

Dimitrios Vikelas in the Diaspora: memory, character formation and language*

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Dimitrios Vikelas (1835-1908) was a key figure in Greece during the second half of the nineteenth century and occupies a central position in its literary and cultural developments. For most people, his name is associated with the revival of the Olympic Games in Athens in 1896;¹ for literary historians, however, his reputation rests on the publication of the short novel *Loukis Laras* (1879).² Though he cannot be considered an inspiring, imaginative and gifted writer, he marks the transition from ideal to real and expresses the trend away from the intense individualism and the melodramatic imagination of the period of 1830-1880 towards the development of a prosperous and

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¹ Petros N. Linardos, *D. Vikélas: Από το Όραμα στην Πράξη* (Athens: Epitropi Olympiakon Agonon 1996).

² Vikelas played a significant role in the rehabilitation of Byzantium during the nineteenth century. He wrote a number of essays on Byzantium in order "to avenge the insulted memory of Byzantium" and to answer the criticisms of Gibbon and Montesquieu. Some of his essays appeared in English, mainly in *The Scottish Review* (e.g. "The Byzantine Empire", *The Scottish Review* 8 [July & October 1886] 258-86), and then reprinted in book form (*Seven essays on Christian Greece* [1890], subsequently enriched in its French version *La Grèce Byzantine et Moderne: Essais historiques* [Paris 1893]). The translator of Vikelas's essays into English was Lord Bute, who believed in the continuity of Greek culture and initiated the Byzantine Revival in architecture in Scotland. On Bute and Vikelas see R.J. Macrides, *The Scottish Connection in Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* (St John's House Papers, No. 4, Centre for Advanced Historical Studies: University of St Andrews 1992) and Alexandros Oikonomou, *Τρεῖς Ἄνθρωποι: Δημήτριος Μ. Βικέλας (1835-1908)*, vol. 2 (Athens 1953), pp. 449-51.

civilised urban society based on the values of hard work, discipline and family cohesion.

Although Vikelas travelled a great deal and moved from country to country, paradoxically he was instrumental in turning Greek fiction towards domesticity. Contrary to what one would expect from a well-travelled and cosmopolitan individual, he did not set his stories abroad (with the exception of "Ανάμνησις") nor did he introduce flamboyant characters; instead, he turned his attention to humble people and to local communities. Perhaps this tendency can be explained by his attempt at writing fiction for instruction and moral improvement rather than for entertainment. In this respect, he is one of the least entertaining writers of nineteenth-century Greece, but his emphasis on locality and domesticity might partly account for the interest of foreign translators, who increasingly towards the end of the nineteenth century demanded local colour from Greek fiction.

Characteristic is the title, *Tales from the Aegean*, of the English translation of his stories published in 1894. In his introduction to this translation, Henry Alonzo Huntington stressed the local colouring and the movement away from foreign imitations in Greek fiction of the time; he also noted that Roidis's *Pope Joan* is "passed over for no other reason than that work which might have been done in any latitude cannot be said to have assisted the evolution of a distinctively national type of fiction," while *Loukis Laras* "is now generally regarded as the most finished specimen of Neo-hellenic romance."³ What is emphasized in this introduction, which is very likely to have been written under Vikelas's guidance,⁴ is the trend towards an accurate and sincere depiction of Greek life. Vikelas is described as the "founder of a school" of Greek short story writing and the attractiveness of his stories "lies partly in the sincerity with

³ Demetrios Bikelas, *Tales from the Aegean*, translated by Leonard Eckstein Opdycke (Chicago 1894), pp. 8-9. The stories were translated from the French and it is worth noting here that in the introduction the novels of Grigorios Palaiologos are described as forgotten (p. 8).

⁴ Mario Vitti claims that Vikelas was behind Juliette Lamber's *Poètes grecs contemporains* (Paris 1881). See his *Ιστορία της Νεοελληνικής Λογοτεχνίας* (Athens: Odysseas 1987), p. 257.

which they image Greek life of to-day."⁵ In other words, Vikelas seems to have orchestrated from abroad his presentation as the founder of realism in Greece, and his image as someone who, despite being a diaspora Greek, shied away from cosmopolitanism by concentrating on the representation of Greek history and the ethos of his country not only in his fiction but also in his travel writing about Greece. There, again according to H.A. Huntington, "one catches, as it were, the last flutter of the vanishing fustanella."⁶

In his autobiography, however, Vikelas presents himself in a modest and self-deprecating manner as a quiet, orderly and not very bright individual.⁷ "I was not destined to be a revolutionary," he says, and describes himself as an unaccomplished businessman and man of letters.⁸ In spite of this unflattering self-image, Vikelas managed to write a novel which received substantial critical attention and praise when it was published and is the most widely-translated Greek novel of the nineteenth century. *Loukis Laras* was translated into at least eleven European languages.⁹ It was translated into English by J. Gennadius in 1881, with an introduction which deserves some attention, as it outlines the developments in nineteenth-century Greek fiction.

