

Cypriot Literatures as Part of the Eastern Mediterranean Contact Area (1850-1960)*

Matthias Kappler**

RÉSUMÉ

Cette contribution constitue une tentative de considérer les «littératures chypriotes», c'est-à-dire surtout les littératures grecque et turque chypriotes, comme partie d'un espace de contact couvrant les vieilles provinces ottomanes dans la Méditerranée orientale (Grèce, Anatolie, Liban, Syrie, Palestine, Égypte), afin de pouvoir analyser les sujets, les lieux et le discours narratif dans le cadre d'une approche comparative. Par le moyen de concepts comme «dislocation / migration» et les modèles de «centre-périphérie», empruntés aux études post-coloniales, cette approche a pour but de déchiffrer des structures convergentes dans l'expression littéraire des littératures chypriotes en comparaison avec les littératures du Proche-Orient (surtout en langue arabe) en essayant de créer des correspondances entre expression littéraire périphérique en migration (par exemple grecque chypriote en Égypte) et les tendances et courants dominants pendant les dernières années de l'occupation ottomane et britannique de l'île.

ABSTRACT

The present contribution constitutes an attempt to consider "Cypriot literatures", i.e. especially Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot literature, as part of a contact area which covers the former Ottoman provinces in the Eastern Mediterranean (Greece, Anatolia, Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, Egypt) in order to analyze topics, settings and narrative discourse in a comparative approach. With the aid of concepts like "dislocation/migration" and "centre-periphery" patterns borrowed from post-colonial studies, this approach aims at providing convergent structures in literary expression in Cypriot literatures in comparison to Near Eastern (especially Arabic) literatures, and it tries to create links between peripheral literary expression in migration (for instance Greek Cypriots in Egypt) and central trends and currents during the last year of Ottoman rule and during the British rule on the island.

* The present contribution is a developed and updated version of a talk held at the International Congress "Cyprus and the Eastern Mediterranean – History, Literature and Culture in the Ottoman Period and After", University of Cyprus, Department of Turkish and Middle Eastern Studies, Nicosia, 1st-2nd November 2002.

** University of Cyprus

Contact Areas and Contact Studies

To consider literature under the light of comparative implications and contexts is a given method in the framework of colonial and postcolonial studies, very much in vogue and therefore to be handled with caution¹. Specifically, the theory of colonial and postcolonial studies is questionable when applied with the same parameters to Turkish or Cypriot, as, let's say, to Black African or Caribbean literatures, because the historical contexts are totally different. Furthermore, it might be argued that Cypriot, as well as Syrian, Palestinian or Egyptian literatures are not to be considered as colonial/postcolonial or so-called Commonwealth literatures, because the mean of expression is not the English language, though with exceptions, such as Taner Baybars, who writes mostly in English, or Khalil Gibran, whose works show clear features of colonialist and post-colonialist writing (see below for other cases). The classical postcolonial approach (especially in Ashcroft & alii 1989: 3-4) is considering literature as a dialogue/response of the periphery towards the colonial/imperial centre, the “writing back of the Empire”, which might not be applied to Cyprus in every instance and for every period of time, although there are also typical examples for that². However that may be, we will see below that a postcolonial studies' approach to Cypriot literatures can be highly productive if we are aware that the point is not the self-definition in contraposition to the colonizer, but the sharing of common configuration through colonialism in an area of cultural transfer and dislocation.

Actually, efforts to launch a comparative investigation of Middle Eastern literatures, namely Greek, Turkish, Arabic and Hebrew, have been made also outside the postcolonial frame theory, taking for granted a few common features in cultural history, such as the role of the central government in the creation of a modern literature in Turkish and Arabic, the emerging of a bourgeoisie in the major cities of the Eastern Mediterranean, and the influence of European Enlightenment and of European, particularly French literature (Kilpatrick 2000: 92). Narrowly related to these features are common developments in language, for instance the diglossia situation in Arabic and Greek (καθαρεύουσα/fusha, δημοτική/âmmiyya), or the language policy and reforms in Turkey and Israel (Kilpatrick 2000: 93).

Another point of approach is given by the “polycentric” (rather than the commonly used term “diaspora”, not appropriate, to my opinion, for Greek literature) character of Greek and Hebrew literature (and here also Armenian literature should be considered), radicated in the Eastern Mediterranean culture and highly relevant for Greek Cypriot literature, too,

as it is a fact that the centre of Greek Cypriot literary and printing activity during and between the two World Wars was in Egypt (Zafeiriou 1991: 35 and *passim*) being so in narrow contact to both contemporary Arab and Greek literature of Egypt³. Even for post-modern literature there have been efforts to trace a common history by the comparative analysis of two novels written by the Turkish bestseller author Orhan Pamuk and the Egyptian avant-garde writer ‘Abduh Gubayr (Guth 1994), as well as by the investigation of the affinities between another of Pamuk’s novels (*Beyaz Kale*, 1991) and Rhea Galanaki’s *Βίος του Ισμαήλ Φερίχ Πασά*, 1989 (Calotychos 1997 and Calotychos 2000: 57-65).

An extremely important aspect of all the literatures we are dealing with in the given period of time is the fact of *periphery* on the one hand and of *displacement* on the other. With the exclusion of Turkish and Arab Egyptian literatures, all the literatures are operating away from the metropolitan centre. In the case of Cypriot literatures there is a plurivalence of periphericity, or of “centres”, namely Athens, Alexandria and Cairo for the Greek Cypriots, Istanbul for the Turkish Cypriots (but also the same city, let’s call it Constantinople, for the Greek Cypriots in a given period of time!), London for both.

As to *displacement* or *dislocation*, a term of postcolonial studies (Ashcroft & alii 1989: 8-11), there are to be distinguished three different levels, all of them being relevant for the literatures and histories of the peoples concerned here. The first is the actual migration, loss of home and subsequently dislocation with related themes in literatures, especially in Greek and Turkish literatures after the Greek-Turkish exchange of populations in 1924, as well as in Palestinian literature with the exodus in 1945 and in Hebrew literature with the migration towards Israel, the latter reflected also in Jewish literature in Turkish, for instance in one of Mario Levi’s novels (*Bir şehre gidememek*, 1990; see Evin 1993: 92-93). As for Cyprus, a great part of the Cypriot, especially Greek Cypriot literature after 1974, is obviously concerned with migration, which exceeds however our chronological context, though displacement is valid also for the previous period of time in the texts of Cypriot migrants to Britain or Egypt.

