

From the Island of Aphrodite to *Terra Australis*: Greek-Cypriot Literary Writing in Australia

George Kanarakis*

RÉSUMÉ

La littérature hellénique de la diaspora n'a pas encore été étudiée et de façon générale elle est absente des histoires de la littérature néohellénique les plus «officielles». Un grand nombre de Chypriotes grecs (surtout après 1974) vivent en Australie. Beaucoup d'entre eux puisent leurs inspirations à partir du monde et des péripéties historiques de Chypre, de la vie de leur nouvelle patrie, mais aussi de ce qui se passe dans le monde. Ils écrivent des poèmes et des narrations en grec, plus rarement en dialecte chypriote, quelquefois en anglais.

ABSTRACT

The Greek literature of the diaspora hasn't been studied yet and is generally ignored by most "official" neohellenic histories of literature. A great many Greek Cypriots live in Australia, especially since 1974, and a large number of Cypriot-Australian authors draw their inspiration from the people and historic adventures of their motherland, Cyprus, as well as from their new country and the world at large. They write poems or narratives in Greek, more rarely in the Cypriot dialect and sometimes in English.

The earliest substantiated presence of Greek Cypriots on the vast continent of the South was sporadic and isolated and goes back to the mid-nineteenth century.¹ The first quantitatively notable Greek-Cypriot immigration occurred about eighty years later – e.g. with 502 individuals in the entire country in 1933 and most settling in Sydney. Their number would climb after the post-war years, increasing impressively after the Turkish invasion of the island in 1974.

Purely coincidentally, the literary journey of the Greek Cypriots in Australia followed the same pattern. The earliest cases of Greek-Cypriot literary activity in this country occurred sporadically – the first in 1913 and

* Charles Sturt University, Australia

the second thirteen years later. (Kanarakis, 1985, p. 101; Kanarakis, 1991², p. 76; Kanarakis, 2003a, p. 57). The number of the writers grew slowly from the late 1940s onwards with a noticeable surge after 1974. Consequently, the significant increase in the number of Greek-Cypriot writers in Australia was directly related to two immigration waves of Greek Cypriots after World War II: the first from the end of the 1940s to mid-1950s and the second from the beginning of the 1970s (mainly after the invasion in 1974) until today.

In parallel, with the significant increase in Greek-Cypriot immigration to Australia after 1974, another factor, purely Australian, encouraged the upsurge of Greek-Cypriot literary writing. This was the social concept of multiculturalism, first officially endorsed in 1972 by the government of Gough Whitlam (Kanarakis, 2003a, pp. 92-93). Whitlam's government recognised and enthusiastically supported the idea and the practice of the maintenance of immigrant cultural heritage and the expression of the immigrants' ethnic identity through artistic channels, including literature.² Among all those Greek Cypriots who emigrated to Australia from the end of the 1940s until 1974, a number exhibited literary interest and talent. For a variety of reasons (economic, social, adjustment time to the new society, etc.), however, not all writers started writing in the years immediately after their arrival. Additionally, some of them had immigrated as children, while others, among whom some had already written and published literary works before emigrating, did not give evidence of their literary ability until years later.

The Greek-Cypriot literary tradition in Australia, established after World War II, was initiated decades before by two individuals. The first was George Nicolaides, an immigrant from the village of Livadia, Larnaca (Kanarakis, 2003b). Nicolaides is a pioneer in Greek-Cypriot Letters being the earliest Greek Cypriot to give us published literary writings as well as, coincidentally, the first published writer of Greek descent in general, making him the founder of literary activity in all Australian Hellenism.

Nicolaides' extant literary writings are short Greek-language narratives which became known through the Melbourne newspaper *Afstralia* [Australia], the first Greek newspaper in this country (Kanarakis, 2000, p. 25 and passim; Kanarakis, 2003a, pp. 197-199). His first published story, "The Aeroplane", appeared in *Afstralia* (Issue No. 5, July 4, 1913), twenty-eight days after the first circulation of the newspaper and just twenty-nine days after his arrival in Australia from Egypt.

Unwittingly Nicolaides became a ground-breaker in Greek-Cypriot literary

history. He made 1913 a turning point in this field because in that one year he gave us the first evidence of written literature, the first published literary writings and the first prose texts. Significantly 1913 became an inaugural year in the history of literature of Australian Hellenism as it was the year the newspaper *Australia* appeared in Melbourne. Before, there had been no Greek-language newspapers or periodicals anywhere in Australia, and as a result there was no public forum through which writers could appear. Even after 1913 the lack of Greek-language publishing companies meant that for several decades publishing would be limited to the facilities of the Greek newspapers of Sydney and Melbourne.

Before Nicolaides' immigration to Australia, this intelligent, well-read man had immersed himself in the cosmopolitan atmosphere of Alexandria and then in the Greek community of Aswan, south of Cairo. His experiences helped to shape the dynamic and diverse role he pursued in Greek community life in Australia, where he initiated a number of completely original undertakings as a press owner, editor, publisher and contributor,³ as well as a book compiler.⁴ Nicolaides' few surviving short stories were published in the Melbourne newspaper *Australia*. Copied from an exercise book, this hand-written collection, entitled *Diigimata* [Short Stories], is signed and dated (1.3.13) by him. Written when Nicolaides was a young man, they reveal influence of the nineteenth century Romantic period in Greece with its inherent tone of sentimental melancholy, frequently employing the dream as a literary device. They demonstrate an attempt by Nicolaides to move away from a simple story line to a more complex one.

