Δελτίο Κέντρου Μικρασιατικών Σπουδών

Τομ. 9, 1992

Η ποιητική απάντηση στη μικρασιατική καταστροφή

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https://doi.org/10.12681/deltiokms.136

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To cite this article:

ΑΠΗΧΗΣΕΙΣ ΣΤΗ ΛΟΓΟΤΕΧΝΙΑ
ΚΑΙ ΤΗ ΓΛΩΣΣΑ
DIANA HAAS

THE POETIC RESPONSE TO THE ASIA MINOR DISASTER

«Ή μικρασιατική καταστροφή θα συνταράττη ἐπὶ μακρότατον τὰς λύρας τῶν ποιητῶν, καί ἡ ποίησις θα διαβλέπη πρόσφορον ὑλικὸν ἀνεξάντλητον εἰς τὰ μαύρα σημεῖα της». Thus wrote Kostis Palamas in March 1929, in a report recommending that the Lambiki Prize in Poetry be awarded to the Smyrniot poet Apostolos Mammelis. The Asia Minor Disaster did, indeed, inspire a plethora of poetic compositions and, if we may judge by Nikos Milioris’ studies «Ή Μικρασιατική Τραγωδία στὴ λογοτεχνία καί στὴν τέχνη» and ‘Απόηχοι τοῦ Μικρασιατικοῦ ὀλέθρου στὴν ποίηση, in which some 110 poets who have dealt with the Disaster theme are named, as well as by the recent, voluminous anthology by Apostolos and Katie Manganaris entitled Θρήνοι καὶ Παινέματα γιὰ τὶς Χαμένες Πατρίδες, which includes some 260 poets, we may conclude that Palamas’ prediction was fulfilled.

It is also true, however, that much of this poetic production, in qualitative terms, does not go beyond sentimentality and rhetoric. In fact, the very title of the anthology just mentioned — Θρήνοι καὶ Παινέματα — not only reflects these two characteristic features, but also demonstrates to what degree the poetry of the Asia Minor Disaster is still associated, in the collective consciousness, with its most exaggerated — I would dare to say its most romantic — manifestations.

This is not to say that «lament» and «praise» as forms of expression are necessarily absent from genuine poetry, nor to deny the sincerity of emotion of the many who, having experienced personally the tragedy and its aftermath, sought to give voice to their grief and their nostalgia through the medium of

verse. However, as we now mark its seventieth anniversary, the time has perhaps come for a more sober assessment of the poetic response to the Asia Minor Disaster. An assessment which must, in its first phase, impose certain criteria on the selection of poets to be considered — to what degree they have withstood the test of time and of critical evaluation, and whether they were simply poets «of the moment» or had a broader involvement in poetic creation — and, in its second phase, seek to discover and analyze the nature of the response of the poets selected in all of its richness and subtleties. This is, in very broad terms, the research I am currently engaged in, and which, from a methodological point of view, follows the evolution of the Asia Minor theme through time, taking into consideration at what point in their development, and under what historical, political, and cultural circumstances, these poets received and absorbed the events of the Disaster.

Even after completing our task of selection, we are left with an abundance of material which I could not hope to discuss in its totality here. To give some idea of its extent and make-up, however, I may list the names of poets who must be included in this study, following more or less chronological order but without distinguishing between «major» and «minor» poets, between mediocre works and masterpieces, or between incidental and sustained involvement with the theme: (1) generation of 1880: Kostis Palamas, Georgios Drosinis, Ioannis Polemis, Alexandros Pallis, and Argyris Eftaliotis; (2) C. P. Cavafy (3) descendants of the generation of 1880: Sotiris Skipis, Miltiadis Malakasis, and Georgios Athanas, and the Asia Minor poets Michail Argyropoulos, Angelos Simiriotis, Apostolos Mammelis, and Omiros Bekes; (4) poets of the inter-war period: Angelos Sikelianos, Romos Philyras, and Kostas Karyotakis; (5) generation of 1930: the Smyrniot George Seferis, George Themelis, Nikiphoros Vrettakos and Tatiana Stavrou; (6) first post-war generation: the Smyrniot George Geralis, Aris Diktaios, Dimitris Doukaris, and the Cypriot Kypros Chrysanthis; (7) second post-war generation: K. Ch. Myris [Kostas Georgopoulos].