The second kind of displacement is the thematic dislocation, where themes of the dominating or colonizing elements are transposed to the local surroundings creating alienation in literary expression. In our area this might be the case with neo-classicist poets, like Ahmad Sawqî in Egypt or the early poetry of Osman Türkay in Cyprus.

The third model of displacement concerns language and consists in the adoption of the colonizer's language or the linguistic switching between the local and socially inferior ("low", according to the diglossia theory, see Ferguson 1959) varieties and the dominating standard ("high") variety. Although the first (adoption of the colonizer's language) is less true for the Eastern Mediterranean area, as in almost all the cases the local languages are used, and local varieties of the colonial language do not exist at all (e.g. in the sense of standard British English and the local "englishes" of the colonized, see Ashcroft & alii 1989: 8), we do find some cases of linguistic dislocation in this sense, as the aforementioned Cypriot writer Taner Baybars and some other contemporary migrant Cypriot authors writing in English such as Alev Adil or Lysandros Pitharas, or a part of post-war Lebanese literature with a wide use of French and English (see Neuwirth & Pflitsch 2000). Linguistic displacement can however be applied to the specific case of Cyprus, when it comes to the second point, i.e. the conflict between a socially dominating "high" standard variety and "low" varieties of the same language which are marginalized as impurities. This kind of displacement does exist in the relation between the linguistic forms of the metropolitan centre and of periphery, i.e. between standard mainland Greek/Turkish vs. Cypriot Greek/Turkish, with exactly the same implications until today in terms of inferiority and dominance as in the "classical" case of a colonizing language.

The following remarks are intended as an attempt to apply the previous approaches for a comparative Middle Eastern or Eastern Mediterranean literary history to the history of Cypriot literatures in the late Ottoman period and during the British rule. Taking for granted that Cyprus forms a historically, linguistically and culturally integrated part of what we call the Eastern Mediterranean contact area, we should be able to point out concrete cases of cross-cultural exchanges in the different fields of interest. The significant contribution by Kechagioglou (1992) for Greek Cypriot literature can thus be extended to a wider 'frame' of Middle Eastern or Eastern Mediterranean literatures considering also the development of Ottoman literatures (in the sense of literary productions in different languages within the geographical area of the former Ottoman Empire) in general. The unique opportunity of this kind of research is given by the nature of Cyprus herself, which has always been a multilingual and multicultural area of contact *par excellence*, not only between Greek and Turkish (and British), but also between Armenian, Arabic, French /Italian /Latin, Maronite, Syriac, Coptic cultures. On these premises and given the

limited time and space of the present contribution, a deep insight into the various instances that will be mentioned is neither possible nor intended. The aim is rather to trace the mere possibility (and need) of an integrated view over a related group of literatures in contact instead of the traditional distinction in “national literatures”.

Several aspects are emerging: the migration of authors and of their works in the given contact area, printing places of Cypriot literatures outside Cyprus, common literary trends and streams, common themes and forms, linguistic copying or switching in literary texts. On the other hand, and in a widened sense of the colonial and postcolonial studies’ approach, the relation to the various metropolitan centres (Athens, Istanbul, London) must also be considered.

1. Geographic and Textual Migration – The Cultural Context of Eastern Mediterranean Literatures

Already under a most superficial investigation, it becomes evident that the area was a cross-cultural market place of printing material and publishing in the last years of the Ottoman rule. The main printing-places, Istanbul and Izmir, were both equally important for Greek and Turkish publications; especially Izmir occupied a prominent place also for Greek Cypriot writers. I only remind that the first texts written by Vassílis Michaelides appeared in the Smyrniote periodical *Πυθαγόρας* in 1873 (Zafeiriou 1991: 17) and that one of the first feminist literary periodicals of Istanbul, *Ευφροσύνη*, was edited by the Cypriot Aimilia Ktena in the 1870s (Zafeiriou 1991: 20). In this context, also the activity of Epameinondas Frangoudis, director of the Greek school of Nicosia, who resided four years in Istanbul (1854-1858), and published a translation/adaptation of Théophile Gautier’s travel diary *Constantinople* in the Istanbulite periodical *Θελξινόη* (22/24, 1857), is an interesting case of Cypriot writing “towards the centre” (see Papaleontiou 2004). Due to the continuous migration of middle and high class Greek Cypriots to Egypt, typical for the years between the 1860s and the 1910s (Zafeiriou 1991: 14) as well as the subsequent importance of Cairo and Alexandria as “centres” of Greek culture, many Greek Cypriots who lived elsewhere and were thus not considered “Αιγυπτιώτες”, i.e. Egyptian Greeks, used the Egyptian metropoleis as printing and distribution places of their works (cf. Pieridis 1971: 19). Actually, it is in Alexandria and Cairo where most of the literary works written by Cypriots in Greek during the 19th century were printed.