If Nicolaides was the first Greek Cypriot (and first person of Greek descent) who opened the field of literature in print in Australia, the second of the two pre-World War II published writers was Edward Parry. He is acknowledged as the first Greek-Cypriot to publish English-language poems, short stories, long narratives, one-act plays, literary biographies of Greeks of antiquity and the Greek Revolution, and translations of Greek and Cypriot folk poems, including the "Hymn to Liberty" by Dionysios Solomos, as well as adaptations into English of Byzantine and Modern Greek prose works and poems (Kanarakis, 1985, pp. 101-102; Kanarakis, 1991², pp. 76-77; Kanarakis, 1997, p. 108). Additionally he wrote and published a few Greek-language poems. Parry's original contribution lies in the fact that he was the first to initiate literature in the English language with publications in various genres.

What gave this prolific writer an advantage were the family, educational and social conditions which he experienced in contrast to Nicolaides. Born

in England (Liverpool), Parry completed secondary and university studies in English and French literature. His fluency in Greek was due to his Cypriot mother (his father was a Welsh seaman) and later (because of her influence) to the fact that the subjects he pursued at university included Ancient Greek, Byzantine and Modern Greek language and literature, interests which he never abandoned.

Parry, settled in Sydney from 1915 and socialising with the Greek people of that city, with whom he used the name Antonios Parris, published his writings exclusively in the Sydney newspaper *Panellinios Kiryx* [Panhellenic Herald] (Australia's second oldest Greek newspaper until today). He became a regular contributor from its first issue of 16 November 1926 until 9 July 1942 when he became ill and his contributions stopped abruptly. Some of the poems Parry published in *Panellinios Kiryx* in 1926-27 constitute part of his English-language poetry collection *Greek Anthology* which unfortunately was never published.

Therefore, before the beginning of World War II, in addition to George Nicolaidis, the only other Greek-Cypriot writer whom my research has uncovered is the prolific Edward Parry. This small number of writers in those years is understandable since their number and rate of their increase are always proportionate to the size of their particular immigrant community and, of course, relevant to the annual net immigration intake from their homeland. The pre-World War II Greek-Cypriot immigration was significantly low resulting in a very slow rate of population growth overall. The Australian censuses record (including the few Cypriots not of Greek origin) 17 first-generation Cypriots in 1901, 26 in 1911, 40 in 1921 and 502 in 1933 (Price, 1990. See also Price, 2001, p. 419). After the war, however, an increasingly large scale Cypriot immigration to Australia was noted. It reflected the civil tension and turmoil as well as underemployment resulting from the war in Cyprus itself and the high demand for labour in an expanding Australian economy. So the Cypriot population in Australia started increasing quite rapidly: 681 Cypriots in 1947, 5773 in 1954, 10 703 in 1966, and especially in the years after the Turkish invasion: 22 216 in 1976, 24 038 in 1986 and 25 480 in 1990 (Price, 1990; Price, 2001, p. 419. See also Price, 1981, Table 2.1, pp. 10-11). It is not surprising that there were correspondingly more Cypriot immigrants with abilities and interests in literary writing.

The literature of the Greek Cypriots in Australia is an established corpus exhibiting vitality in its character and originality and variety in its genres,

themes, as well as its styles and forms. It consists mainly of prose and poetry works spanning from the humorous and light-hearted to the nostalgic and from social and political satire to the dramatic. The prose includes short stories, novels, children's literature, literary translations, etc., while poetry, ranges from the lyric to the epic, and includes oral versifications. Many poetic compositions follow the Modern Greek traditional rhyming verse which is based on the rhythmic speech pattern and in some cases imitates Cypriot folk songs. Free verse is used as well, while more recent years have witnessed modernistic works adding new dimensions and a new dynamism to Cypriot writing. Finally, playwriting comparatively is represented by few writers, with most plays remaining in manuscript form waiting to be staged or published.⁵

The largest part of this literature consists of published works – books, as well as prose and poetry compositions which appeared in Greek community newspapers and magazines. Quite a few works remained unpublished because of the financial limitations of their creators resulting either in being published long after they were written or remaining buried in personal papers and family albums. There was also often a lack of self-confidence in their talent or because these unpretentious and spontaneous oral improvisations were intended to entertain an audience and to provide social commentary, rather than to be published.

If literature reflects the state of the world and life itself, it should not be a surprise that immigrant writers keep returning to certain subjects, i.e. the distressing experiences of immigrant life, nostalgia for the homeland and the people left behind, the Odysseic dream of return, etc. Because of the particular characteristics of the geographical, sociocultural, linguistic and other conditions under which the Greek-Cypriot writers live and work, as well as the intellectual, historical and literary heritage they have carried with them or by which they have been deeply influenced, Cyprus plays a significant role. Whether as a source of direct influence or as a point of reference, the presence of Cyprus appears intense and multidimensional. It is evident in the reflection of rural and urban customs and mores, in the description of the natural beauty of the land, even in the memories and references to events related to the social, cultural and politico-military past of Cyprus (EOKA's struggle, the coup against Archbishop Makarios, the Turkish invasion, eviction and displacement in their own homeland, etc.).

