

An Introduction to the Cypriot Literature for Children, with an Emphasis on Poetry for Children

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RÉSUMÉ

La littérature chypriote pour enfants a atteint sa phase de maturité pendant les dernières décennies. Un grand nombre d'écrivains créent des poèmes ou des récits pour enfants, dont certains connaissent un succès commercial en Grèce. Dans cet article les principales caractéristiques des procédés techniques et de la thématique de la littérature enfantine sont abordées en mettant l'accent sur la poésie.

ABSTRACT

In Cyprus, children's literature reached a more mature stage during the last decades. A great many poems and stories for children are published, and some have been commercial successes in Greece. This article covers the main features, technical processes and themes of children's literature, with an emphasis on poems.

Introduction

At first, we should wonder if *Cypriot literature for children* exists in reality as well as a term. The answer is yes, not because there are texts which are addressed to children and young people, but because, even though Cyprus has experienced adverse historical moments, the country was able to set the bases for growth. Secondly, the term is defined by the geographical and national name *Cypriot* which defines the borders of the space in which a literature which is addressed to children and young people is written and growing. It also determines the national identity of this literature, in relation to other national literatures, which are directed towards the age that is marked out by the second adjectival definition. Therefore, it reveals the national and the cultural identity of a literature which is developing within a geographical area which constitutes an independent state. This kind of

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literature is also mentioned in magazine articles (Greece, *Inspectorate of literature for children*. Tribute to Cypriot children's literature, *Bookbird* 1989 and 2004), but also in stories of children's literature (Yiakos, Sakellariou), while international journals refer to it.¹ The existence of such an organization, *Cypriot Association of Books for Children and young People*, which is incorporated within the International Board on Books for Young People, the international convention of IBBY which took place in Cyprus in 1984, and its even late recognition by the Republic of Cyprus, it strengthens the belief that we could talk about literature for children and young people in Cyprus as well in reality and as a term. Finally, as its by-total, it is in harmony with the broader definition Cypriot literature or literature of Cyprus, which constitutes the essential subject matter of study in this volume. Therefore, as a definition, it states that the literature is produced by people coming from this specific geographical area and who are bearers of certain cultural values and of a certain history. It is written or published in or out of Cyprus, it refers to particular age groups and it is distinguished, independently of their aesthetic outcome, by certain characteristics. It is important to have a proficient author for the researchers of the local literature for children and young people, as well as internationally with publications in scientific magazines with international validity. The characteristics, which were implied above, are located mainly in its thematic and reflect the soul, the culture, the visions and the inner desires of a whole people, and their aim is to aesthetically foster and educate young readers. It is obvious that this literature transpires from the obsession with the traditions and cultural values of the people and of a deep historicity which derives from the years of fighting for its independence, even though the last past years have seen the writers strive towards an ecumenical dimension.

The delay, of which we talked about at the beginning of this study, occurs because of the general social and political situation which existed on the island in 1960. The British colonial regime did not facilitate the establishment of the conditions which would help the production of a literature for children and young people. This delay was justified by the general attitude which characterized many societies, among them the Cypriot society, as well as the Greek, which considered literature for children as inferior in comparison to the literature for adults. The experience of Kypros Chrysanthes (1989: 54) is quite revealing about the prejudice against those who were writing literature for children, and which made him use a false name, in order to publish texts for children. There is also the difficulty which characterizes the writing of texts for

children, combined with the extended illiteracy and the lack of a wide reading public at first, further delaying its growth.

Periods

There are three periods in which Cypriot literature for children develops, seen from a grammatical point of view². The first one starts in 1894 when the first text exclusively for children is published and it ends in 1960 with the declaration of the independent Republic of Cyprus. This is the *infantile period* and we can name it *period of colonialism*. During this long period of time Cyprus lives through dramatic situations which shatter the island: World War II, EOKA's war of liberation (1955-1959), Cyprus is declared an independent State. At this period, the bases are set for children's literature to develop, initially with Polyxeni Loiziada and later with Yannis Perdios, Tefktros Anthias, Michael Trokoudes, Nearhos Klerides, Kypros Chrysanthes and many more. At the same time, the first magazines for children are in circulation. *Child's Echo* (1903-1905), even for a short time, is published in Limassol. Then the *Little Cypriot* (1945-1959) follows in Nicosia, which represented a beginning for new writers who wrote for children, just like *Education of children* in Greece, *Children's Joy* (1953-1959), *My Magazine* (1954-1957) by the Office of Education, which was continued until December 1957 by the title *A Child's World*.³ The writers are using the triptych *Country-Nature-Society* as a subject matter. At the beginning they have a wider educational and nationalistic character and their aim is to create a feeling of patriotism. Gradually, without abandoning the patriotic character, they turn to folk tradition (myths, fairy tales) and to social life as their subjects. Love for nature is a dominating characteristic as is also a tendency to make life seem more beautiful as in Greek children's literature.