In a broader sense, this migration flow coincides with the textual migration in the Middle East, i.e. with the so-called “age of translation and adaptation” in Ottoman Turkish and Arabic literature, but also in the literatures of other communities of the Ottoman society, such as Greek, Armenian, Bulgarian, Persian and others. The political conditions (reforms in Muhammad Ali’s Egypt and the Tanzimat in the Ottoman Empire) promote a wide activity of translations of European, especially French works. The *Tercüme-i Manzume*, a translation-anthology of poetry from La Fontaine, Lamartine, Gilbert, Racine by İbrahim Şinasi in 1859, or Münif Paşa’s translations from Voltaire, Fénelon, Fontenelle with the title *Muhaverat-ı Hikemiye* (“Philosophical dialogues”), mark the beginning of this era in Turkish literature (Paker 1991: 21-22, Tanpınar 2001: 150), whereas in the Arab world the first steps are made by al-Tahtâwî’s translation of Fénelon’s *Les aventures de Télémaque* in the late 1860s. Typically enough, one of the first productions of modern Cypriot literature is also to be ascribed to this tradition of translation and adaptation, being the *Νέα Κύπρια Ἐπη* by Markos Andreadis (1804-1878), printed 1836 in Paris and including also translations from La Fontaine (Zafeiriou 1991: 15). In the period between the 1870s and 1914 in Egypt approximately 70 French novels are translated into Arabic (Cachia 1991: 36; Allen 1992: 183-184). In both areas, Ottoman Turkish and Arabic, the publication of the first novels in form of *feuilletons* in magazines and newspapers is basic and typical for the dynamics of this kind of textual migration (see Strauss 1994: 131-32). The translation and adaptation activity in the Ottoman Greek area can be settled in the same period⁴. The centres of this production, Istanbul, Izmir and other Ottoman towns, are shifting towards outside the Ottoman borders and Greece due to the migration of Greek intellectuals to Italy, Paris, Vienna and Russia. Obviously, not only Greeks but other Ottoman minorities as well are active in this field, first of all Armenians for translations into Turkish, but also Bulgarians and other ethnic groups, favouring considerably the intercommunal culture exchange and contributing an important stimulus for literary creation in the Muslim *millet* (see Tietze 1991b; Strauss 1994: 132, 139-40 and *passim*). Probably one of the most significant innovations is the translation or adaptation of theatre plays. Apart from Molière’s comedies which were the most popular models in the Middle East at that time, we also find adaptations of Shakespeare’s plays, although the first one, *Othello*, was translated in Turkish by Manastırlı Rifat and Hasan Bedreddin from a French adaptation (by Jean François Ducis, 1792) and

considered by the Ottoman translators as a 'great Italian opera' with the remark that their reason for translating the play lays in 'its representation of the bravery of the Arabs' (Paker 1991: 27). It is interesting to see how literature was translated, or rather transferred, into Turkish and Arabic, not only linguistically but by a process of transposition of themes, characters and social connotations. Ahmed Vefik Paşa's famous Turkish translations of Molière's comedies include a transposition of characters, e.g. Georges Dandin is transformed into the Levantine Greek character Yorgaki Dandini, and in Egypt the concept of *ta'rib* (Arabization) and *tamsîr* (Egyptianization) meant not only the translation into Standard or Colloquial Arabic, but a whole transposition of themes, settings and forms, such as the rendering of La Fontaine's verses in *zagal*-form (Allen 1992: 184; see also Cachia 1991: 40). Thus, through the dislocation of contents, as mentioned before for any kind of colonial literature, the text is adapted to the social and cultural needs and contexts of the target audience, which is exactly the intention of the first Ottoman translators of *Othello*.

Apart from translations and adaptation of mainly European literature, the outstanding feature of the late Ottoman period is the rise of own literary productions in new genres developing parallelly to European orientation in other fields of the society. These new genres are drama, novel and short story. In the Ottoman world theatre has been played by Armenian and Greek actors for their own communities in Istanbul from the 1810s, whereas in the 1850s Armenians began to produce plays in Turkish, thus laying the foundations of the Ottoman theatre culminating in the opening of the first Ottoman theatre *Tiyatro-yı 'Osmani* by Güllü Agop Efendi in 1868-69 (Tanpınar 2001: 281-282, Paker 1991: 26)⁵, while the first European play in the Arab world, based on *L'Avare*, was performed in Beirut in 1847 (Cachia 1991: 37). The first original play written in Turkish was İbrahim Şinasi's *Şair evlenmesi* in 1860, a satirical comedy of manners inspired by the comedies of Molière (Paker 1991: 25, Tanpınar 2001: 150). In the whole Eastern Mediterranean area the short story makes its appearance in periodicals, whereas in the field of the novel, especially in Turkish, once again the importance of the non-Muslim millets is highly significant: before the famous Ottoman novels of the Tanzimat era by Ahmed Midhat or Rezaizade Mahmud Ekrem, the first novel in Turkish is Vartan Paşa's *Aqabi*, printed 1851 in Istanbul in Armenian letters (published by A. Tietze in 1991; see Tietze 1991a and Georgeon 1992), followed by Evangelinos Misailidis's work *Temaşa-i dünya*, printed 1871 in Greek letters, which is however a translation, or adaptation, of Grigorios Palaiologos's novel

Πολυπαθής (Athens 1839). In order to see the first original novel to appear in Arabic, we must wait until 1913, when *Zaynab* by Muhammad Husayn Haykal is printed in Egypt (see below).

The extensive description of the translation period in the wider Middle East seen in relation to the parallel development of displacement and evolution of literary texts is a necessary approach in our attempt to locate Cypriot literatures in a common “Near Eastern literary history”. Thus, the historical conditions of the cosmopolitan intellectual and literary ambience found by Cypriot writers on their way to migration, Greek Cypriots in Egypt and Turkish Cypriots in Istanbul, can be better understood.

2. Greek Cypriot Literature in Egypt

At the beginning of the 20th century a new landed economically significant group comprising Greek, Italian and other European settlers, contributes to the literary development of Egypt. This does not mean that there was immediately a reflection of the new surroundings in the often academic or “alexandrine” texts written by Egyptian Greeks. One of the most important Greek Cypriot Egyptian writers, Yiorgos Philippou Pieridis, states in an article written in Nicosia years after his return to Cyprus that “in the past years our literates took, as a rule, the part of the stranger in front of the reality of the place they lived in, very few of them tried to deal with Egypt and its people.” (Pieridis 1971: 17). It is perhaps a myth that Egyptian Greeks lived completely isolated from their Arab and Muslim environment (even Cavafy was not completely unaffected from “Orientalisms”⁶), but certainly a great part of the “Αιγυπτιώτες” did not include the local environment into their texts. Nevertheless, we have a few examples of cross-cultural exchange in Egyptian Greek literary production and related topics dealing with Arabic and Islamic culture. It is not the aim of this contribution to provide a complete account of Greek Cypriot writers in Egypt and their relation with the Arabo-Islamic environment, for this we may refer to the precious studies done by Papaleontiou (2005-2006) and Kechagioglou (1993), where the approach is the examination of “Orientalism” (in Edward Said’s sense), or possibly the absence of it, in the works of the Cypriots of Egypt. In our framework we will only mention examples, such as Yiorgos Philippou Pieridis, Maria Roussia or Nikos Nikolaidis (about them see below), as well as Evgenia Palaiologou-Petronda (born 1911) with poetic

collections such as *Ιχνητά* (Arabic term for “gift, offer”, 1956) or *Μέση Ανατολή* (1946), or Kostas Tsangaradas, though not of Cypriot origin, with his novel *Ναμπία* (1924) and his volume of short stories *Χικαγιάτ* (1925) (see Pieridis 1971: 17-18; Papaleontiou 2005-2006: 19).