It must not be assumed, however, that the writers of Cypriot origin restrict themselves to issues related only to Cyprus. There have always been works

written on a wide range of subjects, influenced, for example, by the effects of war, the global environment, international cultural trends, and social upheavals. In parallel with these influences there is the dynamic and broad influence of Greece (mythology, history, etc.) and of Australia (the impact of the physical and social environments, the immigrant's struggle in the new society, children caught between two cultures, etc.), as also happens with writers from Greece (Kanarakis, 1985, p. 5 and *passim* and Kanarakis 1991², p. 3 and *passim*).

Up to now most of these literary works have been written in Greek, with quite a few in English. The Greek-language works, apart from Modern Greek Koine, have also been composed in the Cypriot idiom. These are of particular significance because they continue the Cypriot folk language tradition in a land culturally and historically different. They not only preserve it from inevitable disappearance in this country, but they give a new dimension to the entire body of the Cypriot and Greek literature in the Antipodes. In certain cases, for the sake of stylistic, socio-historical and other purposes, the writer uses both language forms in the same piece of work.

The Greek-Cypriot writers in their majority are first generation immigrants, including those who arrived in childhood, and a continuously increasing number of Australian-born individuals who write their works mainly in English. The content of many of their works, of either case, confirms that not only have they not been cut off from their Cypriot roots but that they also reflect the Cypriot family and the values of the Cypriot culture.

Of course, not all Greek-Cypriot writers are of the same high literary stature but undoubtedly the majors as well as the minors, according to the degree of their sensitivity and natural talent, contribute positively to the formulation of the fabric of this literature.

This literary corpus is not monopolised by men. Not only do we have a female Greek-Cypriot, and in general female Greek, literary presence, but additionally as the years pass, the more it becomes qualitatively felt, energetic and vital, with the clear imprint of its gender. Yet their numbers, despite their steady increase, have been and continue to be disproportionate compared to that of men. This phenomenon is directly related to demographic, social, cultural and family factors which have influenced the Greek-Cypriot woman's role and place in both the Greek community and the wider Australian society, a situation which started changing after the War due to the increased Greek-Cypriot immigrant numbers and also to the changing times.⁶

Almost all immigrant women writers started evidencing their literary ability and interest during the years after World War II, some as late as the decade of the 1970s and onwards. The reasons, apart from the increase of the post-War arrivals of Greek Cypriots, included: a) Greek-Cypriot immigrant women, at least since the mid-1960s, were more educated in comparison with those of the 1950s and the pre-War period; b) life in Australia was developing, broadening their experiences, and encouraging their intellectual and social independence; c) the appearance of multiculturalism in the 1970s encouraged the migrants to maintain their language and cultural patterns and through the Australia Council, started supporting their literary activities; and d) the post-War multiplication of Greek newspapers and magazines encouraged literary activity (Kanarakis, 2000, pp. 46, 81-98). To these Greek-language Cypriot women, we must add those born in Australia.

The women writers presented here are those who either emigrated to Australia or were born in this country up until 1974. They share a common characteristic in that all of them have written poetry in a variety of thematic landscapes. With a few exceptions, the rest have served other literary genres as well, such as short story writing, the novel and even playwrighting. Thematically the traditional theme of *xenitia* has taken on another form, with the writers displaying a different attitude revealing how facing life in the foreign land has changed. Some treat *xenitia* with sensitivity yet as a negative factor in immigrant life; others see it as a challenge which leads to increasing maturity and a wider perception of reality.

The first woman writer under examination is Zeny Giles, the Sydney-born daughter of a Cypriot father and Castellorizian mother. A multi-award winning English-language writer, Giles made her first literary appearance in the anthology *Hunter Valley Poets 1973*, while her first published prose piece appeared in 1979 in the *School Magazine* (New South Wales Department of Education). Since then she has contributed short stories and poems to various literary journals (*SCOPP*, *Inprint*, *Mattoid*) and to newspapers (*The Newcastle Herald* and *the Age*) and has been included in several Australian poetry and prose anthologies. She has to her credit two short story collections (*Miracle of Waters*, Penguin, 1989 and *Caught in the Light*, Catchfire Press, 2002), one poetry collection (*Blackbutt Honey*, Koel Publications, 2005) and the novel *Between Two Worlds* (Saturday Centre Press, 1981) about a young Greek girl confronted by adversity and caught between two cultures in Australia.

Several other Greek-Cypriot women have followed Giles' creative path, most of them immigrants themselves (at least two, Dhora Moustrides and Anastasia Gonis, in childhood) and fewer born in Australia. Two of them, Aliki Roussou who emigrated in 1955 from Yermassoyia of Limassol, and Dhora Moustrides, from Eftagonia of Limassol who arrived in 1956, have found interest in poetic expression. Roussou composes poetry in Greek. Her poems are noted for their sensitive and unpretentious lyricism. Moustrides writes poetry in both Greek and English, frequently incorporating elements of her original Cypriot dialect. Her voice is dynamic and her themes quite provocative and varied, ranging from time and territory in mothers' and daughters' interrelationships to the diachrony and beauty of love to matters of her Cypriot heritage. In 1995 three of her poems were performed in "Women Folk: A Celebration of Women and Dance" under the aegis of the Adelaide Folk Society.