In presenting a brief overview of Greek fiction during the nineteenth century, Gennadius aims to highlight the importance and originality of *Loukis Laras*:

Although less pretentious than any of the tales and novels we have quoted, *Loukis Laras* is more remarkable than its predecessors on many grounds, as we believe the foregoing remarks will have shown. It marks a fresh and more healthy

⁵ D. Bikelas, *Tales from the Aegean*, p. 10.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁷ Dimitrios Vikelas, *Ἡ Ζωή μου* in: *Ἀπαντα*, ed. Alkis Angelou, vol. 1, (Athens: Sillogos pros Diadosin Ofelimon Vivlion 1997), p. 48.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 103, 188, 225.

⁹ *Loukis Laras* made five Greek editions while Vikelas was alive, and from 1879 to 1894 three in Italian, two in German, English and Russian and one each in French, Danish, Swedish, Dutch, Spanish, Hungarian and Serbian. See Alexandros N. Letsas, *Δημήτριος Βικέλας* (Thessaloniki: Makedoniki Vivliothiki 1951), p. 23.

departure in modern Greek literature. The matter compressed within its two hundred pages contains substance sufficient to make up the regulation three-volume novel. Much creative power has been displayed in the moulding of the very meagre facts which have served as the basis of the work. Its sentiment is tender, without lack of a strong imagination. And the underlying sense of quiet humour is no less pleasing than the absence of any political cavil. Finally, as a specimen of the actual Greek prose style, it is more even and perfect than anything produced of late years.¹⁰

One has the feeling that Vikelas had launched a concerted effort to promote his novel not only by encouraging its translation into major languages within a few years of the original publication, but also through articles published in Greek periodicals by leading foreign scholars such as Wilhelm Wagner, Wilhelm Lange, Karl Krumbacher and Antoni Rubió i Lluch. Although the image he puts forward through his writings is that of a modest and reserved gentleman, Vikelas must have been a great publicist taking advantage of his network of friendships and acquaintances throughout Europe.

He started publishing poetry in 1862 in London and then moved to prose with *Loukis Laras* and his short stories written from 1877 onwards. In 1893 he gathered in one volume, under the title *Διαλέξεις και Αναμνήσεις* (*Lectures and Recollections*), his talks, essays and obituaries, and in 1903 published the first part of his incomplete autobiography *Η Ζωή μου* (*My Life*). He also published his travel writings about England and Scotland (they are included in *Διαλέξεις και Αναμνήσεις*), Greece and Sweden,

¹⁰ D. Bikelas, *Loukis Laras*, translated from the Greek by J. Gennadius (New York: D. Appleton and Company 1881), pp. 12-13; British edition (London: Macmillan 1881), pp. xxii-xxiii. This translation was reprinted in 1971 by Doric Publications in London. In her preface to the translation, which appeared during the military dictatorship in Greece, Helen Vlachos stressed the historical value of the text. In the blurb on the dust-jacket of the book the connection with the resistance to military dictatorship becomes more apparent: "The abiding relevance of *Loukis Laras* is tragically undeniable; its theme is as momentous now as it was a century ago, and, for today's Greeks living in and out of that country, it carries a deeper significance. Loukis Laras has rightly been chosen to inaugurate an important series of nineteenth-century Greek classics that are to be published under the Doric imprint."

and translated six plays by Shakespeare.¹¹ All his published texts have recently been reprinted in eight volumes, edited by Alkis Angelou and published by the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, founded by Vikelas himself in 1899.¹²