The second period (1960-1974) begins and finishes with major significant events for the island: its independence from the British, the coup d'état by the Greek junta and the Turkish invasion of Cyprus. We can name this period *Cypriot Children's Literature of Independence* or *Post-Colonial Cypriot Children's Literature*. The pronouncement of Cyprus as an independent nation is a definitive turn for the cultural movement in Cyprus. Because of the political situation between the Cypriot people and the Turkish minority which is given too many privileges, the production of literary texts presents a gradual deterioration and its growth becomes slower than one would expect. Children's radio shows and programs on television, which come into Cypriots' lives

(1973), play an important role in this period. Children's magazines are also being published, with *Children's Joy* (1959-1968) standing out and which was republished as *Children's Playground* (1968-until today)⁴ by the Pan-Cypriot Association of Greek Teachers. At the same time there is a growth in theatre productions mostly for children (Tasos Koutsoulides, Panos Ioannides, Simos Simeonides, Kypros Tokas), poetry (Yannis Papadopoulos, Papastavros Papagathangelou, Evgenia Petronda and others), while the first anthologies of poetry for children and short stories are produced (A. Karagiorges-K. Chresanthes, Chr. Kolios-K. Vasileiou). Texts of this period are lyrical and show a deep religiousness, which are distinguished by a frivolity and a lack of prudence that is needed in this kind of subject matters. This superficial 'touch' on the subject, though, exists because of the social and political situation in Cyprus; however it is a disadvantage for a literary text, when it takes this direction. We find a similar problem in Greek literature for children at least until the end of the fourth period (1974). Even though it had already started to recede, new subjects appeared inspired from the realities of urbanization, industrialization and the incoming of technology in Greece.

Despite its technical perfection, the children's literature of this period is entrapped, just as in Greece, in a superficial love of nature; it is consumed in hymns for nature and the presentation of natural organisms (animals, birds) or elements of the wider natural environment, (the sun and the moon), mainly in poetry which will continue in the years to come. This superficial dealing of nature is abandoned gradually after 1974, so Cypriot children's literature starts to find its way as it steps into adulthood more obviously, while thoughts and sensitivities about the natural environment and its problems are appearing.

The kinds of written language which are mostly growing are poetry, fairy tales, short stories and theatre. Twenty four books are published during the decade 1964-1974 (post-colonial period), from which 14 are poetry, 6 for theatre, 3 with short stories and one with fairy tales (Liverdos 1989: 36). Four anthologies are also published in the same year, one of poetry and three of short stories.

The last period (1974 until today) is marked by dramatic historical facts, the coup of the Greek dictatorship (15 July 1974), the Turkish invasion of Cyprus (20 July 1974) and the attempts for a solution on the Cyprus matter. The year 1974 as *terminus post quem* marks a new period not only for historical reasons, which without doubt have influenced the thematic of Cypriot literature for children, but also because the Cypriot literature for children starts really to

create a new character and to establish its identity. For that reason we could name this period *forming period*. In this year in Cyprus we see the establishment of the *Cypriot Association of Books for Children and young People* as a national branch of the *International Board on Books for Young People* (IBBY), a few years after the establishment of an equivalent branch in Greece (*Children's Book Greek Society*). The Cypriot Association of Books for Children and Young People, as in Greece, was aiming at the promotion of the books for children and young people, by having writing competitions of texts for children, organizing conventions⁵ and by promoting books for children in general. Also in this period novels for children and young people appear (1977)⁶, which could not be found in previous periods.

Concerning the subjects of the texts that are published independently or are published in magazines of this period, the writers are repeating the subjects of the *post-colonial period*. They are using though in their texts new narrative techniques, while at the same time they are starting to write novels as well. However, what differentiates the literature for children of this period from the one of the previous period is that the writers are bringing their subjects up to date, as it happens in Greece also, and they manage to live up to their readers' expectations. The subject-matters are connected to the worries, the visions and the problems that the Cypriots are facing in relation to the historical and social reality, the invasion, the coup, the hope of gaining back of what is vested, (the peaceful co-existence of the two communities, Greek and Turkish⁷) with contemporary social matters, like disabled children. At the same time, the rich folklore heritage and tradition is used and developed. Historical facts are not any more just a journalistic or biographical narration. They get a literary text form, as their chronicle-writing character is gradually abandoned and it is embodied in the story as historical time. Human values and ideas, like equality, competitiveness, justice, peace and freedom, are put forward. In that way, Cypriot literature for children manages to shake off its local character and to gain ecumenical dimensions. Within the national we find the ecumenical. Science fiction as a genre makes its appearance, which, even as a weak presence, shows the worries of Cypriot writers about alternative worlds and their relations with the Earth. There is a tendency to deal more seriously with the natural environment, since there are no hymns for nature like the ones of the previous period which reveals the shallow way of dealing with this subject, replaced by the problematic relationship between people and nature. There is an increasing interest in writers for human relationships and other social