More Greek-Cypriot women extended their writing activities to other genres. To this group belong Anastasia Gonis from Limassol who emigrated to Australia in early childhood in 1952, Laura Palmer from Nicosia in 1973, Angela Costi born in Sydney, and Claire Gazi from Kaimakli near Nicosia who arrived in 1967.

Gonis, an English-language writer, started publishing in the early 1990s, although she had begun writing stories earlier. Her first published work was the short story "My Best Friends" in the Melbourne journal *Inkshed 2* in 1991, followed in 1992 by a poem, "Under the Influence" in the *Box Hill College Magazine*. Since then she has published more poetry and short stories in the Melbourne journals *Inkshed* and *Antipodes*, as well as non-fiction in the newspapers *The Age*, the *West Australian*, the magazine *New Woman* and elsewhere. Her short stories have been included in anthologies and she has been acclaimed for the quality of her work. She has also received an Arts Victoria Grant for her autobiography *Prints of the Past*. Many of the subjects Gonis deals with relate to the experiences of her own immigrant life: internal discord and conflict as outcomes of cultural and environmental differences, social and geographical dislocation and alienation, the desperate efforts of the immigrant "to balance the two cultures".

Laura Palmer is a bilingual writer who, before coming to Australia, spent four years in London studying English language. Her literary activity occurred mainly in the 1980s while living in Sydney. The small number of powerful poems and short stories she wrote were published in literary journals of Sydney, such as *Aspect* and *To Yiofyri* [The Bridge]. She has also

published a few literary essays and has translated into Greek poems by Antigone Kefala, a noted Australian poet and prose writer of Greek origin, who Palmer acknowledged has influenced her own poetry writing.

Angela Costi and Claire Gonis are connected by a common link – the theatre. Costi, an English-language writer, has revealed a passion for the theatre on all levels as writer, actor and producer, since a university student. In 1995 this interest was expanded by an Australian National Languages and Literary Board travel grant which allowed her to study classic Greek theatre in Greece and Cyprus.

Within a year of her return, Costi had completed her first and best known play *Panayiota*, in which she explores the intense conflict and cultural differences experienced by second and third generation Greek Australians of Cypriot origin. In September 1996, the play was adapted for radio and produced on Radio National ABC and in June 1997 was first performed in Melbourne. It has also been published in the journal *Australasian Drama Studies* (Queensland University Press, April 1998) and selected by the Australian Script Centre for its '99 *Collection*. Other plays and poetic narratives she has written include *The Sounds of Incense* produced by Radio National ABC (1998), *Welcome Matt* (City of Kingston, 2000) and *Shimmer* (City of Darebin, 2001), all receiving critical acclaim. Costi continues to compose and perform poetry as well as write short fiction and essays, quite frequently reflecting her rich Cypriot heritage, and her work appears in prestigious print and online publications in Australia, the United States and the United Kingdom. Her two collections, *Dinted Halos* (Hit and Miss Publication, 2003) and the CD, *Prayers for the Wicked* (a selection of poetry put to music and soundscape launched in Melbourne in 2005), include lyrical and evocative verse. Currently she has been working on a third collection entitled *Honey and Salt Mix*.

Claire Gazis, a Greek-language writer, achieved recognition in 1997 when her short story "Itan Panselinos" received the second prize in the short-story competition of the Greek Australian Cultural League of Melbourne. Apart from a few short stories and poems, her original contribution lies in children's theatre. Gazis is the only Greek-Cypriot woman writer and one of the few Greek writers who has devoted her creative energy to this important area of art for children, both as stage production and theatre literature. Located in Melbourne, she has published two plays in book form, the three-act play *Oi galazopetres tou Ioniou* [The Ionian Bluestones] (2004) and the two-act play, *Stin Kastalia piji* [At the Kastalia Spring]: *Our Water Our Future* (2006). The

first is directed at ten to fifteen-year-olds and is an enchanting tale of the magic birth of the Seven Islands in Greece, i.e. the *galazopetres tou Ioniou*. The play is theatrically well structured and convincingly conveys messages related to global coexistence, universal brotherhood and living in harmony with nature. The second work, published under the sponsorship of the Multicultural Commission of Victoria, Australia, aims to teach children, through the use of Greek mythology and the setting of the plot at the ancient site of the Castalia spring at Delphi, about the ecological issues related to the use of water in areas with dry climates, such as Cyprus and Australia. Both plays have been commended (2004 and 2005 correspondingly) by the Agelidis Foundation of Australia. The first play was also staged on the island of Lefkada in the summer cultural festival of the Palestrinian School. Currently, Gazis is working on a third play for children, *Diamantenia tou Notou* [Diamantenia of the South].

The production of Greek-Cypriot men, on the other hand, has its own merit. From the historical aspect, with the exception of George Nicolaides and Edward Parry, it appears from the end of World War II onwards.

