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When art criticism meets poetry: the case of Eleni Vakalo (1921-2001)

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Eleni Vakalo, a major Greek poet and art critic, contributed in a unique way to Greek letters and culture during the second half of the twentieth century. Born in Constantinople in 1921, Vakalo was raised in Athens where she lived until her death in 2001. She studied history and archaeology at the University of Athens and history of art in Paris. In collaboration with her husband, the painter and stage-designer George Vakalo, and a group of painters and art editors, in 1958 Eleni Vakalo founded the "Vakalo" School of Decorative Arts, where she taught art history for many years. She published many books of poetry and art, she had a regular column for art criticism in the newspaper *Τα Νέα* for 23 years, and she produced a series of radio programmes for the arts (1953-57). In 1965 she toured the United States at the invitation of the State Department and in the summer of 1967 she was invited to take part in the Harvard International Seminar. In Greece, she was awarded many prizes, including the first state prize for poetry in 1991 and the Academy of Athens award for the whole of her work in 1997, and in 1998 she became honorary professor in the School of History and Archaeology in the University of Thessaloniki.

Both with her critical essays and with her poetry Vakalo aspired to establish a new vision of things. However, the innovative nature of her work and the importance of her contribution were not fully appreciated in her time. In Greek literary tradition there have been many cases of poets or prose-writers who published excellent critical essays on literature and the arts, such as E. Roidis in the nineteenth century, and K. Varnalis, O. Elytis, N.

Kalas and G. Seferis, among others, in the twentieth century. In the case of Vakalo, however, art criticism was not limited to a side activity in relation to her poetry; on the contrary, it constituted an autonomous activity, equally important in quality and quantity of production. As a result, critics of her work did not approach it as a whole, but studied its two aspects separately. However, at a closer look, her poetry and her art criticism form a continuum as they are deeply interrelated through a unique and coherent worldview. Certain key-issues that concern her entire oeuvre are, for instance, the body, all its separate senses, movement, perception, consciousness, reality and illusion, vision and blindness, embodied knowledge etc. Moreover, Vakalo expected from readers of her poetry exactly what she expected from viewers of any work of art, i.e. that they should become subtly involved in the process of co-producing the artwork or the poetic text (D 1975, 1989, 1999).[1] In the case of her poetry this expectation is evident on the micro-level of the language practices employed (Kakavoulia 2004).

Systematically avoiding any trace of academic scholasticism, Vakalo wrote some path-breaking essays on art and its reception such as *The modern spirit in art* (D 1959), *The meaning of forms: Readings of art* (D 1975), *From the side of the viewer* (D 1989), *The loss of form within space* (D 1994), *Modern – Postmodern: Links and Distances* (D 2001).[2] She placed great emphasis on the role of the receiver in the artistic process, long before similar theories had gained currency in Greece or elsewhere (D 1959). In this sense, Vakalo acted as a precursor of a fruitful dialogue between cultural ideas and theoretical issues discussed in various European countries. Her contribution in this direction has only recently been fully acknowledged (Kotidis 1999, Kakavoulia 2004). She is the first theorist in Greece to consciously use the term "simulation" in order to describe the dynamics developing

[1] A bibliography of selected works of Vakalo, arranged in four sections – A, B, C and D – is given at the end of this article. References to her works are given by section and date.

[2] The translations of the titles of her theoretical books are mine. None of these books has been translated into English.

between viewer and work of art; and the first to talk about a theory of reception – already in 1959 – as a complex communicative, cognitive and emotive phenomenon that presupposes the creative role of the viewer, as the title of her book, *Από την πλευρά του θεατή* (D 1989), indicates. She studies the artwork well beyond its aesthetic properties.

The term "simulation" denotes a key innovative idea in Vakalo's essays (Kakavoulia 2004: 68-73). Simulation, a technical term used in cybernetics since the 1940s (Wiener 1948), is conventionally defined as the production of replicas of real phenomena, and it is related to imitation and substitution (Baudrillard 1979, Barthes 1972).[3] Vakalo's simulation, however, diverges from this current meaning. It refers to the perceiving process in which the viewer, directed by the specific morphological and structural features of the artwork, unconsciously employs a mental (and imaginary) repetition of the (imagined) movements and actions of the artist. The interaction that takes place between artistic form and viewer is a complex phenomenon, a creative decoding grounded at a first, basic level in a processing of sensory, visual stimuli. The author stresses that the reception of an artwork involves a whole range of sensory motor, visual, mental and affective processes:

> Seeing and perceiving visual forms is in itself not a simple process. In reality what we see are "shapes" which we assimilate with already familiar figures and we attribute to them features similar to those stemming from our own experience.
>
> (D 1989: 23, my translation)

This process may be described as dynamic: the viewer perceives an art object with his visual brain, his imagination and his memory. This process varies from one viewer to another, and it is here that the subjective nature of the reception of an artwork comes into play. This was an entirely new departure, when Vakalo

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[3] One should not forget the poetic "simulations", experiments with poetic language written by the two major surrealists A. Breton and P. Eluard in their book *L'Immaculée Conception* (1930).

first began to expound her theoretical views, in the Greece of the 1970s. Echoing Lakoff and Johnson's (1999) more recent notion of "embodied knowledge", Vakalo insists on the priority of the senses and the body itself in the process of a meaningful decoding of the artwork. Simulation is therefore used as an umbrella term that encompasses both the subjective experience of viewing and its socio-cognitive presuppositions. Simulation, then, is conceived of as a mega-function of "understanding" (reception) and of response:

> With simulation we enrich and discover the wealth of ourselves along with the wealth of art. And when this potential wealth in ourselves is evoked through a function of responding to the work of art, then new cognitive fields are opened up for the viewers who are thus enabled to further explore and produce associations related to their own experiences, associations based however on the limits and the terms of the work of art itself.
>
> (D 1999: 32, my translation)

A visual analogy employed by Vakalo in order to shed light on the precise meaning of simulation is that of the rider who has to become one with the horse if proper rapid motion is to be achieved (D 1975). In this image, Vakalo clearly shifts the emphasis from artist to viewer, by assigning to the latter the role of co-creator. The author traces the same phenomenon of both psychic and kinetic coordination ("συντονισμός") in primitive communities, where the magic realm of all rituals used mimetic identification through dance and movement (D 1975: 44-7, 96).

Vakalo's reception and response theory, grounded in the key notion of simulation as a general, though not specified in depth, theoretical framework of an aesthetic theory, meets with divergent approaches, such as Gestalt morphology,[4] Arnheim's theory of

[4] Gestalt theorists in Germany proposed already in the early twentieth century the notion of active, creative and subjective visual perception (Gregory 1998), agreeing with Merleau-Ponty that "to see means always more than just seeing".

visual perception (1954),[5] similar theories of reception proposed by Eco and Iser (Kakavoulia 2004: 93-124), theories of "sympathy"/"Einfühlung" (Krieger 1992),[6] and late cognitive (Lakoff and Johnson 1999) or more recent neurocognitive theories of perception of the visual arts (Zeki 1999). She explores the communicative nature of the viewer-artist interaction, the transition from sensory stimuli to perceptual awareness, suggesting that the viewer is not a passive receiver, but an active creative-"reader" of any artwork. Ahead of her time in making such statements (D 1959, 1975), Vakalo thus acquired the status of a precursor of interdisciplinary approaches to questions of reception and response.

As one of Vakalo's central concerns in theory, the subjective experience of viewing, but formulated by "the terms of the work of art itself", enters her poetry too in the form of visual metaphors and visual associations. Familiar space is constantly transformed by the strong imagination of an emotive viewer who operates on the basis of simulation, i.e. by assimilating what is new or unknown to one's already familiar or known figures and forms. Driven by morphological or image-schematic features, the poetic self, through an associative look at the world around, transforms what s/he sees into what s/he fears, longs for, wishes etc. Such is the case, for instance, of the image of sparrow-mouse in *Genealogy* (A 1971):

> Looking at a sparrow it seemed to me
> Often the sparrow seems to me like a quick grey mouse as it
> goes by, there is no great difference, nimble, beautiful the mouse
> too which we are afraid of, this is why we do not see
> how much they resemble birds
>
> (A 1971: 9)

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[5] Expounded in detail in his book *Art and visual perception: The psychology of creative vision* (1954).

[6] Edmund Burke in his treatise "Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful" (1757) is the first to translate as "sympathy" the German term *Einfühlung*, which was first used in the seventeenth century (Krieger 1992).

Through the subjective lens of imagination, the sparrow is assimilated to a mouse. Simulation is also at work here. The image of bird merges with the image of mouse as these two creatures share similar features (shape, form, movement, colour). The poet characterizes the mouse as "nimble" and "beautiful", exploring thereby the dark areas of fear. This type of visual metamorphosis is a recurrent theme throughout her poetry. Images stay for a while in the foreground and they soon fade away, replaced by other images; a universe of image transformations gives movement to the poems.

As a poet, Eleni Vakalo appeared for the first time with the publication of 15 poems in the periodical *Νέα Γράμματα* in March 1944, while she was still a student of archaeology at the University of Athens.[7] Vakalo is typically classified among the so-called first post-war generation of poets, along with M. Sachtouris, T. Sinopoulos, N. Valaoritis, M. Aravantinou, N. D. Karouzos and others (Vitti 1989: 430, Argyriou 1986). In her fifty-year presence (1944-1997) on the Greek literary and cultural scene she published 14 collections of poetry and three volumes of collected poems.[8]

Scholars and critics who attempted to map the poetic scene in post-war Greece found it difficult to categorize and classify the poets of this generation according to distinct movements, groups or schools (Savvidis 1982, Argyriou 1986, Menti 1995, Bakogiannis 2000). The social milieu and the socio-political situation, political activism, the strong influence of the generation of the thirties, as well as the influence of foreign poetry, played major and divergent roles in each case. In particular, the relationship of the first post-war generation to the generation of the thirties was the hot issue of debate among critics and scholars (Politou-

[7] Argyriou (1986: 103) writes that these first poems use a non-conventional "austere" language. In the same year (1944), and in the same periodical, the great post-surrealist poet Miltos Sachtouris also published a number of poems for the first time.

[8] See selected publications of Vakalo at the end of the present article.

Marmarinou 1982, Ziras 1982, Kechagioglou 1982, Argyriou 1979, 1986, and others).

However, one should not forget the important role the poets of the first generation played in the Greek post-war literary tradition: they opened up a polyphonic space for poetry and poetic innovation, they felt free to selectively use tradition or even modernist symbolism, they focused on experience rather than ideology or national identity anxieties. The language they used was the "common urban demotic" (κοινή αστική δημοτική) (Belezinis 1988: 102) with many prosaic elements. Vakalo has often been classified as a post-surrealist poet, or even a neo-surrealist poet (Meraklis 1987, Arseniou 2003), but these labels are not accurate in her case. Her poetry cannot be classified as strictly belonging to any post-war poetic movement, tendency or school (Anagnostaki 1962). Dallas (2000) correctly considers Vakalo's poetry as closely related to that of M. Sachtouris and E. Gonatas. Some minor principles she shares with surrealism, but she never used automatic writing or free association, or explored the notion of the unconscious. Vakalo – like other poets of her generation – wanted a language of poetry that bears no sentimentalist or nostalgic overtones, no confessional and self-centred rhetoric. The title of the collective edition of her poetry, *Before Lyricism* (B 1981), hints indirectly at her reaction against emotive poetry steeped in sentiment. Her views become more explicit in an interview:

> I think that my childhood experiences were crucial to my poetry. When we went to parties to the country, everyone would become lyrical. That was exasperating to me. I thought that in speaking about my mother, for example, I should never use lyrical expressions. I spoke simply of "my mother" and those words contained everything, my mother herself, my feelings for her, my description of her. And I wanted in just the same way to say "tree" or "sea" and for them to be there, complete, enclosed in their names. A poem is not a retrospective act of memory: it is made up of features formed in our common roots, in our own elementary behavior. It is a conscious reworking of mythology. (A 1971)

The need to write poetry without linguistic pretensions was a major quest of the post-war generation. The raw material for poetry is everyday language. For Vakalo poetry has a common root with ordinary speech, with simple language, and this is why the author denounces a poetic, over-constructed, posturing language. As Friar (1982: 42) says, "Vakalo uses language distrustingly, like a child learning to speak." By discarding what she calls a "lyrical sense of the world" (λυρική αίσθηση του κόσμου), Vakalo is concerned with the meaning of poetry itself. She hopes that the word may become the thing itself, and, along with Marianne Moore, the only poet she ever translated (Vakalo 1958), she is cautious about overcharging things with more emotion than they generate. Vakalo longs to render the "rhythm" in poetic language rather than "harmony" or "melody". Her views on what is poetry and what is poetic are equally unorthodox, unconventional. For her, poetry is everywhere as long as we can see it. We only need to open our eyes to see it, as she herself said in a radio interview given to M. Mitras (3rd Radio Programme, 1992):

> I must say that my opinion goes beyond a conventional concept, a given and established view of poetry. But this is what I really believe in and what I have fought for... that poetry is everywhere, even in the most common things. We don't need to seek for this "magic" by escaping from things. We need to discover it in all things surrounding us, that's the whole issue."
>
> (my translation)

Poetry is, thus, not a closed code, a specific idiom for specialists; poetry does not concern or address only an initiated audience. Most characteristic in Vakalo's poetic universe is a dialogic interchange between seemingly opposed entities or situations of things. Nothing vanishes or dies, but everything undergoes a series of transformations as one thing takes the place of its opposite. Up becomes down, within becomes without, danger, fear or death are the other faces of salvation, the world outside takes the form of the world inside, touching is seeing, pain or madness is wise knowledge, innocence is power, illness is the reverse triumph of

life itself. As seen from above the sky, a tree is alive, bears fruits and leaves, but as seen from beneath the earth in a dark mirror reflection, its roots plunge as deeply below as its branches grow high above, and it becomes thus a tree of genealogy, "a tree of individual and racial history" (Friar 1982: 39). In *The manner of our endangering* (A 1966) a tree becomes a raft, the sky becomes the sea, a fish becomes a bird. The poetic self constantly changes angles, whether outside the sea looking in or inside the sea looking out. Space expands, boundaries disappear and a continuous communication, a perpetuum mobile, flows between all things.

The nature of her language with its missing punctuation and conjunctions, its truncated and distorted syntax, the use of nouns, few verbs and even fewer adjectives, conceals an internal rhythm operating at the level of the sentence, requiring the reader to become closely involved in the production of meaning through an act of decoding, thereby making him/her, in essence, a co-creator of the poetry (Kakavoulia 2004: 178-90). Vakalo plays with syntax and word order, punctuation and hidden rhythmic structures. This is similar to the way in which a viewer has to become a co-creator of an artefact if its perception is to be effective and satisfactory. To mention an example from her poetry, the active involvement of the reader is achieved by the awakening of forgotten rhythmic structures inherent in the broader culture that the reader and the individual poem share (such as the fifteen-syllable line, in the wider Greek poetic context). Such is the case in the following extract from the collection *Events and stories of Kyra Rodalina* (1984: 248):[9]

> Κάποια φορά συνέτυχε να γίνουν έτσι όλα. Η κυρά Ροδαλίνα διάβαζε καθισμένη στο παγκάκι του κήπου, κι ήταν ωραίο απόγεμα, τα χόρτα κυματίζανε που ελαφρά τα έπιανε γλυκός χλιός αέρας περνώντας έτσι χαμηλά, κι εκείνη σα να έπλεε, σα να ήταν να μην ήτανε [...]. Και επειδή εκείνος πρίγκηπας ο πρίγκηπας που δεν ήταν σε θέση να καταλάβει, επιθυμία

[9] Those of Vakalo's poems that have not been published in English translation will be quoted in Greek.

> ακάτεχη εσύνεχε στο νου του το τίποτα με τα πολλά και λίγα θα
> του μείνουν, της Ροδαλίνας διάλεξε να πει το όνομά της. Κι
> εκείνη τον αγάπησε·

Well "hidden" in continuous text is a series of eight-syllable or fifteen-syllable lines. If we break down the visual continuum of the written text, some rhythmical metric structures emerge, revealing fifteen-syllable (iambic) verses and eight-syllable half-verses:

1 fifteen-syllable verse:
Κάποια φορά συνέτυχε να γίνουν έτσι όλα

1 eight-syllable half-verse:
τα χόρτα κυματίζανε

1 fifteen-syllable verse:
που ελαφρά τα έπιανε γλυκός χλιός αέρας

3 eight-syllable half-verses:
περνώντας έτσι χαμηλά,
κι εκείνη σα να έπλεε,
σα να ήταν να μην ήτανε,

3 fifteen-syllable verses:
επιθυμία ακάτεχη εσύνεχε στο νου του
το τίποτα με τα πολλά και λίγα θα του μείνουν
της Ροδαλίνας διάλεξε να πει το όνομά της.

1 eight-syllable half verse:
Κι εκείνη τον αγάπησε·

The textual disguise of the metrical and stylistic identity of verses is mainly achieved by visual means, i.e. by the continuous printed form of the text on the page. Vakalo – like other poets of her generation – selectively and unconventionally uses metre and rhyme in free verse, a practice already introduced by

the poets of the generation of the thirties in Greece (Daniel 1999, Afroudakis 1987). [10]

From a different angle, the interplay between reality and illusion is the central issue both in the first period (1954-1966) and in the second period (1971-1997) of her poetic production. Already in *The forest* (A 1954) Vakalo explores the reverse of vision, i.e. blindness as an allegory of vision and – at a second level – as an allegory of poetry itself. In the poem "My father's eye" she playfully poses the question of what the difference is between a real and a glass eye, since glass eyes can also fill with tears:

> My father had a glass eye.
>
> He would toss the eye in his hand before he wore it and would say it was a good eye.
> But I did not want to believe him [...]
>
> At last one day I saw him weeping. There was no difference at all from a real eye.
>
> (C 1985: 129-30)

The father actually wears the false eye. The glass eye, a cold simulacrum, bears no difference to a real eye when it comes to feeling pain and crying. What is then the value of the eye, of seeing before pain? It is doubted: "After this episode with my father / I became suspicious even of those who had real eyes" (C 1985: 131). The real eye, just as the glass eye, can equally carry an empty expression. In both cases, the absence of what is seen is equally cruel. Empty eyes have long been a literary topos for both artists and poets. Baudelaire, for instance, was one of those who wrote of empty eyes that have lost their ability to look. Melpo Axioti (1905-1973), the Greek modernist poet and novelist of the

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[10] In particular, in Vakalo's early collections (A 1945, 1948, 1940) we trace, on more than one level of her poetic language, the influence of "παραλογές" (ballads), a special type of folk song. "Paraloyes" also seem to be a source of influence and inspiration for Sachtouris (Hatzivassileiou 1994).

1930s, also wrote of a false (ψεύτικο) eye in her novella *Would you like to dance, Maria?* (1940[1], 1982). Yannis, one of the main characters of this surrealist novella, takes out his fake eye every night:

> Και κάθε νύχτα ο Γιάννης, την ώρα που σωπαίνουνε οι λύκοι μέσα στα αδιάβατα χαντάκια της ζωής, έμπαινε μέσα σ' εκείνο το σπίτι, κι *έβγαζε το ψεύτικο μάτι του*. Το μάτι, μακριά απ' το Γιάννη, καθώς στερήθηκε απότομα εκείνη *την έκφραση τη δανεική*, έστεκε τώρα ακίνητο, σαν χάρτινο δαδί αναμμένο.
>
> (Axioti 1982: 44)

Even though Vakalo and Axioti wrote in two different periods, they share the surrealist symbol of the fake, false eye. They both point to the illusion of vision as the sense that leads to things themselves, to one's deeper truths. Vakalo goes even further, choosing blindness as one of her favourite allegories of vision. Particularly in the collection *The meaning of the blind* (A 1962), she explores the symbolism of blindness. How does blindness relate to knowledge, intuition and – at a second level – to poetry itself? She challenges the metaphoric equivalence I SEE = I KNOW, established as one of the major cognitive metaphors of western tradition (Yu 1998, Kakavoulia 2004: 36-45), proposing instead the metaphoric equivalence I TOUCH, I HEAR, I FEEL = I KNOW. The author suggests that true and deep knowledge can be reached by attending to senses or emotions other than only vision: touching, hearing, feeling; and even further, she proposes that the experience of pain, painful emotional growth, or breaking the barriers of rationality can reveal the true sense of things.[11] The collection *The meaning of the blind* starts with a blind person enclosed in a room, trying to find a way out by touching things:

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[11] Characteristic is the poem "Ox eyes" from the collection *Genealogy* (A 1971) which ends with the following: "This is the truth, I tell you, you can see it, often, given the frenzy and the pain" (A 1971: 69).

The first hours spent in the poem by the blind
From the journal of the poem

They place me in a room

From the volume of silence I can hear that it is not yet
boundless night
when I shall go out through this house's door with no one to
forestall my footstep
Once I shall find this house's door wide open, I shall discover
where it is,
as when I touch things one by one along the wall, it is through
changing their dimensions that I grow to know them
(C 1975: 75)

Here, we have to do with a creature in agony and danger who is fighting to survive; a blind figure who knows the world by touching and hearing things, through shadows and darkness. The blind person is the man of touch and hearing, of poetry and emotion, of memory and imagination, just like other great blind people in western tradition have been (Borges, Milton, even Joyce). Blindness in *The meaning of the blind* is related to poets, prophets, seers and eventually comes to signify poetry itself in the poem "Their legend":

Great sleepwalking youths escape
They guess the poems, [...]
In the month of the bird crossings they hunt the bird of poetry
[...]
On their voice a shimmering landscape will rest above all
colours
He who counts in the alphabet of that cry floated by the passing
of peoples through the desert
Danger sinking my voice like a standing rod before I slip, it has
been heard, it shall be heard each night through the
openings of the air
and not the cypress tree is clasped as tightly by shade's body
(C 1975: 77)

This hyper-image of the sleep-walker, poet, seer, echoes the legendary blind figures of Greek antiquity: Homer, tragic Oedipus, Tiresias the seer. Blindness, poetry, oracles are all interrelated already from ancient times.[12] Vakalo's blind figure at the beginning of the poem is the one who has not been able to see yet, but by the end of the poem s/he manages to see the sun, to directly face the sunlight ("τώρα καθώς το μπορούσα/ κατάματα να βλέπω τον ήλιο"). However, making the luminous side of the world prevail is in itself a painful procedure;[13] Vakalo's sun is surrounded by darkness, it is a black or dark-rimmed sun, an "all black sun" (A 1962).[14] This reminds one of the Platonic allegory of the cave, in which the ultimate knowledge of the idea of good is symbolized by the final moment of a difficult process when the subject is able to stare directly at the blinding sunlight itself.

In this collection of "great poetry", as Anagnostaki (1962) characterized *The meaning of the blind*, comparing it to the poetry of Solomos and Kalvos, vision, all that we can see, eventually makes us blind so that the visible becomes a blinding illusion. Poetry, therefore, is a way to see real, true life without illusions. Vakalo's blind person is not only the man of touch, but s/he is also the creature with a sensitive ear who can understand the birds from their sounds, their croakings and the beating of their wings in the poem "The blind often must tell children fairy tales" (C 1975: 79). In Vakalo's universe the bird and the blind figure are closely linked, they share an unfamiliar sense of space, a different

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[12] The grand narratives about blindness in western civilization, however, do not include myths about blind women, especially blind female seers or priestesses. Instead, one should note that blindness has been linked since the ancient myth of Oedipus with the father-son relationship (Kakavoulia 2004: 271-9).

[13] The sun with its round shape metonymically evokes the actual eyeball, while the eye has been referred to as the "ήλιοειδέστερον" (most sun-like) of all sensory organs.

[14] Light and darkness, brightness and shadow, often recur in the poems' imagery along with a lack of colours other than black, white, and the intermediate shades (grey, silver etc.), with the exception of a rare presence of red, the colour of blood, and green – the green of fresh grass (A 1997).

perception of the surrounding world: the blind by touching and hearing, the bird by flying and moving freely in space. A dominant symbol in this 1962 collection, the bird is variously and heterogeneously depicted as beautiful or terrible ("τρομερό"), alone or in groups, sitting in trees or beating its wings, or croaking, spreading a big threatening shadow on the earth below, attacking humans or struggling with the "rodent of foundations", appearing as a bird-mouse or bird-soul, a bird-fish. A major literary topos of cultural and religious symbolism, a universal Indoeuropean and archetypal symbol for the soul, the bird in Vakalo's poetry is not the naturalistic sparrow of demotic poetry or of lyrical tradition;[15] it is sometimes identified with the chaos of things (A 1962, Anagnostaki 1960), at times it is depicted as a threefold creature that partakes of the world of earth (A 1954, 1971), that of sea (A 1966), and that of sky (A 1962, 1971). A creature belonging to three worlds at the same time cannot but be identified with freedom and with poetry.