One of the main writers representing this current is the aforementioned Yiorgos Philippou Pieridis. He was born in Dali in 1904, lived in Egypt until 1947 when he returned to Cyprus in order to organize the Municipal Library of Famagusta. His first novel *Οι Βαμβακάδες* (“The Cotton Manufacturers”) printed in 1947 in Alexandria and translated 22 years later into Arabic (by ‘Abd al-Mohsin Al-Hashab [?], Cairo 1969, see Pieridis 1994: 15) as well as his *Διηγήματα από τη Μέση Ανατολή* (“Stories from the Middle East”, Famagusta 1949) give an image of the author’s social engagement for the local population⁷. In a series of chapters without novelistic dramaturgy, almost in the form of short stories, Pieridis traces in *Οι Βαμβακάδες* the life of a small Greek community of cotton manufacturers and of their Arab fellow-countrymen in Upper Egypt in a critical-realistic description of exploitation and arrogance, love and disappointment, power and labour. According to Malanos’s words, it is the first time that a local prose text deals with the relation between Greeks and Egyptians without false idealization (Pieridis 1994: 13). Pieridis’s social criticism was certainly an outstanding exception at that time. He criticizes satirically the prejudices of Greeks towards Arabs, as in the case when a young Egyptian from Alexandria is placed in a ruling position of the manufacture provoking the following reaction of most of the Greeks: “Look here! ... an Arab! ... that’s why Hellenism is declining in Egypt!...” (Pieridis 1994: 32). Many pages are filled with the description of labour and life conditions of the workers, in a manner resembling both romantic moralism and socialist realism.

The setting in the Egyptian countryside and the description of life, also of sentimental acting and feeling combined with social criticism put into a rural environment, is a tradition which from Rousseau on continued to influence Eastern Mediterranean literatures and can be found in the first Arabic novel mentioned above, *Zaynab* (1913), by the Egyptian Muhammad Husayn Haykal (Ostle 1991: 105). We do not know if Pieridis knew about Haykal’s novel, but he probably knew about another countryside novel, *Ο κάμπος*, published by the Greek Cypriot Loukis Akritas in 1936, describing in a similar combination of idyllicity and reality the rural life in the Cypriot Mesaoria. And it is no coincidence that in the same years we have the first examples of “rural

realism” also in Turkish literature with Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu, who was born 1898 in Cairo where he spent his early childhood and died in 1974, and whose novel *Yaban*, “The Stranger”, appeared in 1932. Later, in the 1950ies, with Mahmut Makal (born 1930) and the so-called “Köy Edebiyatı” (“Village literature”) another rural literary genre was established, followed by the Cypriot reflection of the “Köy Edebiyatı”, exactly at the same time, with Hikmet Afif Mapolar (born 1919 in Kyrenia)⁸.

Another kind of Greek Egyptian voice is represented by Maria Roussia, who was born in Cairo and died in Alexandria in 1957⁹. Specialized in short stories centred also in urban environments in Egypt and dealing with the theme of the “stranger”, the “alien”, she expresses the quest of identity in a period of wars and displacements; she published also a volume with stories and diaries about her trips to her “homeland” Cyprus, where she actually never lived for longer periods, putting thus a Cypriot counterbalance to her Egyptian production. To a certain extent, her work can be truly evaluated under the aspect of postcolonial writing, and should be compared to other contemporary writers of the area under this light.

One of the most significant Greek Cypriot Egyptian writers, perhaps the outstanding Greek Cypriot prose writer in general, is Nikos Nikolaidis, who died in Cairo in 1956 and left an important production of novels and short stories, as well as collections of poems and “prose-poetry”, with a great variety of themes and settings. Like Pieridis, also Nikolaidis has achieved fame with his social criticism, though the setting of his production is predominantly “Greek”. But there are some exceptions, especially in his only famous poetry collection *Φελλάχοι* (“Fellaheen”, 1937), containing the noteworthy poem “The Fella’s Funeral Procession”, where he depicts the miserable life of Egyptian peasantry¹⁰. In our context, Nikolaidis represents a part of wider Greek literature which, in the 1930s, distances itself from the political developments in Greece: his collection of “prose songs” *Ο Χρυσός Μύθος* (Cairo 1938) was distributed only in Egypt and Cyprus in protest against the censorship under Metaxas’s dictatorship (Zafeiriou 1991: 46).

Political orientated writers dealing with specifically Cypriot experiences in colonialism is another aspect of textual displacement. A typical example for this group is Christakis Georgiou (born 1929) describing late colonialism out of the prisons of Nicosia in his novel *Ωρες 1950* (1981), though particularly interesting in our context is his short story *Χωρίς αποσκευές* (“Without luggage”, from the volume *Παράλληλοι*, 1964): in a

dark New Year's night in London a Greek Cypriot girl, former cabaret dancer, meets a cosmopolitan Lebanese. Re-discovering her Mediterraneanity, she comes into conflict with her English husband, a linguist and collector of Greek dialect material, and leaves with the Lebanese guy to Egypt. Through a painful triangular dialogue, the problematic of loneliness in migration and cosmopolitanism, as well as the consequences of colonialism are subtly traced.