The earliest Greek-language Cypriot I have traced⁷ is the journalist and lawyer Dionysios Koutsakos from Paphos (Kanarakis, 1985, pp. 208-212 and Kanarakis, 1991², pp. 153-156), who immigrated to Australia from Athens in 1948 and settled in Brisbane. From 1950 to 1952 he published and edited the weekly *Ellino-Australiana Nea* [Greek-Australian News]. His literary activity included novellas, travel stories, literary feature articles which he himself published or which appeared in other newspapers and periodicals of Cyprus, Greece and Australia. Many of these works satirised Greek customs, such as matchmaking, comical Greek community characters, etc., and appeared in his regular Greek-language column under the nom de plume “Eavesdropper”. Koutsakos’ aim was to sensitize the Greeks of Australia and encourage them to be proud of their country of origin and represent it worthily. At the end of 1992 he published a book in Sydney entitled *Ena kai Ena* [One and One], comprised of two long prose pieces, one narrative travel story set in Australia and one on current affairs, satirical in tone but serious in aim, that recounts both the day-to-day events of life and incidents from his years of experience in courthouses. What distinguishes him from other writers, however, are the efforts he made in the area of children’s literature. He provides us with the first evidence of writing for children.⁸ Koutsakos’ interesting and somewhat didactic children’s stories regularly appeared in his newspaper in the Greek-language “Children’s Column” under the noms de plume “Grandpa” and “Aunt Mary”.

The year 1949 saw another three immigrants from Cyprus arrive who would make their impact on literary writing in Australia. They were Theodore Xenophou from Polystypos, a mountainous village of Pitsilia, Peter (Panayiotis) Lyssiotis from Xylotymbou of Larnaca who came at the age of five with his mother, and Costas Athanasiadis from Kalavassos of Larnaca.

Xenophou had already published two historical novels (*Brosta ston olethro* [Face to Face with Calamity] (1948) and *Oi Kataramenoi* [The Damned] (1948, 1950), the latter covering the history of Cyprus from 1821 to 1831) before coming to Australia in 1949. His return to writing came some twenty years later after establishing himself in his new homeland. Apart from his English-language novel on the struggle of EOKA, entitled *The Trojan Donkey* (Castle Publishing, 1989), he has written other English-language novels and made his mark as the first Cypriot writer to focus on contemporary social and scientific issues relating to the pollution of the environment and global warming (*Mountain in the Sky*, Castle Publishing, 1982), dealing with modern science fiction (*The Last God on Earth*, 2000) as well as human cloning in Australia and related ethical and social problems (*Sunset at Dawn*, unpublished). Furthermore, his original approach is exemplified in two Greek-language poems, *Iliolousta skotadia* [Sunlit Darkness] (1989) and *Ealo I polis* [Constantinople Has Fallen] (1989 unpublished), the former on the 1974 coup against Archbishop Makarios and the latter on the last fifty-nine days of the siege of Constantinople. Here Xenophou's originality lies in the structure of the poems, both heroic epics in style and length (7222 and 7500 fifteen-syllable lines in couplets respectively), with dialogue parts in the Cypriot dialect, and in addition his use in the former of the ancient technique, first encountered in Homer's *Odyssey* (Raps. XI), of the protagonist's descent into Hades.

Despite the adversities experienced in his new homeland, Xenophou's thematic interests have not been attracted to the usual immigrant subjects but almost totally inspired by the tragic history of his birthplace, Cyprus, as well as of Constantinople and by contemporary issues relating to science and the environment.

Similar problems in modern society, such as isolation and dislocation, exploitation, inequality, etc., trouble the widely regarded poet and avant-garde artist, photographer and photomonteur Peter Lyssiotis. Since 1975 in his innovative work Lyssiotis has followed a multi-communicative approach, combining text with the visual impact of his creative photography and surrealist photomontage.

Up to now his books include *Journey of a Wise Electron and Other Stories* (Champion Books, 1981), *Three Cheers for Civilization* (Champion Books, 1985), *Harbour Breathes*, with Anna Couani (Sea Cruise Books and Masterthief Enterprises, 1989), *CDs and Other Stories*, with Gyorgy Scrinis (Masterthief, 1994). His lyric poetry up to 1975 appeared in Greek in various community literary journals (*Allayi*, *Chronico*, *Epaphi*) and in his 2004 English-language collection *The Bird, the Belltower* (Owl Publishing, and in Greek translation with English introduction by Dimitris Vardoulakis in 2005). He has also published another fourteen books in limited editions (books of artwork) and produced films and videos.

The third writer of this group is Costas Athanasiadis⁹ who emigrated to Melbourne in 1949 where he worked as a journalist for the Greek community newspapers *Afstralioellinas* [Australian Greek] and *Elliniki Phoni* [Hellenic Voice]. In May 1959 he emigrated again, this time to Astoria, New York, where he worked as a journalist for *Ethnikos Kirykas* until eighteen months later he bought the Greek-language newspaper *Campana* [The Bell], founded in 1917. During his residence in Australia Athanasiadis revealed his literary talent publishing a few poems but mainly short stories in newspapers and periodicals of Cyprus, Greece and Australia. Many of his short stories comprise light-hearted romances while others deal with social issues such as unemployment, family financial difficulties, the adversities of immigrant life, etc. Athanasiadis' pioneering contribution, however, is his novel *Daphne Miller* published in Melbourne in 1954. This is the first novel to appear in the Greek Letters of Australian Hellenism. It presents the story of the main character, a liberated, cosmopolitan woman, whose life is traced from a village near Rouen, France, through her entire immigrant life in Melbourne where she finally settles. Thematically and structurally this novel reminds us of the literature of the Romantic Movement in Greece. After Athanasiadis' emigration to the USA, this popular novel, which was already out of print, was published again, but in English translation. Finally, while still in Australia, in 1952 he published his Greek translation of Frank Hardy's short story "The Man from Clinkapella" in *Ellinoafstraliani Epitheorisi* [Greek Australian Review].

