

Four Levitations over Four Notes on Cypriot Literature

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RÉSUMÉ

L'auteur relève les aspects positifs et négatifs dans les relations entre le centre hellénique et la périphérie chypriote. Il est en faveur du polycentrisme et contre le concentrationisme athénien.

ABSTRACT

The author outlines the positive and negative aspects of the relationship between a Hellenic centre and the Cypriot periphery. He argues in favour of polycentrism versus Athenian concentrationism.

A. The contrast between centre and periphery has oftentimes been depicted throughout the history of Modern Greek literature. Since the establishment of the Greek state and the proclamation of Athens as its capital, the Phanariotes, supporters of the ere now mighty Ionian School (Eptanisiaki Scholi), scholars from Alexandria and the province during the interwar years or even from northern Thessaloniki have resisted to Athenians, arguing that the interplays and favouritism among Athenian literary circles diminish and understate the stature and work of other literary circles in the periphery and province.

This is a prolific contrast indeed, as it prompts further criticism and reassessments and does not permit the domination or quiescence of the Athenian perspective. Furthermore, among these contrasts, one may trace significant elements of renewal and quality. Particularly, nowadays, we attest to the emergence of locality with peripheral anthologies and surveys, the emergence of efficient and competent figures and works ignored by Athenian connections and axiological mechanisms; what is more, these

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contrasts are invested with more ideological resultants designating a different ethos (by rejecting bribery and marketability formulas, addiction to the Media, Public Relations and literary glamour, phenomena which have began to dominate in the Athenian publishing and axiological practice). Littérateurs from the province are not invited by major Athenian TV stations to cook pasta for TV lovers, as is the case with certain modernist and innovative Athenian littérateurs, who are being humiliated in order to gain a spot in the limelight, thus increasing the number of copies they sell. Afar from all these, the littérateurs from the province fly under the radar and keep making their statements with modesty.

Indeed, polycentrism has never harmed anyone and, sometimes, Athenian monocentrism crushes values and oppresses qualitative statements. Cyprus could contribute to the elevation of Modern Greek polycentrism which is in fact a prerequisite for the renewal and enrichment of contemporary Modern Greek culture. However, in Cyprus, the contrast with the Athenian Canon may receive different dimensions just as hurtful, or even worse. The Cypriot state could be vested with power; the contrast with Athens' literary and publishing practices and its axiological standpoints could take cover behind Cypriot Statism and end up devoid of any suggestions for renewal, criticism, contemplative reassessment, thus failing to elevate the new ethos and attitude of literary life.

B. Notable Cypriot poets are oppressed by two trends, both the Cypriot and the Greek one. What prevail in Cyprus are relationships, acquaintances and connections of a restricted literary circle. Only conventional affirmative reviews are deposited for each work, without any classification into good, average and bad. Therefore, notable Cypriot poets take the rap.

Although Helladic circles hardly ever study works by Cypriot litterateurs seriously and thoroughly, they always have at hand convenient and conventional affirmative reviews for almost everyone. Therefore, in the context of emotional stress resulting from the 1974 Cyprus tragedy and the ongoing injustice imposed upon Cypriot Hellenism, a dominant impression has been established which Helladic circles keep reproducing: that everybody has affirmative reviews about Cypriot works even though they are on the whole average. Therefore, notable Cypriot poets take the rap.

C. So much persistence for publications of general content detailing the island's literary production, proclaiming that notable poetry is produced in Cyprus, ranking the general traits of each period and other encyclopaedic

trivial! By experiencing boredom, I read so many things, and they are all the same. Even here, one can detect Cypriot Statism. In the same way that efforts are being made to elevate the state identity of Cyprus with the promotion of national teams of polo, volleyball, basketball, football, ice-hockey and field hockey, it is also proclaimed that the Cypriot state possesses literature too.

Therefore, it is imperative to turn away from the general picture and look into the particular *littérateur* and/or the particular work. It is imperative to detect whatever it is that this specific Cypriot poetry collection and this specific Cypriot poet have contributed to art, whatever it is that they have contributed to the Greek poetic art. This is where the essence lies, and not in vague notes.

D. Undoubtedly, the Cypriot dialect has a lot to offer to poetry, theatre and other arts. It constitutes a contemporary live linguistic expression and it may yield modern live poetry and theatre. However, the poetic expression of the Cypriot dialect was led to obsolescence by many that dote on and overprotect it, ending up enclosing it into the one-dimensional expression of an obsolete world; an idyllic world that expresses the ethos of a long gone bucolic Cyprus. In Cyprus, where people lead modern stressed lives, dialectal poetry works in replacement of a world that no longer exists. Very few writers have ventured to employ the Cypriot dialect in order to express their metaphysical anguishes, the ethos and habits of a modern inhabitant of the island. Once, I attended a poetry event. The actor was reciting a beautiful poem by Michalis Pashiardis on the tragic feeling of frustration and lack of response from Heaven. The actor recited the poem as if it was a pastoral bucolic romance, as if he was recounting a wickedly erotic rural story – a recitation nail on the coffin of dialectal Cypriot poetry.