The passage from blindness to true vision is described as an agonizing fight between the blind man and the "lovely" but also fearsome bird. The (blind) poetic persona suffers as s/he hears the birds flying away in freedom, or feels them "pecking first at my eyes". The bird tortures the blind figure until the final fall:

The meaning of the blind

With its plucked head and its small piping voice
Coming quick from the throat
Crossing – how fast – the zones of time
It gradually fought me,
Bored nests throughout my body for its fellows
And I became a dwelling for wild birds
In the midst of a desolation

[15] Anagnostaki (1962) points out that the bird in Vakalo's poetry is far removed from the lyrical bird of folk songs. Daniel (2001), on the contrary, considers that the bird in this poetry does have its origins in demotic poetry.

> The lovely bird shall dwell there now
> Whilst the rodent in the foundations
> Lies curled in a tangle of respiration
>
> (C 1975: 81)

At the beginning of the collection the bird is black with no shadow, linked with the blind figure's agony to leave the dark room, to break free. Yet this freedom is a difficult freedom, almost unattainable, symbolized also by a bird at the end of the poem (ibid., p. 82):

> The birds were traps and nets for souls, they left no clear sky

With this ending Vakalo's poem meets a whole poetic tradition that gave priority to a Jungian "seeking of the soul", in which the bird and its metonymies (flying, wings etc.) symbolized the immaterial soul, the impossible freedom of flying. From fairy tales to Shakespeare and Keats's odes, birds are those earthly creatures that break free from boundaries in ways unattainable to humans. In Shelley's poetry birds symbolize the problematic position of the poet in society. Also, for the cursed poets Mallarmé and Baudelaire, birds such as swans became symbols of the isolated poet or the poet in exile, the rejected and cursed poet.

Moreover, in Modernism the bird as a mega-symbol was frequently identified with art itself, an idea that pervades Vakalo's identification of the blind power of poetry with a lovely and fearsome bird, both a salvation and a "trap for souls".[16] This explains perhaps why the bird first appears in the night, the allegoric night of blind poets. Vakalo wants to suspend the senses until – in utter silence – the ontic truth of the things emerges, the pulse of the world can be heard; she wants to return to poetry its actual meaning, which is linked to doing, "ποιεῖν". With her poetry, Vakalo attempted to reach that archaic world of instantaneous identification, where horse and rider are one continuous

[16] The interrelation of bird and poetry itself is an idea that reminds us of Vakalo's favourite modern painter, Georges Braque (1882-1963), and his picture series (*Atelier*) of bird-cavalettos.

movement, where word and object coincide, where to name a thing is to create it, where a poem must not *mean* but *be*.

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Eleni Vakalo's complete archive with letters, manuscripts, notebooks and other texts is in the Archive Catalogue of the Firestone Library at Princeton University, U.S.A. ["Helene Vakalo Papers (C 0835)"].

Author and readers: the making of the Modern Greek *Physiologos*

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The *Physiologos* is a text that was originally written in Ancient Greek, believed to have been composed in a Christian milieu in the second century A.D. During the Byzantine centuries it developed into a group of texts with characteristics of a specific literary genre through a number of recensions and manuscripts. The texts are organized in chapters. The subject of each chapter – in the ancient redaction – is a plant or a precious stone or an animal, while the Byzantine recensions concentrate on animals only. (I will leave aside Latin, Slavonic and other translations, given that the focus of this paper is the *Physiologos* in the context of Early Modern Greek literature.) In each of these chapters there is a *persona* speaking allegorically about an animal, or rather a species of animal, referring to the Old Testament and quoting especially the *Psalms* attributed to David. One could say that the *Physiologos* is commenting on the *Psalms* in an allegorical way, making use of both the narrative mode and direct speech (cf. Alpers 1996; Alpers 2000).

In order to talk about the modern Greek *Physiologos* I need to introduce a sixteenth-century writer, Damascenos Studites (on Damascenos see Litsas 2001; Manou 1999 is not reliable). Damascenos was born in the first quarter of the sixteenth century. As a young man, still a lower cleric (ὑποδιάκονος), he published the *Thesavros*, his major work. This is an anthology of Sunday speeches and excerpts of lives of saints, collected, translated into the early modern Greek vernacular and edited by Damascenos Studites. As far as we know, the first edition of the *Thesavros* was printed in Venice in 1557 (Kaklamanis 2005: 333, with references

to the relevant bibliography). Damascenos himself took the manuscript to Venice and supervised the printing and proof-reading of the book. Obviously, the purpose was to produce ready material for parish work in Orthodox churches of the Ottoman-occupied parts of the Greek world. The *Thesavros* was to become one of the best selling Greek books during the Ottoman era (cf. Litsas 2001: 250 n. 9; Kaklamanis 2005: 333). Thus, we may suppose that from the sixteenth until the eighteenth/nineteenth centuries his name was known to every Greek-speaking person able to read a book. Even today one can still find reprints in Christian Orthodox bookstores.

I referred to the *Thesavros* as the most important of the works of Damascenos Studites. The work I will be focusing on in this paper is his second most important one – a zoological work apparently entitled by the author: *Συνάθροισις ἀπὸ τὰ βιβλία τῶν παλαιῶν φιλοσόφων – Compilation of the works of old wise writers* (on this text see Moennig 1993 and 2005; on translations into Rumanian and other languages see Velculescu 2001). From the beginning we can keep in mind some facts:

- We can take it for granted that in the first half of the sixteenth century a market for printed books, printed for Greek Orthodox readers in the Ottoman Empire, was established (the standard reference is Layton 1994).
- Damascenos Studites was acquainted with printed books and with the production of Greek books – he had even travelled to Venice (Layton 1994: 164).
- He had realised (obviously) that the printed book was a medium which could reach a wider reading public than manuscripts, and (obviously) he made conscious use of this medium.
- Damascenos Studites became popular through his first major work and his name must have been well known throughout the Ottoman centuries.

- Damascenos Studites was not a creative writer, but an anthologist, compiler and translator of ancient and Byzantine texts into the early Modern Greek vernacular (Litsas 2001).

The *Synathroisis* was not printed during the lifetime of its author, but a couple of decades after his death. Damascenos composed the *Synathroisis* about the year 1568. From that date onwards, until its first appearance in printed form in Venice in 1639, it circulated in manuscript. Today, more than 20 manuscripts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are preserved, plus a small number of more recent manuscripts (for the details see Moennig 1993, Karas 1993: 88-101, Karas 1994: 446-9, Moennig 2005). A difference between printed books and manuscript books lies in the fact that copyists used to create unique realisations through the layout and changes in wording, each copy being partly a reproduction and partly a creative re-working. In this paper I will focus on some of these changes, more specifically on changes which may tell us about how readers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries *read* Damascenos's *Compilation.*

First I will examine changes in the work's title. In a few of the older manuscripts Damascenos's work does not have a title at all. Thus, it is possible that the author did not give any title to his compilation. A number of reliable manuscripts transmit, with some minor variants, a title as follows: Δαμασκηνοῦ ἀρχιερέως τοῦ Στουδίτου συνάθροισις ἀπὸ τὰ βιβλία τῶν παλαιῶν φιλοσόφων, ὅσα εἶπαν περὶ τῶν πετεινῶν ὀρνέων καὶ περὶ τῶν χερσαίων ζώων καὶ περὶ τῶν θαλασσίων, καὶ μετάφρασις εἰς τὸ κοινώτερον (A compilation, made by the archpriest Damascenos Studites, of books by old scholars about the birds in the sky, the animals of the earth and the fishes of the sea, as well as a translation into the vernacular) [Plate I].[1]

This title contains information about the work. Did the author himself give this title to his work, or did a copyist – a reader of the text – add it? Personally, I think *Synathroisis* was the title given by the author – at least, this title seems to be in accordance with

[1] The plates will be found at the end of the article.

his intentions. There exists a document which tells us something about the author's attitude towards his own work: a dedicatory letter. Damascenos Studites dedicated his *Compilation* to a high-ranking Greek official, the Megas Domestikos Michael Cantacuzenos. A number of manuscripts attest the authenticity of the dedicatory letter, which was originally part of the book, but a separate part. Initially, the book was an assortment of documents: the compilation itself, the dedicatory letter (published in Legrand 1894: 444-5), a dedicatory epigram (Legrand 1894: 443), plus a table of contents (which displayed the chapters of the *Compilation* only). At this point this dedicatory letter is of some interest for us, given that Damascenos declares what he believes to be the nature of his work – or what he wants his readers to believe it is. I should add that no autograph of the *Compilation* is preserved:

- καὶ γράφω διὰ ὅσα ζῶα εἶναι ὁποὺ ἔχουσι τίποτες παράδοξον συνήθειαν (My intention is to write about animals displaying some paradoxical characteristics) [Plate II];
- καὶ μὴν νομήσης ἡ σὴ ἐνδοξότης ὅτι γράφω ἐδικά μου λόγια, ἀλλὰ ὅσα ἔγραψεν ὁ Ἀριστοτέλης ἐν τῷ Περὶ ζώων μορίων, καὶ ὁ ποιητὴς Ὀππιανὸς καὶ ὁ σοφὸς Αἰλιανὸς καὶ ὁ σοφώτατος Φιλὴς πρὸς τὸν βασιλέα Μιχαὴλον, τοσαῦτα θέλω γράψει καὶ ἐγώ (Please do not think that I am going to write things of my own. I will simply repeat what Aristotle wrote in his *De partibus animalium*, and what the poet Oppian and the wise Aelian wrote and what the most wise Manuel Philes wrote in his work dedicated to the co-emperor Michael IX) [Plates IIIa, IIIb].

These statements need to be explained. I will comment on the literary sources Damascenos mentions:

- comparing the *Synathroisis* to the work of Aristotle, one finds only a few pieces of zoological information which Damascenos took from the ancient work;
- regarding the poet Oppian: only a few traces of the *Halieutica* and the *Cynegetica* can be found in Damascenos's work;

- Damascenos was obviously more acquainted with the *Περὶ ζώων ἰδιότητος* of Aelian (ca. 170 – ca. 235).
- His primary source, however, was the *Στίχοι ἰαμβικοὶ περὶ ζώων ἰδιότητος* by Manuel Philes, a Byzantine author of the early fourteenth century (the work was printed in Venice in 1533: Legrand 1885: 215-18).

What were the criteria of Damascenos's compilation? Damascenos states that his work deals with any "animal displaying some paradoxical characteristics". And indeed, the *Synathroisis* is organized in chapters, which are sorted in alphabetical order, and each chapter discusses one kind of animal: local animals, animals from foreign parts of the world, mythical animals. We find, for example, a chapter about the cock, a chapter about the viper, a chapter about the unicorn. The presentation of these animals does not concentrate primarily and exclusively on *anatomy* or, say, behaviour, but on the strange, the unexpected – the *paradoxon*, as Damascenos declares in his dedicatory letter. "Strange and unexpected" compared to human experience. Damascenos writes about the crocodile that it does not, like human beings do, move its lower jaw, but its upper jaw. Also, the social behaviour of the pelican is considered remarkable, not because it is so different from human behaviour, but because it is so similar: The parent birds care for their offspring while they are young, and the grown-up birds care for their own elderly parents. The way of feeding can be a paradox; the way some kinds of animals copulate can be a paradox; the symbiosis of two kinds of animals can be a paradox; the animosity of two kinds of animals can be even more of a paradox.

This way of writing about animals is not new in the tradition of Greek literature since antiquity. Anthropomorphic animals described from an anthropocentric point of view: exotic animals, dangerous animals, useful animals – we find these themes both embedded in literary writing of any genre and as the subject of a genre of its own: paradoxography (*ODB* 1583-4). Might it be possible that Damascenos, when quoting Aristotle, Oppian, Aelian

and Manuel Philes in his dedicatory letter, did not exclusively intend to give a bibliography of the works he used as sources, but that he primarily wanted to give us a hint as to the genre his work belongs to: the genre of paradoxography?

This interpretation would help us to explain a number of philological problems of the *Synathroisis*:

- We saw already that Damascenos quotes four authors whose works he used as sources for his own writing, and I stated that our author makes a totally uneven use of these four sources.
- In his dedicatory letter to Michael Cantacuzenos, Damascenos does not quote all the sources of his *Compilation*. A source of information he does not quote is the *Physiologos*. The *Physiologos* does not belong to the tradition of paradoxography, but a number of elements in the *Physiologos* could be *read* as paradoxographic (for a convenient edition of the Byzantine recensions of the *Physiologos* see Sbordone 1936).
- The *Compilation* of Damascenos Studites, compared to Greek literary production in the sixteenth century, seems to be *sui generis*. Obviously, he is writing in a genre which existed in the history of Greek letters, diachronically, but not in early modern Greek writing.

Another question arises: did sixteenth- and seventeenth-century readers accept Damascenos's attempt to revive a literary genre?

In order to give an answer to this question we will need to take one more look at the dedicatory letter. Damascenos refers to the custom of dedicating works of art. In Italy a printed book will be dedicated to a person of high standing [Cod. Meteora Barlaam 204, ca. 1580, f. 101^{v}; see Plate IV]:

> καὶ ἐπειδὴ εἰς τὰ μέρη τῆς Ἰταλίας, ὅταν θέλουσιν νὰ βάλουν κανένα βιβλίον εἰς τὴν στάμπαν, πάντοτε εἰς ἑνὸς μεγάλου ἀνθρώπου ὄνομα τὸ σταμπάρουν, καὶ γράφουν καὶ ἐπιστολὴν εἰς τὴν ἀρχὴν τοῦ βιβλίου πρὸς ἐκεῖνον, ὁμοίως καὶ ἐγὼ πρῶτον μὲν χαρίζω τὸ ποίημά μου τοῦτο

> τὸ νέον εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τῆς αὐθεντίας σου, ἔπειτα δέ, ἐὰν εἶναι καὶ τελειώσει ὁ Θεὸς τὸν σκοπόν μου, τὸ θέλω βάλει εἰς τὴν στάμπαν διὰ μέγα ἔπαινον τῆς αὐθεντίας σου.
> (In Italy, whenever they are going to print a book, they will dedicate it to a high person; they will also address a dedicatory letter to this person, which they will print in the beginning of the book. I want to do the same, dedicating this my new work to your name, and, if God wishes, I will print it to the honour of your highness.)

The book will be read forever and the name of the addressee will be heard until the Lord's Second Coming: μέχρι τῆς συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος (ibid., f. 102^{r}). But things did not happen the way Damascenos wanted. The *Synathroisis* was printed, but with a delay of 70 years, and in the meantime it circulated in manuscripts. That made it subject to textual changes. Parts of the initial assortment were getting lost in the process: the dedicatory letter, for instance, and along with the letter the authorial statements concerning the work. But already some of the very first readers of the *Synathroisis*, readers who had access to Damascenos's dedicatory letter, would form a different impression of the generic identity of the text, as we can see from a codex dating to the last decades of the sixteenth century. This codex, owned by one of the monasteries of Meteora, the Μονή Βαρλαάμ, contains the complete assortment by Damascenos Studites, including the table of contents. It also contains an appendix, and it is explicitly stated that this appendix is *not* a text written by Damascenos Studites. This appendix has a new title [Plate V], which is worth commenting on: Ἕως ἐδῶ ἔναι ἡ νέα Φυσιολογία τοῦ προειρημένου μητροπολίτου Ναυπάκτου κυροῦ Δαμασκηνοῦ. Καὶ ἀπεδῶ ἀρχίζει τοῦ μακαριωτάτου ἀρχιεπισκόπου Κύπρου κυροῦ Ἐπιφανίου (The new *Physiologia*, written by Damascenos, the late metropolitan bishop of Naupactos, goes up to here. And from here begins the one written by the Archbishop of Cyprus, Epiphanios).

We can draw interesting information from this new title, for instance:

- The person who added this title knew who was the author of the *Synathroisis* and he knew what his position was.
- When Damascenos composed his book, he was bishop of Lita and Rendina; now, we read, he is metropolitan bishop of Naupactos. Damascenos was metropolitan bishop of Naupactos from 1574 until his death in 1577. Thus, the earliest possible date for the codex of the Barlaam monastery is 1574. This is in keeping with Sophianos, who believes that this Barlaam codex was produced ca. 1580 (Bees–Sophianos 1984: 325). It is noteworthy that our copyist – called Kyrillos, according to Sophianos – updates the biographical data about the work's author, while in the Venetian imprints of the *Thesavros* (to which I referred earlier) Damascenos remained the humble ὑποδιάκονος he was when the *Thesavros* was first printed.
- The appendix in this title is announced as a separate text, as a work of Epiphanios of Salamis. The text that follows is not, of course, a work of the church father, but a *Physiologos* written in the early modern Greek vernacular. This *Physiologos* is, according to the rules of the genre, organized in chapters, as is the *Compilation* of Damascenos Studites, but in this text the chapters are not arranged in alphabetical order. A question arises as to the meaning of the term *Φυσιολογία* in the title of the appendix: is it synonymous with *Physiologos*?
- The text of Damascenos in the manuscript of the Barlaam monastery is closely connected to the text attributed to Epiphanios: ἕως ἐδῶ... ἀπεδῶ seems to connect two things perceived as similar.

The following facts are worthy of note: the chapters of the *Synathroisis* are given in alphabetical order and are numbered. The appendix is also organized in chapters, the chapters are also numbered, and the numeration of the first text is continued in the second text, beginning from chapter 90 (see the Greek numeral ϟ in Plate V). Now let us compare the table of contents in the codex of the Barlaam monastery: it contains both the *Synathroisis* and the appendix, and the break between the two *Φυσιολογίαι* is not

marked in the table of contents; judging from the table of contents one gets the impression that there is only one text, not two texts combined – that the chapter περὶ τοῦ βασιλίσκου follows on normally from the chapter περὶ ὀνοκενταύρου [Plate VI].

The codex of the Barlaam monastery is not the only manuscript in which the *Synathroisis* is combined with this very *Physiologos* attributed to Epiphanios, but no manuscript transmits only the *Physiologos* attributed to Epiphanios as a separate text. On the basis of this datum, I suppose that a person, unknown to us, continued the text of Damascenos. This phenomenon is known in the history of literature: a later author – a *continuator* – continues the work of an older author. The remarkable fact is that this anonymous *continuator* understood the paradoxographical, according to Damascenos, *Synathroisis* as a *Physiologos* and continued it as a *Physiologos*, thus changing not the gender, but the genre of our work. Obviously, this happened only a few years after the composition of the original work. And already in the sixteenth century the changes observed in the title of the *Synathroisis* make it obvious that our text, written as a paradoxographic work, was read as a *Physiologos*. See the title in a sixteenth-century manuscript, which today belongs to the collection of the Μετόχιον του Παναγίου Τάφου, but which belonged to private owners in the seventeenth century [Plate VII]:

> Φυσιολογία νέα, τὴν ὁποίαν ἔκαμεν τοῦτος ὁποὺ ἔναι τὴν σήμερον μητροπολίτης Ναυπάκτου, ὀνόματι κύρης Δαμασκηνός, ἔσοντας ὁποὺ ἐπῆρε καὶ ἐδανείσθη ἀπὸ τῶν παλαιῶν φιλοσόφων τὰ βιβλία, καὶ ἐξηγεῖται περὶ τῶν ζώων τῆς γῆς καὶ τῆς θαλάσσης, καὶ περὶ τῶν πετεινῶν πουλίων.
> (The new Physiology, written by the one who is today the metropolitan bishop of Naupactos; he drew information from the works of old writers and writes about the animals of the earth and the sea and the birds in the sky.)

In this title Damascenos is mentioned as the metropolitan bishop of Naupactos – which he was from 1574, as I mentioned pre-

viously – and as a living person τὴν σήμερον – as indeed he was until 1577. Thus, just a few years after its composition and while its author was still alive, readers started to perceive the *Synathroisis* as a new *Physiologos.*

The anonymous *continuator* changed the text by adding an appendix, while other copyists – obviously reflecting the reactions of contemporary readers – changed the text more radically.

It is a remarkable phenomenon that in the course of a few decades the *Synathroisis* became – in a number of manuscripts – an anonymous text. As I hope to demonstrate, this phenomenon is part of the process of homogenization of the *Synathroisis* to the *Physiologos*. Initially I stated that I consider the *Physiologos* as a genre rather than a single text, which circulated in variant forms. Texts belonging to this genre never circulated under the name of their authors. They were distributed anonymously, or they were attributed to persons of high recognition – like Epiphanios of Salamis or Basil the Great.

A manuscript which transmits the *Synathroisis* anonymously is codex 721 of the Russian National Library, St Petersburg, dating to the year 1625. In this codex the *Synathroisis* is in good company, together with the *Πουλολόγος* and the *Tale of the Quadrupeds* – both late-Byzantine texts, the one dialogical, the other narrative, with animals as acting *personae*. In the codex of the Russian National Library the text is transmitted almost totally naked – no dedicatory letter, no table of contents, no author's name – under the bare title: Ἀρχὴ τοῦ Φυσιολόγου (f. 236^{v}) [Plate VIII]. A strange thing about this codex is that it also contains another text written by Damascenos, a separate chapter of the *Thesavros*, transmitted anonymously. What is most puzzling is a third reference to Damascenos in the same codex, which we find on f. 211^{r}: here we find written, seemingly without motivation, the name of Damascenos in the genitive case: Δαμασκηνοῦ τοῦ ὑποδιακόνου καὶ Στουδίτου, in the wording familiar to Greek readers since the *Thesavros* was first published in 1557 [Plate IX].

The readers who read the *Synathroisis* as a *Physiologos* and, through the process of manuscript transmission, transformed

Damascenos's text more and more into a *Physiologos*, may seem like phantoms – without a form, without a name. Surely the priest Rhalles, who produced a copy of the *Synathroisis* about the year 1635 in Constantinople is no phantom. Rhalles was a priest in the service of the Patriarch of Jerusalem, Theophanes. Rhalles copied a number of texts in a codex which is preserved in the collection of the Sinai monastery, and he never copied a text without changing it (on Rhalles see Moennig 2004: 11-14).

His copy of the *Synathroisis* is anonymous, an astonishing fact if we take into account that Rhalles was a priest, that Damascenos Studites was a high cleric, that he was a pioneer in translating Byzantine texts into the vernacular, given that the years of the patriarchate of Kyrillos Lukaris were characterized by the efforts for renewing Orthodoxy and that translating into the vernacular was an instrument of this renewal effort. Rhalles's copy has the title Φυσιολόγος ἐξηγητικός [Plate X] and ends with the subscription Τέλος τοῦ Φυσιολόγου [Plate XI].

Rhalles's copy displays a feature of some singularity in the transmission of the *Synathroisis*: someone has added a chapter on the phoenix. Obviously Rhalles, or whoever added this chapter, thought that a *Physiologos* without a chapter about the phoenix is incomplete. Rhalles also changes the order of the chapters from alphabetical to systematic: birds, quadrupeds, fish. But, when he finished the chapter, which was originally the last one, he wrote τέλος τοῦ Φυσιολόγου [Plate XII] – immediately realising, that he had not copied all the chapters. Thus, he deletes τέλος τοῦ Φυσιολόγου – and continues copying.

Rhalles is not the only reader of the *Synathroisis* who, in the course of copying it, changed the alphabetical order of the chapters into a systematic order. The theme of animals has required a system since the first book of Moses. God himself did not create all animals in one act, but according to a zoological system.

This leads us to a codex dating to the end of the sixteenth century which is preserved in the collection of the Iberon monastery on Mount Athos. The anonymous writer organized his text in three parts, 1) birds, 2) quadrupeds, 3) fish. The heading of the

second part, περὶ ζώων τετραπόδων, can be seen in Plate XIII. It will also be seen that our anonymous copyist placed the chapter on the lion before all the other quadrupeds. He does so following the conventions of the *Physiologos*, according to which the chapter about the king of the animals must be the leading chapter in the text (Alpers 2000: 999).

How are we to explain these phenomena? In his dedicatory letter Damascenos claims, according to my interpretation, that his work is paradoxographic. But, his statements on his own work are not complete: he does not declare that he is trying to combine two genres: the paradoxographical and the *Physiologos*. More precisely, Damascenos was not the first one to combine paradoxography and *Physiologos*; his model Manuel Philes did the same 250 years earlier in his *Στίχοι ἰαμβικοὶ περὶ ζώων ἰδιότητος*. There are two main features that both Philes's book and the *Synathroisis* have in common with the *Physiologos*: all are organized in chapters περὶ λέοντος, περὶ ἀετοῦ and so on, and the fact that Philes was already playing with the conventions of the *Physiologos* can easily be demonstrated: I referred earlier to the convention of placing the chapter on the king of animals in the *Physiologos* as the leading chapter. Philes dedicated his work to the co-emperor Michael IX, and probably the author was trying to find a parallel between the βασιλεὺς τῶν ζώων and the βασιλεὺς Μιχαήλ. Then, on reflection, Philes might have thought that it would be wiser to draw a parallel between the king of birds and his addressee, given that the eagle was the symbol of Roman, i.e. Byzantine, imperial power. And, what is more, the eagle is said to live a long life, and εἰς ἔτη πολλὰ – live a long life – was the Byzantine formula addressed to the emperor. Thus, the fact that the first chapter in Philes's work is the περὶ ἀετοῦ can be taken as a proof that Philes was acquainted to the conventions of the *Physiologos* and that he was playing with these conventions.