The exceptional folk versifier Charalambos Azinos from Philousa of Kelokedaron, Paphos¹⁰ also belongs to the post-war writers of the 1950s. From 1956 when he emigrated to Melbourne, Azinos became well known for taking every opportunity to improvise oral verses to entertain, satirize, tease or just describe an event, out of a true spirit of genuine merriment and spontaneity. His verses, thematically reflecting everyday life, people and

situations in Cyprus and Australia, are noted for their smartness and humour, even for their often frequent obscene language. His poetic logos, traditionally rhyming and based on the tempo of the Cypriot idiom, follows the *myllomena traouthkia* [oral songs] of his homeland, not only in style but also in language, structure and technique. Two collections survive: *Oula ta satirika traouthkia ston paron tomon* <sic> [All the Satirical Songs in This Volume] (Limassol, 1972) published when in Cyprus for a visit and encouraged by friends, and *Ta myllomena traouthkia tou X.M. Azinou* [The Oral Songs of C.M. Azinos] (Nicosia, 1985) by Kapa G. Lamachos.¹¹

Since the 1950s the Cypriot population has continued to increase. In 1966 the Cypriots in Australia had reached 10 703 (Price 1990). Among them was Haris Siamaris, from Lefkonoiko of Ammochostos, who had emigrated to Melbourne that year. He has produced two works, *Ta traouthkia tou horkati* [The Peasant's Songs] (Melbourne, 1995), poems published weekly during 1979 in the Melbourne newspaper *Neos Kosmos* and a collection of literary feature articles, *I phoni tou horkati* [The Peasant's Voice] (Nicosia: Presidential Commissioner's Office Publications, 2003), in 1978-80, also in *Neos Kosmos*.

Siamaris' poetic and prose works are characterised by the immediacy of his life experiences and the spontaneous expression of his feelings, all dressed in the lively Cypriot idiom. Sensitive, cleverly satirical and always amusing, he brings to mind the old folk *poitarides* and the storytellers of daily reality, while his themes cover the gamut of Greek-Cypriot life in Australia, particularly in Melbourne with frequent references to the customs and mores of Cyprus and Cypriot culture in general. Ultimately, Siamaris' poetry and prose carry historical and folklore value for anyone interested in the Greek-Cypriot diaspora.

Finally, one of the last Greek-Cypriot writers who emigrated to Australia before the Turkish invasion is Christos Moudouros also from Polystypos of Pitsilia. He arrived with his family in 1972 and has resided in Adelaide since. Moudouros is a prose writer who started in his youth with short stories published in local newspapers and where in 1963 he won the first prize in a pan-Cypriot short story competition sponsored by the newspaper *Haravyi*. His literary energy came to the fore in Australia where he produced two short story collections, *I istoria mias eikonas kai alla diigimata* [The Story of an Icon and Other Short Stories] (1998, awarded first prize in 2000 in the Angelidio Foundation Pan-Australian Competition) and *Synevissan sti yi ton ayion* [These Occurred in the Land of the Saints] (2001), one novel, *I patitzii* [The Plague] (1994), and two collections of feature articles, *Mnimes kai sholia* [Memories

and Comments] (2002) from his column of the same title in the Adelaide newspaper *Paroikiako Vima* [Community Tribune] and *Taxidiotikes entyposeis kai diafora sholia* [Travel Impressions and Various Comments] (2007).

Moudouros' writings reveal his internal world, sensationally charged by the traumatic experiences of the tragedy of Cyprus and his personal interpretation and attitudes towards contemporary local, Cypriot and international issues. Moudouros has made a special literary contribution with *I patizii*, the first Greek-language folklore novel, delving into the treasury of his rich Cypriot heritage and culture, based on a folk story about a deadly plague which had spread throughout the island. For a more authentic effect Moudouros has his characters speak in the Cypriot dialect.

Although the majority of Greek-Cypriot writers in Australia are first generation immigrants, there is a continuously increasing number of English-language writers. They consist of the Australian-born, those who immigrated in childhood, and a few born or who lived in English-speaking environments other than Australia.

Among those born in Australia are Michael G. Michael and George Papaellinas from Sydney and John Charalambous from Melbourne.

Michael, a perfect bilingual, derives his Cypriot heritage from his father. He has extensive intellectual interests in philosophy, theology and literature which are reflected in his passion for literary writing, especially poetry. Many of his poems have appeared in Greek community newspapers and English-language journals such as *Westerly*, *Southerly*, *Studio*, *Ulitarra*, as well as in a number of Greek and Australian anthologies. Two of his short stories, "Associations A" and "Associations B" have received a "Worthy of Mention" from the Fellowship of Australian Writers (1998) and a "Highly Commended" in the Tom Howard Short Story Contest (2000). In 1992 Michael's poetry collection *Isle of Driftwood* appeared (Standard Publishing House), while several others (*Little Icons*, *Another Version of the Events* and *Parables*) and a volume of prose (*Short Stories Off the Wind*) await publication. He was invited by the International Library of Poetry to contribute to the anthology *Memories of the Millenium* (2000), and he has received a number of Australian poetry awards.

This gifted man's writings are sensitive and humble of heart and soul, bringing truth, understanding, and faith to a questing world. As Alison White, editor of *The Australasian Journal of New Poets*, wrote in 1992, "M.G. Michael's poetry is as surprising and unusual as the man himself", and in 1991 the publishers Elephas Books of Western Australia had noted, "Mr

Michael's poems are gentle and flow softly, but often their meaning carries a surprising sting of realisation or of truth".