Another important point of textual migration and displacement (cf. the description of the "translation period" above § 1) can be found in literary translations. In fact, it is not very known that in those years Egyptian Greeks living in Alexandria and Cairo translated classical and modern Islamic literature. Many Arabic authors, from the pre-Islamic 'Imru-l-Qays until contemporary poets like Ahmad Sawqî, were translated into Greek¹¹; in 1878 the Qur'an was translated, reportedly from Arabic, into Greek by Gerasimos Pentakis (Pieridis 1971: 15). Reflections of this translation activity can be seen in Cyprus, where Panos Fasouliotis (1894-1965) from Limassol who had graduated from the American University of Beirut (see Koudounaris 2005: 444) published translations (from English) of the works of the Persian poet Nizami in the Limassolian newspaper *Αλήθεια* in 1917 (Papaleontiou 1998: 152).

Topics and subjects related with the Middle East are thus to be found in extremely different contexts. These topics are not confined to the mere presence of setting and place, but make part of the literary structure of Greek Cypriot literature, even in authors not pertaining to the Egyptian community (like Georgiou). From the comparative point of view, the role of migration in the cross-cultural exchange of Eastern Mediterranean literatures, of which Cypriot literatures form a part, must be underlined. It thus reconfirms on the one hand the extreme importance of the wider Eastern Mediterranean area for the creation, production, transport and diffusion of Cypriot literatures and on the other hand the thematic and stylistic interrelations between literatures in Greek, Arabic and Turkish.

3. The Language Question

One further possible approach suitable for a comparative analysis of our area is given by the linguistic situation in the Eastern Mediterranean. As already mentioned, the common diglossia in Greek and Arabic between "pure" and "popular" language is widened into trichotomy in Cyprus by the

dimension of the dialect. The use of dialect in popular anonymous texts and today still alive in the folk literature of the Ποιητάριδες is going back to the 11th century with the acritic songs, and is living an intensive period in the 15th and 16th centuries, whereas the British rule and the orientation towards Greece in the 19th century put the dialect literature in the background¹². On the other hand, it entered learned poetry with the result that dialect began to play a fundamental role in nationalist writing of the 19th century, not only in Cyprus but also in the Arab countries. The best-known Greek Cypriot example is Vassilis Michaelides (1851/53-1917), the first non-popular (in the sense of ‘learned’) Cypriot poet to use dialect in poetry, although he wrote in καθαρεύουσα and δημοτική, as well¹³. In the same period when he writes his (lesser known) satirical texts with social cynics (Zafeiriou 1991: 22), and little before Dimitris Lipertis (1866-1937) addresses himself negatively to Britain as “step-mother” in one of his poems, Egyptian Arab poets are re-discovering the vernacular *zagal*-tradition, publishing satirical gazals in colloquial Egyptian against the British rule. One outstanding example is Ya‘qûb Sanûn (1839-1912) who, describing the dialogue “between an English soldier’s wife and an Egyptian ‘man on the street’ sketches the people’s determination to eject England.” (Booth 1992: 467). The colonialist’s image is rendered by English words in the Arabic text. The same can be said about Yemenite literature under Ottoman rule, where the satirical poet Ahmad Saraf al-Dîn al Qârah (d. 1863) used Turkish loanwords to “express local sentiment towards the Ottomans” (Booth 1992: 466). Language mixing is indeed a typical procedure for any satirical composition: the wide-spread use of French in Eastern Mediterranean bourgeois societies in order to boast of the pretended high social rank, is often derided by the insertion of French words. Examples are the *zagal*-poet Muhammad Tawfiq in Egypt at the end of the 19th century (*Zagal halafâwî ‘arabî ‘alâ faransâwî*, 1899; see Booth 1992: 468), Anastasios Pnevmatikas in Istanbul with his satirical versified compositions about the Greek high-class society in Pera/Beyoğlu in the mid 19th century (see Stathi 1997 and Kappler 2002: 41) or the novels of Mehmed Mizancı Murat (d. 1917) and Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar (1864-1944) mocking about Europeanized Ottomans in Istanbul. The same is true for deliberate language mixing in Greek Cypriot literature using Turkish words in contexts where Ottoman rule or Ottoman past becomes an object of ridicule or accusation, but also of sympathy for Turkish Cypriot compatriots, for example in Michailides’ epic texts. It is interesting, or obvious, that in both Arabic and Greek literature poetical

multilingualism goes together with the socially lower variety of language, δημοτική or colloquial *‘âmmiyya*, and never with the high or “pure” variety. Especially in Cyprus, where in a microcosmos of language contacts all the languages of the Eastern Mediterranean area are represented, multilingualism is frequent in dialect texts, especially in non-learned literature. This is the case with the so-called ποιητάοηδες (folk poets), shifting continuously between Greek and Turkish, especially in the τσιαπτίσματα (from Turkish *çatizma*, as a loan word [“αντιδάνειο”] migrating back to Turkish Cypriot as *çatizma*), improvised poetical dialogue contests¹⁴. Here the phenomenon is to be considered free of any “national” implications, since ποιητάοηδες writing in Greek Cypriot dialect are not necessarily Greek Cypriots, as attests the following τσιαπτίσμα/*çatizma* performed in 1988 by a Turkish Cypriot ποιητάοης (Yusuf Akandere, a so-called “Linobambaki” from Lurucina, see the text in Yaşin 1999: 229-231):

Εσύ μπο τζιεί ελούννεσουν, ben deligden bakardım,

Mahallene θέλω να’ρω, μα bubandan gorkardım.