matters, such as adoption (Charalampous *The Other Sister*), divorces (Marathephtes *Storms in the Spring*), child labor (Epaminonda *The Wasp's nest and Other Stories*), and mental disability (Avraamidou *Letter to my only Brother*, Poulcheriou *How Close Is the Moon*). Nevertheless, there is a lack of texts or they are appearing very shyly, dealing with serious social matters⁸ that are a concern to human society, such as urbanization, AIDS, drugs (Theodosiadou *The House of Silence*) and criminality. The lack of such texts can be seen not as a lack of sensitivity but rather because of the writers' absorption in important national matters which are straightly connected to the existence of the Cypriots as a nation and a country. The tutorial character is abandoned, realism appears and writers take on the child's point of view. The presentation of the child in previous periods and in Greek literature for children changes from the happy child which is always smiling and free from worries, to a more realistic social image and also introduces the subject of the child with special needs.

Literature for children becomes more acceptable. The state's interest is now greater as the Ministry of Education organizes competitions to promote it. It is taught at the Pedagogical Academy of Cyprus and in Primary schools, through *Anthologies*, in which the publishers are compelled to include texts by Cypriot writers. All the forms of written language are grown (poetry, prose, theatre). One of the most important magazines which is in circulation is *Aneme* (Spinning-wheel) (1989), which is published by the Cypriot Association of Books for children-young people, with original texts, studies, book reviews, book presentations and announcements of competitions to encourage writing books for children and young people, exactly as in the magazine *Journeys to places of literature for children and young people* which is published by the Greek Book for Children Society in Greece. Especially in the last few years there are a lot of texts for children published by local publishing houses. (Epiphaniou, Parga and others), while there are also private publications.

Literature for children and young people gains a larger artistic and aesthetic integrality, which is absent from the texts of previous periods. Great gaps, endless rhymes, lameness in poetic meter are elements which that are disappearing little by little. Prose is more mature now, as the writers encounter texts of international literature. However, even though there have been important developments, there is still a long way to go before speaking of a Cypriot literature for children and young people of high quality. Without doubt, during the last years, the writers have promoted

significantly the Cypriot literature for children mainly through the medium of the novel (short stories presents difficulties because of its strict rules). Many of them publish their work mainly in Athens (Avraamidou, Poulcheriou, Pyliotou, Chatzichanna, Peonidou), creating in this way a wider reading public. At the same time, mostly poets that are traditionally writing for adults (mainstream literature) decide to write for children (C. Montis, P. Crinaios, X. Lysiotes, K. Chrysanthos⁹ and many others).

Cypriot Poetry for Children

Cypriot poetry for children in the last 30 years mostly, can present a large and continuous quality of improving work, at the age when poetry seems to be staggering and prose is marching ahead. The characteristic of the poetry of this period is its style, its ethos combined with its linguistic identity, and its subject matter preoccupation. All the poets that we looked at had verses where the human interest was rich, despite the lack of verse integrality. Children's experiences, children's secret desires, an obvious admiration for the child are all presented in the poets' verses - in order to stay in the children's hearts for ever - as is the kindness of a child's world and the anguish for the lost motherland with an apparent hope for re-establishing the social and political order.

The majority of these poems give out a breath of life, freshness and grace. Even though they are not always aesthetically complete, they imply that their writers are initiated into children's psychology and that they are trying to present an age which is sensitive and easily shaped, which is looking for its aesthetic criteria and its aesthetic destinations.

The basic characteristics of the Cypriot poetry for children are the pure Greek language, except in the few cases which Cypriot idioms are used, and a tendency to improve the aesthetic quality, in comparison with poetry of the two previous periods. It is important to point out that there are many women poets, whose qualities are sensitivity, tenderness, love and affection for children. Many of them have been awarded first prizes in competitions, such as: Filisa Chatzichanna (*Smiles. Poems for Children*, 1980), Toulia Koukouli (*I Draw Hope. Poems for little and big children*. 1st Prize Greek Intellectual Society Of Cyprus, 1997), Nitsa Thalassinou (*Tralala* Award for the anecdote literary text for children by the Ministry of Education of Cyprus, 1988), Myrianti Panayiotou (*Flaps* 1st Poetry Prize by the Cypriot Association of Book for children-young people, 1992), Stavroula Periklou, *Rainbow*, 1988, Prize by the Cypriot Association of Book for children-young people).