George Papaellinas has made his mark with his short stories and novels. He first appeared in 1980, when still a university student, with the short prose work "No Second Thoughts" in *Newsweek*, the journal of the New South Wales Institute of Technology. Among other literary initiatives, in 1985 he founded the "Writers in the Park" readings at the Harold Park Hotel in Sydney and organised them over a number of years while in 1988 he started "Dis/Unities", the Writers Week part of Carnivale, Sydney multicultural festival. His first book was a short story collection, *Ikons* (Penguin, 1986, repr. 1990), followed in 1997 by his novel *No* (Vintage Press).

The eight stories in *Ikons* revolve around the Mavromatis family from Cyprus and their experiences with the loss of homeland and the strangeness of their new socio-cultural environment as well as the Australian-born grandson's search for identity and sense of place. The publishers comment that *Ikons* presents "a vivid and contentious portrayal of a family united only by society's view of them as outsiders" and sum up the author's intention as "an attempt to work through identity issues".

In his novel *No*, Papaellinas portrays an unemployed Greek youth who, in a 500-page monologue, ends his tirade emphatically, rejecting society as announced in the title of the book. The hero, a type of social misfit, accepts the reality that he, and people like him, have no place in this world, while the reader feels assured that these figures become more prominent as the gap between rich and poor in modern society widens.

Papaellinas has completed another novel, *Piecework*, and a film, *Baby Baby*. He has edited several anthologies (including the work of young writers) such as *Homeland* (Allen and Unwin, 1991), *Harbour* (Picador, 1993), *Gang* (Angus and Robertson, 1996), *More Beautiful Lies* (Random House, 1996), as well as the journal *Republica* (Harper Collins, early 1990s). In 1980 he was awarded a Young Writer's Fellowship by the Literature Board of Australia Council and in 1981 the Marten Bequest for a prose writer.

John Charalambous is the son of a Greek-Cypriot father and an Anglo-Australian mother. Born and educated in Melbourne, he began writing fiction while studying literature and creative writing at Melbourne University. Some of his early efforts appeared in Australian newspapers and magazines such as *The Bulletin Literary Supplement*. His two recent novels, *Furies* (University of Queensland Press, 2004) and *Silent Parts* (University of Queensland Press, 2006) have been acclaimed for their realism, sincerity and human warmth.

In the *Furies*, drawing on the author's own experiences in rural Victoria, this novel's central theme revolves around the main character, a Melbourne-born Greek woman, her failed search for an idyllic life away from the big city, and her resulting frustration by the reality she encounters, as well as the feelings of loneliness and isolation due to the lack of tolerance and acceptance of the people of the small-minded country town where she settles. This latter point is skilfully reflected by the title of the novel which refers to the vengeful figures of Ancient Greek mythology.

Charalambous' second novel, *Silent Parts*, is an unconventional and complex story about an Australian soldier in World War I who never returned, a fact which led to the rise of various speculations among his relatives until his great niece undertakes to separate myth from reality and reconstruct the true story. This book is not an account of battles and bloodshed, but as the critic Peter Pierce has suggested "one of the most poignant and unusual reflections on war and remembrance".

Finally, unusual cases yet still belonging to this group of language writers of Greek-Cypriot descent are those born not in Cyprus or in Australia but in a country of the Cypriot diaspora. The first is Laurence (Larry) Darrell (nom de plume of Solon Papadopoulos), borrowed from the leading character in Somerset Maugham's novel *The Razor's Edge*. Of Greek-Cypriot parentage, Darrell was born and grew up in cosmopolitan Alexandria where he got his education and became fluent in English. He felt the inclination for literary writing, in English, at the age of sixteen. A British subject during the Second World War, he served in the British navy. A year before his emigration to Melbourne in 1948, he published three short stories in an English-language newspaper in Alexandria. In Australia, it took him years to resume writing. In the early 1980s he wrote his first poem, "The Creator's Might". In 1999 he published his first collection of poetry and short essays entitled *Who Am I? A Poetic and Philosophic Journey of Self-Expression and Exploration* (London: Minerva Press). Today, Darrell writes poetry and short narratives with a compelling sincerity often addressing concerns of global human concern.

The second writer of this last group is the philosopher-poet A.B. Palma. Born in London, Greek-Cypriot on his father's side and British on his mother's, he lived his first seventeen years in Cyprus where he completed high school in Famagusta. This period influenced him to the extent that, although his poems have a cosmopolitan character and philosophical insight, those referring to Cyprus, thematically and even geographically, remind us of the island's rich culture and vitality. Palma lived in Paris and after his service in the

RAAF, he emigrated to Australia in 1951/52, settling in Sydney. In 1981 he published his only book of poems, *Stones in Summer* (Hale and Ironmonger), a selection of poems he wrote over twenty years. Palma was not a professional poet, nor part of the poetic establishment, however his poetry is carefully crafted, always honest, romantic but intelligent, alive and engaging. He admitted to me that he had been influenced by Sikelianos, Palamas, T.S. Eliot and the philosopher Wittgenstein. After his death in 1990, a three-act verse play, *Another World*, completed in 1987 was found unpublished. The philosophical trend of the play is indicated by the characters: Socrates, Plato, Wittgenstein, Heidegger, and also Antonio and Higgins.

