration.

An admirable case is that of Eleni Delidimitriou-Tsakmaki (Munich), simple worker till she took her pension, she started writing very late, but with determination and in so charming a way, with such a tension and profoundness in her deceptive, seemingly simple way of writing, that her success surprises nobody. She has written two novels in Greek, translated and published also in German, a series of short stories in various anthologies, a novella, plays often presented and a publication with interviews-testimonies of her own initiative and care, as well as a book for children that put her on the front lines both qualitatively and quantitatively.

While reading I got asleep. A profound sleep with so many dreams. Who knows how much time I was sleeping at the same spot on my own hand. It had become so numbed, that when I tried to lie on the back, it dropped parched on me and I was frightened. With my other hand I took my wrist and it seemed to me like a snake, like hot meat and I wasn't feeling it like mine. I started to hit it on the wall to kill it. Once I had hit it many times, I let it go and I tried to stand up. My hand though fell again unconscious on me. I grasped it again from the wrist and I started to hold it tightly and more firmly. To strangle it I thought, as it seemed to me like the head of a snake and I pursued to hit it on the wall. «Help» I cried loudly...

Panini koukla (Cloth Doll, p.124).

The “Educated” Ones

Also present in this first generation of immigrants are the «educated» and even «intellectual» writers. In this category, belongs the ‘steel worker’, as Vaggelis Sakatos (Opladen) calls himself. Engaged politically in unions, but also possessing a theoretical education, Sakatos is a prolific writer on a variety of themes in historic, sociological, literary, and theatrical works. Other writers were scientists in various fields. Their presence in Germany was not imposed by purely economic reasons, and their working relation with their country of destination was, of course, different. Some in this category have written hidden autobiographies; for example, Doctor Georgios Spyrou (Hamburg) who emphasizes the effort of reconstituting a

youth hidden in the drawers of memory. Others write with a great dose of nostalgia such as the novelist Antonis Hristodoulis (Saarbrücken, linguist-philologist), the poet Zacharias Mathioudakis (Stuttgart, political scientist, journalist), the poet Iakovos Papadopoulos (Hamburg, economist). George Kafousias (Stuttgart) already in Germany from 1957, had written a lot in both languages. Actually, much of his work remains unpublished. Thymios Gazis (chemist, Frankfurt), is an example of a scientist who writes in a philosophical mood as the education that he brought with him and his further occupations have influenced him deeply. There is also the poet Thodoris Vlahodimitris (Hamburg, classical philologist) and Garefis Deligkas (Schorndorf, physician), who considers his poetry to be the result of his social activities. Among the best most influential poets is Georges Papoulias (Nuremberg, diplomatic service). He saw in his immigrant compatriots the human dimension of a drama which began in the motherland and continued at their new place of residence in a new setting and with new scene-setters.

*From the reserve I recall again/my first role/as Santcho Pantcha
of the indigenous/from the archives I pull out/shadows of the
moon blooded knees/red grenades/I approach in a distance of a
kiss/I caress its square glass/I pierce him/I bend into him and I
look/It's not me.*

Oi pente ypikootites (The Five Citizenships, p.56).

With scientific exactitude, the neurologist-psychiatrist and historian Antonis Rizos (Bochum) writes equally dynamic scientific studies, literary essays, but also poetry of high quality. He publishes very little, but we could call him a *poeta ductus*, as he always bears in mind the fate of fallen Hellenism.

Chryssafis Lolakas (Stuttgart) constitutes a special case. On one hand, the first volume of his trilogy *Oso aplonetai o ouranos (As far as the sky is spread out)* written directly in German reveals a great talent. Yet, his work cannot be classified as the literature of immigration because it could be lawfully claimed by the literature of exile. On the other hand, already in 1965, he had written a novel in Greece dealing with immigration and in the same critical

spirit and caustic language. He came to Germany as a political refugee because of the junta and made an oath not to write in Greek ever again because he was deeply hurt from the situation in his motherland. He did return to Greece after the dictatorship, but his literary traces have been lost, although perhaps we will hear from him again. Costas Karaoulis (Würzburg) also migrated for political reasons. Having presented his first literary work in Greece, he continued a literary career in Germany, writing and publishing in both languages, living near Greek immigrants and sharing the life of other *Garstarbeiters*, who nourish his imagination and realistic style. Dimitris Kosmidis (Stuttgart) immigrated in 1961 for political reasons and very soon developed his literary activities as a writer, translator and journalist. Mitakos Kouspakeridis (Cologne), is another Greek immigrant writer who managed to get out unharmed from gambling and the activities of the underground in Germany.

George Kromydas (Bonn), a particular case, whom we could compare to the younger Antonis Sourounis, presents himself as a writer of the «underground». He came in Germany before 1961 to escape from his family with its restraining love, to study and to discover himself. Unfortunately or fortunately, he falls into the world of gambling, from which he emerges as a great writer. In his trilogy for the Greek *Kimona* he describes with a lot of bitter humour and caustic German language, his own life and that of other immigrants, as well as that of those who stayed in the motherland and their civilisation. He writes poetry as well as prose, long and short novels directly in German. Recently he tried to write in Greek but with great difficulty. Lastly, we must mention the political scientist, Miltiadis Papanagnou (Munich). Having published two collections of novels in Greek and many novels in German anthologies and revues, he is considered an excellent immigration novelist. He was one of the enthusiastic supporters of the *Polikunst*. Papanagnou returned to Greece after 25 years as an immigrant and continues to follow the activities of his compatriots in Germany and encourage his young colleagues with the same enthusiasm.

We must also mention Alexandros Schinas (Cologne-Essen), a recognized writer in Greece, who handles the two languages superbly but may not easily be included in immigration literature since his published work has another perspective and his other written works belong more to the field of journalism.

If with the term «first generation» we mean the immigrant-writers who arrived at different dates and for various reasons in Germany, not because their parents were immigrants, not those born in Germany and, of course, those without a professional occupation for living, then we must also explore a second group of known writers. These authors have defined and cultivated more conscientiously and more effectively the immigration literature produced in Germany. These writers, most of them scientists, know Greek but also the German perfectly well. They are of the same age as the first group, or younger. They have been born and educated in Greece with a purely Greek and literary education. They are the ones who write in both languages and still maintain relations with the Greek publishers, as they translate German literary works while often succeeding in having their own work published in Greek, too.

Obviously there has been greater interest in the past few years in the broader dissemination of modern Greek literature abroad and especially in Germany. This was demonstrated at the Frankfurt Book Fair in 2001, when Greece was the country of honour. Naturally, Greek writers in Germany did not remain indifferent to this attention. After all, traditionally they have helped to negotiate with the German literary authorities in charge of Greek writers, they have suggested which books to translate into German, given the fact that as specialists of the two cultures, they know which offer quality and promise commercial success for German publishers. They also often accompany Greek authors and benefit from these visits during which they may well become interpreters and translators for their visiting colleagues. Thus they live very closely with modern Greek literature and contribute to making it known. In this way, Greek literature becomes European and international, escaping a narrow pigeonhole. For them, the label literature of *Gastarbeiter* does not apply at all, even if they do not hesitate to make the simple labourers be heroes in their works. A typical example is that of the philologist and translator Dandi Sideri (Munich). Her novel *I patriða tou Giorika* (*The Motherland of Giorika*) is a lyrical novel with strong eroticism between an «educated» woman and a worker.

You became hump-backed always following the same movement of your hands in Hall III of BMW for twenty one years now. No, you don't say no, you are humble, you don't revolt, you don't raise your eyes to the beauties, whichever would bring to you, per chance, your day, which is your night. The all night shifts, all life long sentries, dig treacherous underground passages in your brains, destroy your mental balance. The chronic migraine, chases your dreams, breaks cuts into pieces sounds made of glass in your temples...

(p.73).

Sideri, a poet, has divided her time between Greece and Germany over the past few years. In fact, Athens' publishers are indebted to her for many German poets in Greek. She also has published simultaneously in Greek and German a tasteful, yet peculiar booklet containing texts written by her, in both languages, according to her inspiration and the captured representations which provoked them.

The most known and successful Greek writer is undoubtedly Eleni Torosi (Munich). She came to Germany as young girl in her twenties at the time of the junta to escape imprisonment as she had been involved in the student movement. Immediately she became a collaborator of the Greek program of Bavaria radio. Very soon, she began to write bilingual tales for Greek children as well as German ones, which broadcast on German as lullabies. She started a bright career at the beginning as a writer of books for children in German, and little by little, as if her writing was following the age and development of her own children, she went on writing books for older children, for adolescents and, since a few years, for adults. With her parables, her subtle symbols, always having as subject the specific position of immigrants' children in the society, with her playful and plenty of humour language, her pedagogical dexterity and her pleasant presence she contributed the most to the intercultural education of Greek children in Germany whom she visits at their schools at all levels of education, telling them old and new stories in a way that she alone possesses, and broadens the horizon of all the students regardless of their ethnic origin. Her books easily found publishers in German, and she is possibly the sole immigrant writer

who convinced the publishing establishment in Greece to publish her translated into Greek. She did the translation herself, thus highlighting the «double gendered literary nature» of immigrant literature. Eleni Torosi already made her debut in Greek, as well, following now the reverse road in search of a German publisher for her German translation. The collection: *I ballanta ton portokalion* (*The Song of Oranges*) has drawn again its thematic from the immigrants, without being limited to it:

The last time that my mother visited me in Germany was at the end of January, five years before she died...

The first two weeks she was a real example, to follow, model of discretion and politeness. After that the difficulties began.

The first differences arguments began, when she was starting to change the plates position on the shelves, because, according to her, the position she was choosing was more practical. The big problems however were presented, when she was going out into the streets wearing her slippers and dressing-gown in order to explore the neighbourhood or when she was entering the nearest supermarket twice a day to gape at the shelves. I was trying to explain her, of course in vain, that nobody goes out like that here in Germany, that she was exposing me to the neighbours. «Why do you care about these people my child» she was responding raising indifferently her shoulders, «these are all foreigners!». And she was continuing unrestrained her explorations. A few days later she was starting the famous search in the rubbish containers of the neighbourhood. «What these Germans throw away» she was murmuring «brand new objects, every day!»

(*I Masela*, p.89.)

The writers Napoleon Lazanis (Dusseldorf), Petros Kyrimis (Bonn), Sakis Porikis (Offenbach) can be included in this group that we have called the “Educated”. They share the same characteristics, e.g., departure for Germany, return to Greece, continued cultivation of the muse of immigration. Napoleon Lazanis, topographer, engineer, and anxious spirit,

came for inexplicable unknown reasons to Germany, worked three years there, went back to Greece, came back to Germany again, worked five more years as a small restaurant owner, and finally went back to Greece permanently where he continues to write and translate German literature into Greek. In Germany, he came as if drawn by the fate of immigrants, as a magnet, in order to experience firsthand this life and transubstantiate it very soon in a modern abstract text as a real monument to present and future generations. His novel, *Diadromi (A Journey)*, written and published in Greece before leaving for Germany was acclaimed by critics yet he did not establish his reputation because he left for Germany. Apart from his novella *Oi Psarades (The Fishermen)* which still «takes place» in his motherland, the Lake of Ioannina, all his following works are drawn from his immigration experiences, his personal ones as of those living around him.

On the opposite side of the coast, the one covered by fog. The man sees the fog and dreams. He likes too much to dream. And he knows, dreaming is wasting his time. He doesn't have time. His mind to his compatriots. He fell on them one day but they didn't greet each other. He only had the time to see their eyes. In their minds the sun hidden. An old sun. Forgotten. A small peace of charcoal thrust in the ashes.

(*Ego, o Petros*, p.173, and followings. *Me, Petros*).

In Greece, they did not pay as much attention to Lazanis as they probably should have. Perhaps because he is not the man who chases publicity, or because his themes and very personal way of writing do not facilitate broad recognition. Yet, he is one of the most important contemporary voices. Equally essential is the contribution of Petros Kyrimis. He writes exclusively and obstinately only in Greek—short novels, poetry, theatre, books for children, scenarios for television, and lyrics for songs—some of his short stories have been translated into German for various anthologies as well as his novella *H kardia tou kotsyfa (The Heart of the Blackbird)*. In reality, he does not pay as much attention to the public he addresses as to himself. He writes to obtain catharsis first for himself, expressing his personal pain and despair, even if his protagonists are third persons. He has read a lot of German literature in translation. Lately, he has been living in Greece, but

Germany and its experience will be chasing him everywhere. Sakis Porikis constitutes a special case. He came to Germany with his brother in order to study while working and returned to Greece permanently after more than thirty years of migration. He also writes lyrics. Little published, he uses magnificently the languages with the experienced, sensitive eye of a sociologist and poet. Porikis analyses and presents his characters in a penetratingly sharp manner with great humour. He has a perfect knowledge of Greek, especially contemporary theatre.

With six published collections of poems in German, Eva Boura (Berlin) cultivates an existential poetry. Having lived as an immigrant in England, she transpires to cosmopolitanism, on the one hand, and a profound solitude on the other hand. She does not have immigration as a subject but rather solitude, silence, and melancholy. This is for her a return to the ego, to its recognition. With a similar profile, Aris Christidis came to Ashaffenburg where he wrote some very beautiful pieces with a very critical spirit, short stories and theatre.

Another phenomenon is Georges Valasiadis (Frankfurt). He arrived in Germany from Constantinople as a «refugee». He had Turkish citizenship during the difficult years 1962/1964, and he had even served in the Turkish army. He became an active member of the Greek cultural community but also of the cultural community at large. He started writing slowly but steadily, publishing at the beginning in anthologies. His first novel *Kai sta Tatavla bioni*, (*And in Tatavla Snow*), which had tremendous success in Greece, was followed by the second, *Hamam*. They are both available in Turkish and are awaiting a German publisher. Another, equally interesting case is the Cypriot Glafkos Koumidis (Cologne). An architect and psychologist by education, a painter by profession, he sees writing as a parallel art to his painting, complementary, but also an autonomous activity. In his paintings, he is influenced by Byzantium, but also modern and even surrealistic art. This same influence can be discovered in his writings, which become more accessible if we consider them in a speaking picture.

The Second Generation

The ages of these writers vary greatly as the biographic information suggests. The eldest were born a little bit before WWII, and the younger ones

in the mid-1950s. Age however, is not the determining factor for what links them is the personal experience of immigration. Without their parents serving as mediators between two worlds, having received their inspiration and education somewhat in Greece already, they associate these two worlds in the way they write about immigration. Characteristics which decrease in intensity a little among the younger, second-generation of writers defined as follows: born in Greece or in Germany; raised until a certain age in Greece near their grandparents because their parents had emigrated when they were infants. Their parents were supposed to return soon, but this was not the case hence the anxiety to leave Greece, which in turn created difficult situations in an unknown country.

Let us look, however, at how they coped with this illusion, this particularity, as well as many analogous fates which they share with the first generation «from the Bosphorus to Gibraltar». In fact, this phrase was the title of a beautiful program for foreign listeners of the 'Radio of North Rhinania' in Westphalia. The highlighted aspects of the Greek experience in Germany were the following:

- a) Germany functioned as a space that sharpened the critical spirit of Greeks towards their motherland, which they faced with love but also distance. This criticalness becomes especially important when the subject turns around the returning to the motherland.
- b) A foreign country, Germany, is the space where their capacity of observation in relation to the native has been sharpened hence the Germans could learn a great deal for about themselves by reading Greek authors.
- c) Greek writers in Germany conquered the foreign country as a space of historic review and shook off the prejudices and preconceived ideas. Especially in the trilingual book, the *Kalimerhaba*¹², which we published together with the author of Turkish-Kurdish origin Arzu Toker ten years ago. The average reader sees not only the will of reconciliation between two very hostile peoples, the Greeks and the Turks, but also the great occasion that literature offers to span the gap between them, erase misunderstandings and build bridges of conciliation.
- d) Immigration, especially to Germany, gave to the usual themes of literature other almost existential perspectives.

- e) Immigration to Germany, in this instance, reinforces the intercultural aspect in literature of the Greek-immigrant writers as they realize that the injustice is repeated also in their own motherland.
- f) Greek immigrant writers acquired a cosmopolitanism which is evident not only in their relationship with the German majority, but mainly with the local Turkish minority. One could say, arguably, they represent foreigners collectively.

On the other hand, the thematic of this generation is not free from the traumatic experience of separation from parents during their young or adolescent years. Note also that this theme has been studied scientifically as the 'ego and the others'. These children were forced to live in Greece with their grandparents while their parents were working in Germany. Hence, a certain nostalgia, but the thematic of nostalgia is also present in German literature. We have to ask the question: is there a Greek or a German literature? The writers have asked this question themselves and those who have studied them without a simple answer. We can only say that there is still an immigration literature, perhaps with 'new prescriptions'.

How is immigration literature treated in general? Oddly enough, many of the literary critics in Germany are also immigrants themselves. They studied in the philological or sociological fields, because immigration themes were very important to them as well¹³. The first scientific study on the Greek writers in Germany¹⁴ was written by a German researcher, Herbert Michel and was bearing the characteristic title *Odysseus in the Waste land*¹⁵. In this study, the search for identity is discussed with reference to works having immigration as a main theme. They are written in prose primarily although their writers are not all necessarily immigrants.

Aglaia Blioumis, a Greek immigrant of second generation in her recent Ph. D. thesis¹⁶, which constitutes the first complete scientific study for this literature, studies a long series of debatable themes which are discussed and find their response at first in a theoretical perspective. She makes a choice of certain literary works of Greek immigrants, but also of German writers who deal with immigrants, aiming to clarify the image of the «foreign» as well of «the indigenous» especially from the multicultural and intercultural point of view, as this appears through these literary works. One important point is that: interculturalism explores new possibilities for the understanding of

civilisations, in order to help surpass superficially essential ways of thought and superficially in appearance objective norms of the «mine». The different characteristics, though, must remain visible, because otherwise every kind of specificity disappears.

The much-discussed term *Gastarbeiter-Litteratur* which was the first definition of this literature should give and has more or less given its place to the term *immigration literature*. This is the choice of Blioumi who goes through various other definitions such as: literature that hurts, e.g., literature of anger, foreign literature, literature of the foreigners in Germany, literature in a foreign country. These definitions are used mainly for the Greek literature of Germany, in conjunction and as a continuation of the corresponding older term—literature of immigration.

The more important argument used in favour of the term *immigration literature* is the hypothesis that the language of writing becomes almost exclusively German. Note that this is very relative for the Greek second-generation. Only two cases of these numerous writers fit this seriously: Fotini Ladaki (Cologne) and Thalia Androni (Cologne). Again, their capacity as writers is difficult to wrest from their biography. The first was born and raised in Greece. Fotini Ladaki came to Germany in order to study psychology, and her parents had been there a long time. She is a child exclusively of the second generation. Fully equipped, with Greek education, she gradually was integrated completely. In parallel with her successful studies and her professional activities, she did research, painting and literature as well. Poems of hers have been published in the collection bearing the title *Giudice*, while short stories of hers have been included in anthologies. She has a strongly surrealistic, deeply psychoanalytic writing style, which does not deal only with themes of immigration and used German perfectly as her sole medium of expression thus far. Thalia Androni, a child of a 'mixed marriage', spent her childhood in Greece, expresses herself in German but her long lyrical short story *Mira-Mare* reveals the anguish of the search for identity and her fate-muse.

Exactly the contrary happens with the others. Older and with more years in Germany, Antonis Sourounis (Frankfurt), is one of the most accomplished, successful, and recognized writers in Greece as well. In fact he returned there at the beginning of the 1980s and did not dare or want to write in German, despite his fine knowledge of the German reality and

psyche as well as the country's underworld. In spite of the fact he had visited almost all the countries of the world and been inspired by unique themes, he uses an extremely rude language with profoundness. Greeks of Germany will not leave him in peace, it seems, so he always returns back to his own transubstantiated experiences as an immigrant. Whether his production consists of short stories or novellas, tales or novels – the novel *O horos ton rodon* (*The Dance of Roses*) has been translated and published in German from a big German publisher - someone from its heroes whether Noussis, or Gas the gangster, refers to a multifaceted Sourounis and with a pure Greek idiosyncrasy. A prose writer but also having already experienced poetry, Leonidas Panayiotidis (Ludenscheide), has demonstrated with his relatively containing few pages collection of short stories which has been published in a German translation, a subtle capacity of characters' observation and reactions not only to the intercultural but to the multicultural intuition: *Liga ekatosta kato apo tin epifania* (*A Few Centimeters below the Surface*) and here are plowed the ruptures and the patches of our reactions. Tryfonas Papastamatelos (Aachen), a peculiar literary presence, belongs to the second generation. He was born in Greece, came to Germany at age 12, studied and then settled in Greece. There we lose all trace of him, but he has left us a collection of poems in a «reconstructed» artificial childish German language, which reacts to pure experiences and pure sentiments.

Finally, we turn to three of the most promising poets of the Greek immigration in Germany. Their main characteristic is the constant to-and-fro between the two worlds: Germany and Greece. The older poet, Costas Giannakos (Munich), was born in Greece, went to school there, followed his parents to Germany, studied there and has brilliant cultural and translation activities, with exchanges between German and Greek intellectuals and writers. His way of writing has been gradually transformed from Greek to Greco-German, then to German-Greek and finally to German. Its contents and messages also followed the same itinerary, but we note a conscious indifference to countries of origin. Nevertheless, his preoccupation with Greek poets and knowledge of the German poetry are visible and consciously highlighted.

Mihalis Patentalis (Dusseldorf) and, the youngest of all three, Georges Lillis (Bielefeld) were born in Germany, raised in Greece, where they graduated from schools and universities only to return to Middle Europe, more than ready to conquer poetically their country of birth.

*The sky tonight rained sun./This is an occasion, I thought, and
I took the small paper boat/I folded the ocean to held it in it./I
emerged from it out of the water.*

(Michalis Patentalis).

*I secure my steps./Old olive trees offer their shadow./to the
burned church./The history I think sometimes/must have also
put her thin hand here too./The world doesn't belong to us. We
belong to it.*

(Georges Lillis).

In conclusion, even the second generation of immigrant writers are undoubtedly of Greek origin and in their majority of Greek education. Many have done their secondary and university studies in Germany inside its multicultural life with its proper contradictions. Their reading experiences are in Greek; however, once they have been integrated in German society, which is more cosmopolitan than the Greek, and, of course, mainly German. Despite that situation, they search for their roots with almost a certain «moaning» for their existentialist problematic. They also take refuge in books coming from Greece which are translated into German. They favour and benefit from the existence of bilingual publications, too. They come almost into direct contact with Greek literature, navigating, even transforming it in their own literary production in conjunction with their German experiences. It is an interbreeding of a new form. Aware of their origin and with a romantic sentiment of a lost paradise, these young writers put forward a sort of literature, often with anxiety, that is bilingual, but in German with a more perfect writing. This writing is characterized by a search of the “soul mate” in the literature of the “now-distant motherland” but also by the access that their German-European and multicultural education offers them. They often translate Greek literature into German and German literature into Greek, thus contributing the most in the exchange of ideas and values without fruitless containment and worthless reference to their «glorious» past. A clearly cosmopolitan perspective infuses their work. In the end, with the assurance of their knowledge, theoretical and direct, they act effectively for the solidification of the European idea, withholding in a way, the specificity and dissipating the divisive ethnic and religious differences.

Trends and Themes

The next questions are technical but nonetheless essential as literature is destined to be read or also heard. Furthermore, nobody writes alone, cut off from his colleagues and especially, in this case, from colleagues with the same presuppositions or anxieties. Greek artists-writers, among others of «foreign origin», occupy in Germany a distinctive position given them by literary critics, although not always given with great enthusiasm and objective criteria. The critic¹⁷ has finally been obliged to deal – as long as it has been dealing with and deals with the literature of foreign writers of this country-facing it merely as a sociological document and as a massive phenomenon and not individually. This happened mainly because they themselves raised their voice in a dynamic way. Indeed this still happens during readings, where they are invited usually by social workers to illustrate activities of any kind related to the immigration problems or as an alibi to inertia and ignorance, even on the behalf of leftist and progressive natives, of the cultural offer from the countries of the *Gastarbeiter*s.

The foreign artists themselves have a tradition of common migration of twenty years already. In fact in 1980 they organized themselves in *Polikunst* (Multiethnic Artistic and Literary Association) and generated the interest of other cultural organisations through their activities. There were some journalists and critics, who were writing always with «sympathy» resulting from partially and because of some sort remorse, because of the behaviour of the larger German society towards foreigners. The artists addressed themselves to a very large public, as the language used was German. The *Polikunst* was around for seven years with gatherings, exhibits, book presentations and even a publishing program. *Polikunst* was dissolved afterwards for unknown reasons.

On the other hand, Greek writers in Germany managed to create the Union of Greek Writers of Germany, which was necessary in order to a) be acquainted with one another, as they live dispersed in a large country b) use their Union as an officially recognized organization of public interest which can ask and accept economic support and grants from government foundations and services c) be mutually influenced in literary laboratories, where positive criticism may be given and early reading contacts with specialists may take place d) organize common, if possible, bilingual events to sensitize as large a public as possible. Note this audience should be

composed of compatriots as well as German readers and «receptors» of the literature e) initiate public discussions and claim in this manner that their works be introduced not only in literary discussion, but also in the literary education of youth, regardless of their origin as all are subject to the German educational system. This is a way to fight racism in advance; in other words, literature as a means against racism. This is actually a program suggested recently at the European Union by Greek educators from Aachen and there are good possibilities of it being approved and funded.¹⁸

In order to understand the trends and thematics of immigration literature one is also obliged to take into account the biographies of the writers. In doing so, we must draw the following bitter conclusion: the close relation of these two factors for the production of literary works leads to marginalization of immigrant writers by the critics and the literary establishment. They think that it is easy to discover the biography of the author behind the work, limit themselves to it and refrain from the use of aesthetic measures and criteria. Of course it may be that the critics are not able to apply aesthetic measures and criteria, but also that they fear a comparison would lead to surprises. The fact is, however, that literature of immigration does not always mean «pain of immigration» or «complaints for the hard position adopted by the native», as was illustrated by a series of anthologies with various themes¹⁹, in which participated not only Greeks but also other writers of foreign origins, and even sensitized German writers.