In many cases Cypriot poets are not satisfied with just writing a poem which a child will enjoy reading. By going beyond the aesthetic pleasure, they reach the point of an educational character which is usually shown at the end of the poem, after the description of a situation, fact, behavior or state. This derives from the poet's intention to give advice, lecture, and teach according to the social and national demands. The poet aims for the creation of an awakened consciousness, so s/he would express the good and the virtuous, s/he fulfills the useful and the social accepted, to avoid the personal and social damage. This sense of teaching is gradually weakened, as the poetic production is maturing. We see in all poets the goodness which exists in a child's world and the agony for the lost motherland with obvious signs of hope for restoring the social, political and national order.

Thematic

Concerning its thematic, the Cypriot poetry for children is characterized by a continuous and variable expansion. It is easy to detect the values in life and the value system. They present freedom, love for the nation, faith to man and to the natural values of life and they promote love for nature and for life in general. Poetry remains more traditional, while there is an absence of its expressionistic version. Its features are shown through its subject classification of the Cypriot poems for children, which can be put in the following categories:

1. *Historical poetry for children.* The historical dimension of the Cypriot poetry for children appears at the time of the English occupation / *colonial period* (1878-1960), it continues through the *post-colonial period* of the national independence (1960-1974) and it remains in the *period of formation* (1974 until today), with the desire for freedom spread out. The majority of the poems of the last period are referring to the Turkish invasion and its consequences, while many of them are also referring to the uprising on 1st April 1955 against the British. These poems either record the rousing of the Cypriots, placing children in the fight for independence or they refer to certain heroes, like Evagoras Pallikarides. When the shattered poets write about the Turkish invasion and occupation, poetry matures even more and the lyrical elements are more obvious, because the poets are also aiming at the creation of a national consciousness and memory. Titles and verses like "I never forget" are quite common and they aspire to the encouragement of the nation, with the

growth of historical memory. These poems talk about loosing national ground as geographical parts as well as parts of the nation and the national awareness. An important part is taken by Pendaktylos and Kyrenia, while the local designation which is shown in the geographical definition “my village”, obtains national dimensions. All the pain and the anguish, desperation and hope, the optimism of repatriation which follows the faith of the singer who says *again ours will be, again in time* is expressed here, since, as Henry James put it, “when somebody names a place in a novel it is like in a way it represents it” (Lutwack 1984: 29). Subjects such as refugees or of having to live or be taken by force away from one’s country are closely connected to the Turkish invasion. Even though, someone could place the poems which refer to the young Cypriots’ dislike of the young Turkish in a different category, we enclose them into historical poetry, because apart from the lesson that they give to the *Powerful* of the Earth, they also arrive at the conclusion that they share the anguish and the strong desire of these two societies to coexist peacefully and the acknowledgement of the fact that they are both victims of political pursuits. Therefore they have in them the historicity, which derives indirectly from the historical facts that are hinted in the poem. Hence we see, within the poetry for children, a large part of the recent historical problems in Cyprus and the promotion of the nation’s memory, according to the *educational history*. Moreover, throughout history and the Greek presence within the international community, this aim is always present. We come across it in the patriotic songs that the children sang in the “vouses” (children’s groups in Sparta) of the militaristic Sparta. We see it while reading Homeric texts, which were praising the Greek virtue and braveness, of the children in ancient Athens. We discover that it survives and is active in the time of the Turkish occupation mainly in folk songs and their hopeful messages. We also see it in our time in the poetry of the resistance movement which appears during the Turkish Occupation and continues in the later years.

2. *Religious poetry for children*. The main characteristic here is that we do not see the usual religious mythology, because of the dangers that lie in a possible voluntary or not inclination from the already known version of the facts that they are referring to. The most usual form of it is the child’s “prayer” to God.
3. *Naturalist-“ecological” poetry*. In this category we enclose everything that has to do with nature, animals, plants and lifeless nature in general. Two

tendencies seem to permeate the poetic creation: the first one is the poet's intention to transmit the natural values and the value systems to the children whereas the second one gathers the poetic production in relation to the wealth of nature, nature's beauty (description of places or trees, animals, birds or insects), which is presented with glory as a great "thank you" to the dreamy beauty that nature gives to the eye or even to the acoustic means of the children, quite often very easily and with frivolity so that it does not help the child to develop her/his aesthetic values. The illustration-description comes either from the point of the poet or of the child her/himself. Little myths in verse are created by the poet, in order to communicate features or characteristic elements of behavior. Moreover, many times the poet produces more than one poem in order to complete with various versions the subject, like C. Montis with eight (8) poems dedicated to the almond tree. The poet often creates an entire mythology for this tree and its time of blooming and s/he presents corresponding aesthetic orientations. The same thing happens with the cicada. However, all the poems are created as the representation of an "acoustic phenomenon", without taking advantage of relative myths, like Tithonas' myth and connecting in this way Mythology-Poetry-Aesthetics, like D. Papaditsas in *Tithonas' delirium*.