Damascenos dedicated his work to a person called Michael, too; he let his *Synathroisis* begin with the chapter about the eagle, too, and let this chapter end in *polychronia* – as his literary antecedent did. Because of the alphabetical order of the chapters one

gets the impression that the chapter about the eagle – ἀετός – came first by accident, and not for eulogistic purposes.

But this is precisely the most subtle element of the *Physiologos* integrated into his paradoxographic *Synathroisis.* More obvious are the many quotations from the *Psalms*, which are so characteristic of the *Physiologos*. I could also quote a number of zoological details and pieces of information Damascenos took from the *Physiologos* and not from his paradoxographic models. But there is also a major difference between the *Synathroisis* and the *Physiologos*: the speaking *persona* of the *Physiologos* is totally absent from the *Synathroisis.*

Damascenos tried to establish his work as a work of paradoxography, despite the relationship to the *Physiologos* which existed from the beginning. But the readers of his work in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries did not accept Damascenos's proposal – and this because the paradoxographic genre was not productive in that period. A horizon of expectations for the paradoxographic genre did not exist. What did exist instead was a horizon of expectations regarding the *Physiologos*. This genre had been productive through the Byzantine centuries and continued to be productive in post-Byzantine times. Readers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, being acquainted with the *Physiologos*, noticed the resemblance of the *Synathroisis* to the *Physiologos*, and subsequently started to assimilate the *Synathroisis* to their generic expectations. An anonymous *continuator* added chapters, changing the title of the work from *Synathroisis* to *Physiologia.* Some copyists combined the text of Damascenos with different versions of the *Physiologos*, as represented in miscellaneous manuscripts (a fact that I have not stressed in this paper; see Moennig 2005: 263, 264). Other copyists successively removed the traces of the well-known author of the *Synathroisis*, while others removed the original title and supplied the conventional Ἀρχὴ τοῦ Φυσιολόγου, interpolated chapters belonging to the beginning to the *Physiologos* tradition, and changed the order of the chapters.

This analysis makes it easier to understand some changes in the manuscripts of Damascenos's *Synathroisis*. But it teaches us much more: it indicates how deeply embedded in the early Modern Greek literary universe the *Physiologos* was.

In his dedicatory letter Damascenos writes that his intention was to publish his work in Venice. But it was not printed until 1639. In that year a certain Athanasios Melandros, a priest of Trikkala, printed the work using a title which alludes to the original one but which underlines the "scholarly" aspects of Damascenos's work (μερικὴ διάγνωσις = a detailed account), opening a new chapter in the reception of the work [Plate XIV].

It seems that there are no traces of an assimilation to the *Physiologos*. The Venetian imprint circulated in two types – separately and in a combined edition, bound together with the *Heirmologion*. In the title of the combined edition we read: ἔτι δὲ προσετέθη καὶ μέρος ἀπὸ τὸν Φυσιολόγον. And in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century catalogues of Venetian publishers the *Synathroisis* is quoted as *Physiologos*. The modern scholarly companions to Modern Greek literature also refer to the *Synathroisis* as *Physiologos*. Thus, the misunderstanding continues. However, from the year the *Synathroisis* first appeared in print, instead of changing, as it did in the manuscripts, the text became fixed. Thus, the fortune of the *Synathroisis* in manuscript transmission tells us a vivid story about the *Physiologos*, about early Modern Greek writing, about copying and about reading. But whether or not the *printed* text confused readers, the mechanisms of printing and reprinting took place so far away from the readers that there was no longer a way for interactions to take place between the processes of reading the text and reproducing it.[2]

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[2] This paper is based on the inaugural lecture which I gave at the University of Hamburg in April 2004. I am grateful to Tina Lendari for improving my English.

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PLATES

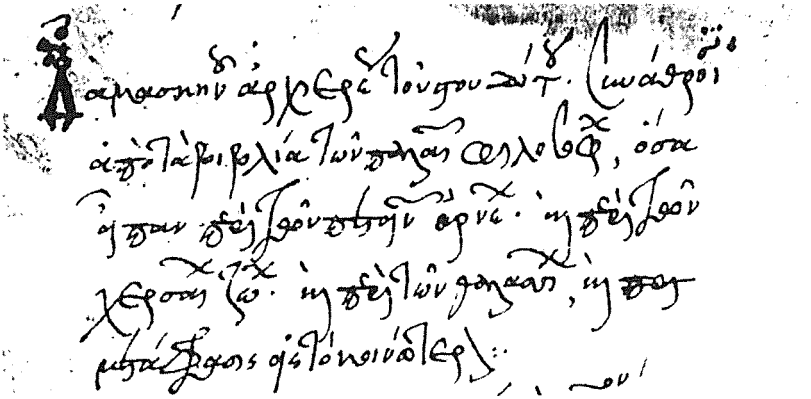


Plate I: Codex Athous Xenophontos 92, anno 1614, f. 2^{V} (detail)

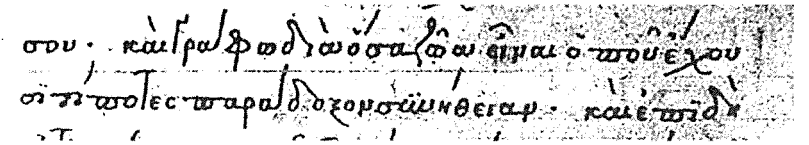


Plate II: Codex Meteora Barlaam 204, ca. 1580, f. 101^{V} (detail)

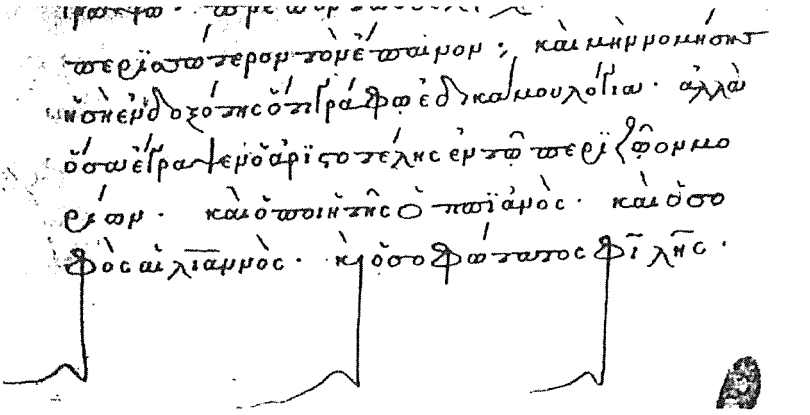


Plate IIIa: Codex Meteora Barlaam 204, ca. 1580, f. 102^{r} (detail)

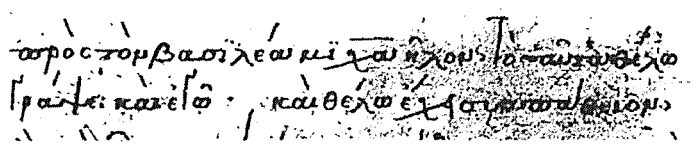


Plate IIIb: Codex Meteora Barlaam 204, ca. 1580, f. 102^{v} (detail)

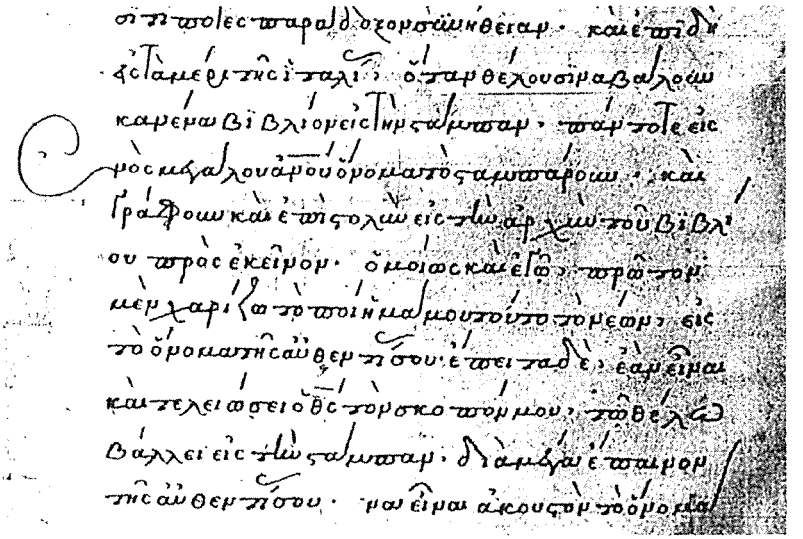


Plate IV: Codex Meteora Barlaam 204, ca. 1580, f. 101^{v} (detail)

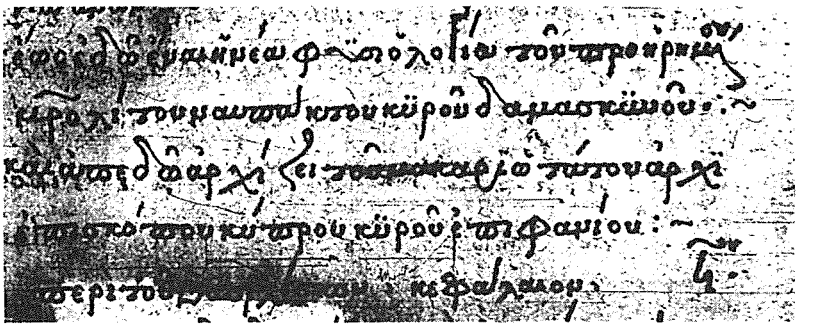


Plate V: Codex Meteora Barlaam 204, ca. 1580, f. 154^{r} (detail)

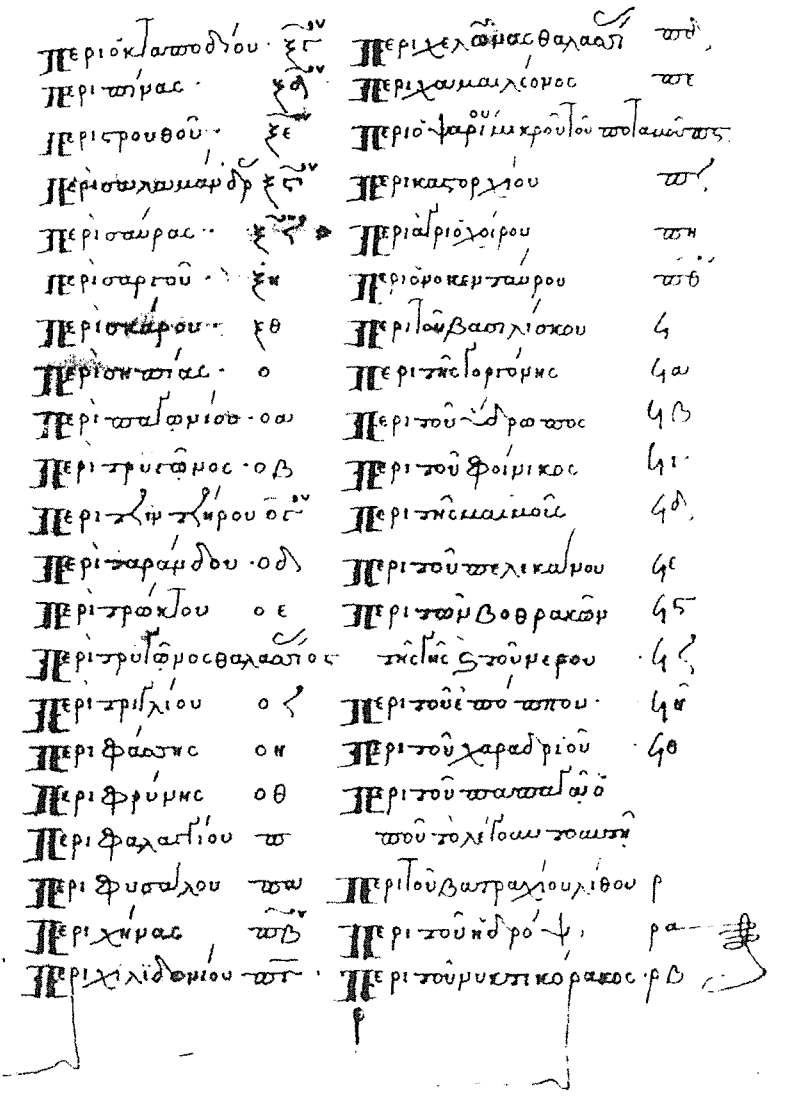


Plate VI: Codex Meteora Barlaam 204, ca. 1580, f. 144r

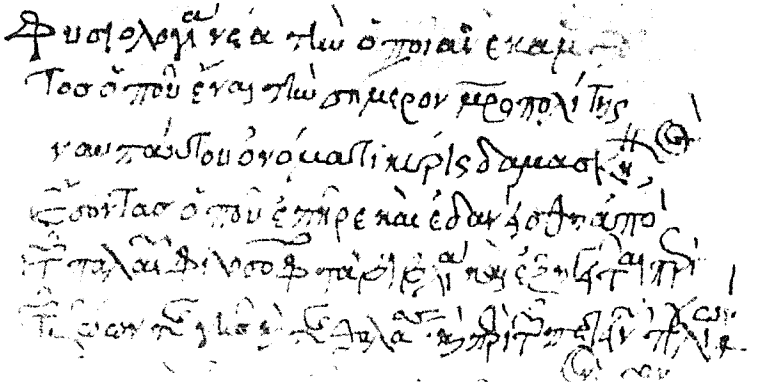


Plate VII: Codex Constantinopolitanus (nunc Atheniensis) Μετόχιον Παναγίου Τάφου 462, before 1598, f. 11^{r} (detail)

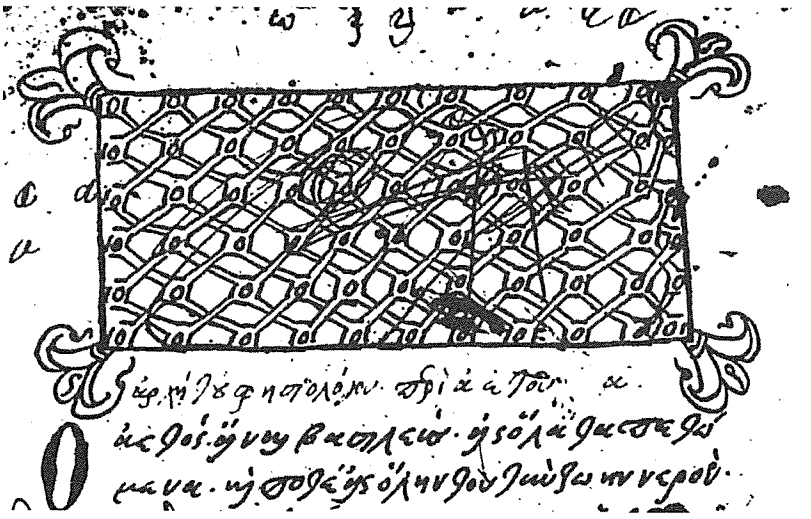


Plate VIII: Petropolitanus 721, anno 1625, f. 236^{v} (detail)

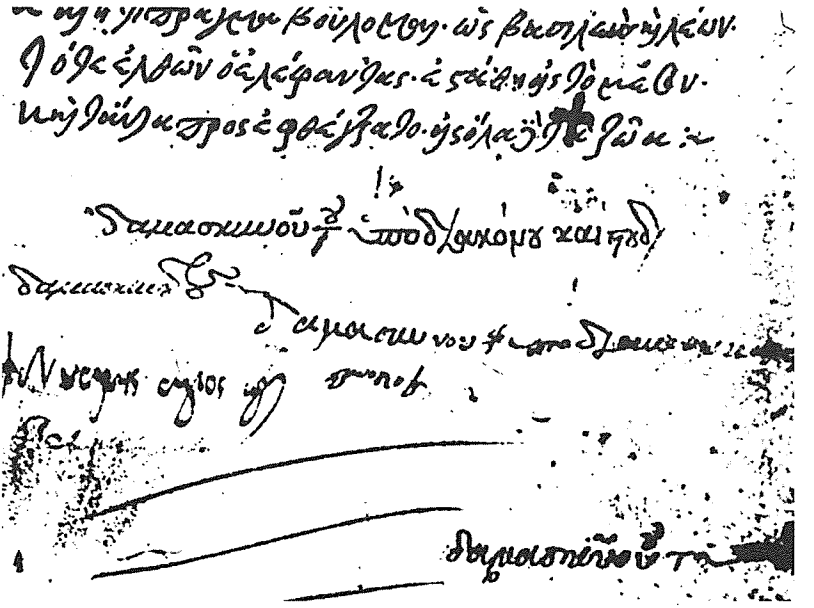


Plate IX: Petropolitanus 721, anno 1625, f. 211^{r} (detail)

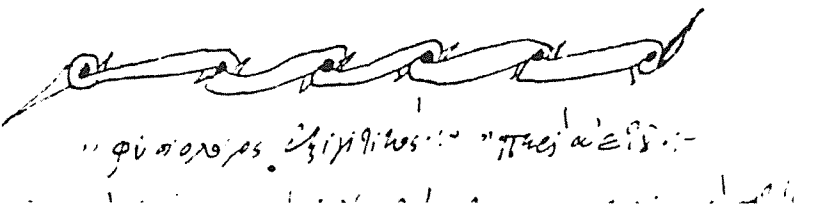


Plate X: Sinaiticus 2122, ca. 1635, f. 92^{v} (detail)

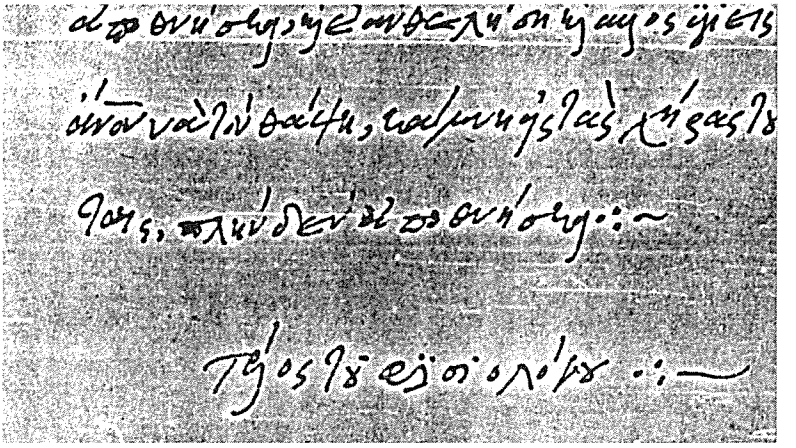


Plate XI: Sinaiticus 2122, ca. 1635, f. 126^{r} (detail)

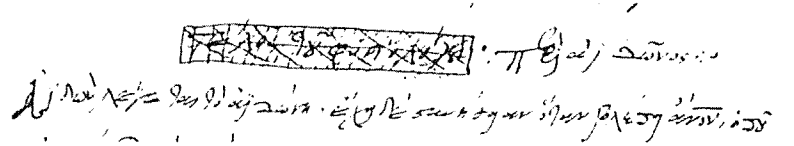


Plate XII: Sinaiticus 2122, ca. 1635, f. 119^{v} (detail)

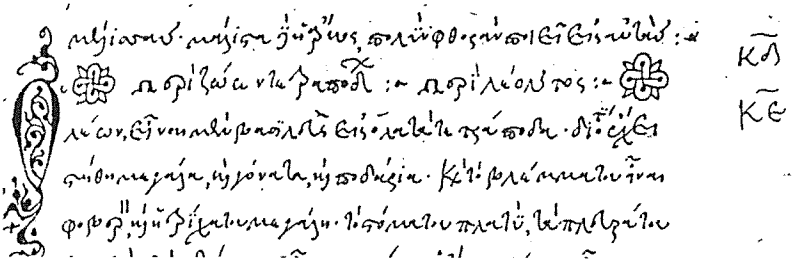
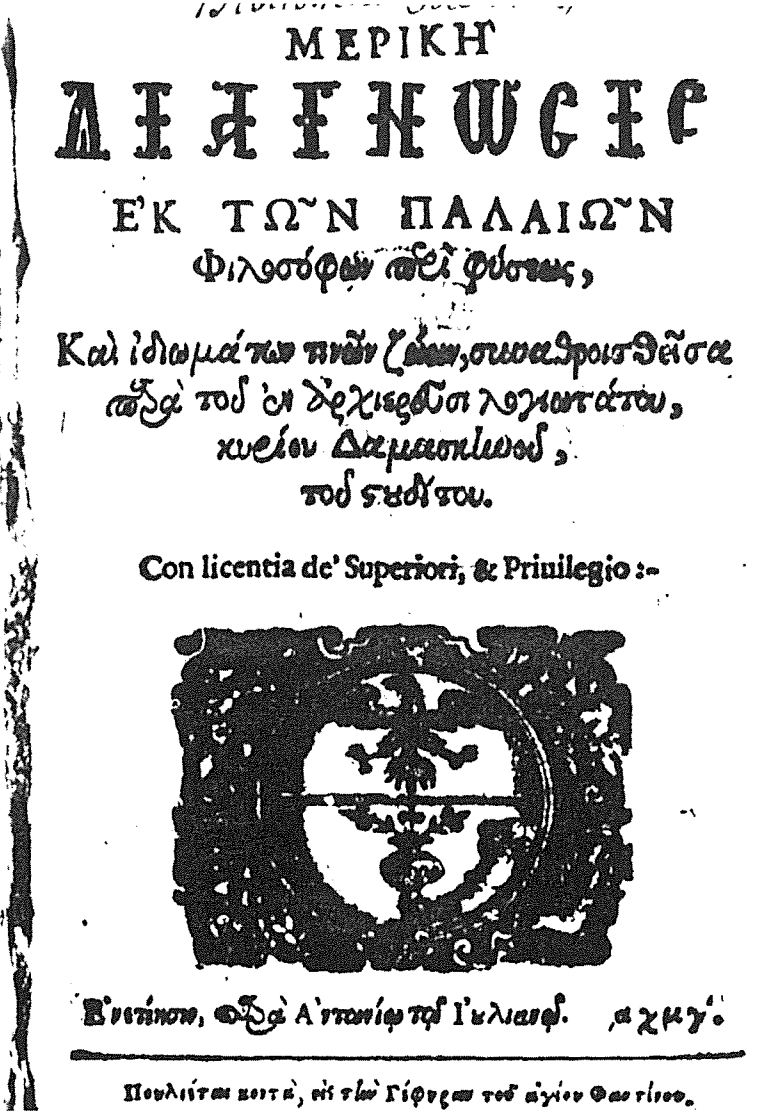


Plate XIII: Codex Athous Iberon 152, 16th century, f. 15^{r}


ΜΕΡΙΚΗ

ΔΙΔΑΣΚΑΛΙΕΣ

ΕΚ ΤΩΝ ΠΑΛΑΙΩΝ

Φιλοσόφων περὶ φύσεως,

Καὶ ἰδιωμάτων πάντων ζώων, συναθροισθεῖσα

παρὰ τοῦ ὁσιωτάτου,

κυρίου Δαμασκηνοῦ,

τοῦ στουδίτου.

Con licentia de' Superiori, & Priuilegio :-

Ἐν Βενετίᾳ, παρὰ Ἀντωνίῳ τοῦ Γιλιανοῦ. ,αχμγ'.

Πουλίται κοιτὰ, εἰς τὴν Γίφτεσσαν τοῦ ἁγίου Φωστίνου.

Plate XIV: Title page of the 2nd edition, printed 1643 in Venice, Antonio Giuliani

Richard M. Dawkins: a pioneer in the field of Modern Greek folktales

Birgit Olsen
University of Aarhus

R. M. Dawkins may be known to readers in different capacities: that of a classicist, an archaeologist, a medievalist, a linguist, or a folktale scholar, and in fact Dawkins was all of these but at different times. What may not be quite as commonly known is that he was also an intelligence officer in the British Secret Service and a mature student at Cambridge.

Since the oral version of this paper was given at his old university, I thought it appropriate to let him explain in his own words how he chose Cambridge and his future career:

> It has sometimes occurred to me that the more important actions of my life have been to all appearances directed by the merest chance [...]. Jimmy was now at St Jacut, having just finished first year at Selwyn with a view to holy orders. At Stratford Road I had frequently met a young clergyman called Tapper, a running blue and scholar at St John's Cambridge. At St Jacut I formed the plan of going to Cambridge and then seeing what would happen to me: Orders were in my mind for I had lately moved back to a perhaps rather nebulous form of Christian belief. However I had never looked much to the future and did not so now. Why Cambridge rather than Oxford? Jimmy was at Cambridge: Tapper had been at Cambridge; Latin prose was needed for entry into Oxford and Latin prose I was certain I could not do and I had neither time nor money to get myself taught. So it was to be Cambridge. But I knew nothing of the colleges; I asked Jimmy Hamilton. He said that he had never heard anything against Emmanuel. So I wrote to the Master of Emmanuel asking to be admitted that October. Confident that classics were beyond my powers I thought I would read Modern Languages. But when I came to London some time in Septem-

> ber I began to talk to Tapper and he insisted upon my reading for the Classical Tripos. So chance, Jimmy Hamilton and Tapper together sent me to Cambridge rather than to Oxford, where I should hardly had attained entrance, and to Emmanuel and to read classics there. It would have been impossible for me to have met with a more fortunate combination of circumstances.[1]

This quotation is from one of two sketches for an autobiography that remain in the Dawkins Archives at the Taylor Institution at Oxford.[2] I have used these documents extensively for my portrait of Dawkins.