His mature life can be divided into three periods. The first (1852-1876) represents the years of his commercial activity and his sojourn in London, the second (1878-1895) is associated with his intellectual activities and his movement to Paris, and finally his Athenian period (1896-1908) when he moves to Athens and devotes his life to public activities for good causes.¹³ As we can see, Vikelas spent most of his life outside Greece and can be described as her cultural ambassador, writing articles in French and English, corresponding with leading scholars and intellectuals and helping Greek writers publish their work outside Greece. He may have been instrumental in assisting Vizyenos to publish his first short story in French, even before it was published in Greek. Since he was able to establish contacts and strike up friendships with a number of European writers, Vikelas must have been good at public relations and this perhaps annoyed Psycharis, leading eventually to the breakdown of their relationship.¹⁴

By the time of the publication of *Loukis Laras* two trends can be identified in Greek fiction. The first trend is more critical and challenging to the nascent Greek state and society; it is closer to the satirical and comical plays of the period and is represented mainly by Grigorios Palaiologos, Iakovos Pitzipios and Emmanuel Roidis. Perhaps it is indicative of their stance that the first two left Greece disgruntled and moved to the Ottoman Empire during a time when the euphoria of national

¹¹ He translated *King Lear*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Othello*, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, and *The Merchant of Venice*.

¹² Angelou, in the fifth volume of his edition, omits, wrongly in my view, Vikelas's title Διαλέξεις και Αναμνήσεις and replaces it with the term Δοκίμια, to the confusion of readers familiar with the first edition of the book.

¹³ A sketch of Vikelas's life can be found in Maria Terdimou, *Χρονολόγιο Δημητρίου Βικέλα* (Herakleion: Dimos Herakleiou Kritis 1991).

¹⁴ See Alexandros Oikonomou, *Τρεῖς ἄνθρωποι: Δημήτριος Μ. Βικέλας (1835-1908)*, vol. 2, pp. 543-8.

independence was diminishing and a more critical attitude was developing.

The other trend was more idealistic and constructive, aiming at improving Greek society, strengthening its European orientation and contributing towards enhancing its prosperity and morality. This type of fiction, represented by Alexandros Rizos Rangavis and Vikelas, had as its aim the improvement of Greek society either through the allegorical presentation of oriental and exotic tales, and stories of slavery, or through the presentation of technological developments in the West, as is the case with Rangavis, or through the projection of ideal and model characters such as Loukis Laras or Papa-Narkissos, as happens in the fiction of Vikelas. There were, of course, novels, such as *Thanos Vlekas*, which combined both trends by criticising social evils, like brigandage, and at the same time projecting paradigmatic characters.

Although the representatives of both categories of fiction agreed on the inadequacies of Greek society and shared similar didactic intentions, they seem to disagree on the method for dealing with these inadequacies. The former opted for an emphasis on the critical representation of society, and the latter looked to society's moral or educational improvement and worked with analogy or allegory.

Writers who spent most of their lives wandering outside Greece, such as Rangavis and Vikelas, did not have organic links with Greek society nor did they know it well enough to depict it. Approaching Greek society from the perspective of the diaspora, both made a genuine effort to contribute to its development. As they were associated with the Greek-speaking periphery or spent many years outside Greece, they can be considered, together with Vizyenos, Greeks of the diaspora.

These three writers, who all made a substantial contribution to Greek short-story writing in its early stages, share some additional characteristics. All of them wrote poetry (Vikelas was influenced by Rangavis to begin with), but today they are better known for their prose. They also established links with Britain, but in different ways. Rangavis was married to a Scottish lady and wrote his travel impressions from Victorian Britain, making reference to the development of the railway system in Britain. Also, most of his protagonists are lords and

ladies. Vikelas, as mentioned earlier, spent several years in Britain, while Vizyenos wrote most of his stories in London. Furthermore, they were well-acquainted with English literature: Rangavis with Walter Scott and Edward Bulwer-Lytton, among others, Vizyenos at least with Shakespeare, while Vikelas, apart from his translations of Shakespeare, read the *Pickwick Papers* by Charles Dickens, *Adam Bede* by George Eliot, and Walter Scott and Charles Kingsley.¹⁵

Finally, and most importantly, memory and autobiography were important for all of them. Rangavis wrote four volumes of memoirs published posthumously (1894-1930) and used the word "recollections" for his travelogues. Vizyenos wrote autobiographical fiction which was described by Palamas as a kind of family memoir,¹⁶ while for Vikelas, as we shall see, memory and autobiography played an important role.