Many poems are referring to the four seasons and to their basic characteristics and they look like adaptations of folk stories from the grandparents to their grandchildren. Many of the poems in which the child is presented have a lyricism that does not touch children because they are full of pretence and a feeling that the God like narrator who knows and determines everything. As well Greek poetry for children, initially nature is presented in an ideal way, without presenting the problems which occur and without taking into consideration ecological matters. Any kind of concern is mainly spotted in prose and it derives from the invasion of technology and urbanization into life.

4. *Family and school/social life*. Poems here are presented in two categories: the child within the family and the child at school. There are more poems about the mother than the father or the grandparents, people to whom children give back love. This preference for the mother (e.g. Montis writes enough poems about the mother, to whom he finds a relation to the divine) is because of the patriarchic character of the Cypriot family and society that needs the man to be concerned with everything outside the house and the woman assigned with all the housework and the bringing up of the

children. In these poems the role of the narrator is played by the child, who shows her/his love towards the mother, rarely to the father, and promises eternal love. The general asymmetry that differentiates literature for children from the general literature is more noticeable in these poems, because the adult narrator presents the feelings which an adult would like for a child to have for her/him. The number of these poems is fairly large. There are even poets who write more than one poem about the mother in a romantic and idealistic way. People are presented with angelic moods and completely pure emotions. Happy situations prevail and as a rule all the conflict relations within the family are avoided, so that the family is presented in an ideal setting, as in the wider Greek poetry for children. Frequently, the absence of the father figure is a result of his loss, because of the fights for freedom in Cyprus and the child's nostalgia and hurting for his loss is evident. For that reason the child avoids war games. War in that way is castigated and a peaceful way of life is presented to other nations.

The spectacular sub-category "The child at school", with a satisfactory number of poems, reveals the growth of subject-matters in Cypriot poetry for children. The aim of this unit is for the child to love school, which is presented as an ideal place. For that reason not one poet records any negative comments on school, not even in comedy verses that are showing anti-pedagogical situations. The child is always behaving, s/he is obedient and has a thirst for knowledge, perpetuating the equivalent social stereotype. While an ideal image of the situation, like the one of the family, is presented, the critical eye of the creator through the poetry for children is absent.

5. *Poetry with the subject matter of the abused child (or victim of war)*. These poems are referring to the child-victim of conspiracies by enemies, political, national or fanatical. Pantelis Michanikos has given us wonderful poems about the murdered child as a protesting voice against the enemies-murderers. The demand for peace gains tragic dimensions. However, it is not expressed with cries or yelling. On the contrary, it goes through the simple words of children who express such demands openly; they do not want war, because it deprives them of their parents.
6. *Inducing-educational poetry*. As the educational character initially was thought, because of the goals of literature for children, as a basic ingredient for a text for children, it is easy to see it almost in the whole literary production. Some times it appears as a fable moral, as we have already reported, in the last two verses of the poem. However, because it

has already been proved that it bears no practical importance, it is progressively discarded until it disappears completely.

7. It is important to underline that in the collections that we took under consideration and study we did not come across *afasica* poems; by this term we mean the poems known as limericks, first introduced by Edward Lear.