The natural evolution of the literature of immigrants in Germany; i.e., that of the Greeks, would be influenced by the «hegemonic civilisation», or *Leitkultur*, as is the - disputed- word of the receiving country. I suggest, however, with all due respect to the analogies, that the opposite has occurred. As has the everyday life of Germans been influenced by the everyday culture of immigrants, e.g., taverns functioning until late at night, coffeeshop tables outside as soon as the warm sun arrives, and a tendency to disturb the perfect order. By the same token, there exist influences of immigrant literature in German literature, e.g., excessive imagination is not necessarily excluded, the myth and the tale are no longer resisted, very clear and systematic language with perfect syntax is no longer mandatory, and the neighbour may be German, Turkish, Greek or of South Asian origin, without the need to exalt his exotic attributes but the desire to try to understand him, as a normal human being, with all his faults and his malice without idealization. Of

course, citizens of foreign origin in Germany do receive influences from their motherlands as well as from the new home. In fact, they may not be able to specify which of the two is the stepmother!²⁰ They also are influenced by their fellow immigrants, their way of life, their way of thinking and reacting. The Greek writers of Germany live and work, but also have a literary action of writing inside the confrontation of cultures and tradition(s). This forced confrontation has given them an «interculturalism» which is a newly acquired view of things. The result is an approach of the cultures, a transformation of the «tradition» which they brought with them. There is an eagerness to escape from the tower or the four walls of their house, in order to discover the new world that surrounds them. All this has been possible thanks to the careful transfer of intellectual goods followed by the careful transplantation to a new reality, where those goods enrich and will be enriched, thus bearing more fruit. The contribution of Greeks in drawing the literatures of the various regions of Europe closer within a new, multifaceted European literature where specificities are not going to be hidden is an obvious effort which by its very nature is «condemned» to success.

As an Epilogue: The Third Generation

The third generation has already begun to take shape with the young people studying in German universities after completing their studies in the German school system (usually with excellent marks!). For the time being, we do not know; however, the future lies before them and we optimistically expect a great deal from them in the field of literature.

NOTES

1. Yiorgos Lillis, *Oti vouliazei einai exo apo to frourio mou*, in *I hora ton koimomenon ydaton*, (*What sinks is outside my castle in The Country of Sleeping Waters*), Athens Mandragoras, 2001, p.11 and on.

2. These numbers have been advanced, based on statistics, by G. Matzouranis in his book: *Ta paidia tou Notou*, (*The Children of the South*), Athens, Gutenberg, 1990, p.11.

3. See *Bericht für Ausländerfragen über die Lage der Ausländer in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, Berlin und Bonn, September 2002.
4. Monika Frederking in *Literatur türkischer Migranten in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, Berlin, Express Edition 1985, p.1.
5. Dimitris Hadjis., its translation into German: D.Hadjis, *Das doppelte Buch*, Cologne, Romiosini 1983;: Dimitrios Hadjis, *Das doppelte Buch*, Berlin (Ost) (Volk und Welt) 1985.
6. In German, *Fremdgeblieben*, Cologne, Romiosini, 1988.
7. I have mentioned only these texts which are translated in German and have been published. See note 8.
8. Niki Eideneier (Hrsg.),Dimitrakis '86-umeine Heimat bittend, Köln, Romiosini, 1985
9. Carmine-Gino Chiellino, *Die Reise hält an – Ausländische Künstler in der Bunderepublik*, München, Beck 1988, p.181.
10. Athens, Themelio,1977 and in German Man nennt uns Gastarbeiter, Frankfurt a. M., Zambon, 1985, Giorgos Matzouranis, *Ta paidia tou Notou*, (*The Children of the South*), Athens,Gutenberg, 1989. Giorgos Matzouranis, *Opou ki an eimai xenos*, (*Wherever I am I feel foreign*), Athens, Kastaniotis, 2000.
11. See general bibliography.
12. Niki Eideneier/Arzu Toker (Hrsg.), Kalimerhaba, Köln 1992, (Romiosini) (greek-german-turkish), p.300 and following.
13. See the poet and scientist of Italian origin, Gino Chiellino, *Literatur und Identität in der Fremde*, Augsburg, Bürgerhaus Kreblesmühle 1985, and: Carmine (Gino) Chiellino, *Interkulturelle Literatur in Deutschland*, Stuttgart, Weimar, Metzler Verlag 2000, who knows Italian immigration literature primarily and draws his conclusions from it. Nonetheless his perspective and comments concern more or less all of us.
14. Exception made of a small study of Michael Elsaesser, "Griechische Migrantenliteratur – ein Überblick", in R. Ehnert/R. Hopster, *Die emigrierte Kultur*, Band 1, Frankfurt-Bern-New York–Paris, Peter Lang 22, 1988, p.157-186.
15. Herbert Michel,*Odysseus im wüsten Land-Eine Studie zur literarischen Verarbeitung des Identitätsproblems in der griechischen Migrantenliteratur*, Cologne,Romiosini 1992.

16. Aglaia Blioumi, *Interkulturalität als Dynamik: Ein Beitrag zur deutsch-griechischen Migrationsliteratur seit den siebziger Jahren*, Tübingen, Stauffenburg-Verlag 2001, p.240. The translation is mine.

17. See, for instance the article of F. J. Raddatz, *In mir zwei Welten*, journal *Die Zeit* 26,24.6. 1994, p.45.

18. Very interesting is also the initiative of the Laboratory of Intercultural and Immigration Studies-EDIAMME (Education Department of the University of Crete in Rethymno) to prepare an anthology with literary texts of Greek immigrants through the world, in order to introduce them to Greek schools and classes abroad. Let's hope that another anthology will follow with texts of immigrants of other ethnic origin, as the immigration is an international phenomenon, in order that the acquaintance and avoidance of racist discrimination to be done systematically, something that should be taught, absolutely and in the Greek schools also.

19. See for instance Polikunst (ed.), *Lachen aus dem Ghetto*, (Klingelbach: Mandala, 1985, L. Costa Hözl-E. Torossi (eds), *Freihändig auf dem Tandem*, (Kiel: Neuer Malik, 1985, N. Eideneier-A. Toker (eds), *Kalimerhaba*, (Köln: Romiosini, 1992) N. Eideneier (ed.) *Alwerden ist ein Köstlich Ding?* (Köln: Romiosini, 2000).

20. See Michali Gana: *Mitria Patrida*, (*Stepmother motherland*), Athens, Kastaniotis 1989.

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Christidis Aris, *Tous elegktes poios tous elegchi (Who Controls the Controllers)*, in Gianacacos, C./Gerogiorgakis, St. (eds) *Deutschland, deine Griechen... Eine Anthologie*, (Greek-German), (Cologne: Romiosini, 1998).

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La littérature de Grecs du Canada

ABSTRACT

No serious study has ever been produced on Greek literature in Canada. In fact, very little has been written on the topic, so Jacques Bouchard and Stephanos Constantinides use the following articles to give an overview, or an initial inventory, which might prove useful in more focussed, more advanced research. There is a sense of urgency here as these authors and their work in Greek may well be forgotten if not studied. Hopefully the second generation of Greek writers who express themselves in English and French will be studied and will find a niche within Canadian and Québécois literature

RÉSUMÉ

La littérature des Grecs du Canada n'a pas fait jusqu'à présent l'objet d'étude et rares sont les écrits qui lui ont été consacrés. Jacques Bouchard et Stephanos Constantinides présentent, dans les articles qui suivent, une vision globale de cette littérature, une sorte de premier inventaire, qui pourrait être utile pour des études plus spécifiques et plus poussées. Il convient en particulier de mettre l'accent sur l'urgence à étudier les auteurs qui écrivent en grec, et dont l'œuvre risque d'être oubliée. Il est à espérer que la deuxième génération d'écrivains grecs qui s'expriment en anglais et en français sera mieux étudiée et saura trouver sa place au sein du corpus littéraire canadien (et québécois).

Les écrivains Grecs du Canada: Un aperçu historique

Stephanos Constantinides*

Les premiers immigrants grecs s'installent au Canada au milieu du 19^e siècle. Il y a bien-sûr quelques références de la présence grecque auparavant, comme celle de l'explorateur Juan de Fucas, alias Apostolos Valerianos, qui découvrit vers 1592 le détroit entre la ville de Vancouver et l'État de Washington, ou celle d'un jeune grec qui accompagnait Samuel de Champlain (1628) et dont le nom n'a pas été sauvegardé, mais il s'agit de cas isolés. Même des références plus précises au milieu du 19^e siècle sont encore des cas particuliers. Il faut attendre le début du 20^e siècle pour que l'immigration grecque commence à prendre une certaine ampleur. Les premiers Grecs arrivés au Canada sont sans spécialisation dans le domaine du

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travail, avec une éducation limitée et sans connaissance des langues anglaise et française. Dès lors ils ne peuvent compter que sur leur volonté de travailler dur pour réussir et pour survivre. Ils vont accepter tout emploi, aussi pénible soit-il et les plus tenaces et les plus habiles vont réussir à accumuler un petit capital pour lancer leur propre petit commerce. Le besoin de se regrouper se faisait sentir avec l'augmentation du nombre de nouveaux arrivants. C'est ainsi qu'en 1906 sera fondée une première organisation communautaire à Montréal, la Communauté hellénique de Montréal. Quelques années plus tard, en 1910 suivra la Communauté hellénique de Toronto et beaucoup plus tard d'autres communautés dans d'autres villes canadiennes. Néanmoins, jusqu'à la deuxième guerre mondiale la population grecque du Canada ne dépasse pas douze mille personnes. C'est après cette guerre que se développe un important mouvement migratoire grec vers le Canada, surtout dans les années '60-'70. A partir des années '80 c'est pratiquement la fin de l'immigration grecque. Il s'amorce même un mouvement de retour vers le pays natal. Avec une population d'origine grecque d'environ deux cent cinquante mille personnes, les Grecs d'aujourd'hui appartiennent de plus en plus à la deuxième et la troisième génération. On les trouve essentiellement à Toronto et à Montréal. Ils disposent de leurs propres institutions et organismes, et ils sont de plus en plus présents au niveau de l'économie canadienne et en même temps ils s'intègrent à la société canadienne. Ceux de la première génération sont des travailleurs, qui exploitent de petits commerces, alors que ceux de la deuxième génération sont dans le domaine des professions libérales, du commerce et des services, et occupent aussi des postes dans l'éducation et dans divers secteurs de l'économie.

Malgré le fait que les premiers Grecs ont tout fait pour conserver leur langue et leur culture, nous ne savons pas s'il y a eu une création littéraire au sein de la communauté grecque pour la période antérieure à la seconde guerre mondiale. Il se peut il y ait eu des cas d'écrivains mais comme il n'y a pas d'archives et qu'aucune recherche n'a été effectuée dans ce domaine, nous avons sans doute perdu leurs traces.¹ Ce n'est qu'après la deuxième guerre mondiale et en particulier à partir des années 1960 que nous signalons la présence d'écrivains grecs qui commencent à publier des livres de prose ou de poésie. Mais même pour cette période là, contrairement aux écrivains grecs d'Australie, par exemple, il n'y a eu presque aucune recherche sur les écrits de ces gens là. Les écrivains grecs du Canada les plus connus, ont vécu ou vivent encore au Québec, plus précisément à Montréal. Les autres se

trouvent pour l'essentiel à Toronto. La plupart sont des poètes et écrivent en grec.

Le plus connu des écrivains Grecs du Canada est Nikos Kachititsis. Né à Gastouni (Ilia, Grèce) en 1926, il est mort à Patras où il est retourné de Montréal une semaine avant sa mort. A Montréal il a vécu de 1956 à 1970. Auparavant il avait vécu au Cameroun, en Afrique, de 1952 à 1954. Ses principaux écrits comprennent les romans «O Exostis» (Le Balcon) et «O Iroas tis Gandis» (Le Héros de Gandes) et les nouvelles «Poioi oi Filoi» (Qui sont les Amis?), «I Omorphaschimi» (La bellelaide), «To Enypnion» (Le Rêve). Il a laissé aussi quelques poèmes, publiés dans une collection sous le titre «Troto Simeio» (Point Vulnérable).

Son style est en partie original et nourri d'un certain esthétisme qui font de lui un écrivain à part des courants littéraires de son époque et plus proche de la prose française et américaine du 19^e siècle². Panayiotis Bouyoucas est un autre écrivain Grec-Canadien, qui contrairement à Kachititsis écrit en français et dernièrement aussi en anglais. Né à Beyrouth où ses parents se sont trouvés pendant la deuxième guerre mondiale il est arrivé à Montréal en 1963 à l'âge de 16 ans. Il raconte qu'ayant fréquenté l'école primaire de la communauté grecque de Beyrouth il a appris à écrire en trois alphabets: grec, arabe, français. A Montréal n'ayant pas été accepté à l'école française parce qu'il n'était pas catholique, il n'a pas eu d'autre choix que de s'inscrire à l'école anglaise. Il a néanmoins choisi d'écrire en français. Il a publié des romans, des nouvelles et des pièces de théâtre. Il a publié entre autres *Le Dernier Souffle* en 1975, son premier roman qui raconte la vie et la mort d'un immigré grec, *Une Bataille d'Amérique*, *La Vengeance d'un Père* et *Anna Pourquoi*. Les sujets de ses romans et de ses nouvelles tournent autour de la vie des immigrants grecs, mais aussi des francophones québécois de Montréal. Dans ses pièces de théâtre il traite aussi de sujets qui touchent à l'immigration grecque et à la vie montréalaise. Dans le *cerf volant* par exemple, une pièce de théâtre, le conflit entre la première et la deuxième génération de Grecs, le mal du pays et les problèmes d'intégration sont bien illustrés. Bouyoucas est un auteur reconnu au Québec et au Canada et ses écrits ont été traduits en anglais, russe, arabe, serbe et italien. Paradoxalement il n'y a aucune traduction en grec. Ses pièces de théâtre ont été jouées à Montréal, à Toronto, à Paris, à Rome et à Belgrade. Bouyoucas qui parle couramment grec – il a d'ailleurs vécu quelques années à Athènes

après 1975 – reste très attaché à la Grèce. D'ailleurs son dernier roman *Anna Pourquoi* se déroule à Leros, son île natale. La critique l'a qualifié de roman captivant et d'une grande intensité dramatique³.

À Montréal des écrivains se sont regroupés au sein de l'Association des écrivains grecs de Montréal. Créée en 1979, l'Association rassemble des écrivains de la première génération d'immigrants grecs. Par conséquent, ces écrivains écrivent et publient en grec. En plus des publications individuelles, les membres de l'Association ont publié en commun quelques anthologies de poèmes, dont une bilingue (français-grec) en 1995. La traduction des poèmes en français a été effectuée par le professeur des études néohelléniques de l'Université de Montréal Jacques Bouchard, qui a aussi écrit une introduction reprenant en partie un article qu'il a publié dans la revue littéraire d'Athènes *I Lexi*, dans une édition spéciale sur la littérature de la diaspora (juillet-août 1992)⁴. Il s'agit d'un des rares écrits, sinon le seul, sur les écrivains grecs de Montréal et leur Association. Parmi les membres les plus actifs de l'Association des écrivains Grecs de Montréal sont les poètes Stephanos Constantinides, Tassos Niphakos, Thalia Tassou, Vissarionas Hatzidavid, Lydia Skalkou et Photis Komporozos.

En 1998, Stephanos Constantinides (Université du Québec à Montréal), et Eleni Nickas (La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australie), ont publié une anthologie des poètes Grecs-Canadiens et Grecs-Australiens. Elle comprend onze poètes grecs du Canada et huit poètes grecs de l'Australie⁵.

Des écrivains grecs vivent et écrivent aussi dans d'autres villes canadiennes et plus particulièrement à Toronto. Parmi les plus connus Georges Thaniel qui a enseigné aussi la littérature grecque à l'Université de Toronto, Christos Ziatas, Fontas Bratsos et Antonis Vazintaris. Georges Thaniel a écrit aussi quelques études sur les écrivains grecs du Canada et des États-Unis. Son étude *O Lepidolepterologos tis Agonias* sur Nikos Kachtitsis (Athènes, Editions Nefeli, 1981)⁶ reste toujours une analyse de base fondamentale pour cet écrivain. Dans un article, *Oi Sygchroni Ellines Poiites tis Diasporas - Voria Ameriki-Mia Thematikiki Proseggisi*, (Poètes Contemporains de la Diaspora -Amérique du Nord- Une Approche Thématique), qu'il a publié dans la revue littéraire d'Athènes *To Dentro* (février-mars, avril-mai 1986), il mentionne les poètes grecs-canadiens suivants: Lydia Avlonitou (Montréal), Fontas Bratsos (Toronto), Savvas Patsalides (Montréal), Vissarionas Hatzidavid (Montréal), Lambis Mavridis (Ottawa), Leonidas

Bobas (Montréal), Stephanos Constantinides (Montréal), Antonis Vazintaris (Toronto), Pavlos Ioannou (Toronto), Martha Zei (Montréal), Yiorgos Stoubos (Toronto), Lydia Skalkou (Montréal), Popi Soteriou (Montréal), et Michalis Sayias (Toronto). Thaniel signale que beaucoup de poètes grecs tant au Canada qu'aux États-Unis écrivent «de façon simple et en utilisant des symboles communs. Il est facile, continue-t-il, de rejeter cette sorte de poésie comme dépassée, ou comme une poésie engagée. Cependant, il ne faut pas le faire parce que dans une société idéale des poètes, il faut que toutes les voix soient entendues et parce que l'inspiration de chacun est personnelle. Si donc nous lisons ces poètes en tenant compte des critères qu'eux-mêmes s'appliquent, il est certain que nous trouverons des poèmes qui vont nous émouvoir ou nous convaincre. Néanmoins, il ne faut pas oublier que la poésie est avant tout un art et la sincérité ou l'authenticité des sentiments ne sont pas suffisants pour écrire un vrai poème si l'aspect esthétique fait défaut»⁸.

Les écrivains grecs-canadiens que nous avons mentionnés jusqu'à maintenant à l'exception de Panayiotis Bouyoucas, écrivent tous en grec. Néanmoins, des écrivains de la deuxième génération commencent à faire leur apparition et écrivent en anglais ou en français. Quelques uns de ces écrivains se sont présentés en commun dans une anthologie sous le titre *Musings An Anthology of Greek-Canadian Literature*,⁹ Montréal, Vehicule Press, 2004. Il s'agit d'une anthologie de poésie et de prose à laquelle participent Margaret Christakos, Tess Fragoulis, Steven Heighton, Hélène P. Holden, Antonios Maltezos, Una McDonnell, Helen Stathopoulos, Aliki Tryphonopoulos, Stavros Tsimicalis, Helen Tsitiotakis, Eleni Zisimatos Auerbach, Panayiotis (Pan) Bouyoucas. Ces auteurs viennent de Montréal, Toronto, et d'autres villes canadiennes.

Les thèmes de la littérature grecque-canadienne tournent autour de la nostalgie de la Grèce, la réalité migrante, l'histoire et la mythologie grecques, les réalités sociales du pays d'origine, mais aussi du pays d'accueil ainsi que des questionnements sur l'aventure humaine, la guerre, la condition féminine et bien d'autres. Il reste qu'il n'y a pas eu d'études ni sur cet aspect de la littérature grecque-canadienne, ni sur d'autres aspects. Sans doute, c'est la littérature périphérique la moins étudiée quand on regarde les études qui existent sur la littérature grecque-australienne et même sur celle des États-Unis et de l'Allemagne. Nikos Kachtitsis et Pan Bouyoucas sont pratiquement les seuls sur lesquels il existe quelques écrits.

En conclusion, à l'exception de Nikos Kachtitsis, qui s'est imposé en Grèce, mais qui reste inconnu au Canada, et de Pan Bouyoucas qui s'est imposé au Canada mais qui reste inconnu en Grèce, les autres écrivains grecs du Canada restent pour l'essentiel méconnus tant au Canada qu'en Grèce. Inconnus au Canada parce qu'ils écrivent en grec, et inconnus en Grèce dont l'establishment littéraire ne porte pas d'intérêt particulier pour cette littérature de la périphérie. Sans doute ceux de la deuxième génération qui écrivent en anglais ou en français réussiront un jour à faire partie du corpus littéraire national canadien et québécois. Mais la littérature grecque du Canada est celle qui s'écrit en langue grecque. C'est une littérature dans la grande tradition de la littérature grecque de la diaspora, celle de Cavafy, de Kalvos, de Tsirkas, de Psichari, de Coraïs et de tant d'autres. Car le seul critère satisfaisant pour identifier une littérature reste celui de la langue.

NOTES

1. Nous connaissons cependant, au moins un cas avant la Seconde Guerre mondiale, celui de Georges Vlassis qui a publié les recueils de poèmes, *Roda kai Violettes* en 1928 et *Fylla apo tin kanadiki poiesi* en 1936.
2. Dimosthenis Kourtovic *Ellines Metapolemikoi Syggrafeis* (Écrivains grecs de l'après-guerre), Athina, Ekdoseis Pataki, 1995, p.120.
3. Suzanne Giguère, Perché entre ciel et mer, *Le Devoir*, 21 février 2004.
4. Jacques Bouchard, *O Omilos Ellinon Logotehnon Montreal* (Association Des Écrivains Grecs de Montréal), *I Lexi*, Ioulis-Avgoustos 1992.
5. Eleni Nickas, Stephanos Constantinides, *Alloithona Topeia: Ellinoglosse poiese Afstralias-Kanada* (Other Landscapes: Greek-language poetry from Australia and Canada), Melbourne, Owl Publishing 1998.
6. Yiorgos Daniel, *O Lepidopterologos tis Agonias*, Nikos Kachtitsis, Athènes, Editions Nefeli, 1981.
7. Yiorgos Daniel, *Oi Sygchroni Ellines Poiites tis Diasporas-Voria Ameriki-Mia Thematiki Proseggisi*, (Poètes contemporains de la diaspora d'Amérique du nord Une approche thématique), *To Dentro* (février-mars, avril-mai 1986).
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Musings An Anthology of Greek-Canadian Literature*, edited by Tess Fragoulis, Montréal, Vehicule Press, 2004.

Littérature grecque au Québec

Nécessité de la poésie¹

Jacques Bouchard*

Dans toutes les sociétés, la création poétique se confond pratiquement avec l'origine même de l'expression humaine; elle précède de loin l'avènement de la prose. La poésie épique et lyrique avait depuis longtemps atteint son point culminant lorsque les premiers prosateurs ioniens entreprirent de séduire l'ensemble des Grecs par les sémillances de leurs récits.

Depuis toujours deux mots concurrents polarisent l'expression du peuple grec: mythos et logos. Les Grecs donnèrent au mythe une valeur apodictique tout en cultivant l'art de la poésie d'une manière exemplaire et décisive pour l'Occident. Ils forgèrent aussi le logos libérateur, qui enseigna à l'Homme à ne plus craindre les puissances occultes des divinités, à s'expliquer l'univers à force de réflexion humaine, plutôt que révélation divine, à prendre en main sa destinée: tantôt en conjuguant, tantôt en opposant ces deux concepts, ils inventèrent la science et la philosophie.

Il y a bien quatre millénaires au moins que ce peuple singulier s'est établi dans la fine pointe de la péninsule de l'Hémos: de là il s'est d'abord répandu dans les îles avoisinantes, s'est disséminé tout autour de la mer Egée, pour essaimer le long du littoral de la Méditerranée et enfin se disperser sur les cinq continents.

"Où que j'aille, la Grèce me fait mal", écrivait Georges Seféris, qui naquit à Smyrne et vécut la plus grande partie de sa vie à l'étranger dans les chancelleries diplomatiques.

Les Grecs qui vont chercher fortune de par le monde transportent dans leurs bagages un hellénisme ancestral fait d'un art de vivre traditionnel, de croyances, de rites et de fêtes; ils sont aussi chargés d'une mémoire collective, encore souvent traumatisée par les catastrophes récentes de leur histoire: la guerre civile (1945-1949) consécutive à la Seconde Guerre mondiale, la

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dictature militaire (1967-1974), l'occupation de Chypre par les Turcs depuis 1974... Quand ce n'est pas la Grande catastrophe d'Asie mineure (1922).

La part la plus précieuse de leur patrimoine culturel deviendra aussi la plus vulnérable une fois ces immigrants installés dans la diaspora: ils troqueront contre une langue de travail des parlers grecs qui perpétuent la plus vieille langue connue d'Europe, celle d'Homère et d'Hésiode.