It can be argued that memory is one of the hallmarks (the other being peregrination and travel) of Greek fiction during the nineteenth century. Either as personal memory in the form of autobiography or as historical memory in the form of the historical novel, it can be said that memory plays a significant role, gradually giving way to experience. With *Loukis Laras* Vikelas combined individual with historical memory, and he can be seen as the writer who based his prose work, whether fictional or non-fictional, on memory.

The literary genre which seemed most suited to Vikelas's artistic temperament was the memoir, as it combines storytelling and recollection, historical perspective and biographical detail, critical analysis and nostalgic excursion, enjoyment and didacticism. Indeed, the author himself highlighted the need for this kind of memoir, showing that very few had been written, or at least published, in Greece:

If our most influential politicians, as well as other Greeks, had found the time and developed the habit to write down their memoirs, it would have shed a great deal of light on our contemporary history. In Europe it is the French in particular

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 87, 90.

¹⁶ K. Palamas, "Τό Ἑλληνικόν Διήγημα, Α' Βιζυητός", *Ἄπαντα*, vol. 2 (Athens: Govostis, n.d.), p. 160.

who have adopted and excelled in this genre, and have enriched their literary tradition with various memoirs which are as enjoyable as they are didactic. It is true that historical truth is on occasions in danger of being distorted by the obsessions, the superstitions and the inclinations of the recounted events, in which the writer himself took part. But apart from anything else, this enlivens and bestows colour on the account.¹⁷

It would indeed be possible to argue that all Vikelas's prose texts are structured in the memoir style. It is not only in *Loukis Laras*, which is explicitly a memoir based on the narrative of Loukas Zifos (or Tzifos), but in all his stories, that a special emphasis on memory can be discerned. In fact, in his story entitled "Recollection" ("Ανάμνησις") he highlights the untempered power of memory and of childhood impressions: "Childhood impressions are truly indelible. Their images remain forever engraved in the memory – events which occurred many years ago pass before our eyes and remain alive for ever in the depths of our imagination and they emerge at once, unprovoked, without us knowing how or why."¹⁸ Vikelas worked not so much with his imagination as with impression and recollection.¹⁹ Moreover, he wrote his prose fiction relatively late in his career and almost all of it is based on specific events or documents. In other words it is a factual fiction.

In fact, it is difficult to divide Vikelas's prose clearly into fiction (*Loukis Laras, Stories*), autobiography (*My Life*) and essays (*Lectures and Recollections*) because all four books are related to each other and do not allow strict and clear generic characterizations. His voluminous book *Lectures and Recollections*, in particular, contains a number of texts of lectures in

¹⁷ Dimitrios Vikelas, *Ἡ Ζωή μου*, p. 127. See also Λουκῆς Λάρας, ed. Marianna Ditsa (Athens: Hermes 1991), p. 123. All references in the text are taken from this edition and page numbers are given after each quotation.

¹⁸ Dimitrios Vikelas, *Διηγήματα*, ed. A. Sachinis (Athens: Estia 1979), p. 173.

¹⁹ Even in his travel writing, e.g. *Ἀπό Νικοπόλεως εἰς Ὀλυμπίαν* [1886] (Athens: Ekate 1991), his visits to countries and cities evoke memories: "All these memories take shape and life when you have seen Mesolongi as I saw it today..." (p. 105). See also pp. 16 and 149.

the essay style as well as festive speeches, obituaries and travel writings. Certain lectures from this volume, like "Settembrini's Recollections", could well have been cast into stories *à la manière de* Vikelas. The two elements which in my opinion run through and link all four books are memory and biography.

Vikelas is one of those men of letters who introduced historic depth and the evolutionary conception of time into modern Greek prose. One would not be far off the mark in claiming that the whole of his prose oeuvre is one "perpetual recollection", and perhaps this is due to the fact that the years of his childhood and youth were better than his mature years, which he does not describe in *My Life*, restricting himself to memories of childhood and youth. The second volume of his autobiography, which would have dealt with his mature life, was never published. In the final analysis, Vikelas was a man who lived with his memories, and who fondly remembered the happy days of his youth; he himself explained the reason thus:

These memories of fleeting encounters and transient relationships remain as happy times which the soul can remember fondly; they are like rays of sunshine, brightening up our shadowy past. Perhaps the duration of these memories depends on each person's character and on the way in which he lives. Perhaps they have more significance for me than others because I spent my youth under the influence of the *ideal* and because my adult years were blackened by many shadows.²⁰