Form

Concerning the form, the verses vary. In order to present the messages, especially national messages, the verse becomes longer, the syllables are increasing and the poem gains a form which is “stronger”, as if it is trying to impose its content with its size. Many poems need more work in order to attain, a more essential aesthetic result. Thus, the aesthetic of the verses is inferior, poetic language is harsh, rhythm is lost and the poem is not progressing aesthetically. In addition, there is no uniformity or symmetry of the verses even within the poem, while instability of the rhyme is noticed. In some point in time poems without rhyme are written. It appears that the poet gives priority to the message (signifier) than the words themselves (signified) because of the effect of modern beliefs. The inner rhythm which probably exists is not damaged, but it is difficult for the child to understand it and the aesthetic result is less accomplished. Since these poems are addressed to children in the last years of primary school, they are far from using simple verses or word games, as for example in *Smiling games* or *Word games* by Th. Chortiatis.¹⁰ Quite often the poems have illustrations¹¹, which are closely connected to their content as the illustrators are using the text as their source of inspiration. (F. Chatzichanna *Smiles*, A. Konstantinides *Dewsprins*, T. Mpati *Sunrays* and many others). In that way the poem’s language combined with the language of the picture transmits the message more easily. In addition the illustrations are used for the aesthetic development of the children. That is because it also has an educational character. The child, especially when the poems are written for children in young ages, is initiated in the world that surrounds her/him, is initiated therefore in life itself, for which s/he is preparing her/himself. Illustrations also make the child’s visual contact with the page more pleasant and the poem becomes easier to read and to be perceived as a means of aesthetic upbringing as well as a means of education. That is because it stimulates the child’s imagination to that s/he will recreate the world written and illustrated in the poem and to identify with that world.

Conclusions

The long lasting historical problems of Cyprus contributed towards the delay of the use of a mature speech for children. Despite the fact that there are many important writers for children and young people (Papantoniou, Delta, Xenopoulos and others). The journey towards maturity began in 1974, and so a new age begins for the literature for children and young people within the wider Greek region (Greece, Cyprus). During this period the Cypriot writers for children and young people turn towards the universal subjects of freedom, independence, and justice.

After 1974, Cypriot literature for children shows a potential for growth in quantity (increase in writing and circulation of books for children and young people) as well as in quality. The writers themselves take the books for children more seriously, they pay more attention to its writing rules and they create full-body aesthetical texts in which the characters are presented more clearly, have a more complex plot, more complicated structure and avoid repeating themselves. Nevertheless, there is a demand for even stronger and more serious efforts, in order to avoid shallow aesthetics. In this way, literature for children will mature safer and sooner.

At the same time, the study of literature for children as well as literary criticism has started to take the above mentioned into account. (Marathephthes, Katsonis and others). There is also a demand for a more systematic study of the texts, with scientific criteria, despite the fact that announcements in conventions and in texts which are published in magazines in and out of Cyprus in the wider Greek region or even in self-sufficient studies attempt a more systematic approach on the kinds and the subjects and the filing of the texts according to gender. There is though a combined interpretation of these variations by using scientific methods (*Data analysis*), for example how many women writers are dealing with a certain kind and subject, whose subjects are more favored by men or women writers and poets and so forth. Those of course who have been involved in studying literature for children are referring to the period of its growth, to literary genres that are created in each period (everyone agrees on the fact that fairy tales are more developed) and in the quantity of the texts that are published in magazines or as self-sufficient books (mainly in the last period). However, they do not go further to an aesthetic assessment of the texts, and content themselves with general excommunications, with which they recognize a continuous upgrading in quantity. It is also noticed that there is confusion about the classification of the texts. Therefore, texts that are

clearly novels are filed by people who study literature for children in the short stories genre. For example, the novel by Filisa Chatzichanna *What happened to Mauricio* is classified by Kostas Katsonis as short story (Katsonis 2003: 32), while also the novel for children by the same writer *Didon, My Pavelakis and Me* is again classified as short story (Katsonis 2003: 26). Even though differentiations such as these are possible, because often the literary genres are not easy to distinguish, when the characteristics of one genre or kind are penetrating in another genre or kind (for example fairy tale novel), in such cases there is no reason for such an important separation. Therefore, those who are engaged upon the study of literature for children, which itself has its difficulties because of the age group to which is addressed to, should have stable and acceptable criteria. They should also dare to attempt publications in foreign journals specialized in literature for children (e.g. *Children's Literary Quarterly*, *Children's Literary*, *The Lion and the Unicorn*, *Horn Book*, *Bookbird*), in order to become widely known. Our research recorded two only short essays by Maria Pylidou in *Bookbird* journal (27.1 (1989): 6-8 and 42.1 (2004): 33-37), which gives important information about Cypriot writers and illustrators of children's books.

As a scholarly literary creation, it started at the end of 19th century-beginning of the 20th century. The pioneers were people of education and those who had realized that children need to have their own literary books in order to help foster a right education. Thus, its primordial aim, as in all cases, was to educate. As it happened with literature for children in the wider Greek region, at the beginning literary production was influenced by European trends, because Cypriot writers consider Cypriot literature as an inseparable part and extension of Greek literature. The fact that, in comparison to Greek literature, its growth was delayed is because of various historical, social and other factors which we presented in the introduction of this essay. Also the fact that there were no publishing houses made the writers publish their texts in magazines and newspapers, a fact that makes the recording of literary production even harder and probably a complete image of the nursing period does not exist. This policy combined with the small reading public had as a result for the writers to remain unknown. Those who were living in Greece were publishing their texts more easily and were more widely known. Only in the last few years Cypriot writers for children and young people are publishing their texts in Cyprus, even though the most known now (Pylidou, Chatzichanna, Avraamidou) continue to publish their work in well known publishing houses in Athens.