Dawkins was born in 1871 and came to Cambridge in 1898. So it was not until he had reached the age of twenty-seven that he seemed at last to have found his niche. His first education he had obtained from his mother at home and he was very pleased with that arrangement. He describes his mother as "extremely competent and well read".[3] After that he seemed a misfit in the educational system. He went to a local grammar school and then to Marlborough College. He has almost nothing positive to say about the years at Marlborough, where he was bullied because of his red hair and lack of skills in any kind of sports, and furthermore he was left-handed.[4] When later on in life he wants to offer some kind of explanation for misleading his parents, he remarks: "I was the last boy who ought to have been send to a public school."[5] What he did bring with him from Marlborough was an interest in botany and in classics – both of which would develop in the years to come.

After Marlborough Dawkins studied electrical engineering at King's College, London. This was the career path his father had chosen for him and he was not at all pleased with it. He secretly saved part of his allowance in order to buy books and in his spare

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[1] Dawkins 1938: 22-3.
[2] Dawkins 1938 and 1950a.
[3] Dawkins 1938: 6.
[4] Ibid., pp. 8-12.
[5] Ibid., pp. 18-19.

time he studied all kinds of humanities subjects. In particular, "exotic" languages, such as Icelandic and Sanskrit, seem to have drawn his attention, but he also read much classical literature.[6]

When his parents died in the years 1896-97, Dawkins felt morally and economically free to make his own decisions about the future and, as mentioned above, this led him to Cambridge. Once in his right element he flourished. He could now freely indulge in the subjects he had earlier studied in secret, and, not surprisingly, he specialized in linguistics.

It was also during his Cambridge days that Dawkins had his first encounter with Greece. In the Easter of 1900 he travelled for thirty-three days to many of the well-known sites and he published his impressions from this first journey to Greece in his college journal, the *Emmanuel College Magazine*.[7] What strikes the reader in this account is the lack of details when it comes to the famous classical sites, whereas the descriptions of the landscape and the way of life of the peasants are much more thorough. Dawkins was obviously more interested in the botany and customs of Modern Greece than in the remains from antiquity, or at least this is what he chooses to present to his readers. After having described, for almost a page, the Greek Easter celebrations, this is, for example, how he presents the rather famous location where he was staying at the time: "The beautiful situation of Delphi is so well known as to hardly need mentioning."[8]

We may detect the first signs of Dawkins's interest in folklore in this brief account from his student days, but it was not until much later in life that this interest was turned into a professional line of study. In his essay to commemorate the tenth anniversary of Dawkins's death, the folklore scholar Robert Georges claims that Dawkins's first excursions into folklore were more in the form of descriptions,[9] and this is exactly what we see here. An example is the description of the tools of a spinning woman – to

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[6] Ibid., pp. 12-18.
[7] Dawkins 1900.
[8] Ibid., pp. 179-80.
[9] Georges 1965: 203.

which the classicist Dawkins remarks that they seem not to have changed since antiquity.[10] For many years Dawkins continued to include such folkloristic observations in his travel accounts.[11] But what I would like to stress here is that this tendency started at an early stage even before he began his professional career in classics – or, to be more precise, classical archaeology.

After taking his Cambridge degree in 1902 Dawkins joined the British School at Athens, and worked there – mainly in the field of archaeology – until the First World War. It is in this period that we see his first contact with the Greek folktale.

Until rather recently the interest in folktales has been very limited among Greek folklore scholars and therefore Dawkins's contribution is all the more important.

Folktales were collected in Greece from the beginning of the nineteenth century and, especially after the middle of the century, this activity was increasing. In 1856 a general appeal from the Ministry of Education to all schoolteachers to collect the folklore of their local area resulted in a massive accumulation of material, but unfortunately most of it still remains unpublished in the archives, especially that established in 1918 by Nikolaos Politis and now in the Academy of Athens. A small proportion of the material was published in the various local folklore journals and especially in the journal of the Folklore Society, *Λαογραφία*.[12]

However, almost nobody collected folktales in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century because of an interest in these tales as such. (Adamantios Adamantiou, who worked on Tinos, may be an exception to this general picture.) The first collector of Greek tales, the Austrian Johann Georg von Hahn, wished with his collection to support the theories of the Grimm Brothers, and in his German translation of the tales he treated them as though they were ancient myths.[13] The Danish philologist Jean Pio, who was the first to publish a collection of Greek tales in Greek, did so

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[10] Dawkins 1900: 173.
[11] See for example Dawkins 1902-3,1903-4, 1904-5 and 1906.
[12] Olsen 2005: 396.
[13] Olsen 1990.

for linguistic reasons. Being an advocate of the demotic language Pio wanted to present a language that was otherwise "hidden from the foreign student [...] by the purified language of the books".[14] This was also Dawkins's way into the field.

In his above-mentioned essay, Georges examines Dawkins's folklore scholarship by categories, starting with the collection of material. I do not fully agree with Georges's positive evaluation of Dawkins's contribution on this point. As for Pio and others, Dawkins's motives for studying folktales were purely linguistic. He himself began collecting as early as 1909. At that time he had lived in Greece for seven years and had become Director of the British School at Athens. Over the years he had been developing an interest in Modern Greek and especially in its various dialects.[15] Between 1909 and 1911 he made several field trips to Asia Minor, where he collected a considerable amount of tales. These he incorporated as samples of speech in his important study *Modern Greek in Asia Minor,* published in 1916. However, Dawkins had no interest in the tales as such and in his memoirs some forty years later he regretfully remarks: "It is curious that when in [...] 1909, 1910, and 1911, I collected a mass of stories in the Greek speaking villages of Cappadocia I found the texts themselves apart from their language of so little interest that I induced a friend to write the necessary notes on them."[16] So it is not surprising that Dawkins gives very little information about the collection, the informants, the recording situation etc., or that the texts are not very interesting as *tale* texts. His approach was not necessarily the best for obtaining a good version of a tale told by a skilled narrator.

As mentioned, Dawkins's interest in folklore was to some extent present already at the time of his first journey to Greece. This interest developed further, partly through his linguistic research and partly inspired by his long-lasting and close intel-

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[14] Pio 1879: III-IV.

[15] This interest started already in his first year at Athens with a journey to Karpathos. See Dawkins 1938: 31.

[16] Dawkins 1950a: XI, 3-4.

lectual relationship with Frederick W. Hasluck.[17] Hasluck was also a classicist, also a former Cambridge student, and for many years librarian at the School at Athens. He moved into the field of folklore and religious beliefs and is now considered an important figure in early British anthropology.[18] His main work was posthumously collected and published by his wife Margaret M. Hasluck, in two volumes entitled *Christianity and Islam under the Sultans* (1929).

This is how Dawkins himself characterizes his correspondence with Hasluck during the war:

> I think that after all the main preventative of mental rust in those years was a long and close correspondence with F. W. Hasluck. [...] it would be difficult to estimate how much I was benefited by this close contact with a mind in many ways so very different from my own and yet bent on the same studies and with the same interests. Hasluck's knowledge of the mentality of the people about whose beliefs he was writing showed me that no study of savages and still less of prehistoric peoples can ever lead to results as solid as can a study of people nearer to us with whom we can come into personal contact. This knowledge Hasluck had won by many years of sympathetic travelling in Greece and still more in Turkey. [...] I must count this correspondence and our close though always very limited friendship as one of the most profitable to my mental development that has ever come my way.[19]

After the war Dawkins once more left it to chance when he was to decide on his future career. He had resigned from the directorship at the School at Athens before the war broke out and during it he had been occupied in the British Secret Service[20] – as had other academics, including Hasluck.[21] But now Dawkins was searching for a job and did not quite know in which direction to

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[17] Olsen 2004: especially 110-13.
[18] For a full description of Hasluck's life and work see Shankland 2004.
[19] Dawkins 1950a: IX, 7-8.
[20] Ibid., IX, 1-9.
[21] Ibid., IX, 7.

look. He felt he had left archaeology behind him and that he was not capable of teaching classics. But when at the same time a Chair of Byzantine and Modern Greek was established at Oxford, Dawkins applied and was elected as the first Bywater and Sotheby Professor of Byzantine and Modern Greek language and literature. This post he occupied for almost twenty years, until his retirement in 1939.[22]

In 1929 Dawkins gave the presidential address to the British Folklore Society with the title "Folklore and literature". At the opening of this paper he reflects on his own path to folklore:

> Folklore first came to me [...] through my study of the modern Greek language, and this had begun in the earliest days of a prolonged residence in Greece; linguistic study led me to popular songs and ballads, and next to a serious collecting of folktales amongst the now scattered Greeks of Asia Minor. These I collected in order to have, for purpose of linguistic study, continuous samples of the popular dialects [...]. Gradually these stories became to me more and more interesting for their own sake [...]. Folklore appeared as the key to unlock many a door, the torch not only to throw light upon many an obscure passage in popular stories and songs, but by whose illumination alone their true colour was to be appreciated.[23]

He concludes: "In the library as well as in the field the folklorist still has a lot to do."[24] We see in this paper how Dawkins's attitude towards folklore has changed since, some twenty years earlier, he had collected this kind of material only as samples of language; this interest in the subject matter of the texts was to become predominant in the latter part of his life when folklore, and especially folktales, became his major field of research.

At about the time of his retirement, in 1939, Dawkins came into possession of a vast amount of folkloric material. At the beginning of the last century Yakovos Zarraftis, a native of Kos,

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[22] Ibid., XI, 1.
[23] Dawkins 1929: 14-15.
[24] Ibid., p. 36

had collected oral folklore of all kinds at the request of another Cambridge classicist, W. H. D. Rouse, headmaster of the Perse School. Rouse had intended to publish the material himself but never found the time and therefore, according to Dawkins's own information, entrusted him with the task.[25] The contact with this material was, I believe, the essential point of departure for Dawkins's serious involvement with folktales. From this point on he produced a continuous stream of publications about Greek folktales. These include both studies on specific tales, or tale types, and discussions of a more general nature about various aspects of folktale studies. They are obviously inspired by his work on the edition of the tales and many of his examples are taken from the Zarraftis collection.

In general Dawkins's work on folktales is significant, extensive and often rather advanced. An especially illustrative example of his pioneering work is to be found in the 1948 volume of the periodical *Folklore*. Here he published "Some remarks on Greek folktales", which treats almost all important questions concerning this subject, such as diffusion and age, relations with the context, survivals, literacy versus orality, types and episodes, and the symbolic values of the tales. In what follows I would like to discuss some of these questions in more detail.

We saw above how, on his first visit to Greece, Dawkins described the method of spinning as an unbroken tradition from antiquity. In his later travel accounts too he would pay much attention to the tools and customs of the rural population and compare them to those of antiquity.[26] However, despite his classical background, survivalism was not his general approach to Modern Greek folklore. On the contrary he took a rather sceptical position, and in a paper from 1930 entitled "The recent study of folklore in Greece", he accuses the Greeks of not having shown much interest in their own folklore until they discovered the possibility of finding in it relics of their ancient life and culture.[27] Considering

[25] Dawkins 1950a: XI, 3.
[26] See for example Dawkins 1902-3,1903-4, 1904-5 and 1906.
[27] Dawkins 1930: 122.

Dawkins's own route to folklore, through linguistics, I find it too tempting not to quote the following remark: "But at first folklore was hardly the conscious aim of these Greek scholars [...]. What the Greeks began with was rather their language and their archaeology [...] because they saw in them their clearest links with the great historical past, and their means of rousing the nation to emulate that old greatness."[28]

When, at the beginning of the tale *The fairy's revenge*, Dawkins meets elements that he could explain in no other way than as a survival he reluctantly does so: "On the evidence, though it is a point on which it is safer to be sceptical and always to proceed with some care, I am inclined to see in the first part of *The Fairy's Revenge* [...] a real survival."[29] The opening of this tale is a story about a tree fairy, in love with a young ploughman. However, the king of the country is in love with the fairy and he therefore fights and kills her lover. The fairy in despair takes refuge in one of her trees, and to get her out of there the king orders the whole grove to be cut down. The fairy escapes into the sky casting a spell on the king: he shall die of ravening hunger, and so he does. This tale is from the Zarraftis collection and was recorded in Kos. Dawkins relates it to the legend of Erysichthon, who cut down the sacred grove of Demeter and was punished by the goddess with ravening hunger. This legend has been shown to have its origin in Knidos – across the bay from Kos on the coast of Asia Minor – and in Modern Greek stories Dawkins found it only in the Dodecanese.[30]

As for the diffusion of the tales, Dawkins positions himself very much along the lines of the geographic-historical method of the Finnish school, and more specifically the branch that follows the ecotype theory proposed by the Swedish scholar C. W. von Sydow. Tale types – i.e. a fixed series of episodes, or as Dawkins has it "the permanent thread of the story"– he argues, must have been invented once in a given place and travelled from there to

[28] Ibid., p. 123.
[29] Dawkins 1950b: 348.
[30] Ibid., p. 347.

other parts of the world, whereas episodes may easily have been invented independently in more places. During their travels the tales constantly adapt to the local geographical and social circumstances, and it is exactly this different treatment in different places that makes it possible in the tales to detect differences between various peoples and their cultures.[31]

Let me quote a few of his examples: first, a story widely diffused both in Greece and elsewhere is the one we could call *The girl without hands*. Normally, it is about a father so depraved that he wants to marry his own daughter. In order to prevent this from happening, the girl first cuts off her hands and then takes refuge in the wilderness, where she meets a young prince who rescues her; her hands are miraculously restored, and finally the prince marries her. In an interesting variant version from the island of Chios the girl is the daughter of a Turkish father and a Greek mother. The mother, who is a prisoner-of-war, secretly brings up the girl in the Christian faith. When the father finds out, he tries to make his daughter give up her faith and submit to Islam. In this version this is seen as the monstrous crime the girl will go to any lengths to avoid. After this alternative opening, the tale goes on along the usual lines: the meeting with the prince and the happy ending. We see here how, in a religiously mixed society, as Chios was under Ottoman rule, apostasy is seen as a crime tantamount to incest and is used as such by a creative local storyteller. But an opening like this would have been unintelligible elsewhere. Dawkins is once again quite advanced in his theories. Apart from showing how the episodes of the tale types adapt to the various cultural, geographical, and chronological circumstances, with this example he also anticipates a phenomenon that was later to be named "allomotif" by the American folktale scholar Allan Dundes. By comparing a vast number of versions of a certain tale type Dundes found that motifs could be changed, according to the situation, without altering the meaning.

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[31] Dawkins 1948: 49-55.

One of his most striking examples is that, in folklore, decapitation is equivalent to castration.[32]

As another example of adaptation we could take the well-known story of Apollonios of Tyre. The ancient Greek novel begins with a king who has an incestuous relationship with his own daughter; in order to keep her for himself and hold suitors at a distance, he pronounces a riddle; anyone who tries unsuccessfully to solve it will lose his head. In the Hellenistic world, Dawkins argues, the father's attitude could pass as tolerable, but not in a Christian one. Therefore, when we meet the story as a Modern Greek folktale the father assumes quite a different attitude. He is eager to cover up his sin and tries by all possible means to marry off the girl.[33] In the version from Kos in the Zarraftis collection the father even repents of his evil deed.[34]

According to Dawkins, the tales' susceptibility to local conditions is at the same time also a very strong argument against the tales being of great antiquity, and as a consequence he rejects any suggestion that they represent layers of former cultures now unintelligible: "but the adaptability they show will surely suggest that anything extremely primitive must have step by step been discarded as the story was handed down through subsequent centuries more and more out of sympathy with many things which by age would either have lost any appeal to later generations, or even have become simply distasteful."[35] These views show how remarkably well Dawkins understood the special circumstances concerning the transmission of oral literature.

Dawkins also presents a very balanced view of the interrelationship between oral and written literature. He rightly finds that there are no clear-cut division between the two and that very often it is impossible to decide weather a written source precedes an oral one or *vice versa.*

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[32] Dundes 1980.
[33] Dawkins 1948: 51.
[34] Dawkins 1950b: 486.
[35] Dawkins 1948: 54.

> I believe that these two currents of tradition, the literary and the oral, have been kept too much apart: the man of books is apt to forget the older, although humbler, sister of literature who passes on her treasures by word of mouth. This does not concern us here; what is our affair is the other side of the picture: that the student of folklore is often only too likely to neglect literature and literary tradition, and to regard its intervention as in some way detracting from the quality, the special virtue, of the pure folktale.[36]

I think Dawkins has a point here, and again he is ahead of his time. Folklore scholars have until recently been suffering from a rather negative attitude towards written sources as inspiration for oral tales. But as research in the craftsmanship of storytelling has shown, to the narrator a story's origin as oral or written has no importance – as long as it is a good story. We even have an example of a blind storyteller who was perfectly able to incorporate material from books in his repertoire.[37] As an example of the interchangeability between oral and written literature we could take the tale of *The ogre schoolmaster*. This tale is widely spread and probably of considerable age. In the course of time it was even transformed into a novel. We know the story from Petrarch and Boccaccio, and it is also present in *The Canterbury Tales*. It is that of Griselda. After its appearance in the Italian works the story of Griselda circulated widely as a chapbook and then again found its way into the oral tradition[38] – a true *Rückwanderer*. In my opinion there is little doubt that the chapbooks were one of the main written sources of inspiration for oral narrators; an investigation into the relationship between a given tale repertoire and the known chapbooks could prove interesting.

Dawkins also enters into what he himself sees as a rather neglected aspect of tale studies, when he tries to give some answers to why these supposedly childish stories about fairies, monsters, princes and princesses have had such vitality and such an appeal

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[36] Ibid., p. 60.
[37] Olsen 1999: 35.
[38] Dawkins 1948: 63-4.

to adults all over the world and for so many years. Again he is a pioneer in the field – and not just the Greek part of the field. Thus, the Danish folktale scholar Bengt Holbek, who wrote a doctoral dissertation of more than six hundred pages about the interpretation of fairy tales, quoted Dawkins as one of the first scholars to approach the problem of the function of the marvellous elements in the tales.[39] Without explicitly saying so, Dawkins touches upon the symbolic value of the tales. The telling of stories, he concludes, is a way of dealing with subjects otherwise surrounded by taboo in rural societies.[40] I think Holbek has a point when he says that Dawkins only *approached* the function of the marvellous, because he barely scratched the surface.

For an example let me return to the Griselda story. In the folktales about *The ogre schoolmaster,* the title character is an ogre disguised as a schoolteacher who devours a child every day. A girl finds out, runs away and gets married. But the schoolmaster tracks her down and successively carries away three of her children. This becomes too much for her husband who dismisses her and marries a less unlucky girl. The heroine endures all these trials. She even endures becoming a servant to the new wife. The husband, about to leave on a journey, asks each woman of the household what he should bring them. His first wife wants "the stone of patience". When the husband comes back, he overhears her telling all her trials to the stone. The stone begins to break under her tears, and she says: "If my sorrows make even you who are of stone break, how could my heart not break." Then the mysterious schoolmaster appears again but transformed into a kind character and bringing her lost children. She is restored to her husband and everything ends happily. Dawkins's problem here is the character of the ogre/schoolmaster. What does he symbolize? Dawkins's answer is that it is: "the strange decrees of fate, whose incalculable doings, for which the only remedy is patience, are a theme appearing in various shapes and disguises in Greek stories".[41] I am not entirely

[39] Holbek 1987: 393.
[40] Dawkins 1948: 61-8.
[41] Ibid., p. 64.

convinced. I think Dawkins would have come closer if he had looked for taboos. If we apply Holbek's model of analysis to this story, we will see that – like most fairy tales – this is a tale about maturity. Two persons are to pass from the status of young person to that of adult – in this case the girl and her husband. But one (or both) of them is not mature and has to pass a test. The ogre is what in psychology is called "a split". He represents a part of the young man, namely his untamed sexuality. Since food and sex are allomotifs in folklore, devouring children could be interpreted as a symbol of unnatural sexual appetite. The young man has to be redeemed, that means he has to become mature and able to control his sexuality. The heroine must help him in this, and since this is a feminine tale – a tale where the main character is female – she is the one who has to undergo the trials. In Greek rural communities the virtue of patience is the female virtue *par excellence* and it is therefore her mastery of this virtue that is tried in the tale, as in so many other Greek tales.[42] I think it is open to discussion whether it is the young man who actually has a problem or the girl who lacks maturity. We could perhaps also explain the split of the husband/ogre as what in psychology is called externalization. This means that, because the heroine cannot cope with masculine sexuality, she sees it, and therefore also her male counterpart, as something demonic. In further support of this interpretation of the ogre as symbolizing a split of the husband is the fact that, when the story passed into written literature, the role of the supernatural ogre was taken up by a cruel husband.

As mentioned above, Dawkins edited most of the folktales from the Zarraftis collection and published them in a bilingual Greek-English edition by Cambridge University Press in 1950 with the title *Forty-five stories from the Dodekanese.* Before his death in 1955 Dawkins published two more collections of tales, but this time in English translation only. He furnished all his editions with very extensive notes, and these – as well as studies like the ones mentioned above – clearly show that he had become

[42] Olsen 2002: 70.

an important folktale scholar who no longer saw the tales as the means to approach something else. He was by now interested in the tales for their own sake and, as we have seen, he studied almost every important aspect of their tradition.

Before concluding, I would like to say a few words about the *Forty-five stories*, and the background to this publication. The material was collected at the same time as Dawkins himself was collecting tales in Asia Minor, and he met the collector, Zarraftis, at least twice. The first time was in the summer of 1906 when Dawkins, according to Zarraftis's letters, visited the embroidery school he directed at that time on Astypalia. In his diary of the journey Dawkins does not refer to the visit to the school. This is peculiar since one of the stated purposes for the journey was actually the collection of embroideries. What Dawkins does mention in the diary is that he met Yakovos Zarraftis, who was working for Rouse, and that he saw some of his manuscripts – which presumably did not impress him. He found that Zarraftis could be not fully trusted. Nevertheless, Dawkins obviously used Zarraftis's services despite his misgivings. For in the Archives at Oxford there is a letter from Zarraftis to Dawkins, also from 1906, with information concerning the pronunciation of the dialect of Kos.

The second time the two men met was in 1910 when Dawkins was on his way to Asia Minor. This time Zarraftis was residing at Kalymnos, and Dawkins used his neighbour there, an old woman, as informant for the local dialect. Again Zarraftis functioned as his linguistic consultant.[43]

They probably did not meet again, but when forty years later Dawkins published the collection of tales from Zarraftis's manuscripts, he was aware of our debt to Zarraftis. In the introduction to the *Forty-five stories* he included the following portrait of him:

> Zarraftis I remember well: he was a kindly, hospitable and enthusiastic old man, carried along always by a real zeal for learning and a deep belief in the value of Greek life and Greek

[43] For references see Olsen 2005: 397. This paper also provides a fuller picture of Zarraftis.

> culture [...]. Yakovos Zarraftis was in fact a worthy member of that brand of scholars [...] who out of their love for letters and for their country recorded for the future an immense amount of interesting material, which would otherwise have been by now completely lost.[44]

I know perfectly well that it is pointless to speculate, but I cannot help thinking that it is a matter of regret that it took Dawkins so many years to become interested in the folklore aspects of Zarraftis's services. Not only did the two men actually meet when Zarraftis's collecting was at its height, but Zarraftis also died only a few years before Dawkins got hold of his material. We could have obtained much valuable information about almost any aspect of the recording situation, had Dawkins interviewed Zarraftis in time about these matters – information which Dawkins himself regrets not having[45] and which he had sought from Rouse.[46]

That Dawkins's estimation of Zarraftis's work changed over the years is also evident from the way he handled his material. Dawkins is certain that Zarraftis "did his best to record the words as they were spoken",[47] and in his edition of the text he follows Zarraftis's manuscripts without much editorial interference.

The tales in Zarraftis's collection are of a high quality. Zarraftis obviously had access to very skilled narrators who could also tell tales of considerable length, and he was, for his time, a conscientious recorder. His collection of tales is the most interesting collection of Greek tales I know. In the edition, Dawkins organized the tales thematically and provided an introduction, an English translation, substantial notes, a description of the language and a word list. In my opinion the result can be seen as one of Dawkins's main contributions to the field of Greek folktales. It is therefore all the more unfortunate that this important edition has for years been out of print and perhaps for that reason is also very

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[44] Dawkins 1950b: 2.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Olsen 2005: 392.
[47] Dawkins, 1950b: 525.

seldom referred to by Greek scholars. A revised edition – preferably in a more modest format – would be a most welcome supplement to the many new editions and studies that fortunately have been published in recent decades.