It is of course likely that his childhood years were not completely unclouded as he was also troubled by the dilemma: businessman or writer – something which his environment imposed on him while he himself repressed it, having already solved it within his own mind.²¹

If Vikelas was more of a businessman and less of a writer it would have been possible to say that he wrote the first Greek capitalist manifesto in the form of a novel. However, this

²⁰ *Η Ζωή μου*, p. 118. There might be an allusion to the fact that his life was troubled for a number of years by the mental health of his wife Kalliope, who suffered from melancholy and tried to commit suicide more than once.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 103, 141, 188-9, 191.

capitalist inclination (or pleasure, as he called it himself) towards financial profit is tempered by the realization that money does not bring happiness: "because the amassing of riches is not in itself a source of happiness. Freedom – this is the true and sound motivation of the working man!" (*Loukis Laras*, 174). Loukis Laras is in effect introduced to us as an anti-hero with narrow horizons ("The khan was my world and patriotism was my trade balance", 50-1), tiny in stature and range (49, 51). Indeed he himself confesses his anti-heroism: "I was not made for a soldier's life. I inclined towards trade" (150). In this work one could point to the juxtaposition of two attitudes towards life, of two philosophies: heroism, which presupposes a type of linear, dynamic and progressive culmination, and conservatism (and Vikelas was a self-confessed conservative), which favours organic recurrence, introversion and deliberation. On Loukis's return to Chios and his meeting with the prisoner Despina, the cyclical pattern asserts itself, even in the plot of the narrative.

Distance and memory comprise the matrices of Vikelas's writing, contributing mainly in *Loukis Laras* to the demystification of Romantic philhellenism and the heroism of 1821, replacing the ideal of revolutionary action with the ideal of order and prosperity.²² Vikelas was, perhaps paradoxically, a conservative modernizer, because on the one hand he promoted the conservative ideals of family values and of taking the "middle road" (even through his heroes), and on the other hand he sought the modernization of Greek education and society. The diaspora is associated for Vikelas with writing as a means of communication and recollection, while the homeland is connected with actions beneficial to society. As M. Ditsa notes:

Vikelas writes and for the most part first publishes all his œuvre (with the exception of his autobiography) during the time when he resides abroad permanently or for extended periods. He lived permanently in Athens for approximately ten years (always travelling abroad at least once a year), and during this period up

²² See A. Παπαδιαμάντης *Αυτοβιογραφούμενος*, ed. P. Moullas (Athens: Ermis 1974), pp. ιζ'-ιη'.

until his death (1898-1908), he is concerned with work for the public good.²³

Vikelas's sojourn outside Greece and away from his mother heightens his sense of nostalgia and remembering, which in turn leads him to idealize certain people. His conservatism combined with his nostalgia should help to explain his tendency to sketch gentle, selfless characters in his prose. And this focus on people and on memory could be the result of the fact that Vikelas did not settle in, or create a special bond with, the foreign places in which he lived. He did not like Odessa, for example, neither did he make any effort to learn Russian.²⁴ But in England, too, he remained in the company of his uncles and aunts and in the environment of the trading office in which he worked.²⁵ Moreover, he was not well acquainted with English,²⁶ a fact which held true for many other of his compatriots who, for this reason I imagine, found it necessary to publish journals in England written in French.²⁷

He had an especially close relationship with his mother and they were in frequent communication. It was to her that he sent his impressions of his travels, which later comprised the primary material for writing his recollections. Indeed, it seems that he kept a kind of diary of his travels and of his reading, something which must have been of use when he rearranged and compiled his recollections.²⁸

Vikelas gives the impression of a particularly sensitive and nostalgic man, who because of his various places of origin,²⁹ and because he frequently moved from place to place, could not

²³ Marianna Ditsa's introduction to *Λουκίης Λάρας*, p. 77. As the author notes, Vikelas discovers his Macedonian origins at the same time as he settles in Greece (p. 79).

²⁴ *Η Ζωή μου*, pp. 52-3.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 164-5.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

²⁷ I am thinking here of journals published in London such as *La Revue d'Orient* (1861), edited by Iakovos G. Pitzipios.

²⁸ See *Η Ζωή μου*, pp. 166 and 235-6.