Même la société d'accueil la plus respectueuse et soucieuse des valeurs d'autrui comporte pour les nouveaux arrivants une atteinte inavouée à leur identité profonde par sa force invincible d'attraction et, à moyenne échéance, d'assimilation. L'insertion politique ne constitue qu'une phase transitoire, bien éphémère, de l'acculturation à l'assimilation finale: il suffit d'étudier le processus d'enracinement sur quelques générations. Le processus est manifestement plus accéléré dans les grandes sociétés, comme celles des États-Unis, de la France, du Canada anglais. La fragilité linguistique de la société francophone a permis jusqu'ici aux immigrants une meilleure rétention de leur langue d'origine. Les immigrants grecs ont tiré profit de cette situation précaire.

Qu'ils l'aient prévu ou non, les nouveaux venus doivent louvoyer dans la tourmente sociolinguistique d'un Québec francophone de plus en plus affirmé, tout en s'adaptant à un continent péremptoirement anglophone. Dans ces conditions, qu'est-ce qui peut bien pousser des gens bilingues ou trilingues à écrire dans leur langue d'origine? Comment ne pas constater que l'expression première des sociétés humaines, la poésie, est aussi la dernière à l'inéluctable assimilation? Comment considérer cette production: faut-il la juger selon les mêmes critères que la production du pays d'origine, ou y voir l'émergence d'une nouvelle poésie québécoise, allophone?

Les écrivains regroupés dans cette anthologie ont un certain nombre de traits en commun: ils sont tous nés en Grèce ou à Chypre et sont venus s'établir à Montréal après avoir fait une partie au moins de leurs études dans leur pays d'origine. Tous vivent et travaillent dans une langue autre que le grec; le vécu quotidien ne peut manquer d'investir un imaginaire qui aurait du mal à s'exprimer dans une prose grecque. Tous pratiquent la poésie. Il ne peut s'agir d'un hasard. Il est probable que la poésie peut s'abstraire assez de la réalité ambiante pour constamment se ressourcer à même la nappe phrénétique des acquis passés du poète. Ceci explique pourquoi les formes

poétiques des écrivains grecs de Montréal renvoient le plus souvent à des réminiscences scolaires ou à des modes littéraires que la présente génération de Grèce peut considérer comme révolues. Depuis leur départ de leur mère patrie, les écrivains de la diaspora entretiennent avec la production littéraire courante de Grèce un lien qui varie énormément de l'un à l'autre. On constate pourtant que la poésie engagée, de gauche ou non, est bien représentée, mais que des familles entières, telle celle du surréalisme, n'ont pas encore été assimilées. On discerne des influences certaines des poètes reconnus: Cavafy, Sféris, Ritsos, Élytis, mais aussi Varnalis, Vrettakos, ou poètes du XIX^e siècle. Par contre, les grands surréalistes Embiricos, Engonopoulos et autres plus jeunes ont peu influencé les poètes de Montréal. Il faut de plus constater l'absence d'une grande partie de la production d'après-guerre, même de la fameuse génération des années 70.

Il serait donc plus juste de parler d'une formation originale, d'une poésie québécoise de langue grecque au stade embryonnaire. Malgré une forte récurrence des thèmes de la "patrie perdue", de la quête des origines, de l'idéalisation du passé, on trouve chez certains une réalité originale, souvent adaptée à la vie nord-américaine, où non seulement les paysages nordiques font leur apparition, mais aussi une certaine thématique héritée des années de la contestation, du féminisme, etc.

On a l'habitude de classer les hommes de lettres qui vivent dans la diaspora selon leur degré de notoriété dans leur patrie d'origine. Ainsi, un Nikos Kachtitsis, qui passa de nombreuses années de sa vie à Montréal, est pourtant considéré comme un écrivain grec qui a vécu à l'étranger. De même, Nanos Valaoritis est un poète grec qui vit depuis des années à San Francisco; la critique n'a jamais fait de lui un poète helléno-américain. Nos poètes de Montréal ont vraisemblablement tous l'ambition de se faire connaître dans leur mère patrie, mais ils auront sûrement la modestie de se qualifier pour le moment de poètes helléno-québécois ou helléno-canadiens, selon la communauté politique à laquelle chacun estime se rattacher.

Certes, il y a quelque chose d'héroïque et de tragique chez un poète solitaire qui continue à cultiver sa langue en dépit de son enracinement dans un milieu linguistique étranger. Il est heureux qu'ils se soient réunis, malgré leurs différences; l'existence même d'un cercle de poètes grecs à Montréal constitue un phénomène remarquable, qui témoigne de la nécessité de créer la beauté au moyen du verbe poétique, où que l'on soit. Mais les activités de

la Société des Écrivains Grecs de Montréal ont en outre des conséquences qui dépassent de loin le domaine littéraire: une communauté culturelle qui compte des créateurs en son sein assure sa survivance identitaire.

Ces poètes montréalais de langue grecque méritent d'être mieux connus dans la société québécoise majoritaire, de langue française¹.

D'anciens étudiants francophones des Études néo-helléniques de l'Université de Montréal ont entrepris de traduire bénévolement, sous la direction du responsable de ce programme, cette petite anthologie poétique pour manifester tangiblement leur estime envers les poètes grecs de Montréal et leur cordiale amitié envers toute la communauté hellénophone du Québec.

NOTES

1. Ce texte est la préface parue dans l'anthologie, *Poètes Montréalais de langue grecque*, Montréal, Association des écrivains Grecs de Montréal, 1995.

L'auteur de cette préface a déjà présenté les poètes grecs de Montréal au public athénien; voir J. Bouchard, «O Omilos Ellinon Logotchnon tou Montreal» («La Société des Écrivains Grecs de Montréal»), revue *I Lexi*, Athènes, juillet-août 1992, p.575-587, introduction et anthologie en langue grecque.

Un poète grec de la périphérie

Jacques Bouchard*

Celui qu'une disposition du sort — qu'on ne saurait imputer ni à la justice de Dieu ni au verdict des hommes — a condamné à n'être tout à fait ni de son temps, ni de son pays, n'a guère d'autre patrie que la route le long de laquelle il chemine. (...) C'est pourquoi, qu'il le veuille ou non, il doit avancer, avancer encore jusqu'à ce que son regard se voile, que ses membres se dessèchent, que son ombre le quitte et qu'il ne soit plus rien qu'une voix mêlée de lumière, ou — ce qui est plus probable — un silence dans la nuit.

Benoist Méchin¹

Peu de poètes en vérité réussissent à transformer la date de leur naissance en symbole poétique et à l'imprimer ainsi définitivement dans la mémoire de leurs lecteurs. Victor Hugo immortalisa la sienne dans une formule fameuse: "Ce siècle avait deux ans..." Stephanos Constantinides, quant à lui, est né en 1941. Mais il naquit dans une conjoncture politique, socio-économique et historique tellement pénible qu'on eût dit qu'elle fût celle d'un siècle de fer, de loin antérieur aux progrès civilisateurs de l'humanisme, du christianisme et des *Lumières*. Voilà pourquoi le poète stigmatisa cette date — banale en somme — en y accolant la simple abréviation, mais d'une éloquente litote: en 1941 av. J.-C.

C'est qu'il vit le jour dans un petit pays occupé, souventefois mis à feu et à sang: l'île de Chypre. Précisons que "la naissance le prit" dans une humble famille paysanne, vivant pauvrement dans la bourgade de Pentalia, près de Paphos: ce qui obligera le jeune homme à toujours travailler manuellement pour pouvoir compléter ses études secondaires. Il n'est encore qu'élève au gymnase lorsque, pendant les années 1955-1960, il prend part à la lutte de libération nationale de son pays. En 1960 il part pour Athènes pour y préparer sa licence es lettres. Celle-ci obtenue, il retourne à Chypre et devient, à partir de 1966, professeur dans l'enseignement secondaire. On sait

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que Chypre demeure l'un des rares pays à ne pas posséder d'université; Constantinides reprend donc le chemin de l'étranger en 1970 dans le but de parfaire sa formation professionnelle: il s'inscrit à la Sorbonne qui lui décernera successivement une maîtrise es lettres, un doctorat en sociologie et un doctorat d'État en sciences politiques.

Ses études terminées, Stephanos Constantinides arrive au Québec en 1976. Il enseigne d'abord à l'Université Laval, puis à l'Université de Montréal et à l'Université du Québec à Montréal. Il a par ailleurs rempli diverses fonctions au Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec, fut président du Conseil consultatif des communautés culturelles et de l'immigration, puis membre du Comité pour l'implantation du plan d'action du Gouvernement du Québec à l'intention des communautés culturelles (CIPACC).

Outre la poésie dont je parlerai plus bas, Constantinides a toujours consacré une partie de son temps au journalisme, que ce soit à Chypre, à Athènes ou à Montréal. C'est que plus directement peut-être que la poésie, la presse écrite lui permet de faire évoluer les mentalités, d'exprimer ses idées et ses idéaux de justice sociale et de liberté, de participer activement à la vie communautaire, d'abord de l'hellénisme irrédimé, ensuite des Grecs de la diaspora².

Au Québec plus particulièrement, alors qu'il était président de l'Association culturelle helléno-québécoise, il a fondé et dirigé la revue *Le Métèque* (1980); présentement, il dirige le Centre de Recherches Helléniques de Montréal, qu'il a fondé, de même que la revue savante *Études helléniques* (1983) dont il est co-éditeur.

Le présent recueil s'intitule *Anthumes*: un mot qui, s'il suggère d'audacieuses associations d'idées, nécessite pourtant quelques explications. À première vue, on croirait y lire le terme *anthos*, fleur, qu'on retrouve dans notre mot "anthologie", de même que dans le prénom chrétien Anthime, porté par nombre d'ecclésiastiques orthodoxes; au fait, Chypre ne fut-elle pas surnommée "l'île des saints"? Le titre évoque aussi l'anglais *anthem*, antienne ou chant de célébration — ce qui siérait admirablement à des poèmes. Un lecteur quelque peu helléniste s'empresserait peut-être de comprendre *anthumnos*, "contre-hymne", qui serait également très évocateur. Mais il s'agit plutôt d'un néologisme forgé par analogie avec son contraire, bien attesté: "posthume". Quoique d'origine latine, ce titre me

paraît convenir tout à fait aux fins de la présente anthologie: le préfixe *ante*, avant, met en relief l'Antiquité historique ou fictive dans laquelle le poète a situé plusieurs de ses poèmes. Quant au second terme du néologisme, *humus*, il rappelle douloureusement ce qui manque essentiellement au déshérité et au déraciné: la terre. Enfin, par son opposition à "posthume", *Anthumes* désigne et magnifie le combat acharné de l'Homme, sa vie durant, luttant seul mais fier contre les forces qui à la fin le terrasseront.

Anthumes présente au public francophone quatre poèmes tirés du premier recueil de Constantinides, paru à Nicosie en 1969 sous le titre *Investir dans le temps* d'un rêve et de quelques témoignages. Ce sont les poèmes: «Je suis né en 1941 av. J.-C.», «Biographie», «Justice» et «Une lueur d'espoir». Du second recueil, publié à Nicosie en 1979 et intitulé *Prière de ne pas cracher dans l'autobus*³, cinq poèmes ont été retenus: «Exploits du monde civilisé», «Nous avons choisi la terre», «Erinyes», «Dans le royaume de Syrobabylonie» et «Jehan S...». Les cinq autres poèmes sont des inédits, plus récents.

Les poèmes choisis et traduits peuvent être regroupés et former quatre cycles: 1^o les poèmes autobiographiques (1 à 4); 2^o les chants inspirés par la tragédie chypriote (5 à 7); 3^o par l'histoire et la politique (8 à 13); 4^o le poème autobiographique final (14) qui pourrait bien clore une période et en inaugurer une autre: on y constate pour la première fois la mention de Montréal.

La poésie de Constantinides est une poésie simple, truffée de prosaïsmes et étrangère à l'alogisme et à l'abstraction qui ont marqué la poésie depuis le surréalisme. On peut donc aisément circonscrire sa thématique et esquisser une certaine évolution de celle-ci au moyen des quelques fragments présentés ici. Le lecteur du texte grec percevra l'évolution du poète pour ce qui est de sa maîtrise des techniques poétiques.

Le thème de l'inadaptation sociale du poète risquerait de nous reporter à un romantisme éculé et aujourd'hui trivial. Or c'est d'abord de son inadaptation éthique que nous parle Constantinides; son inadaptation sociale n'a rien de romantique: elle se fonde sur des constatations d'ordre économique et politique. À scruter attentivement les "témoignages" de Constantinides, on conclura que son affirmation de l'impuissance congénitale à posséder le bonheur *terrestre* ainsi que la grêle mélodie qui l'exprime illustrent assez la "dissonance ontologique" dont Hugo Friedrich

fait la caractéristique essentielle de la poésie moderne⁴. Cette condition de l'homme écrasé de naissance par la foule des systèmes existants n'est pas seulement celle, personnelle, du poète: c'est au contraire le lot -le Destin? de la masse des anonymes, des déshérités de la terre dont le poète se fait le porte-parole.

L'angoisse originelle de se voir partir perdant dans la carrière de la vie prend bientôt des proportions cosmiques: le sol se dérobe et l'homme reste orphelin d'une patrie soudainement perdue. Comment n'être pas cette "conscience malheureuse" quand on se rend compte que la tourmente est généralisée, que les systèmes broient les hommes au nom, usurpé, de la civilisation et que Big Brother commande tout? (Voir "Dans le royaume de Syrobabylonie" et "Salamine de Chypre"). La condition d'esclave, d'exilé, de réfugié est — hélas! — trop humaine; elle ne date pas de l'occupation anglaise de l'île de Chypre (1878 à 1960), ni de l'invasion récente (1974) du pays et de son occupation par la soldatesque turque: de l'Histoire universelle, maculée d'une suite d'atrocités semblables (de Troie et Carthage jusqu'à Auschwitz), l'actualité reprend inexorablement le flambeau — le Vietnam, le régime des Colonels en Grèce, etc. (Voir "Exploits du monde civilisé" et "Réfugiés").

Or le poète refuse de jouer le jeu en se taisant: à l'aliénation résignée, voire consentie, il préfère l'angoissante lucidité du "non serviam". À la suite d'une prise de conscience de sa condition de vaincu, si d'autres attitudes sont possibles, deux surtout s'offrent à l'homme qui décide de ne pas embrasser le parti de la force aveugle (car "médiser" est de toutes les époques, de même que les janissaires volontaires!): il y a d'abord le saut dans l'absurde; mais Constantinides semble bien l'avoir écarté d'emblée. Enfin, il y a l'engagement. Mais ici quelques distinctions s'imposent. Il est évident que Constantinides, en tant que personne politisée, a été amené à faire des choix politiques et même à assumer des responsabilités dans un parti: il fut secrétaire national, pour le Canada, du Mouvement Panhellénique Socialiste (PASOK) en 1980-1981. Il prit aussi une part active au Comité helléno-canadien de solidarité pour Chypre. Mais déçu de constater l'entropie grandissante entre la conception d'un programme et son application, il préféra reprendre sa liberté et quelque distance avec les partis politiques. D'autre part, il s'est vite aperçu que la simonie existe même dans les causes dites nobles, qu'elles soient patriotiques ou humanitaires (voir "Erinyes").

Il en va tout autrement de son engagement en tant qu'écrivain. Constantinides a déjà affirmé qu'il n'était pas un "écrivain engagé" dans le sens partisan du terme⁵. Intellectuel émigré, il a opté de combattre pour l'Homme, de défendre des idéaux de justice sociale qui transcendent les programmes politiques et les patries particulières. La "petite patrie" perdue, il retrouve la grande patrie de tous les hommes, la planète Terre. À le voir prendre la défense autant du Troyen, du Carthaginois, que du Chypriote, on songe à la généreuse pensée de Leibniz: «je souhaite le bien du genre humain; je suis non pas *philellin*, ou *philoromaïos*, mais *philanthropos*».⁶

La poésie de contestation de Constantinides vise à libérer l'Homme des diverses servitudes qui l'oppriment, qu'elles soient d'ordre politique, économique, culturel, religieux, historique, etc. Le poète raille l'utilisation tendancieuse des valeurs helléno-chrétiennes prônée par la Junte militaire grecque pendant la dictature (1967-1974) (voir "Jehan S..."); il dénonce aussi les impostures de l'histoire officielle (voir "Impostures"). Il reprend d'ailleurs autrement ce thème dans d'autres poèmes, qu'on n'a pas retenus dans cette anthologie, en démystifiant les mythes créés par les histoires nationales. Ainsi dans son poème "La Bastille" publié en 1969, le poète se demande:

(...)
*"Mais a-t-elle vraiment eu lieu la prise
de la Bastille?
ou ne sont-ce là
que songes d'une nuit d'été
que des historiens farfelus de l'époque
nous ont refilés
comme événements historiques?
Événement bien douteux que cette prise
de la Bastille.
Il est plus probable
qu'elle reste encore debout
et qu'en vain les hommes
célèbrent sa prise!"*

Que le poète continue inlassablement son combat solitaire, on ne saurait identifier son attitude à celle du Sisyphe de Camus: il ne possède pas l'ataraxie de ce dernier; au contraire son stoïcisme est teinté d'amertume. Les dents grincent. La plainte ou le cri qui jaillissent couvent une haine sourde contre toutes les formes d'oppression, mais aussi l'irréductible espoir qu'un jour ce combat trouvera sa justification. Le ton habituel de cette poésie oscille entre l'ironie et le sarcasme, laissant poindre parfois quelques menaces larvées. L'arme des faibles? Peut-être aussi leur force, quand on ne craint pas de manier la dérision contre son propre sort, comme fait le poète. Et pourtant cette poésie trouve çà et là des accents d'une authentique tendresse (voir "Biographie" et "Adieu").

Contre le monde chaotique extérieur, la littérature constitue incontestablement pour Constantinides un refuge et un lieu de rédemption. L'écriture justifie le combattant et le sauve du néant. Cette conception éthique, quasi sacerdotale, de l'écriture source de courage, Constantinides veut la trouver chez ses aînés d'élection: voilà pourquoi la référence et l'interférence intertextuelles renvoient souvent le lecteur à des textes de Georges Seféris (1900-1971; Prix Nobel 1963), de l'éminent Alexandrin Constantin Cavafy (1863-1933) ou de Manolis Anagnostakis (1925-), lui aussi poète contestataire. Comme beaucoup de poètes grecs de la génération des années '70, Constantinides semble avoir été peu influencé par la poésie d'Odysséas Elytis (1911-; Prix Nobel 1979). C'est que l'esthétique et la réutilisation critique de sujets historiques et politiques des trois autres correspondent mieux peut-être à une poésie démystificatrice.

Poète parcimonieux, Constantinides a livré peu de textes au public; son œuvre connue a gardé quelque chose de fragmentaire, métaphoriquement exemplaire du champ de ruines — les civilisations! — sur lequel le poète promène son regard impitoyable.

Ce texte est la préface parue dans le recueil de poèmes de Stephanos Constantinides, *ANTHUMES*, Montréal, Éd. Le Métèque, 1984.

NOTES

1. *À destins rompus*, Paris, Albin Michel, 1974, p.11 et 13.
2. Constantinides vient de publier une étude sociologique intitulée *Les Grecs du Québec*, Montréal, Editions O Metoikos — Le Métèque, 1983, p.250.
3. En grec, les deux recueils s'intitulent comme suit : *Ependyssi sto hrono enos oneirou kai kapoion martyrion*, Nicosie, Editions «*Kypriaka Hronika*», 1969, *Parakaleisthe me ptyete entos tou leoforeiou*, Nicosie, Editions *O Metoikos*, 1979.
4. Voir Hugo Friedrich, *Structures de la poésie moderne*, Paris, Denoël/Gonthier, 1976 (édition allemande 1956).
5. Dans une interview que Constantinides m'accordait le 11 mars 1983 sur les ondes de Radio-Canada, à l'émission "Actuelles".
6. *Die philosophischen Schriften*, éd. C.I. Gerhardt, vol.VII, Berlin, 1890, p.456. Cité dans A. Lalande, *Vocabulaire technique et critique de la philosophie*, Paris, P.U.F., 1972, p.770.

Women Writers in Australia and North America: Bearing Witness to the Hellenic Immigration Experience

Ekaterini Georgoudaki*

RÉSUMÉ

Des femmes poètes et auteurs, écrivaines de prose d'origine grecque et chypriote grecque récréent, à travers le langage, leurs propres expériences, ainsi que les expériences d'autres personnes relatives à leur déracinement et leur établissement en Australie, au Canada et aux États-Unis. À travers une variété de personnages elles présentent les rêves des immigrants, leurs premières impressions et leurs difficultés d'adaptation à un environnement culturel et linguistique différent, le racisme auquel elles font face, leur lutte pour la survie dans les sociétés capitalistes des pays d'accueil hautement compétitifs et hautement stratifiés aussi bien que de leurs impressions lors du retour à la mère patrie, après beaucoup d'années d'absence. La discussion de leurs textes montre leur importance littéraire, historique et socio-politique.

ABSTRACT

Through language women poets and fiction writers of Greek and Greek-Cypriot origin recreate their own and other people's experiences of expatriation and settlement in Australia, Canada and the USA. Using a variety of characters they present migrants' dreams, first impressions and difficulties in adjusting to a different cultural and linguistic environment. Also revealed are the racism encountered and the struggle for survival in the host country's highly competitive, class-structured capitalist society. The writers also relate their impression of the motherland when they return after many years of absence. The discussion of the texts highlights the literary, historical and socio-political importance of women writers of Greek and Greek-Cypriot origin and their experience.

Introduction

In their poetry and fiction, women writers of Hellenic descent living in Australia, Canada and the USA often describe the devastating effects of WWII, the German occupation, the Civil War and the 1974 Turkish invasion of Cyprus. They present the violence, the loss of beloved people and property, the disruption of family and communal life, the psychological

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traumas and the socio-economic and political problems brought about by wars as the major factors that caused the immigration of thousands of Greeks and Greek-Cypriots, the writers included, in the twentieth century. Standing at the intersection of two different cultures, they also tell stories about their own and other people's experiences of expatriation and settlement in foreign countries. Their texts focus on daily events in the migrants' lives, as well as on the thoughts, feelings and memories such events generate. They thus function as testimonies of immigration. There is a variety of characters, themes and techniques in the literary texts presented in this essay. There is also variety in the origins, educational background, and professional achievement, etc. of the writers. Three of them (Hermione Vassiliou, Avra Tsambi-Michaelidou, and Thalia Tassou) are of Greek-Cypriot origin, two (Haitho Massala and Voula Augerinou) were born in Australia, one (Penelope Karageorge) in the USA, and the rest were born in Greece. Most writers immigrated between the early 1950s and late 1970s.

Illusions about Wealth, First Images and Critique of the Host Country

The Antipodes, Canada and the USA represented places of safety from war and political conflict, as well as stable and wealthy countries promising a better life to immigrants and refugees. Particularly attractive were the legends about "gold in the streets" of North America and Australia, spread by labor and other agents in Greece in order to recruit poor young men.¹ Having first-hand experience of the living and working conditions in these countries, women writers reveal the exaggerated nature of such legends and the illusions they generated. For instance, Tsambi adopts an ironic attitude towards the immigrants' dreams in her short poem "Toronto 1975:"

Dreams are on sale here,
buyers
the victims of circumstances
Dream-books
are out of print.²

In contrast to Tsambi who does not refer to the actual conditions of migrant life in Canada, Amanatidou and Massala illustrate how the dream of quick and easy wealth clashed with daily reality in Australia. Tassos,

Amanatidou's protagonist in her story "Without Roots," is one of the post-WWII migrants who believed the "many unlikely stories about that distant land which drew him like a magnet." One such story is that "in the Antipodes even a labourer lived like a king. As long as he had the indomitable soul of Odysseus, the will to survive..." The events of the story, however, prove that "the fight for survival was hard" and that money did not come easily.³

Massala also contrasts the immigrants' expectations of amassing wealth quickly and easily with their reality of "sweat and toil" (p.120, sect.3, l.48) for long hours every day, in her poem "Australia - New Mother" dedicated to her parents who immigrated there in the 1950s:

When you reach Australia you will gather money
from the streets
by the sackful.
"Why did you come?"
"Why? Because Greece was poor.
Poverty, hunger, earthquake — for many reasons."
Australia — new mother.

(sect.1, l.1-7)

Australia.
Australia.
And they said the streets would be lined with money.
No.
No money in the streets.
Hard work — nothing more.

(sect.2, l.26-31)⁴

In addition to texts showing the migrants' illusions about the countries of reception, there are poems that convey their first impressions of these countries. The speakers in some poems tend to idealize Australia. For example, in Roumeliotaki's "Ode to Australia," Australia is presented as an "exotic Paradise." In Xenophou's "Destination" and Karathanasi's "Enchantress," on the other hand, Australia is personified. In the former, she is compared to a "gigantic[...] goddess" (st.4, l.1) surrounded by "fine-veiled

nerheids who danced beautifully" (l.2). Like "Ulysses in Circe's island" (l.4), the newly arrived immigrant becomes "bewitched" and "spellbound" (l.3) by the nereids' "enchanted songs" (l.3) and begins to sing to Australia, her "new love" (st.5, l.7). In the latter, Australia is presented as a "desirable" woman whose beauty has enchanted poor people around the world:

She is the noble daughter of the Earth.
It was she who conquered us.
Like a fresh, desirable woman,
who quickly intoxicated us.