Let me conclude this paper on Dawkins's importance to Greek folktale studies by quoting Robert Georges: "To folklorists everywhere he is probably best remembered as the scholar who made modern Greek folklore most extensively known, understood and appreciated. His numerous studies of modern Greek folktales provide the most extensive survey of that tradition and the most penetrating analysis of the material in any language, including Greek."[48]

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Transcending politics: symbolism, allegory and censorship in Greek fiction

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There is an established view that literature and politics should not co-exist. Politics has been associated with crudeness and conflict, literature with refinement and sophistication. Stendhal, for instance, wrote in *The Charterhouse of Parma* (1839) that "Politics in a work of literature is like a pistol-shot in the middle of a concert; something loud and vulgar, yet a thing to which it is not possible to refuse one's attention." It has also been claimed that "Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote an artistically weak, politically successful work in *Uncle Tom's cabin*, while Fyodor Dostoyevsky produced a politically unsuccessful, artistically enduring classic in *The Possessed*."[1] Does politics indeed undermine a work of literature or art? Does political art thrive in periods of uncertainty and turmoil? Can we turn to literature in order to comprehend politics? Do claims of literary representations of politics still raise instant suspicions of propagandistic intent?

The essentials of political fiction would seem to be the dominant presence of political ideas and of a political milieu. But some feel that the definition of the political novel is somewhat complicated by its close relationship to the social or even "utopian" novel.[2] The political novel cannot be said to represent a distinct genre since loose terms such as the political or the psychological novel "do not mark any fundamental distinctions of literary

[1] Joseph L. Blotner, *The Political Novel* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company 1955), p. 3.
[2] Gordon Milne, *The American Political Novel* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press 1966), p. 5.

form".[3] It has also been argued that literature can make the abstract ideas of political theory seem real or "come alive" for the reader, while the concrete individualist orientation of literature may act as a corrective to political abstractions.[4] Accordingly, Ken Kesey's novel *One flew over the cuckoo's nest* "can be more insightful and moving to political action than ten years of social scientific reports on the conditions in our institutions for the (judged) mentally ill".[5] George von der Muhll, a political scientist, has come up with the following definition of political literature: "a work of literature most fully contributes to understanding politics if it illuminates the felt experience of those who found themselves constrained in their interactions by a social logic emerging from pursuit of the power to determine collectively binding rules for whole societies or their fictional analogue."[6] He claims that this definition suggests certain criteria for identifying a distinctively "political" quality in literature.

In recent years various feminist and gay/lesbian groups have put forward the argument that "the personal is the political", thus rendering interpersonal relations and everyday human interaction political. In the 1990s it was claimed that the political novel had traditionally been seen as a male genre or, as Sharon M. Harris puts it,

> virtually all of the classic studies of the political novel, and contemporary studies as well, either address only texts written by white male authors or address women's contributions to the genre marginally [...]. Feminist theorists in many fields – history, literature, philosophy, political science, sociology,

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[3] Irving Howe, *Politics and the novel* (New York: Columbia University Press 1992 [first published in 1957]), p. 16.

[4] Joel Kassiola, "Political values and literature: The contribution of virtual experience", in Maureen Whitebrook (ed.), *Reading political stories: Representations of politics in novels and pictures* (Lanham MD: Rowman & Littlefield 1992), pp. 65-6.

[5] Ibid., p. 68.

[6] George Von der Muhll, "The political element in literature", in Whitebrook (ed.), *Reading political stories*, p. 31.

> among others – have challenged assumptions underlying narrow definitions of the political".[7]

In this respect, all human social experience could fall within the ambit of "political" literature.

It seems to me that the relationship between politics and literature could be defined in terms of three approaches: commitment, representation and resistance. In the first case we tend to think of the relationship mostly in ideological terms as a commitment of the latter to the former. In this case literature is subservient to politics, assisting a political cause or defending an ideological standpoint. Under these circumstances literature tends to be transformed into a normative political force or instrument with pedagogic and instructive aims. Normally this sort of literature is considered *engagé* and its appeal is short-lived. In the second case, literature tends to portray political events or revolutionary movements, or tries to capture the political temperature of a certain period without expressing a partisan view. It might also focus on the workings of power, influence and corruption or have as characters primarily politicians or the politically involved. The third mode of engagement of literature with politics involves resistance to political conditions, an attempt to transcend politics as a source of violent conflict or authoritarian oppression. Censorship tends to make literature and the other arts more allegorical, as can be seen, for example, in the case of Iranian cinema. In this approach, literature, through allegorical, allusive or imaginative strategies, tries to carve out a liberal niche which transcends the negative political situation and offers an alternative vision. What makes this category more interesting is its potential for universality and wider diachronic appeal by depicting moral dilemmas that arise from political conditions. Literature of this sort tries to avoid the pitfalls of commitment and is judged by the skilfulness and inventiveness with which it tries to put its message across. In this

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[7] Sharon M. Harris, *Redefining the Political Novel: American women writers 1797-1901* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press 1995), p. xiv.

category of writing the communal dimension of politics gives way to a personal stance against authoritarianism.

It has been suggested that the tradition of the political novel in Western Europe has died. Political writers comparable to Jean-Paul Sartre, André Malraux, Albert Camus, Günter Grass, Heinrich Böll, Arthur Koestler, George Orwell or Ignazio Silone are no longer emerging and the best political fiction has appeared in societies suffering from political divisions or oppression. I am thinking of political writers such as Milan Kundera, Vaclav Havel and Alexander Solzhenitsyn writing on communist regimes in Eastern Europe, J. M. Coetzee and Nadine Gordimer on South African apartheid, Garcia-Marquez, Isabel Allende and Vargas Llosa on Latin American dictatorships or Chinua Achebe on corruption in Nigerian politics. Even in those countries the conditions, which gave rise to political novels in the past, have changed or receded and therefore one could still argue that the political novel is threatened with extinction. On the other hand, international terrorism or forms of racial, sexual and cultural exclusion may offer new opportunities for the writing of political novels.

The political effectiveness of Greek fiction has often been judged by its ability to represent social reality or to engage with major political events such as the Civil War. Any departure from reality was considered a form of escapism and a number of post-war writers argued that their involvement with political events and their efforts to represent the painful conditions in Greece after the Civil War singled them out from the cosmopolitan and evasive writers of the 1930s. They often contrasted their raw and strong language with the lyrical style of their predecessors.[8]

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[8] See the debates of Alexandros Argyriou, Alexandros Kotzias, Kostas Kouloufakos, Spyros Plaskovitis and Stratis Tsirkas, "Η νεοελληνική πραγματικότητα και η πεζογραφία μας", *Η Συνέχεια* 4 (June 1973) 172-9 and Alexandros Argyriou, Alexis Ziras, Alexandros Kotzias and Kostas Kouloufakos, "Το οδυνηρό πέρασμα στην πολιτικοποίηση", *Διαβάζω* 5-6 (November 1976-February 1977) 62-83, and the articles by Alexandros Kotzias, "Μεταπολεμικοί πεζογράφοι" (first published in *Γράμματα και Τέχνες* 55 (April-June 1988) 3-10), *Αληθομανές Χαλκείον: Η ποιητική*

This perhaps explains why there has been no strong tradition in Greece of a symbolist or allegorical political fiction, no Orwellian *Animal farm* or *Nineteen eighty-four*. In the first half of the twentieth century symbolist or allegorical political prose is rather scarce, traced in the reworking of ancient themes by Kostas Varnalis in texts such as *Η αληθινή απολογία του Σωκράτη* (*The true apology of Socrates*, 1931) and *Το ημερολόγιο της Πηνελόπης* (*Penelope's diary*, 1947). In the second half of the twentieth century novelists who to some extent practised symbolist or allegorical fiction included Nikos Kazantzakis, Rodis Roufos, Spyros Plaskovitis (with *Το φράγμα* [*The dam*], 1961) and Antonis Samarakis (with *Το λάθος* [*The flaw*], 1965) though the texts of the last two could be seen as allegorical in a broader sense. After 1974 allegorical and symbolist political fiction received new impetus with the highly acclaimed novel by Aris Alexandrou *Το κιβώτιο* (*The mission box*, 1974) and the earlier novel by Andreas Frangias *Ο λοιμός* (*Plague*, 1972). But as political conditions in Greece have improved, so political allegories have become less popular.

It could be argued that Greek fiction, though closely engaged with the country's politics, was not very successful in trying to capture the political ethos or the political developments of any given period. It was more successful, however, when it was trying through fantasy, allegory or metaphor to portray the frustrations, illusions and disorders of public life or to produce testimonies of oppression. Fantasy and allegory are useful tools to convey a dysfunctional public life. In this paper, I will look at how three Greek writers of different generations have tried to deal with political conflict and repression. Specifically, I will discuss the novels *The fratricides* (*Οι αδερφοφάδες*) by Nikos Kazantzakis, *Graeculi* (*Γραικύλοι*) by Rodis Roufos and *The stories of ordeal* (*Τα διηγήματα της δοκιμασίας*) by Christophoros Milionis. All three texts belong to the third category of political literature outlined

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ενός πεζογράφου (Athens: Kedros 2004), pp. 61-81 and Christophoros Milionis, "Η μεταπολεμική πεζογραφία: Πρώτη και δεύτερη μεταπολεμική γενιά", *Με το νήμα της Αριάδνης* (Athens: Sokolis 1991), pp. 31-49.

above, have as their theme personal freedom, and make extensive use of antithesis, symbolism or allegory, sharing images of devastation and arid landscapes.[9] In discussing the three texts the relationship of politics with religion, antiquity and censorship will be explored and the question of whether or not the writers compromise their art by dealing with political issues will be addressed.

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Kazantzakis decided, in the late 1940s, to deal with the Greek Civil War in his fiction though he himself had left Greece in June 1946 never to return. Living abroad and without first-hand experience of the events, he decided to engage with the Civil War covertly in his *Christ recrucified* (1948) and more overtly in *The fratricides*, a novel which, according to Peter Bien, "is *Christ Recrucified* rewritten in contemporary dress with the mythic element removed".[10] Kazantzakis wrote the first draft between December 1948 and February 1949, the second in March 1949, and returned to the manuscript in 1952, 1954, 1955 and perhaps even later.[11] The novel was published posthumously in 1963.

The action takes place in the fictional village of Kastellos in Epirus, which is controlled by government forces, while the nearby mountain is the territory of the communist guerrillas. The novel has been read as documentary and has also been described as "the most obviously symbolic of all his fictions",[12] characterizations which seem incompatible or even mutually exclusive.

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[9] According to J. A. Cuddon, "a symbol differs from an allegorical sign in that it has a *real* existence, whereas an allegorical sign is arbitrary"; see *Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* (London: Penguin 1991), p. 939. Normally an allegory is a narrative with a double signification and meaning: a primary signification or surface meaning and a secondary signification or under-the-surface meaning.

[10] Peter Bien, "Fratricides: interesting document, defective work of art", *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 2.1 (1984) 1.

[11] Ibid., p. 6.

[12] Morton P. Levitt, *The Cretan Glance: The world and art of Nikos Kazantzakis* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press 1980), p. 160.

Peter Bien identifies incidents or characters in the novel which coincided with the time of its composition and could be linked with historical reality. For example, the news that Chinese communists had captured Beijing and had driven across the Yellow River in January 1949 is mentioned in the novel. The issue of an autonomous Macedonia, debated among Communists at the time, also features in the narrative, further reinforcing the documentary aspect of the novel. Bien also associates the fictional Captain Drakos with Markos Vafiadis and Loukas, Diakos's second-in-command, with Nikos Zahariadis, arguing that "the rivalry between the two fictional leaders recalls that between the real ones during 1948".[13]

Morton P. Levitt, on the other hand, argues that each character and each act in the novel has its symbolic equivalent and Kastellos is a microcosm of the entire world. Indeed the gloomy and barren village could be seen as a metaphor for human suffering.[14] There is, he claims, a symbolic system and an underlying level of metaphor in *The fratricides* beneath its surface realism: "Every physical deed associated with Yánaros is similarly laden with symbolic potential, yet none is merely an abstraction."[15] The protagonist, according to Levitt, is a compelling character, able to unite the physical and symbolic worlds. Levitt also adds that Leonidas's role in the novel is "to complete our view of Yánaros as symbol and maker of symbols" and his narrative function is entirely symbolic.[16]

These two different approaches to the novel, the documentary and the symbolic, could be seen as replicating the antithetical structure of the novel and the dualistic mode of Kazantzakis's thinking.

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[13] Bien, op. cit., p. 17.

[14] The arid and rocky landscape of the Epirote village is in sharp contrast to the prosperous village of St Constantine on the shores of Black Sea where Father Yánaros was born, suggesting that physical descriptions in the novel are laden with symbolic potential.

[15] Levitt, op. cit., p. 165.

[16] Ibid., p. 170.

Father Yánaros, the main character of *The fratricides*[17] oscillates between wordliness and isolation. He tries, on the one hand, to be a pragmatist who identifies with the whole village and perceives Christ as an earthly figure (25/26-27) while on the other he is an exile, a restless loner with a constant desire to leave (52/53). His love of butterflies, described in the following passage, is indicative of his attempt to combine earthly pragmatism with Christian metaphysics.

> Of all the birds and beasts, this fearless firewalker loved butterflies the best – in them he placed his faith. It was only when he was once asked that he discovered why. "Because the butterfly was once a worm," he had replied, "a worm that crawled into the earth and emerged a butterfly when spring came. What spring? The Second Coming!" (74/75)

His association with *anastenaria* (ecstatic fire-walking) is suggestive of his ambivalence and the difficulty he faces in reconciling opposing forces. It is as if he is treading on burning coals.[18] The fact that Yánaros is Arch-Anastenaris (fire-walker) reinforces the image of civil strife as ritualistic drama, a kind of re-enactment of Christ's passion and a catharsis giving fresh impetus: "For thousands of years civil wars have come and gone, staining Greece with blood. Often – though the thought of it is terrifying – often, after such a fratricidal war, our souls soar and create great things. [...] Can it be that this war was necessary so that our souls might take on a new power?" (121/123). The Civil War is also presented as a re-enactment of the War of Independence: "Don't you realize that you've lost the game? That you're the Turks and we're the guerillas and rebels [*αρματωλοί και*

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[17] The editions used here are the following: Nikos Kazantzakis, *Οι αδερφοφάδες* (Athens: Ekdoseis Elenis Kazantzaki 1982) and *The fratricides*, trans. Athena Gianakas Dallas (Oxford: Bruno Cassirer 1967). After each reference or quotation the page numbers are given first to the English translation and then to the Greek text.

[18] The symbol of fire is not developed here, perhaps due to the fact that Kazantzakis could not sustain his own belief in creative renewal. See Levitt, op. cit., p. 171.

κλέφτες] and that we're the ones fighting for freedom? It's 1821 again, my fellow Turks!" (107/109). The Civil War is not seen as a war about ideological differences, but about basic human needs and the perennial struggle for freedom.[19] It is treated as part of the wider struggle between God above and the demons below (62/61), materiality and spirituality, body and soul, Heaven and earthly Paradise, as the work of devil (75-6/76-7). It could also be seen as a struggle between father and son, in view of the fact that Captain Drakos turns out to be the estranged son of Father Yánaros, a relationship which is only fully revealed towards the end of the novel, though it is hinted before this (83/84, 166/169).

The idea of recurrence is conveyed in the novel by the description of the whole world as Pompeii on the verge of eruption. A cycle of exhaustion and regeneration suggests some sort of mythical pattern: "Whatever culture those generations had, they used up creating a great civilization – ideas, painting, music, science, deeds; but now it has been exhausted; and they are in their last phase – to disappear. Let the barbarians come and open a new path to culture" (91/92). Are the guerillas the new barbarians? Such an analogy could be in line with the conception of the Greek civil war not as a unique historical event, but as part of a recurring cosmic rhythm of conflict and warfare as described in the following extract from Leonidas's diary:

> Some invisible power, which I cannot name, plays on us, holding us in its fingers, and I still don't know whether that force is blind and senseless or full of vision and wisdom. I've been thinking about that force since the other day, and sometimes I call it fate, sometimes, need; sometimes I call it a blind, evil demon, and sometimes, God. This power governs and turns all; once it uses peace, once war – whichever is more suitable – to serve its purpose. [...] Should we submit and co-operate with

[19] Women in the novel do not become involved in the action, but they could be seen as a kind of chorus. Their symbolic role is evinced in the following passage: "And suddenly, as he watched these five bereaved women, they seemed to be the five great Hellenic mothers – the Roumeliote, the Macedonian, the Epirote, the Moráitian, and the noble mother of the islands" (151/153).

> this terrible force, or should we protest and resist it? My mind stands helpless at these crossroads, not knowing which way to turn; and yet on this decision rests the happiness and the success of man. I believe the ancient Greeks took the first road – the one of harmony – which took them to the miracle of absolute beauty. The Christians took the second path, which led to the mystic glory of love and kindness. Is it possible then, that no matter which path one treads, he can accomplish the miracle of man? (120/122)

It is not so much social conditions or ideologies that motivate the main characters as dark, inner impulses and primitive, ancestral voices. Drakos, for example, is an unpredictable rebel motivated by inner voices (199/2004) rather than an ideologue. Despite occasional references to Lenin, the motivation of the guerrillas tends to be poverty and hunger, not ideology.[20] People are presented as eternally innocent children who need new stories and prophets in each historical period ("Today, Mohammed is called Lenin", 192/197). Communist ideology becomes another myth, a new story in the history of humanity. For Yánaros the Communist guerillas are concerned primarily with material things; they are not interested in anything spiritual.

Kazantzakis appears to divest the civil war of any political or ideological background and to present it as part of the wider eternal struggle between animality and humanity.[21] War is seen as

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[20] See pages 41/42, 79/80, 107/108. For Yánaros there are no ideas which are not embodied by people: "Ideas do not exist, only people who believe in them; for ideas take the form and the body of the men who nurture them" (207/213).

[21] "You go out to fight saying, 'I won't degrade myself. I'll remain human even during the slaughter; I don't hate anyone.' And I go off to battle with compassion in my heart. But the moment you realize that your life is in danger, that they want to kill you, a dark hairy thing suddenly leaps from the depths of your inner being – an ancestor that was hidden inside of you whom you did not suspect, and the human face you had disappears, and you seem to have sprouted sharp, pointy teeth, like a gorilla; and your brain becomes a jumble of blood and hair. You scream, 'Forward! attack, men! We've got 'em!' And the cries that come from your lips are not your own; they can't be yours; they're not human cries; and even the apeman disappears, frightened away; and from within

a regression to bestiality. The survival instinct brings the animal in us to the surface and the civil war is seen as releasing of a deep-seated, almost primordial, hatred among people. It is not the result of conflicting ideologies or interests, but of instincts which are awaiting violent expression.

> Their life is an unceasing battle with God, with the winds, with the snow, with death. For this reason the Castellians were not surprised when the killing began, brother against brother. They were not afraid; they did not change their way of life. But what had been simmering slowly within them, mute and unrevealed, now burst out, insolent and free. The primeval passion of man to kill poured from within them. Each had a neighbor, or a friend, or a brother, whom he had hated for years, without reason, often without realizing it. The hatred simmered there, unable to find an outlet. [...] Murder, that most ancient need of man, took on a high mystic meaning. And the chase began – brother hunting brother. (8/10)

Kazantzakis's dualistic mode of thought is expressed in animal terms as becomes clear in the following thought of Father Yánaros:

> In this world, he thought, you're either a lamb or a wolf. If you're a lamb, you're eaten up; if you're a wolf you do the eating. My God, is there no third animal, a stronger, kinder one? And a voice inside him replied, "There is, yes, there is, Father Yánaros; be patient. Thousands of years ago it set out to find us, to become human; but it hasn't arrived yet. Are you in a hurry? God is in no hurry, Father Yánaros." (86/87)

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you leaps not your father, but your grandfather, the gorilla. Sometimes I am overcome by the desire to kill myself – to save the man within me, to save myself from the beast. But you keep me alive, Maria, and I wait. 'Hold on,' I say, 'one day soon this brother-killing is bound to end.' I'll cast off the gorilla skin – the khaki, the boots, the rifle – and I'll take you by the hand, my darling, and we'll go to Sounio together, and we will speak again Homer's immortal lines" (99/100).

By presenting animality as an earlier stage of evolution and humanity as the present unsatisfactory one, Kazantzakis could not develop a third utopian category which could capture the imagination of his readers and act as a convincing alternative. A third animal or a third way to transcend this dualism is not visualised in the novel. That such a third way has not yet opened up is stated again by Yánaros later on in the narrative:

> What third road? There is no third road! It hasn't opened yet. We have to open it with our labor, pushing onward to make it a road. And who are the "we"? The people! This road begins with the people, goes ahead with the people, and ends with the people. Many times lightning tears through my mind. "Who knows", I say, "perhaps God is pushing us to the edge of this tragedy to force us to open this third road – whether we want to or not – to save ourselves." (155/157)

It is not clear in the novel whether this third way will be a reconciliation of the opposites or their symbolic transcendence through the idea of freedom. Father Yánaros seems to be the symbolic embodiment of God and opens up a path with no certain destination:

> "This very moment that I speak to you my children," he shouted, "God stands pleased, beside me; none of you can see Him, only I, your priest. Trust me; have faith! Between the two devils – the red and the black – and ahead of them God opens a path and He beckons to us. 'Come,' He says." (222/230)

Yánaros helps to highlight the oppositions by standing in the middle and preaching love and reconciliation as a *modus vivendi*, but does not seem to represent a clear ideological position which could act symbolically. He cannot offer a way out of the conflict, a symbol of transcendence of the differences troubling his fellow countrymen. The transcendence of conflict is not possible because it is presented as abstract and primordial and not rooted in specific historical and social conditions.

Father Yánaros with his naïve idealism cannot serve as a symbol. His stance is rather erratic or idiosyncratic, and therefore

he fails in his role as a social leader. It is not clear whether he stands for Christ or freedom. Freedom for Yánaros has no worldly purpose and is not found on earth. The struggle for freedom is the struggle for the unattainable (69/70). His desire for freedom is too abstract to permit of outlining a clear course of action for achieving it or offering a model of reconciliation. Hence, it cannot develop into concrete symbolism. He claims to be the last free man (249/260), but his death in the end undermines his value as a symbol or a source of optimism. In fact, his killing could be interpreted as the death of the idea of freedom; in other words the symbol is destroyed before it has been developed.[22]

The ritualistic aspect of the novel is emphasized by the fact that it takes place during the week leading up to Easter. Christ and Greece become inseparable for Yánaros (128/129, 145/147, 160/163). Christ's resurrection could be seen as the resurrection of the whole country, though elsewhere Yánaros himself is identified with Christ (147-8/149-50, 159/162). Given that the symbolic re-enactment of Christ's resurrection in the Easter mass is postponed by Yánaros, there is no hope for Greece either: "All I know is that two devils have divided Greece, two devils, curse them! One is red, the other black – neither is a Greek. [...] When are we going to be free of those two devils, so we can remain masters in our own homes? Damn it, aren't there any Greeks we can leave Greece to?" (219-220/227-8). Neither Greece nor the Greeks can emerge as the benign force, the superior agent above the two evils. No symbolic exit from the impasse of the conflict is envisaged in the narrative.

Kazantzakis presents the human being on an ascending curve from plant to animal to human being (92 in the Greek text, this passage is missing from the English translation), a struggle involving constant transformation, moral improvement and freedom

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[22] Morton P. Levitt rightly points out "that each persona in *The Fratricides* fails in his task, that none leaves behind him a meaningful legacy: that the young Royalist soldier does not achieve manhood, that the middle-aged guerilla captain is turned on by his own people, that the old village priest is killed at the command of his son" (op. cit., p. 171).

(98/99). Though regression to bestiality is the result of the breakdown of this process, it is not clear what constitutes its ultimate higher aim and achievement. God, freedom, or a higher form of the human being? The novel fails to give a clear and convincing answer to this question and thus to articulate the symbolic culmination of this process. *The fratricides* suffers from defective symbolism. It is a novel which could not realise its symbolic potential and in which the absence of symbolism could be seen as absence of hope. Kazantzakis did not develop the metaphorical and symbolic aspects of his story as he had done in *Christ recrucified.*

In *The fratricides* Kazantzakis neither achieves a synthesis of the opposites nor their symbolic transcendence. He cannot overcome his dualistic mode of thinking and representing the world; therefore he cannot offer a position for his readers to identify with. He does not show how the conflict might be resolved and his narrative ends with death and despair. Structurally too the novel has loose ends. For example, the internal dispute within the Red Army, epitomised by Drakos and Loukas, does not lead anywhere. Perhaps the author's failure can be explained by the fact that he departed from the historico-mythical method and did not exploit the ability of myth to convert historical events into timeless symbols.[23]

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Rodis Roufos was more successful in drawing symbolic parallels: in his case between ancient history and the contemporary world. His novel *Graikyloi* (first published in April 1967 and reprinted in 1971 and 1999) is one of the few fictional representations of antiquity in post-war Greek prose and the author's most accom-

[23] As Peter Bien points out, the mythic method is "defined as a technique for going beyond present dissolution to the intimation of future reconciliation and synthesis; it is the aesthetic correlative to hope" (op. cit., p. 2).

plished novel.[24] Though not experimental in narrative terms, it represents a subtle allegorical handling of history with a measured balance of fact and fiction. Roufos liked to draw parallels, either between earlier periods (particularly post-classical) and the modern era or between imaginary countries (like Boliguay in his unfinished novel *Viva Boliguay* and in his allegorical story "Ο Υποψήφιος" ["The candidate"] published in the volume of *Eighteen texts* [1970][25]) and the situation in his own country, particularly under the Colonels.