Without doubt, these are not the only literary exponents of Greek-Cypriot descent in Australia. There are others as well who, according to their talent and dedication, contribute to the growth and flowering of this body of literature in all its genres, forms and subjects. From the one writer at the beginning of the twentieth century, the post-war waves of Greek-Cypriot immigration caused a corresponding increase in the number of writers. These waves became the creative source for Australian-born writers of Greek-Cypriot descent. The result has been not only a significant increase of produced literary works but also a deeper maturity with some of these Greek-Cypriot writers already being acknowledged even beyond the boundaries of Australia. In addition, many of these writers dynamically maintain the literary traditions of Cyprus and eloquently keep alive the memory of the long heroic struggles of the Cypriot people and convey the worthy spirit of Cyprus.

NOTES

This article comprises the first part of the literary contribution of the Greek Cypriots in Australia and considers the writers who emigrated to or were born in Australia until 1974. My colleague Maria Herodotou's article takes this study up to the present day.

1. The first documented Greek-Cypriot immigrant to Australia, Antonis Giovanni Meringas (known as Tony Miranda) arrived from England to Victoria in December 1854, attracted by the gold rushes. Another similar but not fully documented case is that of Yiorgis Kalenidis, who, for the same reason and around the same time, arrived in Sydney and settled in the gold mining town of Ballarat, Victoria. For Meringas, see Epaminondas, (October) 1984, p. 13. Cf. Price, 2001, p. 419 and Gilchrist, 1992, p. 100. For Kalenidis see Epaminondas, (September) 1984, p. 19.

2. Multiculturalism consisted of three main concepts which were a careful balance of social cohesion, cultural identity and equality of opportunity and access. Later, in 1982, under another government a fourth concept was added, that of equality (equal responsibility for, equal commitment to and equal participation in society). See also Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (Office of Multicultural Affairs), 1989 p. vii.
3. Nicolaides' contribution is evidenced by his weekly newspaper *Okeanis* (1914-1916) published first in Adelaide and since 30 July 1915 in Sydney, the second newspaper of the Greek press in Australia, and his illustrated monthly magazine *Parthenon* (1921), the third Greek-language magazine in this country and the first in Sydney. See also Kanarakis, 2000, pp. 57-59, 61; Kanarakis, 2003b, pp. 74-77, 82-83, 110-111 [Bilingual].
4. In 1915/1916 Nicolaides published in his newspaper's printing facilities *Pragmateia peri ithikis* [Treatise on Ethics], the first Greek-language book in Australia, a Greek translation by the Sydney teacher Dimitris Sigalos of a treatise by Jules Payot, Chancellor of the University of Aix in France. Later, in 1929, he compiled the book *Diethnis emborikos odigos 1927/International Directory of 1927* which he co-published with Andreas Papadopoulos from Ithaca and George Etrelezis from Castellorizo through their company International Publications, Ltd. See also Kanarakis, 2000, p. 61 and Kanarakis, 2003b, pp. 106-109 and 124-139 correspondingly [Bilingual].
5. Apart from playwriting, there have been contributions to stage production and performance. One impressive theatre personality was Chrysostomos Mantouridis born in Cairo in 1915 of Cypriot parents. Devoted to the art of the theatre as a stage producer, actor, set designer, painter, sculptor and writer, from 1950 to 1979 he successfully staged over thirty plays in Sydney. See also Kanarakis, 1993 and Kanarakis 2003/2004, pp. 205-206.
6. For statistics of Greek women in Australia before World War II and the social constraints which kept them from getting involved in activities, such as literary writing, see Kanarakis, 2001, pp. 77, 78-79, 210, 212-213 [Bilingual].
7. The limitations of space do not allow me to present all male Greek-Cypriot writers. Therefore, I include writers who are distinguished by their original contributions, who initiated a genre or a particular type of literary work, etc.
8. Children's literature was neglected even by the Greek-born writers in Australia. It wasn't until the 1970s that writers, mainly women, began focusing vigorously on producing works in a variety of forms (poems, short stories, novels, etc.) for children in Greek and English.
9. My research recently uncovered further details about Athanasiades' life and literary activities in Australia and the USA. Cf. Kanarakis, 1985, pp. 225-226; Kanarakis, 1991², pp. 169-170.

10. Other folk versifiers (*poittarides*) belonging to this category include: John Neophytou from Achna of Paphos and Andreas Dimitriou-Diamantis, who both emigrated in 1951; John Papadopoulos from Pano Kyvides of Limassol (who produced poems, many satirical, novellas, plays and other narratives in Cypriot idiom), and Euthemios Louka from Aradippou (see his collection *Tha grafo, tha fonazo* [I'll Write, I'll Shout], Larnaca, 2003), who arrived in Australia in 1972 and 1969 respectively. Maria Herodotou (1999, p. 249) also mentions Christos Violaris, Kostas Georgiou, Soteriou and Kappalis. Some produced oral and/or written compositions either in the Cypriot dialect or in Modern Greek Koine or in a mixed form.
11. Lamachos published these poems based on an audio tape sent to him by the poet shortly before his death in 1979. He classifies them into *myllomena* of a few lines and *narrative myllomena*. See also K.G. Yiangoullis, 1995, pp. 45-71.

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