It is a fact that the more bilingual the community is (or was), the more frequent is code shifting. Bilingualism being more diffused among Turkish Cypriots than among Greek Cypriots, it is obvious that Turkish Cypriot ποιητάοηδες used more extensive language mixing (and not because “they are, in reality, [Crypto-] Christians or even ‘Greeks’”, as still considered by a good number of Greek Cypriot researchers¹⁵). In the Paphos region there have been registered folk poetry texts performed in the 1930s by Turkish Cypriots containing very few Turkish words (reported in Giangoullis 1986: 8), although these are not original creations of the performer but only transmitted folk texts. The specific linguistic situation of the Paphos region, where some Muslims even did not master very well the Turkish language, as referred for instance in the autobiography of the Turkish Cypriot poet Taner Baybars (Baybars 2005: 152) and witnessed by one of the most famous ποιητάοηδες, Charalambos Azinas, who, in 1938, published a long poem about Atatürk’s death in Greek Cypriot written in Latin alphabet with the new Turkish orthography, apparently for the use of Hellenophone Paphos Turks (Fevzioglu 2001), is obviously an exception, since there is also a rich material of *çatizma/çatizma* in Turkish Cypriot only¹⁶. Unfortunately, research done until today into the ποιητάοηδες production does not include any comparative aspect with the Turkish production. The same is true for the yet uninvestigated oral literature of the Arabic-Greek Cypriot bilingual

Maronites in the village of Kormakiti, if there is any (see Roth 2000: 129, Giangoullis 1986: 13). The result in both cases is that precious sources of the Eastern Mediterranean culture in Cyprus remain in darkness.

4. Perspectives: Identity Issues in a Comparative Approach

Issues of “identity in literature” are important criteria for a comparative analysis (see the “Prolegomena” in this volume) and can be productive when applied to contemporary Eastern Mediterranean literatures. Talking about Cypriot literary production in Turkish, it is a fact that Turkish Cypriot literature during British rule is marked by distinct features of Ottomanism in its first period, summed up in the programmatic and almost laconic verse by Kaytazzade Nazım (1857-1924) “Osmanlıyız, Osmanlıyız / Alemde biz pek şanslıyız” – “We are Ottomans, we are Ottomans, all over the world we are very lucky” (Fedai & Azgın 1993: 15-18), whereas Turkish Cypriot literature in the later British period is mainly concerned with Turkish nationalism. The “Cypriotness” of a more recent literary activity is characteristic for the contemporary generations (see Neşe Yaşın 1990: 82), but can be compared to the quest for a specific Lebanese national identity in the 1950s, where during the outburst of the Civil War the country faced the issue of joining the UAR and the neo-symbolist Sa’îl ‘Aql (born 1912) published a poetry volume in Latin characters in order to underline his opposition to Panarabism and annexation (*Yârah*, 1961; see Booth 1992: 472).

Furthermore, the proclaimed “Mediterraninity” in Turkish Cypriot culture and literature finds its expression in the common saying of the contemporary Turkish Cypriot poetry as “a Mediterranean poetry which uses the Turkish language” (“Türk dilini kullanan, Akdenizli bir şiir”)¹⁷. This should then be compared to the Egyptian modernism where authors as Taha usayn or Lewis Awad were calling for a “frankly ‘Mediterranean’ Western-oriented culture for Egypt” (al-Kharrat 1991: 180) and confronted to Costas Montis’ exclusive Mediterraneanity in his untranslatable short poem *Μεσόγειος και Κύπρος* (“Mediterranean and Cyprus”)¹⁸ where he exclaims: “Τι αποκλειστικά δική της αγαλιά τής άνοιξε, / τι αγαλιά μοναχοκόρης!”. Though moving outside the chronological framework of the present contribution, it should be however born in mind that identity questions can be easily linked to the periphery/centre structures adopted in this attempt of analysis and therefore be used for a further, and deeper, exploration of the complex literary production and reception in nowadays Cyprus.

NOTES

1. As examples of introductions into the application of postcolonial theory in literature see Ashcroft & alii 1989 and Gandhi 1998.
2. One of those is the case of Rodis Roufos (1924-1972) and his novel *Χάλκινη εποχή*, which was originally published in English (London 1960) and, being a “response” (*antilogos*, according to L. Papaleontiou, see below) to Lawrence Durrell’s *Bitter Lemons*, constitutes a fine example of dialogue or “writing back” to the colonial centre; see the chapter “Από τα Πικρολέμονα του Λόρενς Ντάρελ στη Χάλκινη εποχή του Ρόδη Ρούφου: Αποικιοκρατικός λόγος και αντίλογος” in Papaleontiou 2000: 146-163.
3. It should be mentioned that in this particular geographical and historical context of British occupied Egypt, the theory of colonial and postcolonial studies has been applied interpreting one of Cavafy’s poems (“Waiting for the Barbarians”) with a postcolonial key by McKinsey 2000.
4. This is obviously not valid for philosophical-political texts, where the phenomenon is certainly to be set earlier, i.e. at the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century, when the most important texts of the French Enlightenment are translated into Greek; cf. Kitromilidis 2000: 144-153.
5. Cf. also Th. Gautier’s description of a performance of an Armenian comedy in Kadıköy translated by the Cypriot writer Epameinondas Frangoudis (Papaleontiou 2004: 456).
6. For Cavafy’s dealing of the Arabo-Islamic world in his work see Kappler 2000. It is very interesting, as Papaleontiou (2005-2006: 20-22) and Kegayiolglou (1993: 37) point out, that there are also Cavafian reflections in Greek Cypriot poetry, where explicit reference is made to the Arabic context of the Alexandrian poet, namely the poem *Προς Κωνσταντίνο Καβάφη* (“To Constantin Cavafy”) by Costas Montis and *Αποθανών εν Αλεξανδρεία* (“Deceased in Alexandria”) by the contemporary poet Kyriakos Charalambidis.
7. For a detailed account of Pieridis’ work related to the Egyptian environment see Papaleontiou 2005-2006: 13-17.
8. Mahmut Makal’s novel *Bizim Köy* (“Our Village”) appeared in Istanbul in 1950; H. Afif Mapolar, influenced from the mainland’s “Village Literature”, published his *Üçümüz* (“Us Three”) in 1954.
9. For an account on M. Roussia’s Egyptian production see Papaleontiou 2005-2006: 17-18. About her general work see also Palaiologou-Petronda 1981.
10. See Papaleontiou 2005-2006: 11-12. The mentioned poem in English translation can be seen in the presentation of his work Nicolaides 1998: 115.
11. One of the *Mu’allaqât* by cImru-l-Qays was translated 1896 in Istanbul by I. Stavridis (Papaleontiou 1998: 47), a Greek translation by “Archim. Ilias Dip.” of Sawqî’s odes appeared 1905 in Alexandria (Papaleontiou 1998: 68). The same person translated several other Arab poets in the same period of time. These are only examples, the