²⁹ Although Vikelas was born in Ermoupolis and his parents in Constantinople, his grandfather on his mother's side was born in Ioannina and his paternal grandfather in Veroia.

attach himself to one particular place. As a result, he attempted to attach himself to people and even objects. The events he describes in relation to his uncle's desk are typical; he says, for example, "by a quirk of fate [the desk] continues to follow me even today, identifying itself with my existence."³⁰ His uncle Vasileios Melas brought this desk to Athens with his other furniture. After his death it ended up the property of his brother's eldest son Michael.

But it does not make its new owner reminisce about the past, it is not associated with memories from his youth. [...] When the Society was founded for the distribution of beneficial books I asked him to leave it to me, and now, already an old man, I work at the desk I used to work at in my youth. At every moment its appearance brings to mind memories from that period of my life. Even inanimate objects have their say. They speak to our souls as old friends and endear themselves to us.³¹

This event strengthens the view that Vikelas's childhood was the happiest time of his life and that his memories from this period were like a fairy-tale.

Another reason for the emphasis on his childhood through his memories could be Vikelas's conviction that: "The impressions and the teachings received during childhood have a direct influence on the individual's subsequent moral life."³² He also repeats this view elsewhere in his autobiography³³ and on two occasions it is accompanied by a reference to a well-known line from Wordsworth: "The Child is Father of the Man", taken from the poem "My Heart Leaps Up" (1807).³⁴ Vikelas admits that he admires and is inspired by the English poet,³⁵ but the double reference to the line indicates that Vikelas adopts the Romantic

³⁰ Ibid., p. 148.

³¹ Ibid., pp. 148-9.

³² Ibid., p. 19.

³³ Ibid., pp. 108, 113.

³⁴ In some ways Vikelas adopts the Romantic attitude to memory, and Wordsworth's *Prelude* is Romanticism's most autobiographical poem. Vikelas's interest in Wordsworth's poetry is also confirmed by A. Andreades, *Un Hellène ami de la France – Démétrius Bikélas*, Conférence faite le 12 Février 1910 à la salle du Parnasse (Athens 1910), pp. 11-12.

³⁵ *Η Ζωή μου*, pp. 167 and 232.

philosophy concerning the significance of childhood. The Romantics (Novalis, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Schiller) discovered the child as a source of freshness, unfamiliarity and rejuvenation in their attempt to restore the Edenic primary experience.³⁶ For them the child represented an escape from routine to a wondrous world, to the unfamiliar. The emphasis on childhood was not a sign of infancy but a recognition of the defining character of childhood and of the spiral course of mankind, which never escapes from childhood, but still incorporates a sense of development.

Vikelas's autobiographical recollections are a type of *Bildungsgeschichte*. This Romantic genre insists not on Christian transcendence and redemption but on the painful process of personal development, self-awareness and individual perfection. The emphasis lies on consciousness, self-knowledge and the sense of development, thus highlighting the evolutionary history of human consciousness. Its purpose is not to unite the individual with God, but to reconcile the subject with the object. Consequently the history of mankind, as of the individual, is not conceived of as a preparation for a celestial life but as a process of personal education, self-awareness and moral edification from childhood up to maturity; its ultimate aim is not to identify with God but is a gradual culmination of self-awareness and personal completion.

The Christian model of history (*Heilsgeschichte*) which presupposes the Creation, the Fall and the Redemption is translated to the level of human consciousness as stages or "moments" of self-knowledge (*Bildungsgeschichte*).³⁷ Theological history is modified to become a history of education, of gradual self-knowledge, adopting the voyage of discovery as its blue-print, a kind of Odyssey where the end is a return to the beginning. Vikelas uses autobiographical recollection to return to his youth and to his native origins, his birthplace. Of course, it is not a matter of the voyage being cyclical, but spiral. In other words it is not a mere return, but a return enriched with learning and self-knowledge, a type of Romantic *Bildungsgeschichte*,

³⁶ M.H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (Palatino: W.W. Norton 1971), pp. 380-1.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 96, 187-90.

which in turn leads us back to the reason for Vikelas's emphasis on characterization.

With reference to characterization, I would like to highlight the emphasis that Vikelas puts on the shaping, the education and the moral edification of the individual. This formation process is illustrated by means of biography. Biography is part of this characterization process since a number of his prose texts contain personal characterizations in the shape either of brief biographies or of obituaries. In addition, biography is linked with national history in the following statement from *Loukis Laras*: "The history of the individuals constitutes that of the nation"(123). It has to be said that what survives from his rather ordinary fiction are the characters which he draws, from Loukis Laras to Papa-Narkissos and Philippos Marthas. But in his other texts, too, one can find a number of character-sketches which blur the boundaries between biography, obituary and character study. For example, in *Lectures and Recollections* Vikelas presents us with the work and personalities of many foreign Hellenists: Emile Egger, Wilhelm Wagner, Marquis de Queux de Saint-Hilaire and Gustave d'Eichthal.