Of these twenty-five poets who have dealt with the Disaster, this paper will focus on only three, each of whom has given us a particularly significant

4. Neither Milioris nor the Manganarises appear to apply any critical criteria to their choice of poets. Moreover, the Manganaris anthology has been compiled with no concern for bibliographical accuracy — suffice it to say that a poem («Χρυσόστομος», p. 402) is attributed to Seferis which is not his — making the volume, unfortunately, far less useful for the serious student than its compilers had believed («Ολα αυτα τα διασωθεντα κειμενα, φροντισασαμε και τα συγκεντρωσασαμε, δει χι μονο με την καθαρα ποιητικη έννοια, αλλα με το σκεπτικο πως συμβαλλουν στη μελετη, [...], Δινοντας σημερα στη δημοσιοτητα αυτη την ‘Ανθολογια, ειμαστε βεβαιοι πως ανοιγουμε ένα δρομο στο χαρα της μελετης», [p. 9]).
response to the events of the Disaster as they occurred: Kostis Palamas, C. P. Cavafy, and Costas Karyotakis.

At the time of the Asia Minor Disaster, Kostis Palamas, aged sixty-three, was already in his late poetic maturity. His was the reaction of someone for whom the Disaster meant the destruction of an ideal that had nourished him since his earliest childhood: that, of course, of the «Μεγάλη 'Ιδέα». This is how, in 1901, he had described his early attachment to that ideal:

'Η Μεγάλη 'Ιδέα. Τό παινεύομαι. 'Από τά πρώτα χρόνια μου, μαζί με τήν πρώτη μου άγαπη, τό πρώτο έκστασικό ξάφνισμα μου φύσηξε. Στό σπίτι μέσα τήν άκουσα νά ψιθυρίζεται γύρω μου σάν ένα τρανό μυστικό, σάν ένα «μελλούσης Άναστάσεως» καρτέρημα. Καί τήν πίστεως μ' ευλάβεια θρησκευτική.

This was the ideal behind all of Palamas’ patriotic poetry, and to identify its presence in his work preceding the Disaster would be beyond the scope of this paper. We may, however, remember the first two stanzas of the well-known poem «'Ανατολή», from 1907, with its specific reference to Smyrna and Constantinople. The poet’s purpose is to bring to light the common bond —a «mother»: the «lascivious Orient»— that links together the Greeks of the as yet unliberated regions of Asia Minor and Epirus, and that the poet also feels within himself:

Γιαννιώτικα, σμυρνιώτικα, πολίτικα, μακρόσυρτα τραγούδια άνατολικά, λυπητερά,
πώς ή ψυχή μου σέρνεται μαζί σας!
Είναι χυμένη άπό τή μουσική σας και πάει με τά δικά σας τά φτερά.

Σάς γέννησε και μέσα σας μιλάει και βογγάει και βαριά μοσκοβολάει μιά μάνα· καιει τό λάγνο της φιλί,
κι είναι τής Μοίρας λάτρισσα και τρέμει,
ψυχή δλί σάρκα, σκλάβα σε χαρέμι, ή λαγγεμένη 'Ανατολή.

5. Naturally, in a study of the impact of the Disaster on modern Greek poetry the question of the Disaster as an “theme” is only one part. In another part, the study must address questions concerning the changes brought to poetry as a consequence of the event.
7. As Aimilios Hourmouzios has written, it was this ideal «πού στήριξε τήν πατριωτική» (Ό Παλαμάς και η εποχή του, vol. 3, Athens 1960, p. 288).
I shall now focus my attention on Palamas’ reaction to the event—or rather, events—of the Disaster itself.