- whole translation activity from Arabic, Ottoman and Persian to Greek can be seen in Papaleontiou 1998: passim.
12. Cf. Yiangoullis 1986: 35 and passim.
 13. For a comparative approach to Michaelidis and his Turkish fellow countryman, the Ottoman poet Hilmi Efendi, see Kappler 2004.
 14. The Greek Cypriot *τουατίσματα* genre has been adopted from the Turkish Cypriots looking back on a long tradition of Turkic folk (especially *mani*) literature in Anatolia and elsewhere; for a general overview see Dilçin 2000: 287-289; for the Cypriot context cf. Gökçeoglu 2002: 8, 66.
 15. Cf., for instance, Kyrris 1976: 246.
 16. See some examples in Yaşın 2005: 269-282.
 17. According to Tamer Öncül, in: Karadag, Metin, Çağdaş Kıbrıs Türk Edebiyatı İçinde Osman Türkay Şiirinin Evrensel Boyutları, http://turkoloji.cu.edu.tr/GENEL/karadag_evrensel_pdf, 17.08.2007.
 18. In: *Ylantron* 1 (2001): 3.

REFERENCES

- Allen, Roger. The Beginnings of the Arabic novel. In: Badawi, M.M. (ed.) 1992: 180-192.
- Ashcroft, Bill & Griffiths, Gareth & Tiffin, Helen. *The Empire Writes Back – Theory and practice in post-colonial literatures*. London/New York: Routledge 1989.
- Badawi, M. M. (ed.). *Modern Arabic Literature*. Cambridge: University Press 1992.
- Booth, Marilyn. Poetry in the vernacular. In: Badawi, M.M. (ed.) 1992: 463-482.
- Calotychos, Vangelis. Thorns in the Side of Venice? Galanaki's *Pasha* and Pamuk's *White Castle* in the Global Market. In: Tziouvas, D. N. (ed.), *Greek Modernism and Beyond*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield 1997: 243-260.
- Calotychos, Vangelis. (Pre)occupied Space: Hyphens, Apostrophes and Over-Sites in the Literary Imagining of Cyprus, Greece and Turkey. In: Yashin, M. (ed.). *Step-Mothertongue. From Nationalism to Multiculturalism: Literatures of Cyprus, Greece and Turkey*. London: Middlesex University Press 2000: 49-69.

- Cachia, Pierre. The age of translation and adaptation, 1850-1914: The Arab World. In: Ostle (ed.) 1991: 33-44.
- Dilçin, Cem. *Örneklerle Türk Şiir Bilgisi*. Ankara: Türk Dil Kurumu Yayınları 2000.
- Evin, Ahmet O. Novelists: New Cosmopolitanism versus Social Pluralism. In: Heper, M. & Öncü, A. & Kramer, H. (eds.), *Turkey and the West – Changing Political and Cultural Identities*. London/New York: L.B. Tauris & Co 1993: 92-115.
- Fedai, Harid & Azgın, Bekir (eds.). *Kaymaz-zade Nazım Efendi, Ruhi-Mecruh (Şiirler)*. Lefkoşa: KKTC Milli Eğitim ve Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları 1993.
- Ferguson, Charles. Diglossia. *Word* 15 (1959): 325-340.
- Fevziöğlü, Bülent. Kıbrıslı Rum Halk Şairi Haralambos Azinas'tan Atatürk'ün Ölümü Üzerine Bir Destan. In: Fevziöğlü, B. & Atun, S. (eds.), *Kıbrıs Türk Halk Edebiyatında Destanlar ve Ağtlar Üzerine Bilgiler – Belgeler – Araştırmalar*. Mağusa: Samtay Vakfı Yayınları 2001: 116-133.
- Gandhi, Leela. *Postcolonial Theory. A critical introduction*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998.
- Georgeon, François. L'histoire d'Akapi, premier roman en turc. *ANKA* 16-17 (1992): 35-38.
- Giangoullis, Kostas (Γιαγκουλλής). *Η κυπριακή διάλεκτος στη λογοτεχνία (από τον 11^ο αιώνα ως σήμερα)*. Lefkosia 1986.
- Gökçeoğlu, Mustafa. *Manilerimz*. Lefkoşa: Eğitim Vakfı Yayınları 2002.
- Guth, Stephan. Zwei Regionen – eine Literaturgeschichte? Zwei zeitgenössische Romane aus Ägypten und der Türkei und die Möglichkeit einer übergreifenden Periodisierung nahöstlicher Literaturen. *Die Welt des Islams* 34 (1994): 218-245.
- Kappler, Matthias. “Με ανατολίτικες χειρονομίες”: Εικόνες της ισλαμικής Ανατολής και η χρήση λέξεων ανατολικής προέλευσης στον ποιητικό λόγο του Καβάφη. In: Pieris, M. (ed.) 2000: 195-211.
- Kappler, Matthias. *Türkischsprachige Liebeslyrik in griechisch-osmanischen Liedanthologien des 19. Jahrhunderts*. Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag 2002.
- Kappler, Matthias. A Comparative Look at Greek and Turkish Literature in Ottoman Cyprus between Periphery and Centre. *Journal of Cyprus Studies / Kıbrıs Araştırmaları Dergisi*, Vol. 10 / no. 26-27 (2004): 62-74.
- Kechagioglou, George. Contemporary Cypriot literature and the ‘frame’ of