She bathes in perfumes.
Her clothes are glittering
and we the poor children of the world
hotly lust after her.⁵

In other poems and stories, however, the speakers' bad psychological condition, as they try to adjust to an unfamiliar environment, is expressed through negative images of Australia and its cities. For example, in Sevastopoulou's "Bonfires in Exile" the immigrants' feelings of inner "vacuum" (st.1, l.3) and "desolation" (st.2, l.4) make them see Australia as a place of exile: "Now we kindle bonfires in exile/but cannot feel their warmth." In Krili's poem "Departure" Australian cities are compared to "concrete jungles:"

Herds of volunteer helots
we arrive in concrete jungles.
Without recommendations
without welcome.⁶

By using the images of "herds" and "helots" Krili conveys the low status, vulnerable position and insecurity of the migrants in these "jungles." More ambivalent are the feelings expressed and the images used in a number of other texts. For instance, Vassiliou's speaker in *He Thealli* initially feels "an alien" in the "strange world" (p.13) of her new homeland. After becoming adjusted to her new environment, however, the city is "no longer foreign" to her. On the contrary, it enhances her self-awareness: "It was the city that introduced us to ourselves" (p.23).⁷

Ambivalent are also the views of the Bonegilla camp, where the immigrants had to stay upon arrival, in texts by Krili and Amanatidou. In her poem "Morias," Krili calls the camp "a place of patience and expectation" at which migrants "were waiting for the rainbow." In Amanatidou's story "To teleftaio idioktito," the Bonegilla camp where Gerasimos is taken initially appears to be a "naked, inhospitable camp. A stable where the herd could rest from the storm of immigration." His early conception of the camp gradually changes and he later parallels it to Noah's Ark that saved all the tribes of Israel from "the deluge of immigration."⁸

The new countries that attracted thousands of Greeks after WWII and the Civil War promised not only material wealth but also political freedom. The theme of freedom is important in two poetic texts by Pagoulatou in which the central image is the Statue of Liberty. In *Motherhood*, the immigrants arriving in the New York port of entry to the USA, admit: "Everything impressed our eyes/as though dressed in pure magic" (l.1-2). Leaving their fatherland they "began to dress a dream" (l.14). Yet, the comparison of the passage between the Statue of Liberty and the New York harbour to the deadly straits between the mythical Clashing Rocks, and the contrast between this image with the "magic" of the new place, suggest the immigrants' insecure position and their fear of losing their ethnic identities:

We needed to find secret keys
to pass chaste
Liberty's Clashing Rocks
with our ancestral Identification Card
playing our anthem.

(p.58, l. 3-7)

In the poem titled "The Lady Doorkeeper" (*Transplants*), the speaker cruising around the statue observes that the heart of "Lady Freedom" is "lifeless" (l.8), her head is "hollowed out" (l.9), her eyes gazing on "the Gate to the West" (l.14) are "sham" (l.12). Through these images the poet drops a hint that the contemporary USA may not be the land of freedom that the oppressed and persecuted people from other countries ("castaway humanity," l.18) have sought.⁹

Pagoulatou's and other writers' descriptions include not only the migrants' first impressions of ports of entry, migrant camps, unfamiliar landscapes and new workplaces, but they also include comments about the local society's dominant values, stereotypes, behaviour and their own relationship to it. In other words, there is a frequent comparison between the Hellenic and the Anglosaxon cultures that prevailed in the Antipodes, Canada and the USA. As we can see in the texts discussed below, the speakers usually criticize the latter. For instance, Alexia and Melina, the two central characters in Kefala's prose works *Alexia* and *The Island* respectively, whose families went as refugees to the Antipodes (New Zealand) in the 1950s, sound critical of the Anglos' preoccupation with the weather and with the cutting of grass in their daily conversation.¹⁰ Melina, a university student, also points out that the Anglos become emotional only at sports and afterwards they become "mute as statues" (p.64). Their emotional restraint makes Melina label them "subdued" and "uninteresting" (p.92). Despite her growing command of the English language, her Anglo fellow students still see her as the "other." Consequently, Melina feels lonely and a misfit in all the groups she joins (pp.164, 166). She seems to move on the edge of two different cultures without belonging to either one.

More conscious of the complexities of her immigrant condition is the adult speaker in Kamboureli's journal in the second person, which combines poetry with prose. Although she has left Greece "not out of deprivation or disillusion" (iv, p.9), she originally feels excluded from mainstream Canadian society, because of her "difference," and criticizes its tendency to see her through stereotypes and to ignore her heterogeneity (Dec. 5, 1983):

This is the first time I used the word immigrant with reference to myself. This word hits me in the face and in the heart. It ejects me from what I cannot leave (my past/my Greek language), and throws me into a place that constantly excludes me on the principle of difference. My ideas, my habits, my amorous moods, my temperament are, quite often, not seen as expressions of me, but as specimens of the Greek stereotype I am supposed to represent. How can I explain that, although I am a Macedonian like Aristotle, I am not a mimetic being, a signified brand. I am expected to be homogeneous at the expense of my personal heterogeneity. I've have said "No" to those who invited me

to recite Homer by heart. I've given no response to those who described to me, very vividly, the dirty washrooms they visited in the small island towns of Greece.

(ii, p.8)

The narrator expresses her feeling of dislocation as an immigrant by stating that she does not “feel at home with [herself]” (iii, p.8), but sees herself as “an allusion socially adrift” (p.14). She also expresses the split in her consciousness caused by the clash of her inherited Greek with her newly acquired Canadian culture/language/identity, by comparing herself to “a fractured bone. A fractured bone that heals itself” (p.21). Besides, she describes the English language in which she lives “bathed” (vii, p.10) after immigrating as “a second skin,” another self “wrapped around” the original self (p.21). Living “on the edge of two languages, on the edge of two selves named and constructed by language,” however, is not only a traumatic experience for her, as the image of the fractured bone suggests. It also “liberates the self from a monologic existence,” because “the self becomes a being of multiple meanings and *jouissance* and many little deaths” (viii, p.11).¹¹

Unlike Kamboureli's narrator, the speakers in Kotsovolou's and Panaretou's poems do not see any advantages in their otherness, but they are openly critical of Americans and their values. In “America: First Images,” for example, Kotsovolou portrays Americans as superficial people lacking self-awareness and unable to express their emotions and to communicate. Coming from a different culture in which people move between extremes and express their emotions freely (images of “heaps of feelings,” “burning flames,” “cold icebergs,” “storms” and “rainbows”) her persona feels alienated and “unspeakably lonely” in her new homeland:

Easygoing people
how difficult you seem to me!
With your ever-smiling faces,
plain, unquestioning eyes,
unsophisticated gestures,
sparkling colors,
practical minds.
Have never seen you weeping.
Can you?

Easygoing people
 what is the secret of your culture?
 what is the secret of your easygoingness?
 Flat seem your structures to me
 yet functional they are
 and you survive happily
 in an indifferent inertia.
 Near you I feel unspeakably lonely
 and unbelonging.
 Brought with me from my distant country
 heaps of feelings,
 burning flames and cold icebergs,
 storms and rainbows,
 all the extremes and contradictions
 of raw cultures
 and their potential for synthesis too.
 No place for my luggage here.
 Leave them packed.

To help Americans discover themselves and learn to interact with different people like her she offers her own cultural wealth:

Easygoing people
 I want to take you by the shoulders,
 tenderly at first,
 communicate my inwardness through meaningful touch
 but also shake you strongly,
 smoothly talk to you over a night's time
 about other truths and values.
 Then, deep look in your eyes
 discover what's beyond that glacial look
 and if there exists a world of nothingness
 build together, stone by stone,
 a city for human needs
 and live there with you
 in conscious peace
 and awareness
 of constructive interaction.
 Shall we deal?¹²

The theme of loneliness is also central in Panaretou's poem "The Doctor." The female migrant in the USA who suffers from loneliness consults a specialist. By presenting the American doctor's viewpoint and showing his inability to diagnose and cure the woman's "illness" Panaretou condemns the "affluent" American society whose product the doctor is. In contrast to the speaker in Kotsovolou's poem, who wants to interact with people in the dominant culture, Panaretou's speaker feels rejected and in return rejects them. Her tone is sarcastic and through the words she puts in the doctor's mouth the poet portrays white American middle-class society as materialistic, morally and spiritually deficient, ignorant of and unable to understand people who are different, etc.:

Your illness is very peculiar,
Madame.
You must undoubtedly be a foreigner...
In this country, the symptoms
are like an open book
deciphered,
simple, and
not quite as crooked.
I can deal with sex,
insanity,
or weight,
but for your case, it's kind of late.
Our education is not particularly concerned
with soul, I am afraid,
and I honestly, Madame, hate to see myself
paid
but it's an affluent society
and although we can cure all diseases with
pills of morality,
we cannot prescribe salvation freely
because of the taxes
that limit our humanitarian process
like iron axes.
Doctors suffer a lot
in this country, Madame...
Oh, incidentally, did you say you

believe you suffer from
l-o-n-e-l-i-n-e-s-s?
Here is your bill – what a confusing illness!
You must undoubtedly be a foreigner.
How do you spell it, Madame?¹³

Panaretou sounds critical of white middle-class American values and lifestyle, in her long poem “Jogging” (*Traffic*, pp.29-31) as well. She presents jogging as a means of escape and uses it to point out Americans’ inner emptiness and dull lives. These problems are further revealed through her reference to the “alarming blankness in their eyes” (st.1, l.4), their mechanical “unemotional steps” (st.1, l.8), their “unanimated discussions” (st.2, l.17), the “nonsensical” (st.2, l.15) TV shows they watch for hours, their light reading (*Play Boy*), their stereotypes of masculinity (a man is effeminate if he is interested in art), their dependence on psychiatrists (st.2), their obsession with routine and physical health, the exclusion of all “different” people from their neighborhoods in order to keep their property value high (st.3), their indifference towards older people (st.4), etc. As happens in “The Doctor,” the persona in “Jogging” feels rejected by and a misfit in the dominant society, and reacts by rejecting it, too.

Karageorge also appears critical of the affluent American society, in her poetry collection *Red Lipstick*. In contrast to Pagoulatou, Kotsovolou and Panaretou, however, she was born, raised and educated in New York and she is still living and working there. In other words, she is a member of the American middle class whose values and follies she satirizes. In her book she moves between the American and the Hellenic cultures, she observes them and contrasts the American urban landscape and the complex life of a money and pleasure oriented capitalist society with the rural landscape and the simple life on the island of Lemnos, where her grandmother was born. In the poem “Shepherd and Self,” for example, she tries to imagine how an island shepherd, who works and sleeps outdoors, could live in America, and she shows how incompatible the shepherd’s lifestyle (close to nature) would be in the New York highly technological and artificial environment (“of neon and stone,” l.19). If he tried to live outdoors there, he could not possibly survive. For, he would be a social outcast like the poor and homeless city residents:

At night he sleeps in a lean-to near the animals,
fitting into a green, black, blue, and white world.
A city dweller, I observe him from my bus stop seat
as he crosses the road and imagine him
surviving in America. How he'd sleep over
a grate and dig cans out of trash barrels.¹⁴

The Migrants' Sunless Existence in Foreign Cities

Most immigrants who found themselves in the big cities of North America and the Antipodes came from villages and small towns and spoke no English. Consequently, their adjustment to their new environment was not easy. Karageorge, Vazra and Pagoulatou make general and often metaphorical comments in their poems about the difficulties the immigrants faced in the USA.¹⁵ For example, in "Avenue 'B' Rembetiko" Karageorge remarks, comparing her own privileged position as a Greek American with that of her immigrant parents' generation:

Hardship traveled from Greece with
them. Tragic eyes set them apart,
guests in this Lana-Turnered landscape
of America. But I, fed on Rice Krispies and
speaking no other tongue than English, was
anointed to go forth smiling...

(Red Lipstick, p.14, st.2, l.1-6)

In "New York III, IV" Vazra suggests the dangers threatening the immigrants' health and lives in the urban environment:

We are children of pollution
living in streets
maimed by our footprints
and open death.¹⁶

In "Career" Pagoulatou compares the immigrant to a spider and conveys the vulnerability of his/her life and social position in the big city by metaphorically referring to his/her existence as "sunless" and "moth-eaten" and contrasting the fragile "weft" of his/her life with the hard "steel and concrete of skyscrapers:"

Like a spider
atop the steel and concrete of skyscrapers
I wove the immigrant's
sunless weft

Moth-eaten
and moldy
I spread it under my country's sun
It faded and vanished.¹⁷

Poets in Canada and Australia make more factual references to the immigrants' hard working and living conditions. For instance, Tassou reveals the harmful psychosomatic effects of such conditions on a female worker in Canada, a worker who is ironically one of the contemporary Aphrodites mentioned in the long poem "Aphrodite Montrealitissa" (sect. II). Another irony in the sick woman's case is that she still clings to the dream of wealth in the capitalist paradise of Canada, a dream shared by many other migrants from Greece and Cyprus. She longs to return "Home" in order to heal herself, but first she wants to buy a fur coat, symbol of her material success in Canada. The poet deflates the worker's illusions of wealth and creates further irony by contrasting the images of 1) the fur coat with 2) the cockroaches and rats that constitute the reality of the woman's life in poverty. As was the case in Pagoulatou's "Career," the sunlight of the motherland mentioned in Tassou's poem, has the power to heal the sick immigrant:

I want to go Home
she murmured trembling
I have a slipped disc
and arthritis
my child suffers
from asthma
I need sunlight

the doctor said
but before going
I must buy
the fur coat of which
I have been dreaming for years
How can I go Home
without it
take me with you
tonight
compatriot
I fear
the nightmares
at night
the cockroaches
and the rats.¹⁸

Another contemporary Aphrodite in Tassou's poem (sect. VI) is also a migrant worker in Canada. Through the device of repetition Tassou suggests the monotony of the woman's life and work. The poet shows both the worker's effort to break monotony, her coquetry and her social pretensions, by referring to her making new dresses every month in order to go to church:

The machine
the machine again
on the machine
the same movements
every day
every hour
every minute
every second
at night
she thinks
of the new
dress she will
make
with the new
pattern
she makes nearly ten

new
dresses
a month
how could she
present herself
at church
wearing the same dress
on Sunday?

(p.168)

More references to the monotonous and unhealthy work conditions of Greek industrial workers appear in Greek-Australian literary texts. Massala, for example, writes in “Australia — New Mother:”

Work work work work
24 hours
work work work work
overtime
work work work work
shifts
work work work work
seven days a week
work work work work
factories
machinery
noise
noise noise noise.¹⁹

Moreover, in “Departure,” Krili stresses the newcomers’ inability to communicate in a foreign language, as well as their enslavement (“put to the yoke”), exploitation and dehumanization (“parts of machinery,” “factory fodder”) by an alien industrial society:

Silenced by incoherent words
speechless we are put to the yoke
parts of machinery
under the subjection of heartless foremen.

The toil dries up the nerves
maims the body.
A dim cacophonous workplace.
We are the generation of the Diaspora
factory fodder.

(*Triptych*, p.124, st.4)

The Host Country as Melting Pot

In the previous sections I have presented literary texts that describe and comment upon the hardships of starting a new life in an alien place, and especially upon the immigrants' difficult working and living conditions. In the texts I am quoting in this section such conditions are placed within a wider context of social inequality and prejudice (ethnic, racial, sexual, class, etc.) existing in the capitalist societies of the host countries. In *The Angels*, for example, Pagoulatou points out "the ugliness" of New York "without make-up," an ugliness hidden behind the impressive "show case" of material success (st.3). She exposes the hypocrisy of those in power, as well as the lack of social care for and the exclusion of the contemporary Cinderellas (the poor, the hungry, the homeless, the drug addicted, the sick):

You surely do not suspect
what each narrow alley
washes downstream.
There, the hungry, the poor, and the sick
die in the sun, trembling from the polar cold
of the center of nuclear weapons
and the gleam of the peace prizes.
Tears drop from their eyes
in the shape of bread slices,
tears reflecting in their pearls
Cinderella's palace.
The snot runs down from their nostrils
like liquid antibiotic,
and sterilizes the needle
on their grubby sleeves.²⁰

In “An Ode, a Prayer,” Xenophou addresses Australia as “Mother dearest” and praises it for both its natural beauty and for having embraced people of many races (st.1). She wonders, however, why there is socio-economic inequality in such a democratic country:

I look at your vastness, beauty and potential
and wondering, disillusioned, I hear a cry:
Why are some prosperous while others strive?
Why the dole and not the dignity of work?
Why imbalance in power and wealth?
Why such greed, such fear, such deception?
Why such indifference from some of your children?²¹

The pressure on the immigrants to become assimilated by giving up their language and culture and adopting those of the host country, their social exclusion or rejection because of their difference, the host society's feelings of superiority, hostility, contempt, etc. for the newcomers that often resulted in violence, are frequent themes in migrant women's literary texts.²² I have already quoted Kamboureli's journal comment about her early feeling of exclusion from the mainstream Canadian society, because of her cultural difference and her immigrant status (*in the second person*, ii, p.8). Pagoulatou compares immigration to uprooting and borrows images from house construction to convey the displaced person's struggle to retain “uncorrodable” and “durable” elements (“stones”) from her own cultural “legacy” in order to resist the assimilation forces (“crucible”) in the USA and to create for herself a space of security (“home”) there:

Lord, I groaned while toiling
to build a home in negation
surrounding the foundations' depths
with stones from the uprooted legacy
uncorrodable by alienation's distress
durable
in the foreign country's crucible.

(*Motherhood*, p.54)

In *Alexia* Kefala also shows how the members of a family that enjoyed a comfortable and refined middle-class life in the old country lost not only their home and property, because of war, but also their social status, when they became refugees. To survive in New Zealand, Alexia's parents work in factories while her older brother is sent to dig roads with a noisy pneumatic machine. The only "stones" from their "uprooted legacy" and previous social status are the musical instruments that they have brought with them. The father struggles to keep his identity by playing his violins, composing music and writing his memoirs after work (p.48). The son, however, becomes assimilated. He gives music up and becomes "a Maker of Noise" with his machine (p.58), because the island people consider music unimportant (p.70). Kefala uses Alexia and another girl to reveal the sexism, racism and other prejudices existing in New Zealand. Alexia discovers, for instance, that all the island myths degraded women: "Men belonged to a superior club — the Heavens, and Women belonged to an inferior club — the Earth" (p.62). The girl is also annoyed by the segregation of sexes in public transportation and elsewhere (p.84). Her friend Basia further points out that: "together with their Oath of Silence, the Island People had sworn an Oath to Hate: Foreigners, Intellectuals, Conversation, Artists, Emotions, Laughter, Volubility and so on..." (p.82)

Prejudices of various kinds did not exist only in New Zealand. As historian Tamis states, "racism and xenophobia pervaded Australian society from the first days of white settlement" too (*From Migrants*, p.77). In the pre-WWII period this society viewed itself as "Anglophone, white and culturally British" (p.331), and the definition of the "good" Australian was accordingly "white, Anglo-Saxon and Protestant" (p.160). Even after WWII, when Australia sought new settlers from all over Europe, Australian society maintained its "utopia of racial homogeneity" (p 40) and the government's long-term aim was still to "convert the country to a racial and political melting pot" (p.40). As an ethnic minority in Australia, according to Castan, Greeks belong to:

a group that is not fully [i.e. north-western] "European"(!)-dark complexions and eastern influences have led to this categorisation—and therefore it has been the victim not only of Australian xenophobia but also of Australian racism.²³

Racism against Greeks has been expressed in various ways. As Kalamara and Augerinou illustrate, in their poems "The Noble Ears" and "Greek Church" respectively, Anglo-Australians looked down upon the language and customs of the Greek immigrants. In "The Noble ears" Kalamara presents ironically the case of a lonely woman who is disturbed by the unfamiliar sounds of a song sung in a foreign language. The words "ugly," "discordantly," "barbaric" that the woman uses, when she refers to the old singers and their tunes, betray her prejudice. Kalamara also reveals the woman's ethnic and class arrogance by referring to her "noble ears" and the "top" European orchestras with which she was familiar:

Outside some old fellows
Sang discordantly
in a foreign language.
Ugly faces
ugly tunes.

In her home she was alone
with the unknown song in an unknown language.
Barbaric to her noble ears,
nurtured by music
From the top orchestras in Europe.²⁴

In "Greek Church" the persona also remembers how strange the Greek religious customs first appeared to Anglo-Australians and how the latter often attached labels with negative connotations to Greeks in the 1960s and 1970s ("wogs," "greasy Greeks"). Trying to integrate in the mainstream society she adopted its standards, including those about feminine beauty (blue eyes, fair skin, blond hair), and as a result she rejected herself, because she looked different:

Remember the Anglos lining the streets
Wondering what strange cult these wogs were involved in?
I suppose they didn't know much back then...

In the sixties and seventies you couldn't walk the street
Without hearing, "Hey Wog, Greasy Greek!"
I used to feel so ashamed that I wasn't blue-eyed and
blond-haired.
I can laugh about it now.

(*Re-telling*, p.281, st.2)

Some texts, like Toula Nicolaou's stories "Dagos" and "Mother's Canary," provide vivid examples of Australian children's racism against migrant children and adults. The extract I am quoting describes a scene at a school:

"Dirty Dagos!"
I ran, I was scared.
It was us they were talking about.
I ran up the second yard.
The words repeated over and over.
I could see children gathered near the taps.
I pushed through.
There he was, my brother with egg all over his hair and face.
He was not crying but every now and then a sharp rasping
sound came from his throat.
"Dirty Dagos, Dirty Dagos."
I pulled him towards me and tried to shield him.
Why were they saying these things?
I pulled him towards the tap and tried to wash the egg off.
It would not shift.
It was stuck hard and fast. The cold water made it worse.
I became frantic, children were hemming us in.
"Dagos, Dagos!"
I began to cry. I did not answer them but kept washing his
hair.

(*Re-telling*, p.273)

In the previous story, the father's protest to the school principal brings good results: "The events of that day were never repeated again" (p.274). In "Mother's Canary," however, the confrontation of a young mother and her children with a group of Australian schoolboys ends in her defeat. They take her canary, refuse to give it back and call her "dago," but they remain unpunished. The woman appears vulnerable and powerless because of her young age and her migrant status (*Re-telling*, p.278).²⁵

In most of the texts quoted above, the verbally abused migrants sometimes internalize the dominant society's negative images, usually accept their inferior social position and, therefore, they remain passive. One of the few cases in which the migrant reacts is provided in Vassiliou's *He Thealli*. Her speaker reminds the Anglo-Australian of his probable descent from British convicts exiled in Australia: "We agreed on our own:/If you call me bloody wog I will call you bloody Australian convict" (sect. "Kravgi," p.52, l.6-7).²⁶

Extreme cases of racist behavior resulting in violence are presented in two poems by Kalamara, "Victims" and "The Bullet."²⁷ Kalamara is aware that skin colour is a standard by which people with a racist mentality judge other people's racial/ethnic value. In "Victims" she creates irony by contrasting the Greek migrants, "all dark-faced like Arabs" (l.6), with the young Australian policeman whose "face is white/like sea foam" (l.15-16) and whose hair reminds one of God Apollo (*Genesis*, p.11). From his position of power the policeman victimizes the migrants who are already oppressed by an unfair socio-economic system:

They all have fathers,
in cement factories kneading mud.
None though
earned their bread with ease.
Their bread.
The bitter bread poisons their thoughts
spits hatred

(*Genesis*, p.11, l.7-13)

There are more images in "The Bullet" that show the miserable conditions under which the migrants lived: poverty, squalour, social oppression, exclusion, and discrimination. Their neighbourhood is compared to hell and they are compared to frightened sheep on their way to the slaughterhouse:

The bullet with tiny sweet sensation
pierced the boy's chest
and left behind a hole
a vivid blood colour!
Followed by the screams of the dark-faced wogs
in the neighbourhood of hell.
All dole bludgers.
All useless.
All depressed
and oppressed
with loneliness.
People surrounded by dirty walls,
Filthy cushions in narrow lounges
devoid of fashion.
The bullet flew far with a special whistle.
Such a noise
usually made only by kids in back yards,
by terrified mobs of sheep
before the slaughter.

(*Genesis*, p.12)

In both poems Greeks are portrayed not only as victims of police violence but also as victims of their biology (dark skin means inferior ethnic group), their social class (workers), their immigrant status (wogs), and the technological-industrial environment to which they were transplanted, a highly competitive environment in which only the fittest could survive.²⁸

Returning to Greece/Cyprus as Citizens of the Host Country

Many literary texts express strong nostalgia and the psychological need of migrants to return to their places of origin and reestablish connections with their past, after many years of absence. There is a variety of feelings and thoughts generated by the experience of return. For example, in Vassiliou's novel *Clelia* (Part 7) the narrator is warned that she may get frightened by the changes that have taken place in Cyprus during her twelve-year absence. In fact, most older relatives, including her own parents, have died and the younger ones have immigrated to different countries. Only her aunt

Alisavou has remained and the narrator needs the aunt's welcome kiss to reconnect herself with the land and her family's past (p.169). Her visit to the village, the cemetery and the little church of Panagia Karmiotissa, as well as the stories about the Virgin's miracles finally enable her to feel her ties with the Cypriot land, language and religion: "The umbilical cord of the language I was speaking, the religion I retained and the place I loved had never been severed; it was still joining me with my land" (p.171).