In an essay which preceded the publication of the novel, Roufos took issue with the treatment of the Hellenistic period as a period of decline and argues that it was a period of maturity rather than old age. It was a period that centred on the individual or the wider world and no longer on the city and thus promotes cosmopolitanism, individualism, scepticism and the questioning of traditional beliefs and values. The modern antipathy towards mature periods such as the Hellenistic, Roufos points out, is psychological because the post-classical period presents some analogies with the present. It is a mirror of the modern world, something that Cavafy perceived clearly and used creatively. Roufos notices a modern nostalgia for primitivism or an appreciation of archaic art and a reluctance or fear to look into the mirror of the Hellenistic age lest we recognise features of the present.[26]

Perhaps this explains why Roufos chose Athens during the first century B.C. as the subject of his novel and relied on the ancient sources to give the reader a detailed and accurate picture of the period. The novel drew on Roufos's research for his doctoral thesis at the Sorbonne which he started in 1961, after being appointed to the Greek Embassy in Paris in 1960, but which was

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[24] Dimitris Daskalopoulos shares this view in his introduction to the section on Roufos in the anthology *Η Μεταπολεμική Πεζογραφία*, Vol. 7 (Athens: Sokolis 1988), p. 21.

[25] See Rodis Roufos, *Επιλογή: Λογοτεχνικά κείμενα* (Athens: Kedros 1973).

[26] Rodis Roufos, "Η απολογία μιας 'παρακμής'", first published in the periodical *Εποχές* in 1966, reprinted in *Οι Μεταμορφώσεις του Αλάριχου* (Athens: Ikaros 1971), pp. 89-138.

never completed due to his recall to Athens and the Greek Foreign Office in 1964. In his authorial note he recommends from among the ancient sources Plutarch's *Life of Sulla*, Appian's *Mithridatic Wars* and Athenaeus's *The Deipnosophists* and from modern studies W. S. Ferguson's *Hellenistic Athens* (1911) and Théodore Reinach's *Mithridate Eupator: Roi de Pont* (1890). He also states that in his novel he followed the sources meticulously and only where they had gaps or there were different interpretations did he rely on Ferguson or use his own imagination.

Indeed the novel presents a historically accurate picture of Athens during the critical years 88-86 B.C. In the preceding years Athens had been a prosperous city, had enjoyed peace for a number of years, and her philosophical schools were renowned. As Claude Mossé points out, this state of affairs concerned only a rich minority and there is no information about the rest of the population, the mass of poor citizens who made a meagre living from their land or their craftmanship: "Texts and inscriptions acquaint us only with the minority of rich and influential men who governed the *polis*. The others remain hidden in total darkness. They were to emerge from this suddenly on a summons from the King of Pontos, Mithridates Eupator."[27] Mithridates VI Eupator was an ambitious and ruthless monarch, who managed to increase the territory of his kingdom and to win prestige throughout the Greek world.

In the late spring of 88 B.C. Athens decided to break its alliance with Rome and side with King Mithridates who in the previous year had made significant gains in Asia Minor against the Romans. For the first time in more than a century the Athenians turned against Rome, which had helped them when they were threatened by Philip of Macedon. Historians have raised a number of questions: why did the citizens of Athens suddenly find their staunch ally Rome so repellent? Why did they find Mithridates so attractive? Was this due to his family's reputation as admirers and defenders of Greek culture, as suggested by the contemporary

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[27] Claude Mossé, *Athens in decline 404-86 B.C.*, trans. Jean Stewart (London & Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul 1973), p. 147.

historian Posidonius, or because he could offer a solution to the pressing debt problem faced by some Athenians in hock to Roman creditors?[28] In other words, were the reasons for the Athenians' attraction to Mithridates cultural or social? Was he the saviour of the debt-ridden or just an admirer of Greek culture? Neither history nor the novel gives a clear answer to these questions. An allegorical social reading of the novel with reference to the modern period could see Mithridates as a social revolutionary or a Communist, while a cultural reading would stress the perennial cultural prestige of Hellenism.

The novel portrays Athens as being divided between the democrats, who aspired to get rid of the Romans with the help of Mithridates, and the oligarchs, who supported the rule of Rome. Even the philosophers were divided in their support.[29] Philon, director of the Academy, is presented as a friend of Rome, and, according to his rival the Peripatetic philosopher Apellikon, is concerned primarily for his own social and economic success.[30] The Academicians and Stoics tend to be conservative and support the Romans, while those who belong to the Peripatetic school, like Apellikon, are democrats and look favourably on an intervention by Mithridates. Mithridates is presented as the champion of the poor (49) while the Romans are presented as greedy creditors (42, 52). Roman tax collectors and money-lenders were loathed in

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[28] Christian Habicht, *Athens from Alexander to Antony*, trans. Deborah Lucas Schneider (London & Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press 1997), pp. 297-301. Rodis Roufos himself points out that all the historical sources of the period and particularly Posidonius, being friendly to Rome, were rather hostile towards the Athenian revolt (Roufos, "Η απολογία μιας 'παρακμής'", p. 134).

[29] In Athens there were four famous schools of philosophy which flourished throughout the Hellenistic period: Plato's Academy (founded in 387); its offshoot, the *Peripatos* of Aristotle (founded in 335); Zeno's Stoa (founded in 306) and the "*Kepos*" (Garden) of Epicurus (founded in 301). After the destruction of Athens by Sulla in 86 B.C. the philosophical schools were in decline. See Habicht, op. cit., pp. 105-11.

[30] Rodis Roufos, *Γραικύλοι* (Athens: Okeanida 1999), p. 26. Henceforth page numbers will be given in a parenthesis.

those parts of Asia and Greece which they controlled.[31] In this respect, the conflict in the novel between democrats and oligarchs, and by extension Mithridates and Rome, acquires a social and political dimension which could be translated in modern terms as a conflict between capitalism and socialism.

Athens during the spring of 88 B.C. was ruled by Medeius of Piraeus, who was *eponymous archon* for an unprecedented fourth term, a clear indication that the constitution had been suspended. He must have requested the intervention of Rome but in the years 90-88 B.C. the Senate had been fully occupied with the Italic war.[32] Medeius believed that Rome was a global power which could unite the world under its leadership, and which stood for order, as opposed to Hellenism, which represented clear thinking and the creation of beauty. (81). Though Medeius was pre-occupied with the future of Hellenism, his younger followers cared more about their own profit. With the exception of Medeius and Kalliphon, who belonged to old Athenian families, the new oligarchs are *nouveaux riches* and not aristocrats, who were not concerned about the glory or the independence of the city (107).

The Athenian *demos* revolts against Medeius while Athenion, a philosopher from the School of Aristotle, on his return from a trip to Asia Minor as head of a delegation, claims that he has established contact with Mithridates and he is poised to intervene, which forces Medeius to suggest to his ruling elite that they should leave the city. Athenion is then elected hoplite general by the citizens, who empower him to nominate all other officials. Some oligarchs immediately switch sides and become democrats. The island of Delos defects from Athens and Apellikon leads an Athenian expedition against the island. Lefkios Orbius, a Roman businessman on the island, manages to defeat the Athenians and Apellikon accepts responsibility and flees before he can be finally accused. The island is seized shortly afterwards by Archelaus, Mithdrates's general, with the loss of thousands of Italian lives

[31] Habicht, op. cit., p. 302.
[32] Ibid., p. 302.

and then presented back to Athens. Reportedly, Mithridates ordered the replacement of Athinion by Aristion, an Athenian Epicurean philosopher who had accompanied Archelaus and who was to become the new ruthless "tyrant" of Athens.[33] By that stage nobody feels secure and many are arrested as Roman sympathizers. Athinion himself ends up in jail without his wife, Lyssipe, knowing what has happened to him.

Meanwhile Archelaus tries to secure his rule in the rest of Greece while Cornelius Sulla assumes power in Rome. The latter arrives in Greece in early 87 B.C. and besieges Athens and Piraeus. During the siege the Athenians suffer a great deal due to shortage of food and when Sulla enters the city during the night of 1 March 86, he orders a massacre to teach the Athenians a hard lesson. Later on Sulla repents and puts a stop to the massacre and thus the author has Dion narrowly escape death. Praising the Athenians of former times, Sulla says he is sparing a few (living) for the sake of the many (dead).

The central character of the novel is the fictional Dion who is 32 years old, single, and has studied medicine. His father has been killed 15 years earlier during the suppression of the workers' uprising at Laurion and his mother has died while he was in Alexandria. His younger brother Glafkos, an oligarch-sympathizer, has settled with his wife Chloe at the family estate in Dekeleia, after having enjoyed life in Athens.[34] Dion is a democrat, but avoids extremes or taking sides, and does not wish to see Athens a colony of Mithridates (220). Eteoklis, a sculptor, tells Dion that he cannot find a fixed point in his character because he oscillates between philosophy, medicine and aestheticism and argues that it is time to understand that the role of art is to deal with manly things and the hard life of the majority of people (21). These kinds of references

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[33] It has been suggested that the same man may have been called Athenion by Posidonius and Aristion by Plutarch. See Mossé, op. cit., p. 150 and Graham Shipley, *The Greek world after Alexander (323-30BC)* (London: Routledge 2000), p. 390.

[34] Dion might be identified with Plato, considering that both have a brother called Glafkos/Glaucon.

at the beginning of the novel help to mark Dion out as an eclectic, unbiased and uncommitted character who does not take sides in the political power struggle, unlike Eteoklis, for example, who is a democrat and hates Rome, considering the Romans to be interested only in looking after the interests of the rich.

Dion lives together with his young Jewish slave Ruth, whom he has bought in Delos. She is to become his lover and later they have a son called Harmides. Through their relationship Roufos introduces a cultural antithesis between Hellenism and Hebraism, presenting Dion as the embodiment of Greek rationalism and Ruth as the representative of Hebraic religiosity (419-20). Their relationship in the novel does not seem to play an important role in terms of the plot, but it serves as an argument for the cultural superiority of Hellenism through the representation of Dion as a humane and open-minded individual. This suggests that the novel works on two levels: a cultural one (as a reflection on the role of Hellenism) and a political one (through the conflict with Rome). The political message of the novel is not entirely clear and its political allusions can be read on different levels: local, global, social or ethical.

The situation in Athens during the period 88-86 B.C. and the struggle for power between democrats and oligarchs could be seen as an allegory for political instability and destruction caused by civil strife (a possible allusion to the Greek Civil War). Aristion, for example, in his funeral oration for some Athenian democrats who have died in an ambush outside Athens tries to shift the blame from the foreign powers to his Athenian opponents.

> "Don't ever forget, citizens, who turned out to be the murderers of our people in this battle. It was not the Romans, nor was it their foreign allies. It was the Athenians, double-crossing oligarchs, the same who for so many years oppressed you, and now they are fighting again to subjugate you. They lifted sacrilegious weapons against their homeland, they treacherously murdered your companions. I ask you: are these people, and those who collaborated with them in any way whatsoever, worth any kind of pity or mercy?" (262)

Later on, however, Aristion himself orders an attack by his Cappadocian archers on a delegation of Athenian priests and members of parliament who were seeking a negotiated surrender of Athens to the Romans. A number of Athenians, including Kleinias, lose their lives before Aristion orders his Cappadocians to cease fire (369-376).

Though the conflict in Athens between democracy and oligarchy appears to be ideological, there are characters in the novel who are motivated by greed. Sarapion and Diodoros, supporters of Medeius, are primarily concerned with profit (82), and they easily switch loyalties when the democrats come to power (114). However, in the end they do not manage to save their skins and end up being executed because suspicion and fear rather than ideological debate reign in the city.

It is hard to tell whether this situation in Athens represents an allegory of the situation in Greece after the Second World War, though Roufos in his authorial note at the end of the novel states that the reader should judge whether the period he had tried to "resurrect" offered any didactic message to his own. It has been suggested that the food shortage in Athens during the Roman siege has some analogies with the famine during the German occupation of Athens.[35] The analogies with the post-WWII era are reinforced if we see the struggle for global supremacy between Rome and Mithridates in modern terms.

The opposition between Rome and Mithridates could be treated as a metaphor for the political conflict between East and West, Communism and capitalism. There are incidents in the novel which point to this parallel. For example, the poet Amyntas, presumably modelled on Cavafy's Fernazis, tells Dion that the lesson to be learnt from Mithridates's East is that the individual self cannot survive in the presence of a strong leader who embodies the dreams of the people (122). The idea that democracy is the suppression of individualism alarms Dion, sounding more like

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[35] Vasos Varikas, "Αναφορά στο σήμερα – Ρόδη Ρούφου: *Οι Γραικύλοι*", first published 16 July 1967, reprinted in *Συγγραφείς και κείμενα, Β, 1966-1968* (Athens: Ermis 1980), p. 164.

the barbarism of politics. Is this a form of idealism or escapism? Although in earlier novels Dion also appears to be the author's persona,[37] taking a similar liberal stance and articulating similar views to those in *Graikyloi*, it should be stressed that Roufos himself was not a withdrawn or ivory-tower man.[38]

Though culture and aesthetics might offer a way out of political conflict, the novel does not end on an upbeat note, since the fall of Athens to the Romans and the subsequent defeat and death of Mithridates brings to an unsuccessful end the last resurgence of Hellenism. Hence, the defeat of Hellenism represents a defeat of culture. Yet this rather pessimistic ending is not reflected in the thoughts of Dion who passionately believes in the eternal Hellenic ideals of spirit, truth and beauty.

> Here came the lesson of the preceding hours, the truth that had emerged by reading *Phaedo*: there are other dimensions to greatness and glory, apart from political power. There is spirit, truth, beauty. We Greeks can be the scholars, artists, thinkers of

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[37] See his trilogy *Το Χρονικό μιας σταυροφορίας* (*Η ρίζα του μύθου* [1954], *Πορεία στο σκοτάδι* [1955], *Η άλλη όχθη* [1958]) and his novel about Cyprus *Η Χάλκινη Εποχή* (1960, available in English translation as *The Age of Bronze*, London: Heineman 1960). Roufos's trilogy has been criticised for its anti-Communist content and as a result the writer, who gradually adopted a more conciliatory approach, made some modifications, removing passages and toning down its anti-Communism in the second edition (1971). This trilogy together with the work of other "testimonial" writers of the period is discussed by Peter Mackridge, "Testimony and fiction in Greek narrative prose 1944-1967", in: Roderick Beaton (ed.), *The Greek novel AD1-1985* (London: Croom Helm 1988), pp. 90-102.

[38] Though Roufos was not among the exponents of *littérature engagée*, he wrote essays on ideological issues such as the one on modern Greek conservative ideology (first published in the periodical *Νέα Εστία* in 1956 and reprinted in his book *Οι Μεταμορφώσεις του Αλάριχου*, pp. 16-44). He was a fierce opponent of the military regime in Greece and wrote anonymously *Vérité sur la Grèce* (Lausanne: La Cité 1970), translated into English by Richard Clogg (*Inside the Colonels' Greece*, by Athenian, London: Chatto and Windus 1972). He also contributed an essay on "Culture and the military" in Richard Clogg and George Yannopoulos (eds.), *Greece under military rule* (London: Secker & Warburg 1972), pp. 146-62.

> the new world. Hellenism will not be wiped out, because it is a concept which transcends the shifting fortunes of races... A way will be found to co-exist with Rome. But could we ever come to a true understanding with these people who were so different from us? (434)

The novel urges readers to see it as an allegorical commentary about the modern period, and particularly the period of the Cold War, with its descriptions of power struggle, intrigue, and torture. The novel could be read both on a national level as a reference to the Greek Civil War and the political instability that followed as well as on an international level as an allusion to the clash of superpowers and the parody of independence for small nations.[39] On both levels the message is the same: there are no political saviours.

The aim of the novel is summed up by the last lines of the epigraph from Polybius quoted at the beginning of the text: "the purpose is not to please readers temporarily, but for them to see sense and not make again the same mistakes". History for Roufos offers a lesson for the modern reader, but this lesson could be interpreted as a rejection of crude politics in favour of aesthetic humanism.[40] In the end Roufos's novel is as much an allegory about the political developments of his time as an exaltation of art and culture over the barbarity of politics.

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Art as antidote to repressive politics is arguably the message in some of *The stories of ordeal* (*Τα διηγήματα της δοκιμασίας* [1978]) by Christophoros Milionis.[41] Most of these stories were

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[39] Dimitris Daskalopoulos (op. cit., p. 20) points out that in the novel one can find some analogies with the "lost spring" of the early 1960s.

[40] Left-wing critics such as Dimitris Raftopoulos (*Οι ιδέες και τα έργα*, Athens: Difros 1965, pp. 289-96) have criticized Roufos's first novel for its lack of realism and for an aestheticised treatment of reality.

[41] Christoforos Milionis, *Τα διηγήματα της δοκιμασίας* (Athens: Kedros 2001). Where page numbers are given they refer to this edition. For

first published during the military dictatorship (1973-74) in Greece in the periodical entitled *Ordeal* (*Δοκιμασία*), alluding to the difficult conditions under the Junta. The author uses the medium of the short story rather than the novel because his aim is to provide snapshots of a disordered public life, not to articulate an alternative political vision or a model of political behaviour as Roufos did with his character Dion. By using meticulously detailed descriptions, little action and no characterization, the stories highlight a sense of imprisonment and desolation, thus creating an atmosphere of fear, intimidation or sinister anticipation. In this way they draw attention to the oppressive nature of the regime while at the same time skilfully circumventing censorship.[42] Though Milionis is basically a realist writer and the rest of his fiction relies on his personal experience with references to historical events and his native region,[43] these stories stand out as they represent an appropriation of the techniques of the French *nouveau roman* not for the sake of formalist experimentation or literary imitation, but as a form of cultural resistance.[44] Political

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further bibliographical details see Dimitrios H. Sklavenitis, *Χριστόφορος Μηλιώνης: Χρονολόγιο – Βιβλιογραφία – Ανθολόγιο (από το 1954 ως το 2002)* (Athens: Sokolis 2003).

[42] For the impact of censorship on Greek poetry see Karen Van Dyck, *Kassandra and the censors: Greek poetry since 1967* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press 1998).

[43] For further information on Milionis's fiction see G. D. Paganos, *Τρεις μεταπολεμικοί πεζογράφοι: Χριστόφορος Μηλιώνης – Νίκος Μπακόλας – Η. Χ. Παπαδημητρακόπουλος* (Athens: Nefeli 1998), Spyros Tsaknias, "Χριστόφορος Μηλιώνης" in *Μεταπολεμική πεζογραφία*, vol. 5 (Athens: Sokolis 1988), pp. 254-329, Yorgos Aragis, "Ο διηγηματογράφος Χριστόφορος Μηλιώνης: Τα *Ακροκεραύνεια*", in *Προσεγγίσεις* (Athens: Patakis 1997), pp. 126-38 and Alexandros Argyriou, "Ξαναδιαβάζοντας το *Καλαμάς και Αχέροντας* του Χριστόφορου Μηλιώνη", in *Οριακά και μεταβατικά έργα Ελλήνων πεζογράφων* (Athens: Sokolis 1996), pp. 213-33.

[44] In his essays Milionis demonstrates familiarity with the work of Nathalie Sarraute and Alain Robbe-Grillet (see "Διαχρονική και συγχρονική πεζογραφία" (1975), *Υποθέσεις*, Athens: Kastaniotis 1983, pp. 25-30 and 40, and *Με το νήμα της Αριάδνης*, Athens: Sokolis 1991). It should be noted here that Milionis's wife Tatiana Tsaliki had translated and published in a single volume in 1970 Sarraute's *Tropismes*

oppression gave Milionis the opportunity to put a self-referential mode of writing to a new use, in order to overcome censorship and to express himself freely.[45]

Milionis adopted the modes of the *nouveau roman* to react to an authoritarian regime and not to a literary tradition or an established fictional practice as French writers such as Natalie Sarraute, Claude Simon, Robbe-Grillet or Michel Butor had done.[46] The impersonal style and the overuse of description do not aim primarily to reveal the formal devices and the artificiality of writing as in the case of *nouveaux romanciers*. Instead they draw attention to the impersonality of the regime and its oppressive practices. Lacking characters, Milionis's stories are not anthropocentric and seem to follow Robbe-Grillet's recommended technique that "to describe things, as a matter of fact, is deliberately to place oneself outside them, confronting them".[47] Hence, they could be defined as a "littérature objective", a term used by Roland Barthes for the narratives of Robbe-Grillet.[48] Through a visual narrative full of meticulous description, Milionis maintains a critical distance from what was going on in his country at the time. The objectivity of

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(1939) and Robbe-Grillet's *Instantanés* (1962). She also translated and published in 1969 Albert Camus, *Lettres à un ami allemand* (1945). At that time no publisher wanted to undertake the publication of this translation due to its anti-fascist character, and, therefore, she published it privately with personal permission from Gallimard. In the early years the military Junta in Greece had imposed preventive censorship on all publications, which was lifted in 1970, and this allowed the *Eighteen texts* to come out.

[45] The Algerian novelist Rachid Boudjedra (*Topographie idéale pour une aggression caractérisée*, Paris: Denoël 1975) also adds a political dimension to what is usually seen as an apolitical style.

[46] For more details regarding the *nouveau roman* see Jean Ricardou, *Problèmes du nouveau roman* (Paris: Seuil 1967), Stephen Heath, *The Nouveau Roman: A study in the practice of writing* (London: Elek 1972), and Ann Jefferson, *The nouveau roman and the poetics of fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1980).

[47] Alain Robbe-Grillet, *For a new novel: Essays on fiction*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Grove Press 1965), p. 70

[48] Roland Barthes, "Objective literature" (1954), *Critical essays*, trans. Richard Howard (Evanston: Northwestern University Press 1972), pp. 13-24.

his style serves as a protest against the dehumanization caused by the authoritarian regime rather than a reminder that we are reading a linguistic construct.

The new novel highlighted the relationship of human consciousness with the world, and therefore narrative perspective became an important aspect of its practice, suggesting that truth and meaning depend on individual experience and not on a common understanding between writer and reader. "The objects in our novels", Robbe-Grillet argues, "never have a presence outside human perception."[49] Such a statement brings the *nouveau roman* close to existential phenomenology, but it also seems to contradict its objectivist tendencies.[50] John Sturrock, however, claims that there is no great difficulty in situating the action in new novels "in the reflective consciousness of the novelist" and that "the narrative tradition to which the *nouveau roman* belongs is therefore that of the interior monologue".[51] With reference to phenomenology and existentialism, the question as to whether the *nouveau roman* is subjective or objective has caused disagreements among critics, but in the case of Milionis things are slightly different. In spite of the objectivity of the descriptions, the subjectivity of the observer in his stories acquires particular significance and could be associated with the freedom of the individual and the primacy of an independent private consciousness over the constraints of an external world dominated by repression.

With the exception of the first story, none of the stories conveys a sense of the passage of time while the characters are nameless and seem impersonal. The stories tend to be inconclusive and open-ended. The narrator is a detached observer who does not reveal his views or emotions. What dominates the narrative is the repetitive description of space, whether of flats, roads, abandoned villages or wasteland. In two stories, "Imprisonment"

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[49] Robbe-Grillet, *For a new novel*, p. 137.
[50] Arthur E. Babcock, *The New Novel in France: Theory and practice of the Nouveau Roman* (New York: Twayne Publishers 1997), pp. 18-19.
[51] John Sturrock, *The French New Novel* (London: Oxford University Press 1969), pp. 19-20.

(Εγκλεισμός) and "The steps" (Τα βήματα), the sense of imprisonment and eerie expectation is built up through the painstaking description of the enclosed space of rooms while the repeated references to the sound of approaching steps, door bells, household appliances or insects suggest a tense atmosphere. The repetition of minute details of interior spaces emphasize the feeling of withdrawal, insecurity and isolation while the external world, represented in "Imprisonment" by the sound of military marches, represents an unidentified source of threat and fear. Perception of the external world is often fragmented or partial ("Through the drawn blinds of the French window one could see only strips of the external world as if it has been cut in ribbons", p. 23).

Even the stories which take place in the open air convey a sense of wilderness, of a desolate landscape with no human presence or movement. In the story "The two gendarmes" (Οι δυο χωρο-φύλακες), two country policemen patrol a road leading to a village. Everything seems deserted and there is no sound of animals, bells, or even the wind. The only rhythmic repetitive sound comes from their boots. On a branch of a tree something sparkles and they think that it is a piece of tin, reflecting the sun. One of them shoots at the sparkle, but nothing happens. The reflection of the sun is still there. Obviously the contrast between the deserted landscape and the sunshine is an allegory of resistance to the tyrannical regime and the desire for freedom. In this same story there is an allusion to the military coup of 1967 when the two officers visit a boarded up and deserted building, presumably the village school, which has above its entrance a sign reading: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom – Founded April 1867 (Αρχή Σοφίας φόβος Κυρίου – Ανεγέρθη Απριλίου 1867)". The title itself is a play on words, splitting the word "χωρο-φύλακες" in two: χωρο (country) and φύλακες (guardians) and thus suggesting the policemen are guardians of the whole country rather than just the village. We find a similar word play in the story "At Katara" (Στην Κατάρα), where the word "Katara" is both a geographical reference to the eponymous

mountain pass between Epirus and Thessaly, and a word meaning curse and calamity.