The thematic is closely related to the Cypriot history or to subjects that were of concern for the Cypriot society and had a historic, social or folklore writing character or they are perceived within the wider cultural life in Cyprus. In the last twenty years Cypriot novelists turn to past historical periods, as they are trying to preserve the historical memory and to strengthen national feeling (Pyliotou *Silver smoking device*, Kalogirou-Pavlou *CY-1104* and others).

The end of the 20th century and the dawn of the 21st century give birth to a new generation of writers, who do not seem to have a great thematic and genre relation to the previous one. This generation seems to be untied from the older aesthetic forms and from the thematical inspiration and appears to be an innovative kind of literature for children and young people, based absolutely on the poetic imagination, on humor, changes and under the strict child's glance (Margaritis Kyriakos *The village of the sheets* (2001) Elena Pericleous' *The boy who was the star of the Earth* [2002] Maria Olympiou's *Dangerous Mission* (2005) Maria Pachiti's *Senarios of Life* (2006). Myrianthi Panayiotou's book *Little moon come down to play hide and seek* touches poetry deeply. She introduces a child's glance describing with humour changes and puns; a thematic which is very clear in the children's world. The new poet Eleni Artemiou-Fotiadou, a known scenario script writer for television, a playwright and prose writer moves in the same field.

Illustration was influenced by the rapid growth of technology and the internet, since some people rely on the computer in order to illustrate children's books. The illustrators of those books combine photography with art in a harmonic composition. In the last years illustrators have appeared, who use collage in order to illustrate children's books in a modern way - Helena Poulcheriou - or other techniques such as stencil technique, spray paint skillfully changes the color and they give a dreamlike result - Eleni Lambrou - or techniques that lead to a unique game of imagination - Theodora Pyliotou. Louiza Kaimaki, who took her illustration studies abroad, makes very interesting works and promises a continuous and successful upward trend. Like the writers and the poets, the illustrators are conscious of their cultural identity which is closely related to their cultural heritage, traditions and their history, whose elements they exploit. For that reason their inspiration derives from their eternal civilization, which provides them with a special beauty and power in books' illustrations and a sense of cultural eternity, irrespectively of the techniques they use.

NOTES

1. The journal *Bookbird* 27.1 (1989): 6-8, which is the official instrument of expression of children's literature internationally citing IBBY's opinions, publishes a short text by Maria Pylidou regarding War, Peace and Co-existence in Cypriot Children's Books. The author refers to Cypriot children's literary books on the events of 1974, suggesting that the Cypriot writers "should not ignore these events as subjects when writing children's texts. The writer also underlines the fact that in Cyprus so few lectures, seminars and congresses are organized and that there is not a constructive criticism on children's literature. Although there is reference to "Cypriot children's books", the term *Cypriot children's literature* is not officially mentioned. The same journal publishes another short text by Maria Pylidou about Cypriot illustrators of children's books (42.1 (2004): 33-37). The article does not mention exactly the term *Cypriot children's literature*, as it happens in other cases of national children's literature, since the writer herself does not use the term, although inferred by the words "Cypriot children's books" (1989). However, the publishing of this text by an English journal, with a very strict editorial policy proves that this literature is accepted and therefore it also proves the use of the term as well. The reason that we do not see the term in the English written bibliography is that there have not been more than two essays or articles published about Cypriot children's literature, while non Cypriot researchers do not know it (possibly because of the language) in order to present it in one of their studies.

2. Mich. Marathephthes (1989: 14) divides Cypriot children's literature in two periods with two sub-periods each. We think that historical and intellectual factors enforce us to divide it into three sheer periods. Concerning the division into two sub-periods by Marathephthes, periods with time limit the year 1945, we think that the Second World War constitutes an important historical fact. However, it has not affected the development of the Cypriot children's/young people's literature. Apart from that, Marathephthes enlists it in the first sub-period and he does not think of it as a turning point, as it happens usually in other literatures, because of its effect on literary production. The publication of the journal called *The Little Cypriot* can not be taken as *terminus post quem*, despite its very important role, because its publication is not a 'landmark'. Before that, already, even for a short period of time, the journal for children entitled *Child echo* (1903-1905) circulated, a fact really important for a period division or as a fact that takes place in a particular period of the development of a literary phenomenon. The *Little Cypriot* journal was published right after World War II, while we do not have any other significant clues, literary or not, which allow us to consider there were facts taking place which force us to enlist the years to come within a different sub-period. Therefore we do not accept the year 1945 as *terminus post quem* of a new sub-period. On the contrary, the year 1960 as a