The setting in other texts with the theme of return is Greece. In some of them, like Kefala's "Summer Visit," the narrators or other characters pay short visits to their places of origin. In others by Karathanasi, Xenophou, Amanatidou and Liakakou, the immigrants return to settle in Greece permanently. Kefala's narrator has a reunion with her relatives. Acting as an observer she also sees connections between ancient and modern Greeks, "a continuity of line between the people in the street and the statues in the museums, the Byzantine paintings" (pp.46-47), she "rediscover[s] a physical ancestral line" and finds people's manners "infinitely familiar" (p.61). Yet, after some time, she is anxious to return to her own life in Australia, because in Greece she feels that she is "living suspended unable to think" (p.72) and she forgets who she is.²⁹

More conflicting are the narrator's feelings in Karathanasi's autobiographical *Kravges apo to parelthon*. Her return to her village Moloha (near Kozani) is motivated by strong nostalgia. It brings, however, memories of a painful past connected with the violence against and the displacement of her family members and other relatives during the Asia Minor catastrophe, WWII and the Civil War, including her own immigration to Australia. The changes that time has brought about cause her additional pain: her grandparents, parents and other relatives and friends died, her parents' house was sold and renovated, her grandparents' house is ruined, the village has been deserted by most of its young residents, etc. What remains unchanged is the beauty of nature that temporarily frees her from pain and even makes her dream of starting a new life in Moloha. But, as she realizes at the end, the ghosts of the past and her old age will prevent her from doing so (p.158).³⁰ As a result, her quest for wholeness, happiness and a new life in the motherland remains unfulfilled.

In contrast to Karathanasi's *Kravges*, Xenophou's novel *Vemata* leaves open the possibility of a happy life in Greece for her young protagonist Demetres

whose bond to the motherland is reestablished through his marriage with his beloved Anthoula, during a short visit to his village. Although Demetres takes Anthoula to Australia, he plans to return to his village soon, settle there permanently and contribute to its development, utilizing the education and professional skills he acquired in Australia.

In certain texts the speakers present their migration as a kind of rejection by Greece, and their desire to return is mixed with the fear of a new rejection. Amanatidou sums up such feelings in "Scattered Thoughts:" "Our motherland is tight. So tight that we made the big decision to leave. So tight that when we return it can no longer contain us" (*Re-telling*, p.105). Amanatidou deals with the theme of rejection in some of her stories as well. In "Gyrismos," for example, the narrator Gregoris returns to his village after eighteen years of absence. The joy and excitement of his reunion with his mother, siblings and villagers are soon replaced by a feeling of alienation from them and from his old self. He realizes that he cannot recapture the remote past (p.38), because everything has changed and, after his mother's death for which he feels guilty, he finally returns to Australia where he belongs now (p.39).³¹

The feeling of rejection is combined with disappointment when the immigrants' high expectations, based on their ideal and rather static picture of the motherland, clash with reality. This also happens when they compare their new homeland, which is technologically and economically more advanced, with the old one. Some texts sound very critical of contemporary Greek society and culture. For instance, in her autobiographical story "Paralirima" Goga describes some of her experiences during her visit to Greece in 1985, after thirty five years of absence in Australia. She complains about relatives who care only for money, treat her with indifference and give her the impression that she is an undesirable "xeni" ("alien"). Similar experiences are described by Liakakou's narrators in her story "Kalimera" and her book *Yia ena rodo*. The narrator in "Kalimera," who returns to see her mother before she dies, concludes that only rich immigrants are welcome in Greece. She herself feels "xeni" in both countries (p.131). In *Yia ena rodo*, Vaso and Yiannis sell everything they accumulated in Australia for fifteen years and return, with their four children, to live in Greece. Liakakou describes in detail the treatment of the immigrants by their families, relatives and villagers, emphasizing the villagers' interest in money (p.86), the

changes that all the characters have undergone, as well as the discrimination against Vaso, Yiannis and their children who are seen as Australians even by their close relatives (p.87). The most painful rejection comes from their own mothers who blame Vaso and Yiannis for both immigrating and returning, and treat them and their children as “xenoï.”

Moreover, Liakakou refers to the political and socio-economic problems during the military dictatorship (1967-74), and especially to the poverty of a large segment of the Athens population, in both her novel (pp.90-91) and her tale “Zitianoï tis Athinas.” In the tale, the spectacle of an “army” of beggars and street vendors generates feelings of pity, disgust and shame for the degradation of Athens and its inhabitants from the glorious period of Pericles to the present. The narrator concludes that slaves in Pericles’ Athens lived better than many of its free citizens today (p.74). She is also annoyed by the slogans and behavior of the junta as well as by the citizens’ submissive attitude (pp.74-75).³² In both texts Greece is portrayed as a third world country, when contrasted to Australia whose citizens the immigrants have become. Therefore, the readers are not surprised when, at the end, the protagonists decide to return to Melbourne and start from the beginning.

Similarly, in her poem “Motherland” (st.3), Krili expresses both the immigrants’ view of themselves as Greece’s “rejected children” (l.7) and their feelings of alienation and confusion when they return to it:

Many return
 searching for the essence of our roots
 and your identity.
 Cut off from your nourishment
 we have lost our rhythm,
 we are like tourists.
 We pay you fleeting visits,
 enchanted, we feel your history,
 touch your beauties
 and become confused.³³

Using strong language she also condemns what she considers the vices of modern Greece:

Your villages deserted
your shores sold off.
The multinationals blow cancer in your bowels.
(p.386, st.1, l.16-18)

On the proud mountains they have nested death
and above renowned Athens
a curled-up adder spits vitriol.
(p.386, st.2)

Motherland betrayed,
cushion of the rich,
lair of the C.I.A.
harlot of the superpowers
from the cradle,
you found yourself in bondage
at the crossroads of the world.
Your history distorted
the language of the people enslaved
your schools anaemic
your hospitals stables
your crops discarded.
(p.387, st.4)

She praises the Greeks who “defended” (st.5, l.6) their country but “were tortured or murdered” (l.7), and blames the present decline on the people who “did not rise” (l.1) but chose a self-centered, comfortable existence. She feels at home only when she is able to reconnect with those aspects of Greek life, culture and history that she values:

I recognize you
when the song moves on the lips of a shepherd
when the muses recreate your rhythms
when the brave fight for freedom
when the people flood the streets seeking the sun.
(p.387, st.7)

Karageorge also speaks about the decline of values. Like Liakakou and Krili, she chooses modern Athens as her target. Being American-born, however, she is free from the strong emotions of the poets who are first generation immigrants. "Socrates in Denim" is a good example of her critique:

Greece, you light up the Acropolis
and burn down your forests. Smog chips your ruins,
Grey mist, and the drone of motorbikes
on hot summer nights. In the Plaka, discover
priapic monkeys, plaster Zeuses for sale
next to worry beads in neon colors.

You dilute Homer's wine-dark sea, color
it pastel blue, create calendar art on sale
to drugged-out dreamers. Spokes on a bike.
Song of a lyre. Climb the Acropolis.
See a crone shuffle *drachmas*, then cover
her eyes with a black apron, face a rutted ruin.

Voyagers to antiquity whirl in a glass ruin
of mermaids, quiver to screaming motorbikes,
cower by kiosks, pop icons. Theseus under cover
rides a ferry third class to Heraklion, sails
back to maze and memory, while Athena colors
the air electric, street-walks the Acropolis,

searching, Greece, for your soul, Acropolis
of marble and working muses, all in ruins.
Cicadas scream in your empty houses. Uncover
gods turned to dust. Fragments blend with earth, color
the landscape, haunt of lovers on motorbikes
seeking answers to riddles, yearning to sail

beyond the three-day classic tour, assail
spirits hidden in caves. Weep amid ruins.
Map desire in Hermes Travel Bureau. Color
of ancient light floods the Acropolis
where travelers struggle to discover
the lost music of Alpha. Motorbikes

wind down through rock. Socrates on a bike
wends his way to a taverna to discover
a woman of gold, flowing hair the color
of sun, more beautiful than ruins,
graceful as magenta ships that sail.
Red-gold flame lights up the Acropolis.

Visit your dreams. Discover Acropolis.
Search through chrome ruins, find motorbikes
the color of Paros marble and myths for sale.

(pp.23-24)

As we see in the poem, Greek society's ways of thinking and living appear destructive for both the natural environment and the cultural legacy left by ancient Greeks. For, it sacrifices everything for the sake of material profit.³⁴ Contemporary Athenians who bear the names (Athena, Socrates, Theseus) of ancient historical and mythological figures also appear lacking their ancestors' qualities, and ancient gods (Hermes and Zeus) are presented as objects used by the tourist business. In the eyes of the poet, all this proves the decline of moral and spiritual values in modern Athens. Moreover, Karageorge suggests the loss of ancestral beauty and harmony, by showing that the song of a lyre and the music of Alpha have been replaced by the irritating noise of motorcycles.

Conclusion

The extracts illustrate that the return to the motherland is a complex psychological and intellectual experience that usually involves a cultural

shock, because of the immigrants' long stay in a different cultural environment. Together with the other poems, stories and novels discussed in this essay, the texts about return constitute a small part of Hellenic immigration literature. They all deserve our attention not only for their literary value but also for the information they provide about the lives, thoughts, memories, feelings, relations, etc. of individual immigrants, against the background of historical events. By adding personal testimonies to the official histories of Hellenic immigration, which do not deal with individual experiences, the writers give validity to such experiences, and they complement and enrich the official histories. Moreover, their concern with socio-economic problems, their political commentary and their cultural critique of both homelands, make their texts significant documents from a sociological viewpoint, as well.

NOTES

1. See C. Evangelos Vlachos, *The Assimilation of Greeks in the United States* (Athens: EKKE, 1968), p.58, and Charles C. Moskos, *Greek Americans: Struggle and Success*. 2nd ed. (New Brunswick: Transaction Publs., 1989), p.12, about such legends concerning the USA and their effects on Greek men. As Vlachos points out, in their imagination America became "the land of dreams, and gold, and opportunities" (p.58).

2. Avra Tsambi-Michaelidou, "Toronto 1975," in the anthology *Alloithona topia: Ellinoglossi poiesi Australias-Canada ('Other' Landscapes: Greek-language Poetry from Australia and Canada)*, eds. Eleni Nickas & Stephanos Constantinides (Melbourne: Owl Publ., 1998), p.170. The title of this book as well as of the other books cited in my essay appear abbreviated in subsequent references. I have translated into English all the poems quoted from this anthology, as well as the titles and excerpts quoted from: a) literary texts written in Greek by Amanatidou, Gatsiou, Goga, Karathanasi, Liakakou and Vassiliou, in co-operation with the writers, and b) scholarly works written in Greek and cited in the essay. Also, from bilingual collections of poems or stories I cite abbreviated the English titles in my text and notes (after the first full bibliographical reference), because I quote from their English sections.

3. Dina Amanatidou, "Without Roots," *The Seed of Peace: Short Stories*, trans. into English by Nick Machalias (Melbourne: Argo Publ., 1993). The quotations come from p.28.

4. Haitho Massala, "Australia – New Mother," in the bilingual anthology *Re-telling the Tale: Poetry and Prose by Greek-Australian Women Writers/Me dika mas logia: Ellinides syggrafis tis Australias*, eds. Helen Nickas and Konstandina Dounis (Melbourne: Owl Publ., 1994), p.118. Massala also provides a list of the work places for migrants in the cities, such as factories, railroads, milk bars, fish and chips shops, etc. (p.119). See also Anna Gatsiou's poem "Apatila oneira" ("Deceptive Dreams") in bilingual *Apartia I: Anthology of Poetry and Prose* by the Association of Greek-Australian Writers (South Oakleigh: Nautilus Publ., 2000), p.55 and Ioanna Liakakou's prose piece "Prosfygas" ("Refugee") in her book *...ta idia shedon (...almost the same)* publ. in East Kew, Vic., by Tsonis (2002). In the latter, the young man is warned that he won't find dollars in Australian streets; instead, he will face various kinds of difficulties (p.41).

5. "Ode to Australia" by Helen Roumeliotaki" (*Re-telling*, p.98, st.1, l.1) – the poem was translated into English by Konstandina Dounis. Georgia Xenophou, "Destination," *Reflections: Poetry 1956-1999*, trans. Kalliopi Kafetzi (Melbourne: Nautilus, 2000), pp.2-3. I am quoting stanzas 1-2 from Noula Karathanasi's "Enchantress," trans. by C. Alexiadis and published in the Greek-Australian newspaper *Neos Kosmos* (25 Oct. 1989). The grandeur of Melbourne also impresses the arriving immigrant, as she sees it from the ship around midnight, in Karathanasi's "Melvourni" ("Melbourne"), *Kelaidismoi (Bird Songs)*, Athens: n.p., 1998, p.20.

6. From "Bonfires in Exile," by Sofia Sevastopoulou, I have quoted lines 3-4, st.3 (*Re-telling*, p.59). From Yota Krili's "Departure," in sect. III titled "Laya" of the bilingual *Triptycho: Poeimata/Triptych: Poems* (Melbourne: Owl Publ., 2003). I have quoted p.124, st.3, l.8-11. The laya (=black sheep) represent the poor Greeks who were forced to migrate by circumstances. The Greek proverb, "Everyone takes wood from a fallen tree," that "prefaces this section aptly illustrates how migrants were like the fallen tree of which others benefited" (Helen Nickas, "Introduction," *Triptych*, p.7).

7. *He Thealli: Poesi (The Storm: Poetry)* by Hermione Vassiliou (Melbourne: Owl Publ., 1993). The excerpts are from Vassiliou's entry on 1 Feb. 1987 (p.13), included in Ch.1 which is part of the section titled "Plin tria sin exi," 1991 ("Minus Three Plus Six"). This section has the form of a journal. The excerpts from p.23 come from the entry on Oct. 1991, included in Ch.10, in the same section.

8. From "Morias" (*Triptych*, pp.134, 136, 138) I have quoted p.136, st.8, l.2-3. Dina Amanatidou, "To teleftaio idioktito" ("The Last Possession"), *Homatenioi anthropoi: Diegemata (Earthen People: Stories)*, Melbourne: n.p., 1989, p.18.

9. Regina Pagoulatou's bilingual texts: long poem *Mitrotita/Motherhood*, trans. Kali Loverdos-Streichler (New York: Pella, 1985), p.58, and "The Lady Doorkeeper" in the collection of poems *Metamoshefsis/Transplants*, trans. A. Athanassakis (New York: Pella, 1982), p.13.

10. By analyzing their otherness Alexia and Melina "participate in the discourse about migration, language and cultural interconnections," as Helen Nickas states in her "Introduction" to *The Island*. According to Nickas, Kefala places language "at the epicentre and succeeds in showing that any migration, whether voluntary or not, forces comparisons" (p.17). See Antigone Kefala's bilingual *Alexia: A Tale for Advanced Children/Alexia: ena paramythi gia megala paidia*, Greek trans. Helen Nickas (Melbourne: Owl Publ., 1995), p.84, and her trilingual novella *The Island/L'isle/To nisi*, trans. Marie Gaulis (French) and Helen Nickas (Greek) published in Melbourne (Owl Publ., 2002), pp.66, 68, 72.

11. All the quotations are from Smaro Kamboureli's *in the second person* (Edmonton: Longspoon P, 1985). In Miranda Panaretou-Cambani's poem "Letter to my Mother" the trauma of the double or divided self is conveyed through the image of "twisted" feet "so that neither fits here or there" (st.4, l.1-2). The speaker admits that she is "tired of trying to belong" (st.5, l.4). See *The Traffic of the Heart* (Chapel Hill: Carolina Wren, 1986), p.94.

12. The poem is included in the English section titled "Human Inscapes" (pp.94, 96) of the bilingual collection *Esoterikes diarythmisis: Poemata se dio glosses/Interiors: Poems in Two Languages* by Youlika Kotsovolou-Masry (Athens: Nefeli, 1988), trans. into Greek by Toula Spanou-Kafetzaki.

13. Panaretou, "The Doctor," *Traffic*, p.21. As Anastasia Stefanidou remarks, social stereotypes of American otherness created by transmigrants, function as the main resistance mechanism against Americanization and cultural assimilation. See her "Ethnic and Diaspora Poets of Greek America," PhD diss., Aristotle U of Thessaloniki (Greece), 2001, p.169.

14. From "Shepherd and Self" I am quoting lines 9-14 (p.79). For Karageorge's critique of the USA and its middle-class citizens, herself included, see also the poems "Avenue 'B' Rembetiko" (p.14), "New York Love Letter: P.S. You're Crazy" (pp.27-29), "Bloomies" (p.30), "Big Bed" (p.43), "Office 3 p.m." (pp.55-56), "On an Elevator in a New York Office Building" (p.57) and "The Crazy Ladies of New York" (pp.60-61) in *Red Lipstick and the Wine-dark Sea* (New York: Pella, 1997). What mitigates her critique is her humor.

15. Historical information about the immigrants' difficult living and working conditions in the USA is provided by Moskos (pp.12-13) and Ioannis Touloumakos,

He Ellada exo apo ta synora: Ena mikro aferoma ston ellinismo tis diasporas (Greece outside the Borders: A Short Dedication to Diaspora Hellenism), publ. by Malliaris (Thessaloniki, 1996), pp.17-18. Tamis also refers to the difficulties, exploitation and frequent unemployment of Greek migrants in low paying manual jobs in Australia (pp.96-98, 103, 156) and to the high death rate amongst them in the pre-WWII period (p.21). See Anastasios Tamis & Efrosini Gavaki, *From Migrants to Citizens: Greek Migration in Australia and Canada* (Melbourne: LaTrobe U, National Centre for Hellenic Studies and Research, 2002).

16. Persa Vazra, "New York III, IV," in the bilingual *Mia epimoni anoixi/A Persistent Spring* (Thessaloniki: Nea Poreia, 1987), p.44, st.1.

17. "Career" in bilingual *Pyrrhichios*, trans. Apostolos Athanassakis (New York: Pella, 1979), p.34.

18. Thalia Tassou, "Aphrodite Montrealitissa" ("Montreal Aphrodite"), *Alloithona*, pp.164-65.

19. Massala, "Australia – New Mother," *Re-telling*, p.119, sect.3, l.1-13. For descriptions of the hard, unhealthy and unpleasant work conditions in Australia see also the poems: Krili's "Necessity's Children" (p.128), "The Machine" (p.130), "Black Horse" (p.132) and "Morias" (pp.136, 138) in *Triptych*; Demetra Koutouli's "Foreign Land" (p.106), Amanatidou's "Elegy" (p.114-15) and Xenophou's "For Factory Women" (p.318) included in *Re-telling*; Karathanasi's "Oi Synetairoi" ("The Partners," pp.40-41) and "Rizosame" ("We Have Put Down Our Roots," p.44) in *Kelaidismoι*. Also see the following prose pieces: Xenophou's novel *Vemata ton Xenitemenon* (*Paces of Strangers*), publ. in Adelaide by Claxton P. (1997), pp.46, 51-53, 70, 82-83, 94, etc.; the story "He modistroula" ("The Young Dressmaker") by Litsa Nikolopoulou-Goga, *To spiti tou patera mou* (*My father's House*), publ. in Melbourne by Tsonis (2000), pp.122-24; Kefala's Alexia (pp.48, 50, 52, 58), and Liakakou's *Yia ena rodo yia ena milo* (*For a Rose, for an Apple*), Melbourne: Tsonis (1998), pp.21-24, 38-40, 52, 60-61, 64-68. References to the migrants' poverty and their hard struggle for survival are also found in Vassiliou's novel *Clelia* (Melbourne: EKEME, 2000), pp.15-16, 39-40; and in Amanatidou's stories "To diavatirio tis anthropias" ("The Passport of Humanity") in *Anthropini Characteres: Diegemata* (*Human Characters: Stories*), Melbourne: Tsonis (1997), pp.40-41, and "To teleftaio idioktito" in *Homatenioi*, pp.17-25. In the latter, Amanatidou mentions the aging of the first generation immigrants, expressing the fear that the Greek race will disappear after their deaths (p.22). Moreover, some writers discuss the long-term effects of toil and other hardships on the migrants. For instance, Karathanasi starts "The Message" by referring to the "Withered faces/bodies bent/sunken eyes" of the older migrants (*Re-telling*, p.132) and ends "Enchantress" by comparing herself and the other migrants to "transplanted flowers,/who before they bloomed again/lost their Spring" (*Neos Kosmos*).

20. *Oi Angeloi/The Angels*, trans. A. Athanassakis (New York: Pella, 1988), No.12, p.43, st.4, 5. Also in "Snow Storm" (*The Nepenthes*, p.39) the "purity of the unexpected snow" (l.2) conceals "social corruption" (l.4). Pagoulatou calls the snow "Nature's costly mask of hypocrisy" (l.16) that covers the grim daily reality. Moreover, in "Investments" her speaker states: "As an emigrant child of hers/I made my money/laboring hard/on docks and other service posts" (l.8-11)-"hers" refers to Greece. Yet, the fruit of her labor does not help either Greece or herself; for, her savings end up "in the World Bank/of Social Injustice" (l.13-14). See *Ta Nipenthi/The Nepenthes*, trans. George Pilitsis (New York: Pella, 1995), p.29.

21. I have quoted from "An Ode, A Prayer," *Reflections*, p.94, st.2. In the third (last) stanza Xenophou turns to God for help to right the social wrongs. The indifference of the Australian rich for the poor and of employers for their workers whom they exploit are also criticized in her novel *Vemata* (pp.96-98). Besides, in her poem "Necessity's Children" Krili affirms the contribution of immigrants and Australian working class people to the economy of the country (st.2) while presenting them as "maimed/victims of toil and progress" (*Triptych*, p.128, st.3, l.1-2). In the last stanza, she invites her "adopted Mother" to recognize their contribution and help them "to build the tower of justice," thus becoming a real "motherland" for all its inhabitants (p.128, st.4, l.5-6).

22. Moskos mentions the Anglicizing of Greek names in the USA as an example of the trend toward Americanization in the first decades of the 20th century (pp.40-41). Gavaki discusses a similar tendency in Canada, especially during the pre-1950s period, "when the preference in Canadian immigration was for white Anglosaxon Protestants, while immigrants with strange names and customs were not given many opportunities" (*From Migrants*, p.257). Greeks, the other Balkans, Italians and Eastern Europeans "were seen as 'unsuitable' for Canadian society" (p.374). The change of Greek names to gain acceptance in pre-WWII Australian society is discussed by Tamis (*From Migrants*, p.86). As Moskos, Gavaki and Tamis illustrate, the trend toward assimilation was motivated by the Greek migrants' need to survive and progress in societies hostile to non-Anglo-Saxon immigrants. Vassiliou makes an ironic comment about the host society's limited and rather confused perception of the migrants and its tendency to level and homogenize their cultural differences often indicated by their names. Since this society finds all migrants similar, it is not surprising that an Asian man with the distinctive name Vang Pang makes some people wonder whether "he was a Greek, [named] Vangelis Pangratides" (*He Thealli*, sect. "Kravgi," p.54, l.3).

23. Con Castan, "Introduction," *Reflections: Selected Works from Greek Australian Literature*, eds. Thanasis Spiliadis and Stavros Messinis (Box Hill, Vic.: Elikia Books, 1988), p.9.

24. Vasso Kalamara, "The Noble Ears," *Genesis: Thirty-three Australian Poems* (Beaumaris, Vic.: Athina Publs, n.d.), p.7, l.1-5 and 18-22.

25. In her book *To spiti*, Goga provides several examples of racist treatment of Greek migrants. "Isorropies" ("Balances"), p.53, and "Paralirima" ("Delirium"), p.93, refer to the verbal abuse of Greeks by Australians during the period 1956-70. Moreover, in "Ta paidia ton metanaston" ("The Migrants' Children"), p.86, and "Stin Pinakothiki" ("At the Art Gallery"), pp.127-28, Goga describes the mistreatment of Greek children by Australian children at school. Amanatidou deals with a similar theme in the stories "Ditti tautotita" ("Double Identity"), p.17, and "Aihmiro Proskinima" ("Painful Pilgrimage"), pp.29-30, in her collection *Anthropinoi*, as well as in the story "Without Roots" (*The Seed*, pp.31-32). In this story she additionally gives proof of discrimination among Greeks. Tassos who immigrated in 1952 married Meg, a girl born and raised in Australia. Because she "belonged to one of the first Greek families to arrive in Melbourne" (p.29), she treated him with an air of superiority: "You migrants who've just arrived, seem like hicks compared with us who've been here longer..." (p.30). All these examples refer mainly to the postwar period and most writers point out the gradual changes in the attitude and behavior of Australians after the 1970s. Xenophou, however, expresses her anger at being discriminated against by being called "a New Australian,/after thirty years of hardship and toil" (p.7) in contemporary multicultural Australia. See her poem "Pursuit of Agricultural Studies" (*Reflections*, pp.7-9) for more details.

26. According to Tamis, European settlement in Australia began in 1788: "The new settlers comprised 1000 British, 750 of whom were convicts... From 1788 to 1868 over 180,000 British and Irish convicts arrived in Australia" (*From Migrants*, pp.31-32).

27. See Anastasios Tamis, *Istoria ton Ellinon tis Australias (History of Australian Greeks)*, vol.1 (1830-1958), Thessaloniki: Vantias, 1997. Tamis mentions that people threw stones at, set fire to or looted Greek homes and shops in Australian cities in 1916 and 1934 (pp.613, 616). There were also cases of racist violence against migrants in the big cities before WWII (p.37). He provides similar information about Anglo-Australian attacks against Greek individuals and property during the first half of the 20th century in *From Migrants* (pp.323-24, 335). He also mentions the derogatory term "bastard dagos" applied to Greeks, the job restrictions, the segregation during the socials, etc. (p.335). Similarly Moskos mentions the following early 20th century events: 1) the characterizations of Greeks as "the scum of Europe," a "vicious element unfit for citizenship," and "ignorant, depraved and brutal foreigners" printed in Utah newspapers, 2) the killings of Greeks in Nevada, 3) the breaking up of Greek stores and Ku Klux Klan attacks against Greeks in Utah, and 4) the anti-Greek assault in South Omaha, Nebraska (pp.16-17).