In the story, roads are blocked by the snow at an altitude of 1700 metres. A few people are stranded in a wooden hut in the middle of nowhere with supplies of wood and lighting fuel running out. This could be read as a metaphor for Greece under military rule and the exhaustion of the gas lamp as symbolic of the darkness imposed by the junta. The allegorical contrast between light and darkness can be found in several of the stories while the transition from light to darkness acquires symbolic connotations and contributes to the gloomy ending of "Drive" (Διαδρομή). This story tells of a private car being kept under surveillance by the secret police, whose car is identified by its special three-figure number plates. The road is endless, the radio broadcasts military marches, and the chase goes on and on, suggesting that nothing will ever change.

The last two stories make some implicit connections between art and freedom. In the story "The poet or the tick-tock of the clock" (Ο ποιητής ή το τικ-τακ του ρολογιού) a couple sit in their flat around midnight. The man is reading a newspaper report to the woman about how two murderers have entered a flat, hidden in the loft and waited there until around midnight when their victim arrived. The murderers had made a number of phone calls beforehand to make sure that their victim would not be there when they arrived. The reading of the newspaper is interrupted a number of times by the ringing of the telephone but, when the woman picks it up, the person at the other end hangs up. The phone calls and the coincidence as to the time (midnight) invite the reader to draw a parallel between the murder as reported in the paper and the calls to the couple's flat. The unsettling atmosphere created by the report, the suggestive silence of the night and the spooky calls are all intensified by the ticking of an old clock in the flat. The repeated references to the clock heighten the sense that something sinister is imminent and time is ticking away.

The couple's sitting room is described in detail and some of the descriptions are repeated. The recurring descriptions relate to

Reproduced from Waldemar George, *Le Peinture Expressioniste* (Paris: Éditions Aimery Somogny 1960), p. 82. I would like to thank Christophoros Milionis for sending me a copy of the painting.

the clock and a painting by Francis Gruber (1912-1948) called "The poet" (1942), portraying a door half-open in the countryside without any walls around it, through which one can see a horse with its head lowered and a bird of prey on its back (see illustration). In front of the door on a dilapidated wooden bench a tired poet is sitting. The reader is invited to make sense of these disconnected images of the clock, the newspaper report and the painting. We may assume that what is involved here is a contrast between the atmosphere of fear and intimidation associated with the enclosed space of the flat and the sense of freedom represented by the painting. The painting here seems to be a symbolic representation of the freedom of art, offering a way out of the claustrophobia and intimidation. The boundaries between text and reality are blurred in this story as the reader is induced to anticipate something along the lines of the newspaper report happening again, suggesting that life imitates art and not the other way around. Art is identified with openness and freedom; real life with violence and fear. Though the poet in the painting appears vanquished, the story could be read as an allegory about the power of art to transcend political repression.

The antithesis between life and art is implied in the last story "Introduction to the French lesson (A Paris)" (Εισαγωγή στο μάθημα των Γαλλικών (A Paris)). Here a teacher reads a description of Paris by Anatole France, mentioning various landmarks such as Hugo's Notre-Dame, the Louvre, the quartier latin, the Sorbonne; it represents a stark contrast to the picture of poverty glimpsed from the rear window of the school, which is referred to twice. Another description, mentioned three times in the story, is that of a photograph of a man with slightly protruding forehead, thin lips and trimmed triangular moustache. This photograph, which is described as being on the wall of the classroom, seems likely to be an allusion to an omnipresent official photograph of the dictator Papadopoulos. The contrasts in the story are completed by a final one made between the slightly-built female teacher and the heavily-built school Inspector with a game leg, who has come to observe her class. One could argue that this story

is trying to contrast Paris as a symbol of enlightenment, art and freedom with the squalor and repression of Greece at the time of the military junta.

It could be claimed that the stories are based on much tedious description, very little action and too many forced contrasts which render them schematic and predictable. On the other hand, this kind of writing, with its lack of excitement, plot and causality, intrigues the reader, draws attention to detail and raises suspicions about the flatness of style. For example, in the story "The steps" the brands of domestic appliances are referred to more than once: the refrigerator is a Philips, the dish washer an Indesit, while other brands such as Candy and Hoover are also mentioned. One wonders what is the point of these details, but one could speculate that it is an allusion to the dependency of Greece on foreign imports or increasing consumerism among middle-class Greeks.[52] Milionis's style of writing cultivates an interrogatory stance on the part of the reader. The repetitions seem to be intended to excite the curiosity of readers, who are free to make their own associations, surmises or connections. Though the stories are about repression, intimidation and dehumanization, they are equally about the freedom of the reader to construct their own interpretation of the stories. The sheer objectivity of the descriptions conceals and reveals at the same time, inviting reflection and probing into their nature. The persistent descriptions and repetitions suggest some sort of freezing of time reflecting the deadlock into which the country has been lead by the dictatorship.

During the dictatorship allegorical writing was not uncommon. George Seferis wrote the poems "The cats of St Nicholas" (1969) and "On aspalathoi..." (1971), Thanasis Valtinos published in the volume *Eighteen texts* (1970) his story "Ο γύψος" (The plaster cast), and Spyros Plaskovitis wrote his

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[52] In the story "Cynicism" (Κυνισμός) two foreign tourists visit a desolate and scorched landscape which metaphorically stands for the whole of Greece. Their indifferent attitude to what they observe suggests that many foreigners were indifferent to the plight of Greece during the dictatorship.

stories *Το συρματόπλεγμα* (The barbed wire), not published until 1974. What singles out Milionis is that he was using *nouveau roman* techniques in an unpredictable and original manner and for a completely different purpose.[53] His stories articulate a message of resistance and at the same time give an idea of the conditions endured by people at the time. They are allegories of dystopia and freedom and metonymies of fear and darkness. However, their success lies not so much in their message or their atmosphere, but in their avoidance of censorship. By drawing attention to the art of writing, the stories seek to represent and at the same time to transcend the violence of politics.[54]

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The three texts by Kazantzakis, Roufos and Milionis discussed above could be judged in terms of what sort of alternative to conflict or tyranny they present to the reader. Kazantzakis's alternative, being clouded in metaphysics, is not clearly spelled out and this explains why his novel has been seen as flawed.[55] The aim of the novel is confused, being neither realistic nor symbolic/allegorical, whereas the narrative stresses personal salvation rather than offering a more general vision. Roufos's alternative is embodied in Dion and amounts to patriotism and liberalism, while his allegorical story makes few demands on the reader. Milionis does not seem to offer a clear alternative, since his main concern

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[53] For other practitioners of the *nouveau roman* in Greece see Ritsa Fragkou-Kikilia, *Η Κωστούλα Μητροπούλου και το Αντι-Μυθιστόρημα* (Athens: Theoria 1984).

[54] Unfortunately this collection of stories by Milionis received little critical attention. See Elisavet A. Kotzia, "Η κριτική υποδοχή της πεζογραφίας του Χριστόφορου Μηλιώνη", in Georgia Charitidou (ed.) *Χριστόφορος Μηλιώνης: Αφιέρωμα* [Βιβλιοθήκη της Πανελλήνιας Ένωσης Φιλολόγων] (Athens: Metaichmio 2000), pp. 56-7. See also her review ("Πειραματική δοκιμασία", *Η Καθημερινή*, 16 June 2002) of the second edition of the collection in 2001.

[55] Yannis Vasilakakos, 'Νίκου Καζαντζάκη *Οι αδερφοφάδες*' in *Ο Ελληνικός Εμφύλιος Πόλεμος στη μεταπολεμική πεζογραφία (1946-1958)* (Athens: Ellenika Grammata 2000), p. 272-3.

is to outwit tyranny by avoiding censorship. His demands on the reader are greater as s/he has to make a special effort to comprehend the connotations of the allegorical descriptions. Kazantzakis's novel is a failed religious allegory because it cannot offer vision or hope and abandons the mythico-historical method; Roufos's historical allegory, on the other hand, makes good use of this method inviting readers to draw parallels between antiquity and modern times, while Milionis's stories represent modernist allegories which rely on style, urging readers to empathise and reflect on the conditions of imprisonment.

What the novels by Kazantzakis and Roufos share is an attempt to transcend conflict and to promote liberalism and idealism through characterization. Father Yánaros does not succeed as a credible symbol because he becomes too involved in the conflict, while Dion enjoys the role of a detached observer and is able to emerge as a symbol of independence, humanism and optimism. In both novels politics is presented as greedy, dirty and bloody and therefore, to counterbalance this negative image, the texts have to set up an idealistic, selfless and humane paradigm. Thus, resistance to politics leads to literary manifestations of metaphysics, idealisation and abstraction. On the other hand, the fact that Milionis's stories lack rounded characters shifts the issue of symbolism from characterization to description. In this way he avoids the pitfalls of idealism which lurk in the creation of symbolic characters. His stories do not make implicit value judgements or put forward idealised models of behaviour. In trying to avoid censorship, he is able to maintain a subtle balance between politics and literature.

In the three texts religion, culture and art emerge as challenges to politics. Kazantzakis fails to offer a convincing symbolic alternative to political conflict, whereas Roufos and Milionis both manage to resist the violence of politics using the aesthetics of Hellenism and the allegories of writing respectively. These narratives represent, on the one hand, a defence of freedom and democracy and, on the other, a defence of culture and literature. They tread carefully between commitment and aesthetic autonomy,

social engagement and private withdrawal; they transcend politics by engaging in politics, thus offering a new perspective on the social role of literature without compromising its autonomy. It should be said, however, that this kind of writing could easily lead to literature and culture being elevated into idealised aesthetic realms cut off from social reality. Roufos manages to escape this pitfall by adding a national dimension to the political in the form of his character Dion.

In conclusion, it could be said that politics is not always detrimental to literature. It can often release a writer's allegorical powers and stretch his or her potential for invention, wordplay and new ways of representing the past. Symbolism and allegory can give an extended lease of life to political literature, but the devices used to avoid censorship or castigate tyranny may pose increasing challenges to readers in later periods. It seems to me that resisting both political oppression and ideological dogmatism can produce the most fruitful and rewarding engagement between literature and politics.

Ancient sites, modern eyesores? The transformation of the city of Athens in English-language accounts (1945-2005)

David Wills

All travel – and writing about travel – involves a process of selective viewing and interpretation. Guidebooks and other prose travel accounts of Athens are no exception. Travel writer Leslie Finer admitted that every visitor to the Acropolis could not avoid seeing it in the light of "his own personal experience and sensitivity" (1964: 193). In this paper I examine how the city has been perceived by, and promoted for, the English-reading public since the end of the Second World War.

Many of the first-person travel accounts of Greece published in the first two decades following the war were little different in spirit or intent from those of the nineteenth century, when the country had been "seen through the eyes of a person educated by means of the Latin and Greek classical writers" (Wagstaff 2004: 9). The literary traveller in Greece discerned the presence of the past everywhere: Patrick Leigh Fermor commented in the 1950s that "there is hardly a rock or a stream without a battle or a myth" (1958: x). In this way, Greece in the twentieth century was similar to the Palestine recorded by medieval Christians: "the Holy Land became an imaginative geography in which pilgrims could roam through the world of scripture in three dimensions, as it were, with every site testifying to the truth of the text and recalling a Biblical tag or quotation" (Elsner and Rubiés 1999: 17). For many writers of the 1940s, '50s and '60s at least, visiting Greece served to validate or reinforce their views of the ancient past.

By the 1960s, however, the era of "pilgrimage" to Greece was coming to an end. Jeanne and Georges Roux commented in the middle of the decade that "it is only a short time since visitors to Greece were more often pilgrims than tourists ... [when] the country was visited by archaeologists and scholars seeking on her soil the remains of an antiquity they had learned to love in their college lecture rooms" (1965: 15). Even as he wrote a guidebook entitled *The pilgrim's companion in Athens*, published in 1964, Stewart Perowne observed that "more and more people visit it [Greece] each year in the height of summer, for the joy of the sun and the sea" (1964: 14). Tourists of course continued to visit the Athenian Acropolis. But in recent decades most have viewed the experience differently from those who wrote travel books during the mid-twentieth century. Katherine Kizilos found 1990s tour parties waiting to enter: "the tourists looked displaced, even bored, but still they came" (1997: 17). However, the city was apparently little visited for reasons other than its ancient monuments. *Time Out* recently remarked that "the modern city was until now a reason to bypass the capital altogether, or at most to provide a base while you spent just two or three days taking in the basics" (Rigopoulos 2004: 11).

In analysing the representation of Athens through guidebooks and travel writing, I am following other recent scholars who have argued that these forms of literature are central to the process of tourism. Giles Barber has defined a guidebook as a "usually pocket size work which the traveller is expected to take with him [sic] and consult on the spot" (1999: 94). As such, the guidebook helps to shape travellers' experiences as they move through the city: what they choose to see, and the significance of what they see. Whereas travel *writing* has the author as hero, a guidebook is intended to aid the reader in becoming the hero. In practice, however, the distinction in the form and usage of these two genres is not always so obvious. Travel writing often includes passages of history or information, and may therefore be physically carried by travellers to the locations in question. This is not the only way in which travel writing can be said to influence

travellers' perceptions of what they see. As Holland and Huggan have argued, such prose texts "do not necessarily act as substitutes for actual travel; on the contrary, they may often function as its catalyzing agents" (1998: 9).

In this paper I show that accounts of Athens – whether intended for armchair travellers or as information for those who were visiting – have reproduced a number of common themes over the past sixty years. The city changed significantly during that time, its population and infrastructure growing at a huge rate. In arguing that the modern city was made to "disappear", and that the people were thought of as the "other", I follow Penny Travlou's interpretation of guidebook accounts of Athens (Travlou 2002). I show how an East-West discourse is apparent in writers' characterisations of the Athenian people as well as in their descriptions of the cityscape. When travellers have found Athenian behaviour undesirable or inconvenient, they have had recourse to "orientalising" descriptions. I argue that recent writing and publicity surrounding the Olympic Games of 2004 provides the opportunity for more positive discourses about the city. Firstly, however, I consider the representation of the various ancient monuments of the city, arguing that each is assigned a different value by travel writers.

The ancient city

The sociologist John Urry has argued that "one's sense of place is not simply given but is culturally constructed" (1990: 2). Many travel writers of the period immediately following the Second World War regarded Greece as the cradle of Western civilisation, the country to which their own culture owed its civic and moral virtues, as well as much of its art and drama. In 1944 the young writer Demetrios Capetanakis suggested that in Britain "modern Greeks are little known". However, he did not believe that the same was true for the *Ancient* Greeks, because an Englishman "has done classics at school, perhaps also at the university, and Greece means for him a world of unreal perfection" (Capetanakis 1944: 135). Whilst some of the writers in English I have used in

this paper spent their formative years in the USA or Australia, Capetanakis's comment holds true for the majority, who were educated in Britain. In the first decades of the twentieth century, as Victoria Tietze Larson has explained, "at every level of the educational process classical studies were the dominant ingredient in the education of the gentleman" (1999: 191). To take one writer as an example, Compton Mackenzie listed his preparation for Oxford as Thucydides, Herodotus, Xenophon, Demosthenes, Greek tragedies, and the *Odyssey* (1960: 8, 9, 12). There was a general assumption that readers shared travel writers' appreciation of the importance and value of the classical world. The editor of the 1962 *Blue Guide* to Athens, for example, stated that the ancient state was "of fundamental importance to the Western way of life and as such is of perennial interest" (Muirhead 1962: vi). It is unsurprising then to find the Athenian Acropolis being billed by one 1950s travel writer as "the most famous site in the world" (Krippner 1955: 37). Fifty years later, it could still be called "one of the archetypal images of Western culture. A first glimpse of it above the traffic is a revelation, and yet feels utterly familiar" (Ellingham and others 2000: 91).

Alfred Zimmern's *The Greek Commonwealth* was a widely-read textbook on the ancient world in that, although first published in 1911, it was still in print in the 1960s. Zimmern made explicit the slippage of terms that occurred in accounts of ancient history: "To us in the North, if we are book-learned and home-keeping, Greece and Italy spell Athens and Rome. They are associated in our minds with a host of inherited ideas, with Art and Freedom and Law and Empire" (1961: 17). Such a reading of the past influenced viewings of the monuments of Athens in that travel writers emphasised the artistic and symbolic importance of the Acropolis (rather than other possible values such as historical events that may have taken place there). The Parthenon itself was acclaimed by Brian De Jongh in 1974 as a "harmony of design and execution [which] astonishes and delights" (1974: 128). The Erechtheion possessed "grace and airiness", whilst the wings of the Propylaea were "masterpieces of classical architecture"

(Welsman 1956: 81; De Jongh 1979: 23). The Temple of Athena Nike was praised as "an exquisite shrine" and "jewel-like", by authors writing over forty years apart (Cooper 1960: 37; Olofsson 2004: 32).

Writers attached a number of symbolic values to the Acropolis (Wills 2005). As the quotation from Zimmern's book suggests, ancient Athens could be regarded as synonymous with the cultural and political achievements of ancient Greece in general. At the end of the 1950s one writer was arguing that "artistic impulses which were expressed in architecture, sculpture, painting and poetry, political impulses which determined the world events of the time, all these had their starting point in the Acropolis, or, more broadly speaking, in Athens" (Kriekoukis 1959: 6). The authors of a guidebook published in 2000 observed that Pericles could not have foreseen how "his ruined temple would come to symbolise the emergence of Western civilization" (Ellingham and others 2000: 91). Thus a number of writers described a visit to the Acropolis as one of pilgrimage. In the 1940s Ashley Smith was passed by a group of tourists making the "pilgrimage" (Smith 1948: 198), and, two decades later, Guy Pentreath encountered those whose "faces look less like those of tourists than of pilgrims, expectant of a great experience" (Pentreath 1964: 33).

But the Acropolis could also be seen – by foreign observers as well as locals – as symbolic of the more recent history of the country. Eleana Yalouri has shown how, since the time of Greek Independence in the nineteenth century, the Acropolis has been made to echo the nation's attempts to recover from a ruinous recent past (2001: 185). According to travel writer Barbara Whelpton, the Acropolis:

> was built over and made to look like a Turkish city with narrow winding streets and small Turkish houses. It remained in this state until the nineteenth century, when the Greeks revolted against the Turks [and] were able to free their country from

> foreign rule [....]. Then began the great work of restoring the Acropolis to something of its former glory.[1]

Once the Turkish remains were swept from the Acropolis, as classicist Mary Beard has recently emphasised:

> All that the visitor can now see is what the archaeologists of the nineteenth century chose to leave behind: a handful of monuments with a fifth-century BC classical pedigree, standing in splendid (or uncomfortable) isolation, stripped of as much of their later history as possible.[2]

As British resident in Athens Sofka Zinovieff observed in her 2004 travel book, this left "a monument to ancestor worship, authenticating the Athenians as spiritual descendants of the ancient Hellenes" (2004: 49).

As with the Acropolis, descriptions of – and values ascribed to – other ancient sites in the city have been largely consistent across the past sixty years. Visitors were cautioned by guidebooks that they would find the Agora a scene of "sprawling confusion", or "large and confusing" (De Jongh 1974: 133; Mee and Spawforth 2001: 66). However, the fragmentary nature of remains was not necessarily an impediment to earlier travellers in Europe: as Chloe Chard has observed of the Grand Tour, sites were "viewed as independent of any noteworthy qualities that they may exhibit as objects of observation", and the past was conjured into the present through "efforts of intuitive understanding" (1999: 75). Twentieth-century travellers to the Agora were likewise advised to use their imaginations. James Ryan instructed his mid-1980s readers that "you can imagine the cheerful, lively bustle, with the crowded markets, the barbers' shops, the moneychangers, the priests, the beggars and the merchants" (1985: 31). Two decades earlier at the Agora, travel writer S. F. A. Coles had found himself transported back in time to witness the Panathenaic procession

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[1] Whelpton 1954: 85.
[2] Beard 2002: 102.

(1965: 38-9). In contrast, the adjacent Hephaisteion has often failed to impress. Osbert Lancaster called it "devastatingly boring" (1947: 48). In aesthetic terms, the Hephaisteion suffered from comparison with its illustrious near-neighbour. It "lacks the curvature and 'lightness' of the Parthenon's design", one guidebook of 2000 informed its readers (Ellingham and others 2000: 100). In addition, unlike the Agora itself, the Hephaisteion had no compensatory historical importance to give it interest. Even the name of this temple – formerly known as the Theseum – had been in dispute until earlier in the twentieth century.

The most important reason for visiting the Theatre of Dionysus has often been said to be its cultural significance. A 1940s writer called this "the home and shrine of drama, the very birth-place of comedy and tragedy both" (Wigram 1947: 48). Likewise, half a century later, the writers of the 2000 *Rough Guide* argued that its place in dramatic history still made this "one of the most evocative locations in the city" (Ellingham and others 2000: 98). According to the same guidebook, the Kerameikos cemetery was "little visited" and "has something of an oasis feel about it" (Ellingham and others 2000: 100). For these same reasons, back in the 1960s S. F. A. Coles had found it easy to visualise this as the location from which Pericles delivered his funeral oration for the Athenian dead of the Peloponnesian War (Coles 1965: 64). The "Roman magnificence" of the Temple of Olympian Zeus impressed a number of writers. John Pollard, writing in the 1950s, emphasised the "ornate Corinthian capitals, burgeoning whitely against the blue", and the "view through the pillars towards the Acropolis" (1955: 22).

My analysis of travel writing about these various ancient sites broadly confirms Penny Travlou's judgment that "in the case of Athens there is an archetypal imagery followed by guidebooks, regardless of publication date" (Travlou 2002: 109). However, it is important to recognise that similarities in representation may occur for different reasons, and one example of this is the brevity with which the Acropolis monuments were described. In 1961 Eric and Barbara Whelpton declined to give details about the

Parthenon sculptures for their readers because "these are so well known that they do not need describing, any more than the present aspect of the Parthenon which everyone has seen from their earliest years" (Whelpton and Whelpton 1961: 31). Many travel writers of the 1960s were burdening their readers with less historical information than those of the previous decade. Writers (and publishers), such as Robert Bell, began to recognise that potential readers may no longer regard themselves as "pilgrims" to the sites and monuments. Although, Bell argued, "in the past it appealed mainly to the archaeologist, the classical scholar and the keen student", Greece "is now making strenuous efforts to attract the ordinary visitor" (1961: 16). Thus Bell, although writing in the same year as the Whelptons, gave very different reasons for his scanty Acropolis coverage:

> I make no apology for dealing with this famous monument in a general way as this book is written for the average motorist; and the fact must be faced that to the average person one set of ruins can be very much like another – to use a favourite *Daily Express* phrase, they can be "off-putting". For those readers who want a detailed description of the Acropolis and its treasures, or the other archaeological wonders of Greece, any public library will recommend books eulogising their attractions.[3]

Ann Rickard's 2004 narrative of the Acropolis included just two sentences of history: "In the mid fifth century BC a man of vision, by the name of Pericles, persuaded the locals to begin an ambitious program of building in Athens. Work began on the Acropolis, with three contrasting temples and a monumental gateway" (Rickard 2004: 23).

When it was first established by the Greek government in the 1950s, the Greek Tourist Organization viewed itself as having "the responsibility to introduce the foreign pilgrims to both past and present Hellenism" (Yalouri 2001: 128). But by the last years

[3] Bell 1961: 246.

of the 1960s, the GTO had abandoned references to cultural heritage in favour of the slogan "Fun in Greece" (Simpson 1969: 38). It had become apparent that many tourists wanted to visit Greece for the glories of its present rather than those of the past. Many of those who did visit monuments during their stay might be expected to have less classical knowledge, especially now that progressively cheaper air-fares and package holidays allowed the gradual democratisation of travel. For the members of some social classes in Britain, and for most women, a classical education had never been a reality. In the 1950s, for example, only grammar and independent school pupils were taught about classical culture, via lessons in Latin, whilst the majority – those who attended the secondary moderns – were not (Forrest 1996: 1). But even in very traditional schools the existing curriculum was progressively squeezed to include more of "new" subjects such as science and modern languages. Thus by the early 1960s Her Majesty's Inspectors of schools were growing concerned about the "steady decline in the number of candidates entered for public examinations in Greek and Latin" (Forrest 1996: 15). Classics was formally pushed further to the margins by the reorganisation of education in the 1970s, resulting (at least in most parts of the country) in the disappearance of grammar schools in favour of comprehensives, and the introduction of a National Curriculum in all state-funded schools at the beginning of the 1990s.

Writing in the 1990s, the academic Jennifer Craik divided tourists of her own time into three groups:

> only a minority of tourists are truly cultural tourists (of the Grand Tour type) while a significant number are "culture-proof". Of those in the middle, many tourists may be motivated to take advantage of cultural attractions once other, primary motivations to travel have been met.[4]

[4] Craik 1997: 120.