In *My Life* he dedicates two chapters to his uncles Leon and Vasileios Melas. Leon Melas is his role-model and the person with whom he identifies most. Neither uncle nor nephew, as the latter admits, was destined to become a successful businessman, both being predisposed to memoir writing. Vikelas mentions that his uncle was prompted to write his recollections by reading *Loukis Laras*³⁸ but did not complete them, leaving only an outline of his autobiography. He also shared his interest in the education of the young with his uncle, and this was prompted by his disappointment with the present state of affairs.

His disappointment with the present was moderated by his hope, which was mostly based on the gradual education of future generations. This is the reason that the education of Greek children became his main concern and his exclusive preoccupation.³⁹

³⁸ *Η Ζωή μου*, p. 129.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 139-40.

Apart from his role-model uncle, he also depicts other people. He does not concentrate only on well-known figures, such as Stephanos Xenos or Alexandros Rizos Rangavis or Spyridon Trikoupis, but pays special attention to describing sensible and virtuous people like his aunt Loutsika and his brother-in-law Aristeidēs Oikonomos.⁴⁰

Recollection and character formation collaborate in *Loukis Laras* also in order to chart the process of gradually growing old and the difference between maturity and youth. Vikelas often refers to the different ways in which the old and the young consider things and how the present sometimes alters the sense of the past.⁴¹ Although the young seem to forget it, Vikelas insists that a recollection of the past is useful in many ways;⁴² man should be aware of his past and of his experiences, and this is the indirect message of the last sentence of his novel: "Oftentimes, when I see my daughters and my granddaughters dressed up nicely, when I see my wife adorn her white hair with the latest European fashions, I remind her of the trousers she wore when I led her disguised on Pandelis's donkey and we both burst out laughing and give thanks to God from the bottom of our hearts" (240). However, in filtering the past through memory from the perspective of the present, he indirectly outlines both social development and his preference for older social practices.⁴³ Ultimately, his tendency towards recollection serves to boost his ideal of moral edification as much as his nostalgia ("Memories of my childhood often appear to me like a dream," 119).

At the basis of Vikelas's characterization lies the more general philosophical and pedagogic notion that man is not born but is moulded, that genius is not enough on its own, but education and study are also required. Indeed, he insists that sometimes it is beneficial to the poet or to the author to educate himself in ways which go against his natural inclinations.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 114-15, 219-21.

⁴¹ See *Loukis Laras*, pp. 33, 48, 82.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 56.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 176-7.

⁴⁴ Dimitrios Vikelas, *Διαλέξεις καὶ Ἀναμνήσεις* (1893), now in *Ἄπαντα*, vol. 5, p. 54. See also *Ἡ Ζωή μου*, pp. 126, 138 (but as an example of

The emphasis on education⁴⁵ and study also gives Vikelas an easy answer to the question of the role of art: is there a moral duty or can it be exclusively art for art's sake? In accordance with this view, art and the press should contribute to the moral edification of the reader. And this edification, of course, is not legislated for or controlled by rules, but via the cultivation and elevation of public opinion. As will be shown below, the idea of the middle road and of common sense has particular significance for him. Vikelas gives particular significance not only to the gradual formation and cultivation of public opinion but to the education of the author, who must "first learn to write before he makes an attempt at authorship", drawing on the work of ancient authors as well as the products of younger writers, "studying them closely and critically, without blind enthusiasm".⁴⁶

The fact that Vikelas lived abroad not only increased his nostalgia, but also helped him to view all things Greek from a dispassionate and more detached perspective. His conservative temperament and his judicious approach collaborated with the distance that the diaspora afforded him, driving him to make reasoned judgements, especially concerning language. It is not only his conciliatory character that leads him to the middle road, but also his time abroad, especially that spent in England. Vikelas's middle road is not merely a compromise between *katharevousa* and demotic but the need to establish a written language which is different, on the one hand, from the spoken language or its dialects, and, on the other hand, from the archaic. The creation of an easy-to-understand, uncontrived literary language was necessary for him as a standard which would refute neither demotic nor *katharevousa*, acknowledging to some extent its polyglossia and linguistic hierarchy as was the case, in his experience, in other countries. Vikelas did not want to impose a single form of language or a conciliatory

inconsistency), and p. 113. Cf. Ditsa, op. cit., p. 42* and Loukis Laras, p. 150.