28. Zisis Papadimitriou considers social darwinism “one of the most aggressive forms of contemporary European racism, since it turns the ‘survival of the fittest’ [...] into a basic principle of social organization” (p.157). See his book *O Europaikos ratsismos: Eisagogi sto fyletiko misos (European Racism: Introduction to Racial Hatred)*, Athens: Ellinika Grammata, 2000). Tamis states that “the attitudes of social Darwinism reached the point of genocide” of the Australian Aboriginals (*From Migrants*, p.77).

29. All quotations are from Kefala’s “Summer Visit” (pp.43-92), in *Summer Visit: Three Novellas* (Artarmon: Giramondo Publ., 2002). In her most recent “Travel Journal,” publ. in *Heat* magazine (Nov. 2004), Kefala also describes a short trip to Athens, including visits to various museums that enable her to establish similar connections (pp.154-56).

30. Noula Karathanasi, *Kravges apo to parelthon (Cries from the Past)*. Thessaloniki: n.p., 1996. In contrast to *Kravges*, Goga’s story “To spiti tou patera mou” (“My Father’s House”) presents a happier return to her late father’s village in 1995. Although his house was sold and was later damaged by an earthquake and deserted, it brings her happy memories that enable her to reconnect with her family’s past. This fact and the warm welcome by some villagers make her want to revisit the village (*To spiti*, pp.15-18). Also in “Yia ti Thessaloniki, yia mena, yia sena...” (“For Thessaloniki, for me, for you”) Goga describes her recent visit to Thessaloniki with her husband and two other couples from Melbourne. Although she becomes aware of contemporary socio-economic problems, she has the satisfaction that her hard work in Australia has been rewarded and now she is able to fulfill an old dream, to visit Thessaloniki and enjoy the good things that the city offers (*To spiti*, p.38).

31. Amanatidou, “Gyrismos” (“Return”) in *Petrina Somata: Diegemata (Bodies of Stone: Stories)*, 3rd ed. (Melbourne: n.p., 1990).

32. “Paralirima,” *To spiti*, pp.95-96. Goga also complains about her estrangement, about the “scorn” and “disdain” (st.4, l.3-4) with which she is treated, in her poem “Homeland, you are wounding me” (*Re-telling*, p.100), and concludes that her best mother is her “Adopted Land” (st.5, l.4). Liakakou’s, “Kalimera” (“Good Morning”) and “Zitianoι tis Athinas” (“Athens Beggars”) are included in ... *ta idia*. See also *Yia ena Rodo*, pp.98-99, 105-106, 113-14, for events that illustrate the two mothers’ hostile behavior.

33. Yota Krili, “Motherland,” in *Greek Voices in Australia: A Tradition of Prose, Poetry and Drama*, ed. George Kanarakis (Sydney: Australian National UP, 1987), p.386, st.1, l.6-15.

34. Similar themes are developed in Panaretou’s poem “Blue Guide-An Extra Page,” *Traffic*, pp.32-34.

De quelle origine est ce personnage?

Pan Bouyoucas*

RÉSUMÉ

Trente ans après la parution de son premier roman, en 1975, Pan Bouyoucas est le seul romancier et dramaturge d'origine grecque écrivant en français au Québec et au Canada. Dans le témoignage qu'il nous livre ici, il parle de son cheminement, de son choix de langue, et des problèmes qu'un tel choix lui ont causés. Non pas parce qu'il est d'origine autre. Nombreux sont les auteurs francophones d'origine autre qui écrivent aujourd'hui au Québec. Cependant, ils parlent pour la plupart du «vieux pays», sinon de leur communauté, tandis que Bouyoucas, ainsi que l'a remarqué Mme Maïr Verthuy, professeur de littérature à l'Université Concordia, a été longtemps le seul qui prenait toujours Montréal pour décor et qui ne parlait pas que des Grecs. Une tâche rendue d'autant plus ardue lorsque la majorité est particulièrement sensible aux critiques, et, ne connaissant pas vraiment «l'autre», rejette toute image qui ne correspond pas à celle qu'elle s'est fait de lui. Quant à la communauté grecque, parce que Bouyoucas écrit en français, elle l'a complètement ignoré.

ABSTRACT

Thirty years after the publication of his first novel in 1975, Pan Bouyoucas is the only Greek-born novelist and playwright writing in French in Québec and Canada. In his testimony, he reflects on his journey as a writer, his choice of language, and the problems arising from that choice. Not because he is of another origin. There are many foreign-born francophones writing in Québec today. Most of them, however, write about the "old country" or focus on their cultural community, while Bouyoucas, as noted by Maïr Verthuy, professor of literature at Concordia University, was for many years the only writer who always set his stories in Montréal and peopled them with characters of all origins. A task made all the more difficult by a majority which is hypersensitive to criticism, and, without really knowing the other, rejects any image which does not correspond to the one it has of him. As to the Greek community, because Bouyoucas writes in French, it has ignored him totally.

Je suis un conteur d'histoires. Je vais donc vous raconter une histoire, la mienne. Plus précisément celle d'un écrivain québécois d'origine grecque. Nous avons parfois besoin de faire de notre vie un récit pour qu'elle ait un sens.

* Écrivain

Mes parents se sont rencontrés durant la Deuxième Guerre dans un camp pour réfugiés, en Palestine. Ils se sont mariés à Jérusalem, en 1945. Entre-temps en Grèce, aussitôt les Allemands partis, les Grecs avaient commencé à se battre entre eux. Mes parents ont décidé de s'établir au Liban.

Je suis né à Beyrouth. Beyrouth était alors une des villes les plus cosmopolites du bassin méditerranéen, et dès l'âge de cinq ans, à l'école primaire de la communauté grecque, j'ai appris à écrire en trois alphabets: grec, arabe, français. Après le primaire, on m'a inscrit au Collège international où tous les cours se donnaient en français. On y enseignait aussi l'arabe et l'anglais. Je comptais parmi mes camarades de classe des garçons de plusieurs origines, et nous discussions de nos hormones en ébullition dans trois ou quatre langues, liés, semblait-il, à tout jamais, par notre culture cosmopolite. Mais voilà, si la culture rapproche les peuples, les politiciens, pour se donner une raison d'être, doivent les séparer.

Pressentant une autre guerre, mes parents décident en 1963 d'émigrer au Canada. Ils avaient entendu dire que son premier ministre avait reçu le prix Nobel pour la paix. J'avais seize ans et je les ai suivis, comme on suit son destin.

Au Canada, mes parents décident de s'établir à Montréal, afin que leur fils puisse terminer ses études en français. Mais au lendemain de notre arrivée, nous apprenons que l'école française m'est interdite. Parce que je ne suis pas catholique, je dois m'inscrire à l'école anglaise. J'ai donc fini mes études en anglais.

Quand j'ai commencé à écrire, j'ai choisi le français pour deux raisons: à Beyrouth, j'étais tombé amoureux des livres en français, et à Montréal, j'étais tombé amoureux d'une jeune Québécoise francophone. Si elle m'aime, me disais-je, il me suffira de mettre sur papier les histoires que je lui raconte pour que je sois aimé de toute sa communauté... Depuis, j'ai l'impression que ma vie n'a été qu'une longue négociation entre mes rêves et la réalité.

Mon premier roman, *Le Dernier Souffle*, qui raconte la vie et la mort d'un immigré grec, est sorti en 1975. Pas un seul critique n'en a parlé. C'est la faute de mon éditeur, me suis-je dit, et j'ai apporté chez un autre mon deuxième manuscrit.

Publié en 1976, *Une Bataille d'Amérique*, racontait les déboires d'un jeune écrivain montréalais déchiré entre la culture de ses parents grecs et celle de sa jeune femme québécoise. Cette fois, l'accueil a été un peu moins discret. Et le critique du quotidien *Le Devoir* a dit, entre autres: "Sans doute, ne sommes-nous pas habitués ici à une littérature de cette espèce... Ce roman est un enrichissement et un élargissement de la thématique habituelle. Et puis, le plaisir de lire n'est pas ici si fréquent en ce moment pour que l'on puisse boudier ce nouvel auteur qui s'affirme et continuera de s'affirmer, cela est sûr, comme un conteur né." Le critique était Jean Basile, un immigré d'origine russe qui avait grandi en France. Il est mort depuis.

Ainsi on me boudait... Était-ce parce que les critiques et les journalistes québécois traversaient, comme leur peuple, une crise d'identité qui excluait les autres communautés? Pour s'affirmer, la majorité des auteurs québécois avaient commencé à écrire en joual, avec beaucoup de succès. Je maîtrisais bien maintenant la langue des Québécois, mais je ne partageais pas leur vécu qui donnait au joual ses couleurs et ses rythmes.

Soudain, et pour la première fois de ma vie, je me sentais Grec, rien qu'un Grec. Aussi bien retourner en Grèce, me suis-je dit.

Nul besoin d'être Grec pour aimer la mer Egée. Quant aux Grecs, ils me faisaient sentir tellement... québécois. Non seulement parce qu'à force d'aimer et d'écrire en français, mon grec s'était détérioré. Car l'appartenance n'est pas uniquement appartenance à une langue, elle est aussi appartenance à un système de valeurs.

Si l'identité représente l'étoile qui permet à l'individu de naviguer dans les moments sombres, je me sentais flotter à la dérive sous un ciel couvert. La Grèce où j'espérais me soulager du sentiment profond d'aliénation qui m'habitait s'avérait un exil. "Un exil sans recours, dirait Camus, puisque l'homme est privé de souvenirs d'une patrie perdue ou de l'espoir d'une terre promise." C'est de ce divorce entre le rêve et la réalité, le passé et le présent, que naît le sentiment d'absurdité. Comment expliquer autrement le fait que les chefs de file du théâtre de l'absurde soient Beckett, Ionesco, Adamov, tous des immigrés? À y penser, Kafka aussi était un déraciné.

Heureusement que j'avais deux enfants. Deux filles dont la mère était québécoise. Une Québécoise qui commençait à avoir le mal du Québec. De

nouveau j'ai suivi mon destin. Cette fois il avait pris le visage de mes deux filles. Mes deux filles dont je ne pouvais plus me passer. Elles étaient devenues mon étoile.

De retour à Montréal, je me suis mis à traduire les livres des autres. De temps en temps, j'inventais une fable pour mes enfants et un jour, quand j'ai appris que Radio-Canada lançait un concours de textes radiophoniques, j'ai soumis une de ces fables. Elle avait pour personnages des Québécois de souche et je l'ai soumise sous un pseudonyme, comme l'exigeaient les règlements.

Le texte a remporté le premier prix. Encouragé, j'ai écrit un autre texte dramatique avec des personnages québécois, mais cette fois pour le théâtre, et je l'ai déposé au Centre des auteurs dramatiques. Deux mois après, je reçois un appel téléphonique de la directrice artistique d'une nouvelle compagnie de théâtre. Elle a beaucoup aimé ma pièce, dit-elle, et voudrait la monter. Nous nous donnons rendez-vous, mais aussitôt qu'elle me voit, elle dit: "Vous n'êtes pas québécois? Je pensais que Bouyoucas était un nom de plume." Voyez-vous, au téléphone, on ne peut guère deviner mes origines. Bref, elle m'a promis de me rappeler aussitôt qu'elle aurait complété le financement du projet. Elle ne m'a jamais rappelé. Et ma seule consolation était que le texte du Québécois pure laine qu'elle a choisi éventuellement a été un si grand four que sa compagnie est morte dans l'œuf.

Mince consolation quand même. En plus d'avoir des problèmes d'identité, j'étais maintenant accablé de paranoïa. Au moment même où je découvrais, grâce à ces deux textes, que je maîtrisais, en plus de la langue, les codes et les valeurs de la culture dominante. J'ai retiré ma pièce du Cead et je me suis remis à faire des traductions.

J'aurais peut-être continué à ne faire que cela, des traductions, si quelques années plus tard, le directeur du théâtre anglophone le Centaur, lui-même un immigré, ne m'avait appelé pour me demander de lui écrire un spectacle sur les enfants d'immigrés. C'était un thème qui me collait à la peau, et j'ai accepté.

Le spectacle devait jouer quatre semaines. Il est resté neuf semaines à l'affiche du Centaur. À Toronto, où on l'a monté en 1991, il a été le plus gros succès de l'année. On n'avait jamais vu ça: un spectacle qui attirait des

membres de toutes les communautés et qui arrivait à réconcilier dans la salle tous les esprits dans une même émotion ou un même rire.

Tous les esprits, à l'exception de certains intellectuels canadiens-anglais. Tel ce critique de Toronto qui m'a quasiment traité de raciste parce que j'osais rire de certains travers des Grecs, des Juifs ou des Chinois. Mais ce même critique a commencé son papier en disant qu'il s'agissait d'un spectacle sur les immigrés de deuxième génération. Pourtant le spectacle était annoncé comme une pièce sur les "Canadiens" de deuxième génération. Il y avait même une chanson dont le refrain était: Nous ne sommes pas des immigrés mais des Canadiens de deuxième génération. Et il me traitait moi de raciste. Mais il n'était pas le seul intellectuel canadien anglais à n'avoir entendu que ce qu'il voulait entendre.

Cette fois, je ne me suis pas laissé démonter. J'ai écrit une autre pièce, mais en français. D'ailleurs, les Québécois avaient commencé à s'intéresser un peu plus aux autres, et quelques auteurs ethniques se faisaient maintenant publier et jouer. Je ne me sentais plus seul.

La pièce était *Le Cerf-volant*, une comédie dramatique dont le personnage principal, Dimitri, est un épicier d'origine grecque dans la cinquantaine qui, un jour, lâche son magasin et monte sur son toit pour faire voler un cerf-volant comme il le faisait en Grèce, dans son enfance. Sa femme le supplie de descendre. Viennent ensuite son fils, son frère et sa locataire québécoise. Mais Dimitri refuse de redescendre tant qu'on ne lui aura pas dit pourquoi, après trente années à Montréal, il a l'impression qu'il n'existe pas. Il s'en prend surtout aux Québécois, leur reprochant de ne lui adresser la parole que pour lui demander le prix des patates. Éventuellement il découvrira que son propre frère, sorti du même ventre et parlant la même langue que lui, ne le connaît pas plus. Il découvrira aussi que lui-même n'a jamais vraiment compris sa femme, quand elle lui avouera des choses qu'il ignorait.

Le public, composé à quatre-vingts pour cent de Québécois francophones, a beaucoup aimé la pièce. La réaction des intellectuels a été, encore une fois, toute autre. Comme leurs confrères anglophones, certains m'ont traité de raciste. À cause, entre autres, d'une réplique du frère de Dimitri qui, ne comprenant rien à la douleur de ce dernier, lui suggère, pour se soulager, de se prendre une maîtresse, et une maîtresse québécoise, car les Québécoises, dit-il, sont des femmes "faciles". C'est un préjugé courant parmi les

immigrés, mais les intellectuels l'ont pris au premier degré. Quant aux critiques, l'un d'eux a écrit: "Les Grecs ne parlent pas comme ça." Un critique québécois pure laine qui me disait, à moi, comment les Grecs devraient parler. Un autre m'a reproché de n'avoir pas fait de l'histoire de Dimitri une tragédie. Je le mentionne car c'est important. J'y reviendrai.

J'ai découvert durant cette production d'autres choses tout aussi révélatrices. En voici deux exemples. Durant les répétitions de la scène de la confrontation finale entre Dimitri et sa femme, celle-ci, une Grecque qui n'a pas la langue dans sa poche, lui dit ses quatre vérités. Alors le comédien me dit: "Il faudra changer la fin. Après tout ce qu'elle vient de lui dire, il devrait la quitter." Ça m'a pris un bon moment pour le convaincre qu'un Grec de l'âge et de la mentalité de Dimitri ne quitterait jamais sa femme. Plus tard, lors d'un enchaînement, je m'aperçois qu'à aucun moment ces personnages grecs ne se touchaient. Je suggère donc à la comédienne qui joue la mère de toucher son fils quand, par exemple, elle lui reproche ses cheveux longs. La comédienne me répond: "Mais je peux pas le toucher, je suis sa mère."

Soudain je prenais conscience du fossé qui nous séparait. Et le fossé n'était guère linguistique. D'ailleurs, combien de langues parle-t-on à Beyrouth, à Belfast ou à Sarajevo? Un des fossés qui séparent les communautés est plutôt celui des significations dont les mots sont porteurs. Même les mots les plus simples comme "mari", "mère", "fils". Je me suis demandé alors si une grande partie de l'incompréhension avec laquelle mes textes étaient accueillis n'était pas due au fait que les autres portaient un regard critique sur mes personnages à partir d'une expérience ancrée dans leur culture, avec toutes les idées préconçues et tous les préjugés que cela impliquait. J'ai commencé aussi à questionner mon attitude à l'égard des textes d'auteurs québécois de souche. Prenons le mot "père". Quand je dis "père", je vois un homme qui travaille sans jamais se plaindre pour que sa femme et ses enfants ne manquent jamais de rien. Il est la tête de la famille, et sa femme, du moins en public, ne lui contestera jamais ce rôle, même si elle sait qu'elle est le cou qui décide de quel côté la tête tournera.

Dans le théâtre québécois des trente dernières années, le père est presque inexistant. Et quand on le met sur scène, on ne voit généralement qu'une victime aigrie comme c'est le cas dans *A toi pour toujours ta Marie-Lou* de Michel Tremblay, une pièce que j'aime beaucoup. Mais j'ai beau l'aimer, je ne comprends pas le personnage du père qui, du début à la fin, chiale parce que son patron l'exploite. Plutôt que de m'émouvoir, il me tombait sur les nerfs et j'avais envie de lui crier: "Change de job!" Mon père, pour améliorer son sort, avait changé de pays.

Je mentionne cette pièce parce que le critique que j'ai cité tantôt me reprochait de ne pas avoir fait du *Cerf-volant* une tragédie comme celle de Tremblay. Ce qui prouve que même nos définitions de la tragédie divergent. Pour moi, il y a tragédie quand un personnage est écrasé par les obstacles qu'il essaie de surmonter. Donc, dès le départ, il y a lutte. Est-ce à cause de la culture dont j'ai héritée et qui, depuis *L'Odyssée*, dit à l'homme que bien des maux l'attendent, et qu'il lui faudra lutter contre eux sans jamais se laisser abattre. Mais quand on regarde notre théâtre, on jurerait qu'au Québec, il n'y a pas un seul homme d'action, que tous les hommes ne font que parler de ce qu'ils feront le jour ou ils arrêteront de parler. Voici pourquoi nos hommes et femmes de théâtre aiment tant Tchekov. Mais souvent ils oublient que Tchekov ne considérait pas ses pièces des tragédies, mais des comédies. Et les comédies de Tchekov suintaient l'ironie.

Voici pourquoi chez nous, on prise tant les monologues. Même quand il y a deux personnages sur scène, chacun monologue de son côté, sur son désarroi amoureux ou sur son mal de vivre, comme s'il était à la confesse. Par éducation ou par inclination, j'ai horreur, moi, du striptease émotionnel, du flagellement et de l'apitoiement sur soi. Pour moi le théâtre est conflit, lutte et confrontation. Est-ce parce que je ne suis jamais allé à la confesse ou parce que la culture grecque-orthodoxe est davantage enracinée dans le paganisme que le catholicisme?

Vous vous demandez peut-être pourquoi j'insiste sur ces différences. Ne sais-je pas que l'ethnicité est un phénomène d'une grande complexité où il est difficile de rationaliser l'irrationnel sans reproduire le discours des folkloristes? Après tout, ces critiques et ces intellectuels acceptent bien tels quels les personnages, les pièces, les romans et les films créés ailleurs.

Je me dois d'ouvrir ici une parenthèse. Mes textes n'auraient jamais été publiés ou montés au Québec si tous les éditeurs et tous les directeurs artistiques avaient été du même avis. De même pour les critiques, j'en ai eu plus de positives que de négatives. Mais même dans les critiques positives, même chez les directeurs artistiques qui aiment mes pièces, je sens parfois un malaise quand le texte de l'auteur québécois que je suis diverge trop des modèles et des critères établis chez nous. J'en ai eu la preuve lors de la production de ma dernière pièce, *Nocturne*. La directrice artistique du théâtre qui l'a produite l'aimait bien, elle m'a quand même demandé d'en changer la fin. C'est l'histoire de deux adultes qui entraînent avec leurs jeux macabres la mort d'un adolescent. La directrice en question voulait que les deux adultes fassent à la fin acte de contrition. J'ai refusé, et le metteur en scène et les comédiens m'ont appuyé. Le lendemain de la première, certains m'ont reproché mon cynisme. D'autres ont trouvé le spectacle nouveau, courageux et risqué et... de facture européenne.

Même mon éditeur... Il me connaît depuis plus de vingt ans. Aussi, ce qui est rare au Québec, il m'a avancé de l'argent pour me permettre d'écrire *La Vengeance d'un père*, un roman dont l'histoire se passe le lendemain du référendum de 1995 et de la fameuse déclaration du premier ministre Parizeau accusant les ethniques d'avoir fait perdre aux Québécois leur indépendance. Une jeune Montréalaise d'origine grecque est attaquée et mutilée. La police, faute de preuves, tarde à arrêter le suspect. Le père de la victime pense qu'ils tergiversent parce que le suspect est un Québécois de souche et il décide de faire justice lui-même. Après avoir lu le manuscrit, mon éditeur m'a dit: Tu devrais retravailler le personnage du père. Pourquoi? je lui demande. Il n'est pas assez grec, me répond-il. C'est quoi un Grec, je lui demande. Un gars plus extroverti, dit-il, plus exubérant, comme Zorba.

Voilà, non seulement on ne connaît pas l'autre, mais on rejette toute image qui ne correspond pas à celle qu'on s'est faite de lui. C'est d'autant plus pernicieux pour les minorités qui se voient cantonnées par la majorité à une caricature, et à une caricature qu'elles finissent par adopter et promouvoir, du moins en public.

Je sais, les Grecs aussi, pour ne parler que d'eux, nourrissent autant de préjugés envers les autres ethnies. Mais les critiques et les intellectuels sont des Québécois de souche. Tout comme les producteurs et les directeurs de programmation des chaînes de télévision ou l'on voit de plus en plus des

personnages issus des communautés culturelles. Mais si vous regardez le générique, il n'y a pas un seul ethnique parmi les scénaristes. Voici pourquoi, par exemple, quand il est question de racisme, le plus souvent le pauvre immigré est victimisé par un skinhead. En connaissez-vous beaucoup de skinheads qui auraient un emploi ou un logement à refuser à un immigré?

Chose étrange, personne à ce jour ne m'a encore reproché mes personnages québécois de souche. Comme je l'ai dit plus tôt, on a même cru que certains de mes textes avaient été écrits par des Québécois de souche. Comme *Lionel*, une pièce que j'ai soumise à un concours, une fois encore sous un pseudonyme. Elle a remporté un prix, et tous ceux qui l'ont lue l'ont bien aimée mais personne ne se décide à la monter. Et un jour, j'ai eu enfin la réponse à la question qui me tracassait depuis que la directrice artistique qui avait pensé que Bouyoucas était un nom de plume ne m'avait pas rappelé. La réponse a été des plus nettes et dite devant témoins: Pan, m'a dit le directeur artistique en question, je monterais *Lionel* demain si tu t'appelais Boudrias.

Autrement dit, on ne me permet de parler que de ma communauté, alors qu'on ne reconnaît chez le Québécois ethnique que je suis que la partie de moi-même conforme à l'image qu'on a de moi. C'était clair dès la parution de *La Vengeance d'un père*. Les critiques ont été toutes bonnes, mais la plupart parlaient du roman comme d'un polar, parce qu'il y avait enquête et vengeance, occultant toute sa dimension politique. Même les producteurs... Ils ont tous encensé mon portrait de la société montréalaise, me disant que je suis un des rares Québécois capables de faire le pont entre les deux cultures, que c'est un livre important et courageux qui aborde des sujets très sensibles, mais voilà, l'aspect politique du livre les dérangeait. Et le seul producteur qui s'est montré sérieusement intéressé à l'adapter tel quel à l'écran m'a demandé d'écrire le scénario en anglais...

J'avais entamé l'écriture d'un roman. Je l'ai mis de côté car soudain je ne savais plus quel nom et quelle origine donner à mes personnages. Plutôt que de passer un autre dix ans à traduire, j'ai écrit une pièce sur un personnage qui me hantait depuis longtemps, mais que je remettais toujours à plus tard, car l'action se passait en Égypte et au début du 5^e siècle. Il s'agit d'*Hypatie*, la mathématicienne et philosophe qui fut la première femme directrice de la fameuse Bibliothèque d'Alexandrie. Ce qui ne plut guère à l'Église et, en l'an 415, les moines la tuèrent puis mirent le feu aux manuscrits dont elle était la dépositaire.

Le sujet m'intéressait pour plusieurs raisons. L'archevêque Cyrille, que l'Église a éventuellement canonisé, a fait assassiner Hypatie parce qu'il ne pouvait accepter qu'une femme soit directrice de quoi que ce soit, mais surtout parce qu'elle défendait des milliers de manuscrits alors que lui voulait en imposer un seul, l'Évangile. En dernier lieu, cela se passait dans la ville la plus éclairée et la plus cosmopolite de l'Antiquité. Et le refus de Cyrille d'accepter le pluralisme qui y florissait plongea le monde occidental dans la Grande Noirceur pendant plus de mille ans.