- Modern Greek literature: a provincial, local, marginal, peripheral, independant, autonomous, self-sufficient or self-determined literature? *Journal of Mediterranean Studies* 2/2 (1992): 240-255.
- Kechagioglou, Yiorgos (Κεχαγιόγλου). Όψεις του νεοελληνικού ‘ανατολισμού’: Η συμβολή των Κυπρίων λογοτεχνών της Αιγύπτου. In: *Πρακτικά Συμποσίου ‘Οι Κύπριοι λογοτέχνες της Αιγύπτου’*, Lefkosía: Politistikés Ypiresías Ypourgeíou Paideías 1993: 29-48.
- al-Kharrat, Edward. The age of ideology and polarization since 1950: The Mashriq. In: Ostle (ed.) 1991: 180-192.
- Kilpatrick, Hilary. Eastern Mediterranean Literatures – Perspectives for Comparative Study. In: Klemm, V. & Gruendler, B. (eds.), *Understanding Near Eastern Literatures – A Spectrum of Interdisciplinary Approaches*. Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag 2000: 83-94.
- Kitromilidis, Paschalis M. (Κιτρομηλίδης). *Η Γαλλική Επανάσταση και η Νοτιοανατολική Ευρώπη*. Athina: Poreia 2000.
- Koudounaris, Aristeidis L. (Κουδουνάρης). *Βιογραφικόν Λεξικόν Κυπρίων 1800-1920*. Lefkosia 2005⁵.
- Kyrris, Costas P. Symbiotic Elements in the History of the Two Communities of Cyprus. *Kypriakos Logos* VIII/46-47 (1976): 243-282.
- McKinsey, M., Αναζητώντας τους βαρβάρους – Ο Καβάφης και η Μεταποικιακή Κριτική. In: Pieris, M. (ed.) 2000: 36-45.
- Neuwirth, Angelika & Pflitsch, Andreas. *Agonie und Aufbruch – Neue libanesische Prosa*. Beirut: Dergham 2000.
- Nicolaides 1998 = Nicos Nicolaides the Cypriot – Anthology / Νίκος Νικολαΐδης ο Κύπριος – Ανθολογία. London: Diaspora Books 1998.
- Ostle, Robin (ed.). *Modern Literature in the Near and Middle East 1850-1970*. London/New York: Routledge 1991.
- Ostle, Robin. From romantic nationalism to social criticism 1914-1950: The Arab World. In: Ostle (ed.) 1991: 104-115.
- Paker, Saliha. The age of translation and adaptation, 1850-1914: Turkey. In: Ostle (ed.) 1991: 17-32.
- Palaiologou-Petronda, Evgenia (Παλαιολόγου-Πετρόνδα). *Μαρία Ρουσσά η Κύπρια πεζογράφος*. Lefkosia 1981.
- Papaleontiou, Lefteris (Παπαλεοντίου). *Λογοτεχνικές μεταφράσεις του Μείζονος Ελληνισμού. Μικρασία – Κύπρος – Αίγυπτος 1880-1930*.

- Thessaloniki: Kentro Ellinikis Glossas 1998.
- Papaleontiou, Lefteris, *Στοχαστικές Προσαρμογές – Για την Ιστορία της ευρύτερης Νεοελληνικής λογοτεχνίας*, Athina: Gavriilidis 2000.
- Papaleontiou, Lefteris. Η Κωνσταντινούπολη του Th. Gautier και του Ε. Φραγκούδη. In: *Μνήμη Άλκη Αγγέλου – Τα άφθονα σχήματα του παρελθόντος*. Thessaloniki: University Studio Press 2004: 451-462.
- Papaleontiou, Lefteris. Εικόνες της Αιγύπτου σε κείμενα Κυπρίων λογοτεχνών. *Νέα Εποχή* 287 (Χειμώνας 2005-2006): 5-25.
- Pieridis, Yiorgos Philippou (Πιερίδης). Τα νεοελληνικά γράμματα στην Αίγυπτο. *Κυπριακά Χρονικά* 67 (1971): 11-22.
- Pieridis, Yiorgos Philippou (Πιερίδης). *Οι Βαμβακάδες*. Lefkosia: Politistikes Ypiresies Ypourgeiou Paideias kai Politismou 1994².
- Pieris, Michalis. (ed.). *Η ποίηση του κράματος – Μοντερνισμός και διαπολιτισμικότητα στο έργο του Καβάφη*. Irakleio: Panepistimiakes Ekdoseis Kritis 2000.
- Roth, Arlette. Un usage linguistique en voie d'éviction. Observations sur la «réduction» syntaxique et stylistique dans le parler arabe de Kormakiti. In: Ioannou, Yannis & Métral, Françoise & Yon, Marguerite (eds.), *Chypre et la Méditerranée orientale*. [Travaux de la Maison de l'Orient Méditerranéen nr. 31]. Lyon: Maison de l'Orient Méditerranéen 2000: 127-137.
- Stathi, Pinelopi (Στάθη). Κωνσταντινουπολίτικα στιχουργήματα – «Η ωραία Μελπομένη και ο διπρόσωπος εραστής Νικολάκης». *Ο Ερασιστής* 21 (1997): 352-365.
- Strauss, Johann. *Romanlar, ah! O romanlar!* Les débuts de la lecture moderne dans l'Empire ottoman (1850-1900). *Turcica* 26 (1994): 125-163.
- Tanpınar, Ahmet Hamdi. *19uncu Asır Türk Edebiyatı Tarihi*. Istanbul: Çağlayan 2001¹².
- Tietze, Andreas [= Tietze 1991a]. Der erste moderne Roman in türkischer Sprache. *Journal of Turkish Studies/Türklük Bilgisi Araştırmaları* 15 (1991) [= Fahir İz Armagañ II]: 345-353.
- Tietze, Andreas [= Tietze 1991b]. Ethnicity and Change in Ottoman Intellectual History. *Turcica* 21-23 (1991): 385-395.
- Yaşın, Mehmet (ed.). *Eski Kıbrıs Şiiri Antolojisi*. Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları 1999.
- Yaşın, Mehmet (ed.). *Kıbrıs Şiiri Antolojisi*, Istanbul: Adam Yayınları 2005.

Yaşın Neşe. The Cypriot Peace Operation by the young Cypriot poem. In: *Turkish Cypriot Identity in Literature/Edebiyatta Kıbrıs Türk Kimliği*. London: Fatal Publications 1990: 79-89.

Zafeiriou, Lefkios (Ζαφειρίου). *Η νεότερη κυπριακή λογοτεχνία – Γραμματολογικό σχέδιασμα*. Lefkosia 1991.