significant historical fact of the course of an independent now Republic of Cyprus points out the beginning of a new period, even if it does not last long, because we see a development in Cypriot children's literature. The period 1960-1974, which, according to Marathephthes, is the first sub-period of the first period (1960 until today) should be considered as a separate period, because the social and political conditions and the cultural happenings within these years differentiate it noticeably from the child literature that is being produced at the beginning of this period (1894-1960) as well as in the last, approximately, thirty years (1974-2006). This period consists of characteristics which semaphore a course towards the formation of its identity and it opens horizons for children's literature to reach its maturity. That is why we consider the year 1974 as *terminus post quem*. Therefore, the division of periods which Marathephthes suggests is not reliable for the division of the periods into sub-periods even though it has its logic. In conclusion, the time limits which we accept as constituting historically the periods of appearance and development, and which create periods of growth are 1894 - 1960, 1960 - 1974 and 1974 until today.

3. At this period there are also publications of mathematics journals, like *Studying Home* by the Gymnasium of Cyprus and the weekly children's newspaper *Studying* (1954) by Ant. Nikolaidis (Marathephthes 1933: 18), while the radio with programs for children, as in Greece and the unforgettable "Children's time" with Antigoni Metaxa, strongly contributes to the further growth of children's literature in Cyprus. In the last period of the Cypriot children's literature many newspapers had special pages for children (*Eleftherotypia*, *Eleftheria tis Gnomis*, *Embros*), while in 1981 the newspaper for children, *Avgerinos*, is published. Six months after its circulation stopped (1984), the same publisher (Andreas Christodoulides) publishes a journal with the same name *Avgerinos*.
4. Until recently (2006) Maria Pyliotou was writing in this journal, working on a variety of subjects for each issue.
5. In 1984 the International convention of IBBY was organized in Nicosia, which contributed in the further spreading of the books for children.
6. After a research, which is still running, about the books for children and young people that were published and republished in Greece within the decade 1995-2005, we have recorded 170 books by Cypriot writers. Among them, 44 (25,88%) are novels, 18 (10,58%) are short stories, 53 (31,17%) are fairy tales (one of which is written in meter form -Kalimeres K. *Nino the penguin*, Nicosia 2002), 22 (12,94%) are poetry, 1 (0,58%) is a combination of poetry and prose (Chatzimatthaiou A., *Fairy tales and songs for children*, Nicosia 2004), 21 (12,35%) are stories (in a fairy tale form) and 11 (6,47%) are theatre (two written in meter). The results of this research is that fairy tales are leading the way as a traditional form of literature, but the novel is following, which is a newly presented kind in the second place with a significant gap from the other

kinds which were traditionally produced by Cypriot writers. This conclusion on one hand underlines this period (1974 and on) as a new time in the Cypriot literature for children and young people and on the other hand presents its rebirth and its effort to form a new identity and reach adulthood.

7. According to Maria Pylidou (1989: 7) of the 25 writers who wrote 52 books between 1976-1987, only 11 refer to “the peaceful co-existence of Greek-cypriots and Turkish-cypriots which will bring a just solution to the Cyprus issue.”
8. Maria Pylidou (1989: 7) remarks that “Subject such as running away from home, divorce, loneliness, insecurity, the need for emotional outlets, young people’s political engagement and their involvement in our national problem have not yet been touched upon by Cypriot writers however”. In the years that followed until this day, many of these subjects are examined in Cypriot children’s literary texts.
9. These poets publish the collections: C. Montis: *Poems for Little and Big Children* (1976), *Now that I read better* (1988), *Messages of Verse* (1991), *Let the verse take you by the hand* (1993). Crinaios Pavlos: *Angels’ notebooks* (1970), *Myrto’s Book* (1978). X. Lysiotes: *Seesawing* (1983). K. Chrysanthes: *The Yellow Chrysanthemum* (1951/1991), *Stories of the Flowers* (1954), *Story of the Birds* (1955), *True Stories* (1956) and others.
10. Th. Chortiatis a) *Smiling Games*. Athens: Kambanas, b) *Word Games*, Athens: Kedros, 1986.
11. Very often the poets themselves are the illustrators of their books (e.g. Pylidou 2004: 33). The last decade we certainly have many interesting examples of illustrations in children’s books by people who have studied in Greece, in the U.S.A. and in Europe.

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