C'est le seul de mes textes qui a fait l'unanimité. C'est mon seul texte aussi qui a gagné un prix sans que j'aie eu à le présenter sous un pseudonyme. Pourtant *Hypatie* contient les mêmes préoccupations et obsessions qui m'avaient amené à écrire tous les autres. Qu'en déduire?

Je me posais la question lorsque Maïr Verthuy, professeur de littérature d'origine galloise, publiait une étude sur mon oeuvre. Depuis Jean Basile, c'était la première fois en vingt ans qu'une intellectuelle issue d'une communauté ethnique analysait mes écrits. C'était la première fois aussi que quelqu'un semblait comprendre toute ma démarche. En fait, Mme Verthuy semblait y voir plus clair que moi-même. Elle m'a fait remarquer, entre autres, que j'étais le seul auteur québécois francophone qui prenait toujours Montréal pour décor et qui ne parlait pas que de sa communauté. J'en étais ravi, mais aussi j'ai senti que cela pesait depuis le début sur mon destin comme une malédiction. Cette insistance à vouloir parler de ma ville et de tous ses habitants.

C'était d'autant ironique qu'au même moment, dans une conférence qui a fait du bruit, la romancière Monique LaRue citait un écrivain de ses amis, Québécois de souche comme elle, qui se plaignait "qu'une génération récente d'écrivains immigrants... sont plus sensibles aux problématiques étrangères qu'à la nôtre... ils ne font pas partie de notre littérature et ne veulent pas en faire partie, pas même en racontant leur passage vers notre société."

Qu'est-ce que je faisais depuis vingt années? Ne voyait-on encore une fois chez l'autre que ce qu'on voulait voir? Je laisserais Monique LaRue répondre: "La transculture est une noble idée, mais dans la réalité, même chez les esthètes, c'est plutôt et encore le sentiment ethnique qui prime... leur logique est fondée sur des critères purement ethnico-culturels..."

Attention, je ne m'insurge pas contre les Québécois. Dans le domaine des relations interculturelles, le peuple québécois est beaucoup en avance sur ses politiciens et sur ses intellectuels. Je ne remets pas non plus en question ma vie à Montréal. Il n'y a pas d'autre ville au monde où je voudrais vivre. Et c'est comme citoyen à part entière que je m'insurge, tout comme le fait Monique LaRue lorsqu'elle dit: "Mon ami nie aux autres le droit de penser la littérature et le Québec différemment... De quel droit et selon quelle logique pourrions-nous exiger d'un écrivain qu'il parle de nous à notre manière?"

Au Québec, comme dans nombre d'autres pays, si les immigrants étaient jadis considérés comme des "voleurs de jobs", aux yeux de certains, les enfants de ces immigrants sont aujourd'hui une menace à l'intégrité de la société qui a accueilli leurs parents. Le discours est plus ou moins semblable dans les communautés ethniques qui, elles, usent de l'indifférence pour annihiler le message de ceux qui contreviennent aux idées fixes qu'elles se sont faites de leur identité. En fait, de part et d'autre, surtout parmi les plus vieux, on dirait que les seules idées qui circulent sont les idées fixes. Alors que pour moi, la Cité est un endroit offrant les plus grandes possibilités de dialogue. Et à travers l'histoire, le symptôme le plus révélateur de l'échec urbain a souvent été l'absence de dialogue. Pas nécessairement un silence, mais le murmure complaisant d'un chœur de citoyens dévidant les mêmes inanités.

Je l'ai dit une fois à une table ronde organisée par la communauté grecque. Ajoutant que c'est en confrontant les autres et en prenant conscience des différences qu'on s'épanouit. La communauté ne m'a jamais plus invité à aucune de ses manifestations. À ses yeux, je suis devenu un auteur québécois francophone. Autrement dit, un traître. Tandis que les autres me renvoient toujours l'image du Grec.

Et à mes yeux, que suis-je?

Comme homme, je ne me pose pas la question. Comme homme, je me sens bien dans ma peau. C'est quand je prends la plume que la question revient me hanter. Au point de ne plus savoir, comme je l'ai dit, quel nom ou quelle origine donner à mes personnages. Devrais-je alors m'en tenir aux pièces historiques?

Ces questions en ont amené une autre: supposons, me suis-je dit, supposons que je sois un de mes personnages, comment dérirais-je la suite de son histoire?

Il me faudra d'abord savoir qui je suis. Une chose est sûre, je suis et je serais jusqu'à ma mort un hybride aux appartenances multiples. Mais cela suffit-il pour faire vivre un personnage? Si un personnage a besoin d'une identité propre, il lui faut aussi jouer un rôle dans la pièce, autrement dit, il lui faut une motivation.

Dans mon premier spectacle, celui sur les enfants d'immigrants, il y avait une chanson que les six comédiens chantaient en chœur. Je n'en peux plus d'être un trait d'union entre deux cultures, disait-elle. Quand je l'ai écrite, je n'y voyais qu'une source de déchirement. Mais avec le recul, je me suis rendu compte que ce trait d'union pourrait être aussi une source d'enrichissement et que, dans ce monde qui s'annonce de plus en plus pluraliste et cosmopolite, son rôle est nécessaire. Il l'est doublement quand ce trait d'union est écrivain, puisqu'un des buts de toute oeuvre romanesque ou dramatique est de nous forcer à questionner nos valeurs et nos préjugés. Tout comme l'a fait Shakespeare, il y a exactement quatre siècles, en créant son *Marchand de Venise*. Les événements survenus depuis en Europe ont prouvé que peu de gens écoutaient. Faut-il pour cela capituler? Surtout quand les événements des derniers temps, toujours en cette Europe, nous donnent l'impression que l'humanité, en cette fin de millénaire, souffre encore d'une déférence trop aiguë à l'égard du passé, une déférence qui empoisonne son présent et paralyse son attitude envers l'avenir? Il y va de même au Québec où récemment on a réintroduit la dimension ethnique dans le débat national, en opposant, et je cite un récent éditorial, "en opposant les francophones du Québec aux autres Québécois, en jouant sur les peurs", les indépendantistes "utilisant de façon abusive l'épouvantail du déclin du peuple québécois", les fédéralistes "encourageant la montée du courant partitionniste, avec ses relents d'intolérance."

Heureusement que chez nous on ne sort pas les Kalashnikovs pour régler ces questions. De toute façon, les Kalashnikovs ne régleront rien tant que nous penserons que nous n'arriverons à avoir une société cohérente que si tout le monde de cette société était de la même ethnie et d'accord sur un

vaste ensemble d'idées et d'intérêts. L'histoire en est témoin: même dans les sociétés les moins hétérogènes, l'unanimité était le plus souvent imposée de façon douloureuse.

Dès lors mon rôle et ma motivation deviennent clairs et précis. En tant que trait d'union, non seulement je me donne une identité qui me facilitera la vie et qui sera d'utilité à mon pays, je fais aussi, et dans le contexte mondial actuel, la projection hors de moi de ce qui en moi participe de l'universel. N'est-ce pas là ce que cherche un écrivain dans un personnage?

Je suis donc un trait d'union planté dans l'île de Montréal, comme un olivier apporté de la Méditerranée. Aujourd'hui, ce trait d'union a pris racine et ses racines sont ses enfants. Et ce sont surtout mes enfants qui me motivent à continuer. Car je pense que c'est au sein de tous ces petits traits d'union que germera le cosmopolitisme qui, espérons-le, rendra ce monde un peu plus tolérant et un peu moins violent. Un cosmopolitisme que je retrouve déjà chez la plupart des jeunes Montréalais, de toutes les souches et demi-souches, qui se fichent bien d'où l'autre vient. Pour eux, ce qui compte, c'est où ils vivent et où ils s'en vont, ensemble.

Oui, dorénavant, quand je ne saurai quel nom et quelle origine donner à mes personnages, je penserai à tous ces enfants. Quant à leurs parents, certains me critiqueront, la plupart m'ignoreront. Ceux-là parce qu'ils acceptent avec difficulté le présent, ceux-ci parce qu'ils cherissent trop le passé". Tandis que l'écrivain vit, lui, dans l'avenir. C'est pour cette raison qu'il questionne constamment les rapports sociaux en place et qu'il propose de nouvelles idées, de nouvelles espérances et de nouvelles responsabilités. Et pour que tous se sentent responsables de l'avenir d'un pays, il faut d'abord que tous et chacun soient reconnus pour ce qu'ils sont. Sinon, l'histoire en est de nouveau témoin, la non reconnaissance est non seulement une source de douleur personnelle, mais aussi une source de conflits sociaux.

À propos de reconnaissance, permettez-moi, avant de clore, de vous parler de Jacques Cartier. Non parce qu'il a débarqué dans le Nouveau Monde accompagné d'un lieutenant grec. Mais parce que le "Brief récit" de son voyage, qu'il a publié à son retour en France en 1545, n'a eu qu'une édition et est passé à peu près inaperçu. En fait, la découverte du Nouveau Monde

a échappé totalement aux intellectuels du 16^e siècle. Ils s'intéressaient davantage aux Anciens. Même les livres de géographie publics à l'époque en font peu de cas et n'incluront le Nouveau Monde qu'un siècle après.

Je l'ai appris récemment, en relisant Rabelais. Rabelais a été le seul écrivain du 16^e siècle qui a reconnu l'incalculable portée de la découverte du Nouveau Monde et l'a mentionné dans ses écrits.

Mais je terminerai en citant un autre écrivain français, Romain Gary qui, lors d'un entretien, a dit: «Je plonge mes racines littéraires dans mon métissage ...dans l'espoir de parvenir ainsi à quelque chose de nouveau... C'est pourquoi les critiques traditionalistes voient dans mon œuvre un corps étranger dans la littérature française. Ce sont les générations futures, pas eux, qui décideront.

Note : Ce texte a été publié dans une première version aux Actes du séminaire international du Centro Interuniversitario Di Studi Quebecchesi, Università di Bari, à Venise (D'autres rêves, Les écritures au Québec, Venise, Supernova, 1999).

Littérature chypriote : pensées hérétiques

(Fragments d'un article à venir)

Stephanos Constantinides*

I

Je voulais un texte qui situerait la littérature chypriote dans le cadre plus général de la littérature néo-hellénique. La question que j'ai posée et que je continue à poser est de savoir si la littérature de Chypre, comme une littérature périphérique, appartient à la littérature grecque moderne, si elle fait partie de cette dernière ou si elle a son autonomie propre et connaît donc son propre développement autonome. De plus, je voulais présenter un texte qui fasse une évaluation de celle-ci à ses mérites, au-delà de considérations générales et anodines. Je me suis adressé à différentes personnes, mais aucune d'elles n'a accepté de relever le défi. Il semble que l'art de devenir moine est une tâche lourde, surtout si le monastère se trouve dans le désert de la Cyrénaïque... C'est pour cela que je me contente pour le moment de quelques aphorismes hérétiques qui peut-être un jour prendront forme, pour se concrétiser dans une sorte d'approche critique plus «sérieuse en apparence» et peut-être, également, avec des considérations plus «académiques».

II

La littérature chypriote présente un corpus sérieux, elle est vivante et dynamique. Comme littérature «périphérique», en rapport avec le centre athénien, elle est la seule qui demeure autonome, à l'exception peut-être d'un «groupe» (ou des «groupes») de Thessalonique. Les autrefois prospères littératures de la «périphérie» (École ionienne, Alexandrie etc.) ont été absorbées par le gourmand centre athénien. Celles de la diaspora, sont demeurées sous-évaluées ou inconnues.

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On pourrait également poser la question de savoir si en réalité la littérature chypriote est périphérique. Il ne fait aucun doute que les écrivains d'origine chypriote se voyaient comme appartenant à cette catégorie, même si leur désir profond était de faire partie de la grande famille littéraire hellénique.

III

Les références faites par des critiques et philologues Grecs à la littérature chypriote sont empreintes de généralités anodines, exprimant dans la plupart des cas des vœux pieux, les «grands frères» ne voulant pas faire «souffrir» leurs compatriotes de la campagne. D'ailleurs, les écrivains chypriotes ne courent qu'après ces vœux pieux et la «reconnaissance».

Quelques écrivains chypriotes ont gagné la faveur de certains «critiques» grecs (plutôt des spécialistes des relations publiques) et «philologues» et se débattent pour obtenir une petite ne serait-ce que tiède reconnaissance au-delà des horizons chypriotes. Quelques uns ont réussi à obtenir de cette manière une sorte d'«immunité» dans l'espace chypriote et un «respect» conformiste.

Si la fonction de l'intellectuel est d'avoir une voix critique on doit donc avoir le courage de dire des vérités qui ne sont pas toujours agréables à entendre. De telles vérités doivent être dites à l'égard des écrivains chypriotes.

Les écrivains chypriotes attendent de leurs confrères «grecs» un traitement amical, pas une évaluation critique. Et les seconds répondent promptement. Quelques-uns se forcent même de créer une 'cour grecque'. Le tout se joue au niveau des relations publiques.

IV

La littérature chypriote a sa propre particularité et son propre dynamisme. Elle est incluse sûrement - au moins pour le moment - dans la littérature néo-hellénique. Le temps nous dira si avec son frottement avec la littérature des Chypriotes turcs elle constituera un corps distinct et autonome. Elle pourrait par exemple suivre l'affranchissement qu'a suivi la littérature du Québec en relation avec celle de la France. Mais Chypre est très petite pour pouvoir être comparée avec le Québec fort de 7 millions d'habitants. D'ailleurs la littérature du Québec pourrait difficilement inclure celle des anglophones qui appartiennent davantage à la littérature canadienne. De même on pourrait se demander si la littérature du Québec est canadienne. Théoriquement la réponse est oui, dans les faits la réponse est non. Elle a ses propres caractéristiques, sa propre dynamique, sa propre autonomie. Les écrivains québécois parlent d'une littérature québécoise nationale. J'écris tout cela car les problèmes d'identité et de définition vont surgir aussi dans le cas de la littérature chypriote. Jusqu'à maintenant le terme littérature chypriote excluait plus ou moins la littérature chypriote turque. A l'avenir cette dernière sera-t-elle intégrée dans la première? Il existe des problèmes essentiels de contenu mais aussi de forme qui fort certainement feront l'objet de discussions futures.

V

Des écrivains comme Vasilis Michailidis, Dimitris Lipertis, Kostas Montis, Theodosios Pieridis, Pantelis Michanikos et Tefkros Anthias, pour ne citer que quelques uns des poètes Chypriotes, peuvent sans complexe se comparer aux plus grands poètes de la littérature néo-hellénique contrairement à quelques autres qui convoient sans cesse des appuis et du soutien dans les salons athéniens. En ce qui concerne les romanciers les choses sont plus difficiles. Malgré cela Nikos Nikolaidis le Chypriote et Yiorgos Philippou Pieridis par exemple n'ont rien à envier aux romanciers grecs. De plus il existe des critiques littéraires, tels Aimilios Hourmouzios avec un esprit critique très intense.

VI

Cependant il ne fait aucun doute que l'étroitesse de l'espace au sein duquel se développe la littérature chypriote crée des dépendances personnelles et sociales. C'est ainsi que les écrivains Chypriotes s'encensent, s'accordent mutuellement des récompenses et font la promotion de leurs œuvres respectives, dans un climat pratiquement d'«inceste spirituel».

VII

Quelques fois on a l'impression que les poètes chypriotes de l'entre-deux-guerres étaient plus humains, plus authentiques, prenant soin davantage de leur art que de leur image. Des poètes tels Pavlos Valdaseridis ou Pythagoras Drousiotis, lyriques, frais, juteux, sensuels, mélancoliques avec des tons bas gagnent beaucoup plus que quelques contemporains qui font des offrandes dans la cour de quelque Artaxerxis au nom de la gloire.

VIII

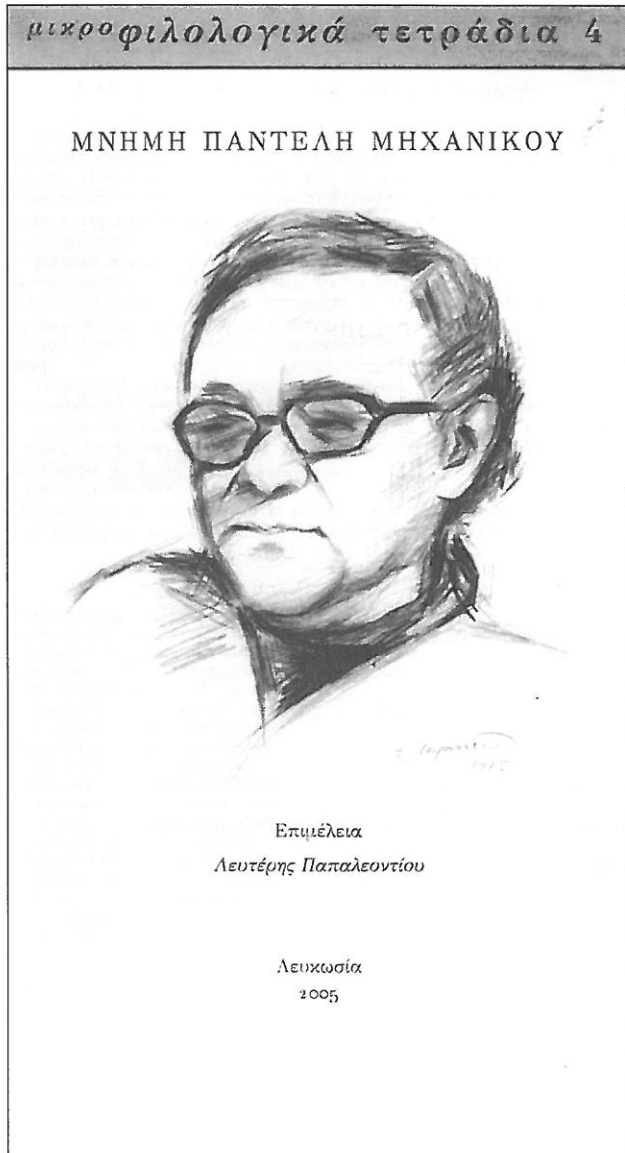
Je ne voudrais pas être dur et injuste avec les auteurs chypriotes. Ils créent dans des conditions difficiles. Et ils produisent une œuvre qui se compare avec celle des autres écrivains grecs. Il est cependant grand temps d'échapper à la formule tyrannique de la publicité et des relations publiques ainsi que de la dépendance des salons athéniens pour se faire reconnaître.

IX

Il existe à Chypre une poésie qui a été ignorée même si elle prend ses racines dans la tradition homérique. Il s'agit de celle des pioitarides (chantres). Quelques uns d'entre eux comme Christoforos Palaisis et Charalambos Azinos ont laissé des vers puissants qui les classent au côté des poètes «reconnus» de la poésie chypriote. Pavlos Liasidis appartient certainement à cette catégorie malgré le fait que son œuvre s'est transformée de l'art de «chanter» en une poésie «dialectique», comparable à celle de Dimitris Lipertis. C'est pour cela qu'il faut féliciter K.G. Giagkoullis qui a étudié systématiquement cette forme «pioitariki» d'art de poésie.

X

Il est peut-être temps de considérer la littérature chypriote au-delà du qualificatif «périphérique», c'est à dire en tant que littérature dotée d'une colonne vertébrale autonome. Ce qui ne l'empêchera pas de faire partie de la littérature néo-hellénique. Pour procéder à son étude nous avons besoin de gens hérétiques, courageux... Les approches traditionnelles sont épuisées. D'ailleurs, la pensée critique se trouve depuis longtemps en déclin en Grèce. Les critiques font indirectement de la publicité au vu et au su de tous ceux qui demeurent passifs ou indifférents. D'une manière ou d'une autre si c'est à travers cette «critique» qu'ils cherchent à construire leur image publique, les écrivains chypriotes sortiront toujours perdants car d'autres se retrouvent toujours plus près du pot de miel.



Pantelis Michanikos, a Cypriot poet.

Some Rather Heretical Thoughts on Cypriot Literature (Fragments)

Stephanos Constantinides*

I

While trying to situate Cypriot prose and poetry within the broader framework of modern Greek literature, I kept asking myself one question: Does Cypriot literature, as a literature of the periphery, belong to modern Greek literature? If not, do Cypriot letters have their own identity and their own autonomous development? Moreover, I was looking for an article that considered Cypriot literature on the basis of its merits rather a series of facile generalizations. I asked several people, specialists on the topic, but no one felt up to the task. So I decided to provide a few heretical remarks which may one day take shape as a more 'serious' critical and even 'scholarly' study.

II

First, Cyprus does indeed possess a lively, dynamic literature. As a peripheral literature in terms of Athens, it is the only autonomous literature, perhaps with group(s) in Thessaloniki, as the only other real exception. The once rich literary traditions of the periphery, such as the Ionian Islands and Alexandria, have been absorbed by an ever-hungry Athenian centre while the literature of the diaspora remains unknown or under-rated.

Perhaps then the initial question should be rephrased: Is Cypriot literature really on the periphery? Writers of Cypriot origin definitely see themselves in that category, although they would truly love to be part of the big Greek literary family.

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III

References made by Greek literary critics to Cypriot letters usually reek of banality and express the pious wishes of Athenian cityslickers who do not want to hurt their country cousins. Of course, many Cypriot authors do nothing but scramble after those wishes or nods of recognition.

A few Cypriot authors have been praised by certain Greeks posing as 'philologists' and critics but acting more like publicists. These writers jockey amongst themselves to win a little faint, even lukewarm, praise beyond the Island's borders. In this way, some have managed to acquire both a certain immunity within Cyprus and a rather 'conformist respect'.

Ideally, the intellectual's function in society is to have a critical voice. He/she must summon the courage to speak the truth, even if it is not always pleasant to hear. In this case, certain truths about Cypriot poets, novelists and playwrights should be told. For example, some Cypriot writers naturally expect a friendly treatment from their 'Greek' confreres rather than a critical review. Moreover, some of them strive to create their own 'Greek court'. In fact, everything is a question of public relations.

IV

As mentioned Cypriot literature does have its own personality and dynamic and is included, at least for now, in modern Greek literature. Time will tell whether it will constitute a distinct and autonomous literature with its proximity to Turkish-Cypriot literature. It could follow Quebec's relationship to French literature. However, Cyprus has a population much smaller than Quebec's seven million. It is worth adding that Quebec literature would not readily include the literature of English-speaking authors, who belong more readily to Canadian literature. This leads to the question of whether Quebec literature is Canadian or not. Theoretically it is, while practically it is not, especially when Quebecois authors speak of theirs as a national literature.

This North American tangent simply highlights the problems of identity and definitions that arise in the case of Cypriot literature. Up to now, the very term Cypriot literature virtually excluded literature in Turkish or Turkish-Cypriot literature. Some people would like to use the term Greek literature of Cyprus. In the future, will Turkish-Cypriot literature be included? Basic problems with content and form certainly will need to be debated.

V

Cypriot poets like Vasilis Michailidis, Dimitris Lipertis, Kostas Montis, Pantelis Michanikos, Theodosios Pieridis and Tefkros Anthias, to name but a few, may be compared to the great poets of the modern Greek tradition without hesitation. This is not the case for many others who covet Athenian attention and acknowledgement. In terms of novelists, the situation is more delicate. However, Nikos Nikolaidis (the Cypriot) and Yiorgos Philippou Pieridis need not envy any other Greek writer. There are also such literary critics as Aimilios Hourmouzios, who possess an accute critical sensitivity.

VI

However, the narrow niche in which Cypriot literature has developed creates social and personal dependencies. The nature of the situation explains why Cypriot writers bow to one another, mutually award prizes and promote their own works in what one could call a climate of 'intellectual incest'.

VII

Sometimes it seems that Cypriot poets of the period between the two world wars were more human, more authentic even. They cared more for their art than their image. Poets like Pavlos Valdaseridis or Pythagoras Drousiotis write in lyrical, fresh, juicy, sensual yet melancholic voices. Their low tones have more impact than that of some modern poets who spend more time on their image.

VIII

I do not intend to be harsh or unfair towards Cypriot authors. They create under difficult conditions. They produce works comparable to those of others writing in Greek. However, it is high time to throw off the yoke of public relations and marketing as well as dependency on the Athenian salons in order to be recognized.