⁴⁵ See "Περί ἀγωγῆς" in *Διαλέξεις καὶ Ἀναμνήσεις*, pp. 61-75 and "Γυναικεία Ἀγωγή" (1904) from the journal *Ἐθνικὴ Ἀγωγή* (now in *Ἄπαντα*, vol. 8, pp. 192-204).

⁴⁶ D. Vikelas, *Διαλέξεις καὶ Ἀναμνήσεις*, p. 60.

linguistic construct, but advocated the use of a suitable language for each occasion. He was driven by pragmatism and everyday experience, not by theory. He did not attempt, then, to solve the language question with a theoretical proposal but on the basis of what was occurring in other languages. And in this case England's example was probably a decisive factor, as is obvious from the following argument:

In no other country is the written language indistinguishable from the vernacular. Linguistic uniformity has been achieved absolutely nowhere. It is generally believed that English has supremacy over other languages in this respect. But if one opens any English novel (for example that of Mrs Wood entitled *The Village Tragedy*, one of those which have been read most during the last two years), one would see that while the narration is in the usual literary tongue, the dialogue is written in the language of the interlocutors, a language which is difficult for foreigners to understand having learnt the language from books alone. Such diglossia does not seem curious to the English. Why should we not also endure this?⁴⁷

The intense social stratification in England demands an analogous linguistic stratification, something which Vikelas puts into effect in his translations of Shakespeare:

I dared to make use of this language in translating the dramas of Shakespeare, altering it out of necessity in accordance with the subject and the speaking characters; because Juliet's nanny speaking to the child speaks differently from Hamlet philosophizing. The philosophizing Hamlet uses terms and forms which the nanny did not learn at school. Otherwise the language that they both use is, in my opinion, identical.⁴⁸

It seems that his experience of social diversity, especially in England, is what led Vikelas to his opinion regarding linguistic variety, that there should be one commonly accepted primary standard language (perhaps following the pattern of the ruling social class) and others secondary to it.

⁴⁷ Ibid., pp. 19-20.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 22.

not overestimate Greece's position, nor should they embrace the notion of the chosen people: "We in Greece usually consider that the whole world has its gaze constantly directed at us, that it is mostly concerned with us."⁶⁹ On reading these down-to-earth reflections by Vikelas, I am struck by how timely they are now and how little things have changed since his day. In the final analysis, then, the diaspora may have sharpened Vikelas's nostalgia, his tendency towards recollection and perhaps his conservatism; it also, however, increased his critical pragmatism.

Vikelas's case might help us to draw a tentative typology of the Greek diaspora writers during the period 1860-1930. The three main figures of this period, Vikelas, Psycharis and Cavafy, represent different positions towards mainland Greece. Vikelas is more constructive and pragmatic, Psycharis tends to be polemical and pugnacious, and Cavafy, as the most detached of them, ironic and critical. All three contributed differently to literary and cultural developments in Greece and this fact demonstrates the diversity and vitality of the Greek diaspora towards the end of the nineteenth century. It also shows that nineteenth-century Greek culture is a creation of rebels such as Roidis and Psycharis as much as of conservatives such as Vikelas, or even Palamas, despite the latter's occasional radical rhetoric.

It will be interesting in particular to draw a comparison between Vikelas and Cavafy. As near-contemporaries and coming from business families, both are critical of Greek society, but they represent two contrasting attitudes. Cavafy's stance is more challenging and uncompromising, whereas Vikelas's is more conciliatory and constructive. Their diaspora perspective must have had a direct effect on their literary writing too.

Vikelas based his work on memory and moral edification, looking towards his homeland critically but also nostalgically. On the other hand, Cavafy shunned nostalgia and morality, replacing them with irony and provocation. The former writer tried to bridge the gap between diaspora and homeland; the latter exploited it creatively, maintaining their separation. In short, Vikelas sought to raise standards and improve social

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 184.

values, Cavafy fought to undermine them. The combination of history, memory and diaspora produced in the case of Cavafy a great poet and a self-effacing individual, and in the case of Vikelas a rather ordinary writer but a great public figure.

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