Ann Rickard and her husband found that "Each monument, church or museum we have toured so far – apart from the Acropolis in Athens – has been virtually empty. We are obviously not the only tourists in Greece this year who are not inclined to explore history, castles and ruins" (Rickard 2004: 92). But as far back as the 1940s Dilys Powell was arguing that, in comparison with Rome, "the temples and theatres of the Acropolis apart, the architectural monuments of classical Athens are, for the unscholarly, not many or inescapable." However, Powell continued, "gradually as one walks about Athens the consciousness of the past grows stronger": through the landscape, the street names, and the dominating presence of the Acropolis (Powell 1941: 68). This reduced the city, as Mark Mazower has said of Salonica, to "little more than a backdrop to what was left of its more significant ancient predecessor" (2004: 212). In the next section I examine how writers of accounts in English reproduced the buildings, noise, smells and people they encountered as they moved about the modern city in search of this ancient past.

The modern city and the (modern) Athenians

The population of "Greater Athens" (including Piraeus) has been calculated at 1,378,586 in 1951, rising a decade later to 1,852,709, and to 2,540,242 by 1971 (Vermeulen 1983: 115). Those who travelled to visit the ancient city therefore had to confront (or were confronted by) the sounds, sights and smells of modernity. For most writers the post-war transformation of Athens meant urban sprawl and pollution, globalisation and homogeneity. Alexander Eliot warned readers of the 1960s that "the capital is modern and faceless", with "mile upon mile of concrete office and apartment warrens" (1964: 13). By the 1980s, in Brian Dicks's view, Athens had become "a sea of concrete paralysed by traffic, blasted by noise, polluted by fumes, vulgarized by advertising gimmicks and subjected to the incessant, dusty activities of the builders and developers" (1982: 33). Some writers disputed this prevailing view that modern Athens was an example of modernisation gone wrong. At the end of the 1960s, for example, William Sansom

argued that "Athens has too often and too easily been dismissed as a mediocre mess of concrete with neither character nor beauty. This is shortsighted and insensitive" (1968: 110). But even in 2005 an Athenian magazine editor recognised that "many visitors are not immediately taken by Athens" (Bissias 2005a).

In part, such concerns were a manifestation of the "middle class anxiety" (Urry 1990: 42) about changes to – and the destruction of – the sights/sites which form the focus of tourism. Some travel writers attempted to distance themselves from the processes that had been set in motion. They were comfortable to pin the blame on *tourists*, rather than themselves as *travellers*, for being the catalysts of change in Greece: "Tourism is like a sickness here", was Katherine Kizilos's judgement (1997:58). Comments about the new architecture of Athens also reflect the steadily growing dissatisfaction with the aesthetic and social consequences of the 1950s and '60s reconstruction of British towns and cities. But in criticising the physical transformation of the city post-1945 many writers were, in truth, guilty of cultural imperialism. They desired the modernisation along Western European lines of *some* aspects of Athenian infrastructure – because they wanted their experience as tourists to be comfortable and ordered. Ann Rickard, for example, has recently praised the "gleaming new airport", which is "as modern, as state-of-the-art and efficiently functional as an airport should be" (2004: 11). But writers looked down upon the manner in which this modernisation was carried out, and upon the aesthetic results. Though neo-classicism has been one of the mainstays of city architecture in the "West", when it was attempted in Athens the resultant buildings were regarded by Patrick Balfour in the 1950s as "of poor inspiration and unhappy proportions" (Kinross 1956: 55). In her 2004 book Melissa Orme-Marmarelis specifically referred to a fall in building standards since ancient times: "it seems that the appreciation for aesthetics and quality workmanship has declined since those golden years" (2004: 154).

When writers turned their attention to the Plaka, its picturesque aspect regularly drew praise in comparison to other parts of the city. In the 1960s Alexander Eliot discovered

> a place of whitewash and rich shadows, of coffee roasting in the open, of howling cats, street fights, passion on the stairs and a profusion of flowers growing in oil cans. Moreover, it can be a place of refuge from the huge blank unreality of the city below.[5]

Four decades later, Ann Rickard found

> a labyrinth of narrow streets, handsome churches and beautiful old homes. Throughout the exciting old quarters are lively cafés and tavernas, elegant restaurants and beckoning shops, all among the stateliness of the Byzantine churches and mosques. You can't help but love it.[6]

At the Acropolis travel writers desired isolation from other tourists, but the Plaka provided an opportunity for what John Urry calls the "collective gaze": the experience was thought to *benefit* from the presence of people to "give atmosphere or a sense of carnival to a place" (Urry 1990: 44-6). However, even here some writers, including William Sansom in 1968, registered their disapproval of the encroachment of modernity: "much of the Plaka is no longer what it was; now the area is a tourist moneymaker, a jazz of signs has sprouted, and a madness of motors has been allowed inside" (1968: 118-19). Writers desired an "authentic" experience – the "real Greece" was that which seemed to be unaffected by Western-style modernisation.

As I have suggested, many of those who wrote about Greece in the period after 1945 knew more about the ancient world than the modern country. It was therefore virtually inevitable that many travel writers would use their images of Ancient Greeks to help them make sense of their encounters with the modern Athenian

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[5] Eliot 1964: 13.
[6] Rickard 2004: 20.

people. Descriptions of the Greeks as resembling ancient gods, characters from mythology or drama, or figures from sculpture, are a common feature of mid-century travel writing about Greece. In Athens of the 1950s and '60s, William Sansom found policemen who stood "with their hands raised in the angular, archaic posture of Zeus saying Stop"; Louis Golding came across an old woman at the Roman Forum "moving erect as any figure on a Greek vase"; and, according to Robert Payne, "there are girls in Athens who look as though they had stepped down from the Porch of the Maidens" (Sansom 1968: 112; Golding 1955: 20; Payne 1961: 115). A few writers made efforts to portray the Athenians as a modern, European people. In the early 1940s Dilys Powell pointed out that Athens had its "fashionable society, just as any European capital" (1941: 81). In 2004, over sixty years later, Kate Collyns formed a similar image: "Modern Athens is literally buzzing with new shops, restaurants and easy-going café culture" (2004: 13).

But over the course of the past sixty years writers have found much to criticise in the Athenian lifestyle and behaviour they have observed. In 1970 Herbert Kubly implicated policemen in scams to lure tourists into bars for over-priced drinks (1970: 177-83). A decade later David Plante encountered a taxi-driver who covered over the meter and tried to charge double the correct fare, and *Athens News* columnist Brian Church has recently claimed that such drivers "rip off many Greeks as well as visitors" (Plante 1986: 250; Church 2002: 10). In her analysis of guidebooks Penny Travlou has identified a duality in the perceived status of the Greeks encountered by travellers:

> On the one hand, they are represented as being like their ancestors, with more or less the same physical features and qualities. On the other hand, in the particular case where they are connected to the tourist services, hierarchy and authority is built between the tourist playing the role of civilised Westerner and the Athenian as the provider of low quality services.[7]

[7] Travlou 2002: 120.

Travlou refers to "Greeks being different from Western people", Athenians being reduced to the exotic "other" (2002: 120, 124). I would go further, and argue that the specific characteristics of the "other" attached to the Greeks represent an "orientalising" tendency on the part of travellers. When describing Athenian markets in particular, travel and guidebook writers have regularly used the vocabulary of "oriental" or "eastern". Hans Rupprecht Goette, for example, found Monastiraki in 2001 to have "the atmosphere of an oriental town with its many shops, its busy traders and its bustling activity" (Goette 2001: 91). As the anthropologist Michael Herzfeld has explained, during the nineteenth century it was a prevalent British attitude that "delivered from its oriental yoke, [Greece] was a child of its antique past, one that had failed to mature in the manner of the West" (Herzfeld 1987: 55). Accosted by a policeman for using his typewriter on the slopes of the Acropolis, travel writer Ashley Smith revealed a continuation into the 1940s of this cultural snobbery when he exclaimed that "things like this wouldn't happen in England" (1948: 193). In presenting examples of Greek corruption and trickery, as well as making the overt connection of commerce and "hard sell" tactics with the "East", writers were reproducing a stock "orientalising" portrayal more commonly associated with descriptions of Turks. As Herzfeld has summarised, qualities associated with this Turkish stereotype have included "shiftiness, double-dealing, illiteracy, influence-peddling and rule-bending, disrespect for norms and admiration for cunning individuals who could twist them for their own advantage" (1987: 29). Travel writer Monica Krippner explicitly identified "a Turkish legacy [that] has left the Greeks with a taste in oriental opulence which [...] leaves much to be desired" (1957: 31).

Whilst writers found certain aspects of the "oriental" (such as Monastiraki) picturesque, many found the contrasts and contradictions of the modern city difficult to reconcile. In the early 1970s, for example, Glyn Hughes found it "impossible to realise that here, in this hideous semi-circle between the mountains and the Mediterranean Sea, was the home of the Greek poets and

philosophers, where a vital spring of our civilisation arose from the people and their myths" (1976: 42). In the next section, I explore writers' attempts to focus upon the ancient, and to shut out the modern.

The disappearance of modernity

Some visitors were unable to prevent the present from affecting their experience of viewing the antiquities of Athens. As John Pollard surveyed the Acropolis from Philopappos hill in the early 1950s, the "distant growl of traffic destroyed the illusion" of being back in the fifth century BC (1955: 24). Most writers, however, claimed to have succeeded in cutting themselves off from the modern city. Standing atop the Acropolis in the same decade as Pollard, Monica Krippner felt "a peace and silence, a remoteness from the noisy grimy world over the wall where the goods trucks bumped and clattered" (1957: 21). Some sought in their writing to distinguish their appreciation of antiquity (as travellers) from that of the masses (of tourists). For Ann Rickard, viewing the Theatre of Herodes Atticus in 2003 was "so absorbing that I don't even see or hear the hordes of tourists around me" (2004: 24). Such writers appear to have desired an "authentic", individual experience when visiting sights/sites, what John Urry has characterised as the "romantic gaze" (1990: 20). Penny Travlou has argued that for many writers of guidebooks "there are two different time narratives within the same space; one refers to classical Athens and the other to the modern city. These narratives show a preference and therefore resurrection of the former and a sort of indignation towards the qualities of the latter" (Travlou 2002: 111). Rickard, for example, encountered the "depressingly golden arches of a fluorescently lit McDonald's. It breaks the spell like a bucket of icy water thrown over us" (2004: 23). Although some have felt that the modern surroundings have imposed themselves upon the archaeological remains, for most writers the ancient city remained the true identity of Athens. The Parthenon was seen by Guy Pentreath in the 1960s to physically dominate "all the tall

blocks of flats and making them somehow look but a passing fashion" (1964: 28).

The intellectual concentration upon the classical past also led to a relative dismissal of the extant Byzantine and Ottoman remains. Antoinette Moses admitted at the end of the 1970s that "most tourists neglect Byzantine Athens in favour of the classical sites" (1978: 231). John Russell recognised the extent to which the capital had been shaped for 1980s visitors by generations of classicists and archaeologists:

> If there had ever been a Byzantine era in Greece, they were not going to tell us about it. If the long Turkish domination had brought mosque and minaret even into the interior of the Parthenon itself, they took them out and saw to it that they were never mentioned again.[8]

But this was not merely rhetoric imposed by the West. In the nineteenth century the Greeks themselves had put forward this view of history as an important part of the process of forging the new nation state. The classical ancestry of the Greeks was emphasised in order to secure the support of the European powers for their country's independence. Greek sources sought to assert their people's distinctiveness in opposition to what they were not – Turkish – so that "forgetting the Ottomans was part of Greece's claim to modernity" (Mazower 2004: 474). The Byzantine period was likewise considered to have been "a disgraceful period for the Greek nation, an era of foreign occupation" (Hamilakis and Yalouri 1996: 121). Indeed, "full of intrigues, eunuchs, courtiers and infinite wealth, Byzantium was but the medieval version of the Ottoman Empire" (Agapitos 1994: 2). In their concentration upon the classical past of Athens, writers since 1945 were therefore part of a long tradition originating from both Greek and earlier "Western" sources.

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[8] Russell 1986: 247.

In recent years more Greek voices have been heard in English-language accounts of the city – publications by people of Greek descent from America or Australia who are visiting their country of origin for the first time. Just as earlier generations of (Western) writers were looking to find the origins of Western civilisation, these authors have been on pilgrimages of their own, wanting to "find themselves". George Sarrinikolaou, a New Yorker from the age of ten, arrived in Athens "to reclaim a space for myself in the city where I was born" (Sarrinikolaou 2004: ix). However, these writers have often viewed aspects of Greece no less critically than others approaching from "the West". Sarrinikolaou, for example, described at length his experience of corruption in the public health system, in which "the extent and quality of care depend on an institutionalized practice of bribery" (Sarrinikolaou 2004: 112). In the last section of this paper I consider the extent to which recent events, especially the Olympics, may herald new ways of writing the city.

The contested city

In the run up to the Olympic Games of 2004, familiar negative representations of the city of Athens emerged in British newspapers as well as in guidebooks and travel writing. In *The Independent* Guy Alexander wrote that "Athens" Olympic preparations have been laughingly billed as the modern Greek ruins" (2004: 3). Rick Reilly subsequently apologised on behalf of his fellow American journalists: "We envisioned you as a bunch of lazy, swarthy guys in wife-beater T-shirts chugging ouzo instead of finishing the baseball dugouts" (Yannopoulos 2004). Travel writer Ann Rickard had tried to give a balanced view: "next year, when the Olympics are about to be staged, we are sure Athens will be a place of grandness again, but now it is just an awful mess" (2004: 25). But the eventual success of the Games – and of the infrastructure put in place to host them – caused new versions of the city to be written, at least in periodical publications. In a review article *Athens News* trumpeted a "definitive shift in global media opinion", as "the flagships of the world's mainstream press

plead "Sorry" for their past doubts about a successful Athens Olympics" (Yannopoulos 2004). The improvements to buildings, monuments and pedestrian areas in time for the event drew praise from Coral Davenport who asserted that "the Greek capital may still be surrounded by swathes of concrete sprawl but its ancient and modern centre is looking better than it has in decades" (2004: 37).

The Greek authorities were aware of the transformative potential of the Games. Athens mayor Dora Bakoyannis argued that "the Olympics gave us a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to show that Athens is a lively, modern metropolis" (Bakoyannis 2005: 6). She anticipated long-overdue changes to tourist patterns: "Athens is attracting tourists in its own right, rather than just being treated as a stepping stone on the way to the Greek Islands and is pitching for a share of the lucrative city break section of the tourism market along with Amsterdam, Paris and Madrid" (*World Report* 2004: 12). At least in the short term, this appeared to have been realised: Gianna Angelopoulos-Daskalaki, chief organiser of the Games, reported a 20% increase in tourism to Athens since the Games (Donald 2005). A leaflet inserted into the magazine *Time Out: Athens* in 2004 reversed expectations: the "Clubbing Map" was devoted to "the best bars and clubs you need to know to have fun at night in Athens", but for those who subsequently surfaced for a few daylight hours there was a tiny section on "must-see Athens sights" (including the Acropolis).

2005 saw Elena Paparizou's victory in the Eurovision Song Contest with "My Number One". For *Athens News* journalist Maria Paravantes, Eurovision helped put the country on the map: "it 'reminded' our fellow Europeans that Greece is also part of this continent" (Paravantes 2005). A further result was that, as Kyriacos Karseras reminded us, 2006 saw Athens "host the (somewhat lowbrow) Eurovision Song Contest" whilst Patras became "the (decidedly highbrow) cultural capital of Europe. This means that the entire spectrum of Greece's cultural and

organisational credentials will be showcased at the same time" (Karseras 2005: 75).[9]

Conclusion: a city transformed?

Late 1940s Athens was a bustling place, a city of contrasts:

> glittering jewellery, salted nuts sixpence a bag, fish mart, fowl mart, flower mart, near-Parisian elegance to dungeoned squalor, a one-legged boy with a carnival hat, twelve bootblacks in a row, more stock in the shops than there is in Burlington Arcade, more poverty at the other end of the elegant road than there is in Piano Sorrento.[10]

In a 2005 editorial for a magazine distributed free in Athenian hotels and museums, Ilias Bissias also represented his city as having a multiple identity: "take a carefree wander around Athens to discover the neighbourhoods that combine the ancient with the modern, the classic with the subversive, the conservative with the rebellious, and Europe with the East" (Bissias 2005b). Although over the past sixty years writers have recognised the dynamic elements of Athens, all too often they have viewed static as desirable. Athens was undergoing a transformation during the post-war period, but travel writers wanted the city to have a kind of theme-park antiquity. Elements that challenged writers' ability to experience the ancient past, or their notions of what constituted "Greek", were ignored, denigrated, or described as "Turkish".

Travel writers in English have new opportunities to demonstrate their awareness of the positive achievements of the Turkish period, through greater access to its remains. In a recent leaflet the

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[9] The British media, however, showed little interest in Eurovision. On the day itself (20 May 2006) the event was barely mentioned by the "quality" newspapers *The Independent* and *The Guardian*. Afterwards, press attention focused (understandably) upon the Finnish winners, "death metal" outfit Lordi. However, veteran commentator for the BBC Sir Terry Wogan took the opportunity to praise the hosts: "Athens and Greece has been transformed by the success of the Olympic Games" (live television broadcast, BBC1, 20 May 2006).

[10] Smith 1948: 36.

branch of the Museum of Greek Folk Art which houses the Kyriazopoulos ceramics collection very clearly advertises its location as at "the Tzami (Mosque) on Monastiraki Square". This is in contrast to the situation before the building opened to the public, when even the presence of the mosque was not marked on guidebook plans of the square (Plante 1986: 253). As recently as 1991 John Freely, in his book of walks through the city, described the baths of Abid Efendi as "now abandoned and beginning to fall into ruins". However, Freely's prophecy that "it is only a question of time until the *hammam* itself disappears" (Freely 2004: 245) has fortunately not come to pass. Instead, the "Bathhouse of the Winds" (as it has been re-christened) has been lovingly restored and has opened complete with an audio tour evoking for visitors the sights and sounds of a typical Turkish bathhouse. However, two recent "archaeological guides" for travellers to Athens give a mixed impression of interest in the post-classical past: Goette's includes information about extant Byzantine and Turkish remains, whereas Mee and Spawforth elect to cover only the period until the 7th century AD, pleading that subsequent "equally fascinating periods require an expertise which we do not claim to have" (Goette 2001: 91; Mee and Spawforth 2001: xii).

As I have shown, since the end of the Second World War writing about the city has remained remarkably static. But in 2004 Sofka Zinovieff wrote in her travel book of a city "where you can choose between visiting a chic Indian restaurant, a designer-kitsch gay bar with fusion cuisine, or a converted warehouse specializing in mussels" (2004: 117). A guidebook of the same year trumpeted that "a cosmopolitan Mediterranean and European city is being born [...]. Athens has come of age" (Church and Ayiomamitis 2004: 24). It is too soon to tell whether the Olympics of 2004 will finally encourage a new, more positive view of the (modern) city of Athens to emerge in travel writing and guidebooks. But the aftermath of the rhetoric and recriminations, as well as physical regeneration, surrounding the Games does provide an opportunity for the prevailing representations to change, for the performance of a narrative transformation.

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The year 2005-6 at Cambridge

Students

Three students took the Part IB examination, one of them, Cecily Arthur, gaining a first. There were also three students who took Modern Greek in the first-year examinations (Part IA).

There were two candidates for the Certificate in Modern Greek: Dr Rupert Thompson was awarded a Distinction and Leonor Sierra passed with Credit. Carina Schaefer passed the examinations for the Diploma in Modern Greek.

Gwen Edwards, who graduated in 2005, was awarded a prize in the 2005 London Hellenic Society undergraduate essay competition.

Kostas Yiavis submitted his dissertation in April 2006 and was approved for the degree of PhD in July. His dissertation is entitled: "A critical edition of the rhymed mediaeval romance *Imberios and Margarona*". In 2005 he was awarded the Panagiotakis Prize for an essay entitled "So near, yet so far: Medieval courtly romance and *Imberios and Margarona* – A case of demedievalization". He received the prize at a special ceremony held at the University of Ioannina on 30 September 2005, during the international conference "Neograeca Medii Aevi VI".

Foteini Lika, who was awarded the Leventis Studentship, and Efstratios Myrogiannis began research for the degree of PhD in October 2005. Their research topics are, respectively, "History and fiction in Roidis's *Pope Joan*" and "The emergence of a Greek identity (1700-1821)".

Teaching staff

Dr Dimitris Karadimas returned to Athens in the summer of 2005, after three years as our Language Assistant seconded by the Greek Ministry of Education. During the year 2005-6 language teaching was undertaken by Ms Eftychia Bathrellou, Dr Regina Karousou-Fokas and Ms Marina Rodosthenous. The replacement for Dr

Karadimas is Ms Eleftheria Lasthiotaki, who arrived in March 2006.

Teaching in nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature was given by Dr Tina Lendari and Dr Notis Toufexis, during Dr Holton's leave of absence in the Lent Term. Courses on modern Greek history were again taught by Mr Kostas Skordyles.

Visiting speakers

Ten lectures, covering an especially wide range of subjects, were given in the course of the year. The programme was as follows:

13 October. Dr Vicky Panagiotopoulou-Doulavera (University of New South Wales): *Representations of Achilles in medieval and early modern Greek literature*

27 October. Dr David Wills: *Ancient sites, modern eyesores? The transformation of the city of Athens in English-language accounts (c. 1945-2005)*

10 November. Professor M. Chryssanthopoulos (University of Thessaloniki): *Fictions of continuity: time in lieu of place in Cavafy's poetry*

17 November. Professor Dimitris Tziovas (University of Birmingham): *Transcending politics: symbolism, allegory and censorship in Greek fiction*

26 January. Dr Margaret Kenna (University of Wales Swansea): *Conformity, humour and parody: handwritten newspapers from an exiles' commune, 1938-1943*

23 February. Professor Ulrich Moennig (University of Hamburg): *Author and readers: the making of the early modern Greek* Physiologos

2 March. Dr Anastasia Markomihelaki-Mintzas: *Modern Greek variations on the myth of Helen*

27 April. Bruce Clark (*The Economist*): *What price success? The population exchange of 1923 as a political and moral conundrum*

4 May. Professor Maria Kakavoulia (Panteion University, Athens): *When art criticism meets poetry: the case of the post-war Greek poet Eleni Vacalo (1921-2001)*

11 May. Dr Birgit Olsen (University of Aarhus): *Richard M. Dawkins – a pioneer in the field of Modern Greek folktales*

Graduate Seminar

The Graduate Seminar met on ten occasions during the year. Papers were given by the following invited speakers: Dr Teresa Shawcross (Exeter College, Oxford), Professor Alexis Politis and Professor Angela Kastrinaki (both of the University of Crete), Dr Chrystalla Thoma (University of Hamburg), Dr Constanze Güthenke (Princeton University), and – at a joint seminar with the Faculty of Classics – Professor Mark Janse (Roosevelt Academy, Middelburg). Papers were also given by the following research students and teaching staff: Foteini Lika, Stratos Myrogiannis, and Dr Regina Karousou-Fokas.

Activities of members of the Modern Greek Section

Dr David Holton paid a short visit to Princeton University in March 2006, as a guest of the Program in Hellenic Studies. While there he gave a lecture on *Erotokritos*, and seminars on the Cretan Renaissance and the Cambridge Medieval Greek grammar project. Together with other members of the Medieval Greek research team, he took part in the conference "Neograeca Medii Aevi VI", held at Yannina from 29 September to 2 October 2005. He also gave papers at a colloquium in honour of Professor Elizabeth Jeffreys, held at King's College London, and at a conference on the teaching of Modern Greek as a second or foreign language at the University of Western Macedonia, Florina, both in May 2006. In July 2006 he organized a conference in Cambridge, under the auspices of the Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (CRASSH), with the title "Unlocking the potential of texts: interdisciplinary perspectives on Medieval Greek". He has been appointed Professor of Modern Greek, with effect from 1 October 2006. He has published:

"Notes on some verb forms in the work of Leonardos Dellaportas", in: Vassilios Sabatakakis and Peter Vejleskov (eds.), *Filia: Studies in honour of Bo-Lennart Eklund* (Lund 2005), pp. 97-108

Dr Notis Toufexis, in company with other members of the Medieval Greek research team, took part in the conference "Neograeca Medii Aevi VI", held at Yannina from 29 September

to 2 October 2005. He also gave papers at a conference on "New Technologies in the Humanities", held at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki in November 2005, a conference on "Digital Philology – Problems and Perspectives" at the University of Hamburg in January 2006, and a conference on Ioannis and Theodosios Zygomalas at Argos in June 2006. In November 2005 he gave a seminar on digital resources and technologies for philologists at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. In February 2006 he gave a seminar with the title "The first lexicographer of early Modern Greek: Martin Crusius (1526-1607) and his *Alphabetum vulgaris linguae graecae*", at the Centre for Hellenic Studies, King's College London, and in July 2006 a seminar on XML-based transcriptions of Medieval Greek manuscripts at the Institute for Classical Studies, University of London. He has published his PhD thesis: *Das* Alphabetum vulgaris linguae graecae *des deutschen Humanisten Martin Crusius (1526-1607). Ein Beitrag zur Erforschung der gesprochenen griechischen Sprache im 16. Jh.* (Cologne: Romiosini 2005).

About the contributors

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