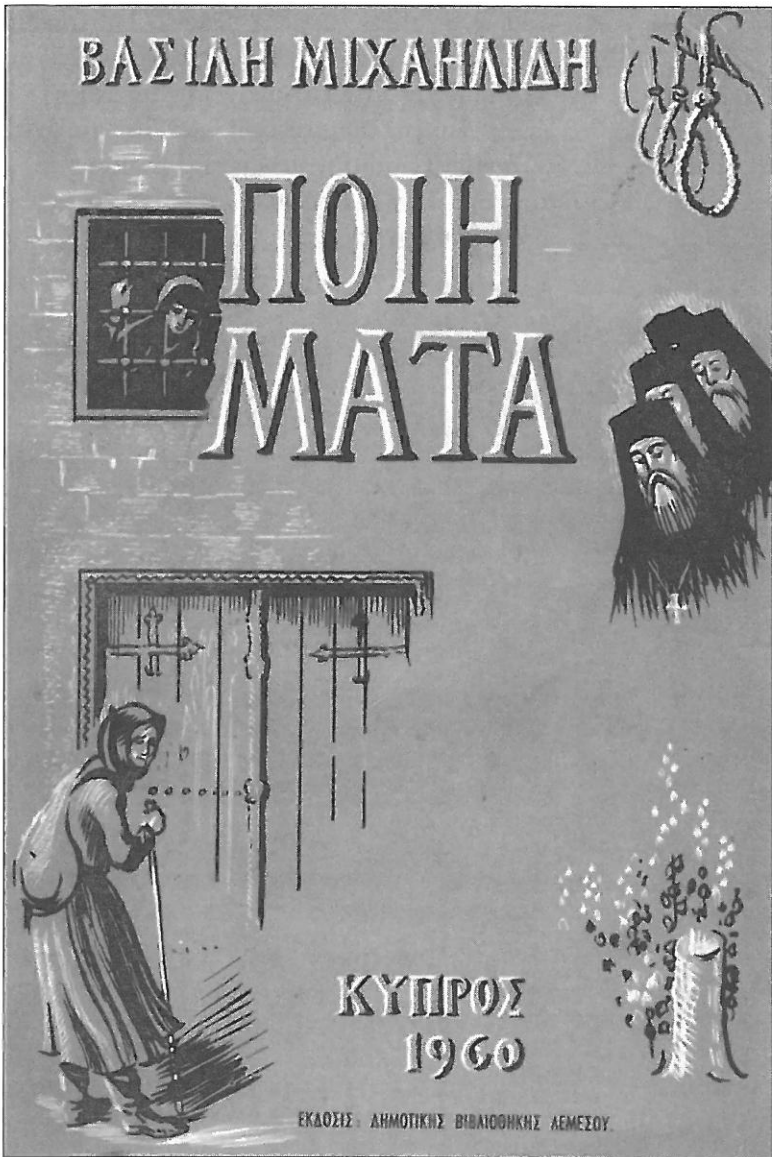
IX

There exists in Cyprus a poetry that has been ignored despite its roots in the Homeric tradition. It is that of *pioitarides* ('cantors'). Some of the 'cantors', for example, Christoforos Palaisis and Charalambos Azinos, have penned potent verses which place them next to the 'recognized' poets of Cyprus. Certainly Pavlos Liasidis belongs to this category, even though his work has changed from that of 'cantor' to a 'dialectical' poetry comparable to the poems of Dimitris Lipertis. On that note, K.G. Giagkoullis should be congratulated for having systematically studied the '*pioitariki*' poetic form.

X

Perhaps the time has come for Cypriot literature to be considered without the tag peripheral. In other words, it could be considered a literature with its own backbone. This would not prevent Cypriot letters from belonging to the category of modern Greek literature. Now, what is needed are a few more

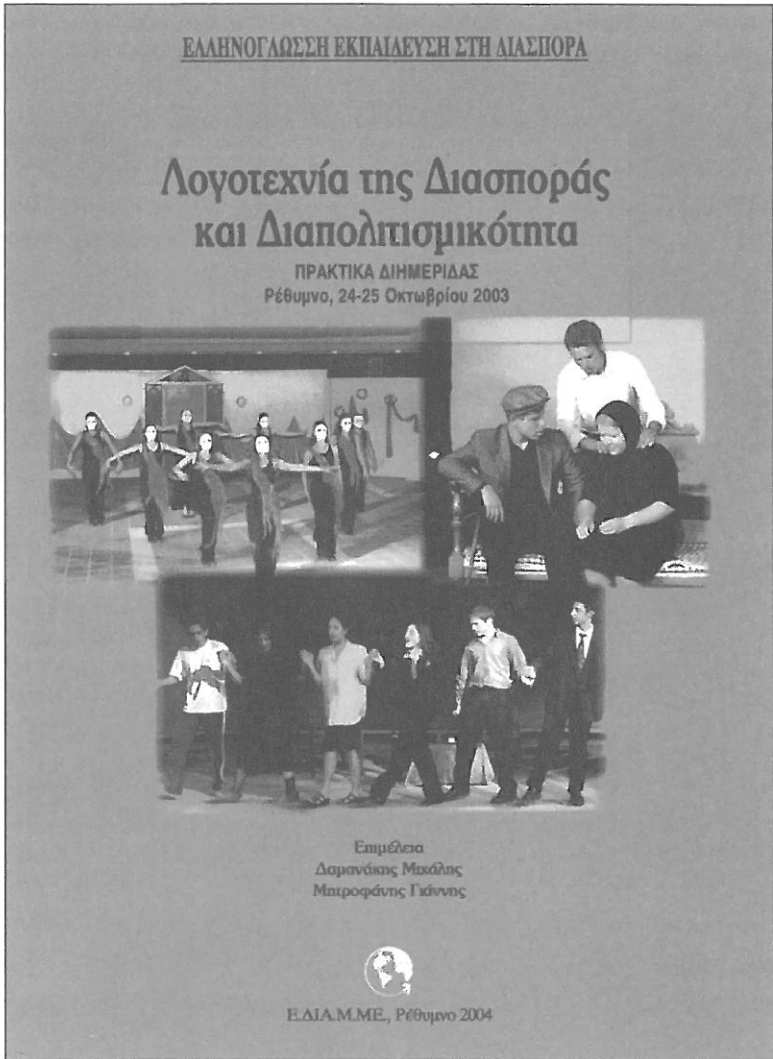
heretics, brave souls willing to study Cypriot letters. The traditional approaches have grown threadbare and critical thinking has long been on the decline in Greece. Critics indirectly advertise the works that they discuss, and everyone knows it, although the reaction remains passivity or indifference. Overall, however, if Cypriot writers persist in using this form of 'best-seller' criticism to create their public image, they will lose as others are always closer to the proverbial pot of honey.



Vassilis Michaelidis, the national poet of Cyprus.



The Anthology of the Diaspora Greek Literature published by the Laboratory of Intercultural and Immigrant Studies – EDIAMME of the University of Crete (Rethymno, 2004) for use in the schools of the Hellenic diaspora.



The proceedings of the conference organized by the Laboratory of Intercultural and Immigrant Studies – EDIAMME of the University of Crete (Rethymno, 2004) on the Greek literature of diaspora.

Chronologie - Grèce

16 octobre 2004 - 15 avril 2005

31 octobre : Dissolution du parti Dikki (Mouvement démocratique et social) fondé par Dimitri Tsovolas, ancien ministre du Pasok.

4 novembre : Protestation de la Grèce à la suite de la décision de Washington de reconnaître la Fyrom (ancienne république yougoslave de Macédoine) sous l'appellation de République de Macédoine.

27 novembre : La Grèce devient membre de l'Organisation internationale de la francophonie dont la 10^{ème} Rencontre s'est tenue à Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso).

30 novembre : La Grèce annule un accord passé avec EADS par le gouvernement du Pasok portant sur la commande de 60 chasseurs Eurofighter et lancera en 2005 un nouvel appel d'offres ouvert à tous.

7-9 décembre : Visite officielle en Russie du Premier ministre Costas Caramanlis.

12 décembre : 4^{ème} Congrès de la Coalition de la gauche et du progrès: Alexandre Alavanos remplace Nicos Constantopoulos à la tête de ce parti.

27 janvier : Jean-Marie Le Pen, président du Front national, en visite à Athènes à l'invitation de Makis Voridis, président du Front hellénique déclare que le soutien de la Grèce à la candidature de la Turquie à l'UE est une erreur.

4 février : Mgr Pantéléimon, évêque d'Attique est suspendu pour 6 mois par le Saint Synode. Ce prélat et d'autres dignitaires de l'Église orthodoxe sont accusés de corruption.

8 février : La Chambre des députés élit par 279 voix sur 296 Carolos Papoulias, aux fonctions de président de la République, qui succède, le 12 mars, à Costis Stéphanopoulos.

13 février : 17^{ème} Congrès du parti communiste KKE. Mme Aleka Papariga est réélue secrétaire général.

17 février : L'UE met en demeure la Grèce de réduire avant la fin de 2006 son déficit excessif: ce déficit de 5,5% en 2004 devrait être ramené à 3,6% en 2005.

3-6 mars : 7^{ème} Congrès du Pasok, qui adopte une nouvelle Proclamation et de nouveaux statuts.

11-13 avril : Visite en Turquie de Petros Molyviatis, ministre des affaires étrangères. Au cours de sa visite deux vedettes turques violent les eaux territoriales grecques autour de l'îlot d'Imia.

14 avril : Costas Caramanlis accepte l'appellation «République de Macédoine-Skopje» pour la FYROM proposée par Matthew Nimetz, envoyé personnel du Secrétaire général de l'ONU.

Chronologie - Chypre

16 octobre 2004-15 avril 2005

20 octobre : démission en zone d'occupation turque du «gouvernement» de Mehmet Ali Talat.

17 novembre : Le Parlement européen approuve la proposition d'octroi de 259 millions d'euros à la zone d'occupation turque, qui doit aussi, pour être mise en œuvre, recevoir l'aval du Conseil des ministres de l'UE.

14 novembre : Le Premier ministre grec Costas Caramanlis, en visite à Nicosie, déclare: «Le peuple souverain de Chypre a jugé que le plan Annan n'était pas satisfaisant. La réunification de Chypre reste la priorité majeure».

26 novembre : Selon un sondage 59% des Chypriotes grecs souhaitent que le gouvernement chypriote use de son droit de veto pour s'opposer à la fixation d'une date d'ouverture des négociations d'adhésion de la Turquie à l'UE.

2 décembre : Réactivation de la Chambre de commerce franco-chypriote au cours d'un colloque sur les relations franco-chypriotes présidé par le président du Sénat, Christian Poncelet.

9 décembre : Selon un sondage 78,1% des Chypriotes grecs estiment que la Turquie n'a pas sa place en Europe. 70% d'entre eux voteraient à nouveau contre le plan Annan si celui-ci leur était à nouveau proposé pour la réunification de Chypre.

17 décembre : La Turquie obtient du Conseil européen que ses négociations d'adhésion commenceront le 3 octobre 2005 mais refuse de parapher le protocole étendant son union douanière avec l'UE aux dix nouveaux membres dont Chypre.

1^{er} janvier : Selon les archives du Foreign Office la Grande Bretagne a facilité l'intervention de l'armée turque à Chypre en juillet 1974.

3 février : La Commission européenne et le gouvernement chypriote sont parvenus à un accord préliminaire sur l'extension du commerce entre les deux communautés chypriotes à travers la «ligne verte». Cet accord doit être approuvé par le Conseil des ministres de l'UE. Le gouvernement chypriote refuse toujours la proposition de la Commission d'un commerce direct entre la zone d'occupation et le reste de l'UE.

20 février : Elections législatives en zone d'occupation turque: le parti républicain turc (CTP) de Mehmet Ali Talat obtient 44,4% des voix et 25 sièges sur 50 et le parti de l'unité nationale (nationaliste) 31,7% des voix et 18 sièges.

7 mars : Jean Asselborn, ministre des affaires étrangères du Luxembourg, pays qui préside le Conseil européen, déclare au cours de sa visite à Ankara être «prêt à favoriser des contacts directs entre Chypriotes grecs et Chypriotes turcs».

28 mars : La Turquie adresse une lettre à la Commission de Bruxelles l'informant qu'elle approuve le texte du protocole sur l'extension de son accord d'union douanière aux dix nouveaux États de l'UE. Mais Ankara précise que cette extension ne constitue pas une reconnaissance implicite de la République de Chypre.

6 avril : La Cour européenne des droits de l'homme déclare recevable la requête contre la Turquie de Mme Myra Xenidès-Arestis réfugiée chypriote grecque de Famagouste contrainte de quitter sa maison après l'invasion turque de Chypre en 1974.

CYPRUS

DOCUMENT

The European Court of Human Rights [sitting in Chamber] unanimously **declared admissible** the application lodged against Turkey by Cypriot national Ms. **Myra Xenides-Arestis**, who was displaced from her home and property during Turkey's military invasion of Cyprus in 1974².

The application was lodged with the European Court of Human Rights on 4 November 1998. The Government of the Republic of Cyprus as of right intervened in the proceedings. The Court held a public hearing on 2 September 2004 and published its decision on 6 April 2005.

In essence, the Court concluded that:

Turkey's Government continues to exercise overall military control over the northern part of Cyprus and have not been able to show that there has been any change in this respect and it is therefore responsible for violations of human rights occurring in that area.

European Court of Human Rights

185

6.4.2005

Press release issued by the Registrar

ADMISSIBILITY DECISION

XENIDES-ARESTIS v. TURKEY

A Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights has unanimously **declared admissible** the application lodged in the case of *Xenides-Arestis v. Turkey* (application no.46347/99). (The decision is available only in English.)

The applicant

The applicant, Myra Xenides-Arestis, was born in 1945 and is a Cypriot national of Greek-Cypriot origin. She lives in Nicosia.

Summary of the facts

The applicant claims to own half a share in a plot of land in the area of Ayios Memnon, in Famagusta (Northern Cyprus), which was given to her by her mother. There are a shop, a flat and three houses on the land. She maintains that one of the houses was her home, where she lived with her husband and children, and that the rest of the property was either used by members of the family or rented out. She also states that she owns part of a plot of land with an orchard.

The applicant maintains that in August 1974 she was forced with her family by the Turkish military forces to leave Famagusta and abandon their home, property and possessions. She states that since then she has been prevented from having access to, from using and enjoying her home and property.

On 30 June 2003 the “Parliament of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus” enacted the “Law on Compensation for Immovable Properties Located within the Boundaries of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus”. A “commission” was set up under this “law” with a mandate to deal with compensation claims.

The United Nation’s plan for the reunification of Cyprus (the Foundation Agreement – Settlement Plan) was put to the vote in Cyprus on 24 April 2004, with two separate referendums being held for the Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot communities. However, the plan was rejected in the Greek-Cypriot referendum and did not, therefore, enter into force.

Complaints

The applicant complains of a continuing violation of her rights under Article 8 (right to respect for home) of the European Convention on Human

Rights and Article 1 of Protocol No. 1 (protection of property) to the Convention in that, since August 1974, she has been deprived of her right to property and her home. She also maintains that Turkish military forces prevent her from having access to, from using and enjoying her home and property because she is Greek Orthodox and of Greek-Cypriot origin, in violation of Article 14 (prohibition of discrimination) of the Convention in conjunction with the other two Articles invoked.

Procedure

The application was lodged with the European Court of Human Rights on 4 November 1998. The Cypriot Government intervened as a third-party in the proceedings. The Court held a public hearing in the Human Rights building on 2 September 2004.

Decision of the Court

The Court declared the application admissible, without prejudging the merits of the case. It rejected the respondent Government's objections on jurisdiction concerning the victim status of the applicant and the exhaustion of domestic remedies. In particular, as regards the latter, the Court considered that the remedy established in the "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus" could not be regarded as an "effective" or "adequate" means for redressing the applicant's complaints.

Accordingly, the Court considered, in the light of the parties' submissions, that the complaints raised serious issues of fact and law under the Convention, the determination of which required an examination of the merits.

Registry of the European Court of Human Rights

The European Court of Human Rights was set up in Strasbourg by the Council of Europe Member States in 1959 to deal with alleged violations of the 1950 European Convention on Human Rights. Since 1 November 1998 it has

sat as a full-time Court composed of an equal number of judges to that of the States party to the Convention. The Court examines the admissibility and merits of applications submitted to it. It sits in Chambers of 7 judges or, in exceptional cases, as a Grand Chamber of 17 judges. The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe supervises the execution of the Court's judgments.

CHYPRE

DOCUMENT

La France et la question chypriote **La crise de 1964**

La *Revue Etudes helléniques/Hellenic Studies* a publié dans son numéro du printemps 1996 en annexe de l'article de Jean Catsiapis *La France et la question chypriote, de la guerre d'indépendance à la crise de 1964* les textes des entretiens du général de Gaulle avec Georges Papandréou du 29 juin 1964 et avec İsmet İnönü le 1er juillet 1964, textes, conservés aux Archives du Quai d'Orsay. Elle complète cette publication en reproduisant dans ce numéro une série de lettres relatives à la crise chypriote de 1964.

(Recherche réalisée par Jean Catsiapis)

I

Nicosia, le 9 juin 1964

Son Excellence Monsieur le Président de la République française
Général Charles de GAULLE, Paris.

C'est avec un grand regret que je suis contraint d'informer Votre Excellence que le gouvernement turc, en dépit des résolutions du Conseil de Sécurité des 4 et 19 mars 1963 et contrairement aux obligations que lui impose la Charte des Nations Unies, poursuit sa politique de menaces répétées d'attaque contre la République de Chypre. Renouvelant ses menaces la Turquie a maintenant amassé un grand nombre de forces navales, terrestres et aériennes en vue d'une invasion immédiate de Chypre.

En outre, la Turquie a, à plusieurs reprises, violé l'espace aérien de Chypre et ses eaux territoriales et, au moyen de son contingent à Chypre, continue

ses interventions illégales sur le territoire de la République. Elle recourt à de nouveaux actes d'agression en encourageant et en soutenant les chypriotes-turcs dans leur effort pour obtenir le partage de l'île, en leur fournissant des armes et des munitions et en envoyant des «irréguliers» à Chypre pour les aider dans leur sinistre dessein.

J'en appelle à Votre Excellence pour qu'elle exerce toute son influence afin de mettre un terme aux activités du gouvernement turc, qui sont contraires aux idéaux des Nations Unies et mettent la paix internationale en danger.

Archevêque MAKARIOS
Président de la République de Chypre.

II

Paris, le 10 juin 1964

TÉLÉGRAMME

Son Excellence Monseigneur MAKARIOS
Président de la République de Chypre.

Je suis conscient, Monseigneur, de la gravité de la situation à Chypre et des troubles auxquels l'île est exposée. Je souhaite qu'une fois surmontée la crise actuelle, une solution soit trouvée qui assure pour l'avenir la vie de Chypre et la paix à son sujet.

C. de Gaulle.

III

AFFAIRES ÉTRANGÈRES

CHIFFREMENT

CABINET DU MINISTRE

Paris, le 3 juillet 1964

AMBAFRANCE WASHINGTON

RESERVE

Diffusion PR - PM - CM (1 ex.)

M. de Carbonnel

M. Lucet

Je vous communique ci-après le texte des lettres échangées entre le Président Johnson et le Général de Gaulle en dates des 29 juin et le 3 juillet 1964. Vous voudrez bien faire remettre au Président des Etats-Unis le texte de la réponse du Président de la République. L'original de cette réponse vous est adressé par la prochaine valise.

Citation : "Washington, le 29 Juin 1964"

"Cher Général de Gaulle,

"Comme mon ami George Ball vous l'a dit, je crains beaucoup que l'aggravation de la situation à Chypre conduise à une guerre entre la Grèce et la Turquie. Au début de ce mois, les Turcs n'étaient en vérité qu'à quelques heures d'une action militaire. Il a fallu les efforts les plus intenses de ma part pour persuader le Premier Ministre Inonu de relâcher sa prise. Dans les semaines qui ont suivi, le danger dans l'île n'a pas diminué.

"Je suis convaincu que si la guerre doit être évitée, nous devons nous acheminer d'urgence vers une solution permanente. L'accumulation d'armes à Chypre est déjà telle qu'il semble que ce soit seulement une question de temps avant qu'un incident grave ne conduise à une guerre civile sur l'ensemble de l'île. Si les troubles continuent, et aucun progrès sérieux vers un règlement n'apparaît, tôt ou tard les Turcs se sentiront obligés de recourir

à ce qu'ils considèrent comme un droit d'intervention qui leur est garanti par le traité.

"M. Tuomioja, le Finlandais qui a été nommé médiateur des Nations-Unies n'a jusqu'à présent fait aucun progrès dans la voie d'un règlement. Après les événements du 5 juin, il nous a vivement engagés à nous associer aux Grecs et aux Turcs dans un effort tendant à rapprocher suffisamment les deux parties pour que son propre travail puisse commencer à porter des fruits. Nous avons reçu des encouragements dans le même sens du Secrétaire Général U. THANT.

"C'est dans ces conditions que j'ai demandé au Premier Ministre de Turquie et au Premier Ministre de Grèce de discuter la question avec moi à Washington. Dans ces discussions, j'ai insisté aussi fortement que possible pour que les deux gouvernements - en tant qu'ils sont les deux parties responsables les plus intimement intéressées par le problème - trouvent rapidement une voie les acheminant vers une solution par la négociation. J'ai offert l'assistance d'un représentant impartial des Etats-Unis pour servir de catalyseur.

"Le Premier Ministre INONU était tout à fait prêt à entrer en conversation avec les Grecs. Le Premier Ministre PAPANDREOU, cependant, se montra très hostile à l'idée d'une négociation sérieuse. Néanmoins, je pus obtenir l'assurance qu'il nommerait un représentant pour rencontrer le médiateur des Nations-Unies et un représentant de la Turquie.

"Les progrès qui peuvent résulter de ces rencontres dépendront en fait, naturellement, de l'existence d'une volonté sérieuse de parvenir à une solution. Alors que je crois le Premier Ministre INONU désireux d'arriver à un règlement, j'ai le regret de dire que j'ai trouvé peu de trace d'une volonté analogue de la part du Gouvernement grec. Le Premier Ministre PAPANDREOU semble croire que le temps travaille pour lui, que la position turque se dégrade progressivement et que finalement il réalisera le désir, qui est celui de son coeur, d'une union entre Chypre et la Grèce sans avoir besoin de faire la moindre concession aux Turcs. Cette attitude ne tient pas compte de la sensibilité et des exigences de la Turquie. Sauf si la position grecque se modifie, les Turcs devront abandonner tout espoir d'éviter l'humiliation excepté le recours à l'action militaire.

Je crois savoir que vous aurez une conversation avec le Premier Ministre PAPANDREOU lundi prochain et je suis certain que votre conseil influencera grandement l'orientation qu'il prendra. Les Etats-Unis n'ont aucun intérêt à la forme que peut prendre un règlement à Chypre, si ce n'est de s'assurer qu'il résoudra le problème de façon permanente. Cela signifie que ce règlement doit tenir compte des intérêts de la Grèce et de la Turquie et du peuple de l'île. Nous n'avons nous-mêmes proposé aucune solution car il nous a semblé qu'une solution durable ne pouvait être trouvée que par les parties. D'après ce que M. George BALL m'a dit de vos conunentaires sur la question, je conclus que vous et moi sommes pleinement d'accord pour penser qu'il faut une solution permanente plutôt qu'un simple replatrage des arrangements actuels qui ne sont pas satisfaisants.

"Le premier pas essentiel est, pour la Grèce aussi bien que pour la Turquie, de faire face à la dure réalité et de reconnaître qu'aucune solution permanente n'est possible si des efforts ne sont pas faits pour la rendre acceptable de l'autre côté. Je suis sûr que vous pouvez exercer une grande influence en soulignant ce point devant le Premier Ministre PAPANDREOU, et aussi en insistant auprès de lui pour lui montrer combien il est vital, dans son propre intérêt, d'éviter toute action sur l'île qui puisse provoquer les Turcs dans les semaines qui viennent. Je suis très sensible au fait que vous vouliez bien recevoir l'Ambassadeur BOHLEN lundi. Il a été informé de tous les détails de nos conversations avec les Grecs et les Turcs la semaine dernière et est à votre disposition pour développer n'importe lequel des points ci-dessus, si vous les désirez.

"J'examinerai naturellement toute suggestion que vous souhaiteriez faire quant au point de savoir comment la France et les Etats-Unis - en tant que nations qui ne sont pas directement parties au problème de Chypre, ont pleinement conscience de leurs responsabilités mondiales - peuvent le plus utilement combiner leurs efforts pour mettre un terme à ce danger actuel et réel qui menace la paix du monde.

"Madame Johnson se joint à moi pour vous faire part, ainsi qu'à Madame de Gaulle, de nos sentiments les plus chaleureux,

Sincèrement, Lyndon B. Johnson".

Fin de citation.

IV

TÉLÉGRAMME AU DÉPART ¹⁵²

AFFAIRES ÉTRANGÈRES

CHIFFREMENT

CABINET DU MINISTRE

Citation : "Paris, le 3 Juillet 1964"

"Cher Monsieur le Président,

"Vous avez bien voulu me faire part de la teneur des entretiens que vous avez eus avec le Premier Ministre de Turquie et le Premier Ministre de Grèce au sujet de l'affaire de Chypre.

"Je vous remercie de ces très intéressantes informations.

"Comme vous le savez, je viens d'avoir à mon tour des conversations avec M. Papandreou et M. Inonu. Ceux-ci m'ont tenu, dans l'ensemble, le même langage qu'à vous-même. Pour ma part, j'ai souligné notamment que le maintien de la paix était un devoir et une nécessité contre lesquels aucune considération particulière ne pouvait prévaloir et qui engageait la responsabilité des deux Gouvernements. Tout devait donc être entrepris par eux pour que les désordres cessent dans l'île et, a fortiori, pour qu'un conflit armé ne survienne pas entre la Grèce et la Turquie.

"Je pense comme vous que cette affaire requiert une grande vigilance. Je compte en suivre attentivement l'évolution au cours des prochaines semaines.

"Madame de Gaulle se joint à moi pour vous adresser ainsi qu'à Madame Johnson, l'expression de nos bien sympathiques sentiments,

C. de Gaulle."

Fin de citation.

Diplomatie p.O,

AFFAIRES ÉTRANGÈRES

TÉLÉGRAMME AU DÉPART 128

CHIFFREMENT

CABINET DU MINISTRE

Paris, le 3 juillet 1964

RESERVE

Diffusion : PR - PM - CM (1 ex.)

M. de Carbonnel
M. Lucet.

AMBAFRANCE WASHINGTON / 1630 - 1630

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.../.

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