On 2 June 1919, only weeks after Greek forces landed in Smyrna, Palamas published a poem entitled «Σμύρνη» in the Constantinopolitan journal 'Ο Λόγος. As one might expect, the poem reflects Palamas’ boundless enthusiasm at what appeared to be the imminent realization of the dream of the «Μεγάλη Ιδέα». Using once again the metaphor of the «Mother»—this time Greece— uniting her scattered children across time and space, he makes Smyrna the symbol of national re-birth:

Πέρα ώς πέρα στη γης τής 'Ιωνίας,
δοξαστικό άρχολόγησε τροπάρι!
'Απ' την Κνωσό ώς την Πέργαμο θεία χάρη
στην 'Ελλάδα, πηγή τής άρμονίας.
Και ο Σμύρνη, πάντα έσυ μαργαριτάρι
στά μαλλιά της νεράιδας Μικρασίας!
'Η Μίλητος δεν είναι πιά καμάρι
της ιστορίας' τής δόξας 'Εφεσίας
οι καιροί σβήσαν τη φεγγοβολιά.
—Σμύρνη, ξαναγεννήτρες είναι οι Μοίρες
(χτυπήστε, 'Ομήρων ιωνικών οί λύρες)
μέσ’ στη ζεστή τής Μάνας σου άγκαλι
πού ανοίγεται όλα για να τ’ άγκαλιάσει,
και τά σκόρπια τα σπλάχνα της, μια πλάση.

Palamas’ historical and political awareness was, however, too acute for him not to understand the darker side of the situation, as we see from this second Δεκατετράστιχο, also written in 1919:

Στής Παναγιάς την Πόλη το Κοράνι
τού Θεού τή Σοφία πατάει και βρίζει:
με δετά χέρια αν Ισκοι είν' οι Σουλτάνοι,
ζή ο Κούρδος και, 'Αρμένη, σε θερίζει.
Τού Ζεϊμπέκου χτυπάει τό γιαταγάνι,
και η Ρωμιοσύνη δίχως μετερίζει,
κι η 'Ανατολή τού αίματο πυρίζει,
και τής Θράκης ή γη και ας λαμπυρίζει
με φωταχνάρια 'Όρφεων και Διγενήδων,
μαύρη γη, κούρβα Τούρκων 'Οσμανλήδων.

8. The poem was included in the collection Τά Δεκατετράστιχα, published the same year in Alexandria.
Here, the poet describes the plight of the Christian populations —Greek and Armenian— of Asia Minor and Thrace, victims of Turkish (and Kurdish) brutalities, but even more so, ultimately, of the nations of Western Europe who, looking apathetically at the «magic mirror» of the «Devil», «take pride» in the «ghost» of the «Brotherhood of Nations» (probably an allusion to the League of Nations). While he is certainly referring to the persecutions which had begun much earlier —his reference to the Kurdish «mowing down» of the Armenians makes this clear—the immediate motive for writing the poem was quite likely the «Disaster» which befell the Christian inhabitants of Aidini in mid-June 1919, and in which Italy played a major collaborationist role.9

Verses from this poem, with the image of «Ρωμιοσύνη» defenseless before the deceptiveness of Western Europe, serve as an epigraph to Palamas’ long poem dealing with the Disaster of 1922 itself, «Οι Λύκοι», published in the journal Μούσα in October 1922. The work has three parts, each of which bears a specific date. I will focus here on the first part —that which provoked a controversy following the poem’s publication— and on certain passages from the second and third parts.

The first part is dated 27 August 1922, day on which the Turkish army reached Smyrna and the persecution of the city’s Christian populations began.10 The «Poet» speaks:


10. See Angelomatis, pp. 214-218. This date is according to the Old Calendar, which Palamas was most likely using. If, however, he was using the New Calendar (by which the Kemalian troops entered Smyrna on 9 September 1922), then the poem was written one day after the counter-attack of Kemal and the collapse of the Greek front at Afyon Karahisser, on 26 August (13 August by the Old Calendar).
ξανά σάν πάντα και γιά τη μάχη και γιά τη νίκη
νά τούς φτερώσεις τό πάτημά τους δπου πατεί.
Σ’ έμε — κελλάρης λυράρης είμαι,— σ’ διένα ανήκει
νά το κεράσω στά νέα ποτήρια τό άρχαίο πιοτί).

....................................................

. . . Βοσκοί και σκύλοι, λώβα και ψόφα. Τ’ άρνια; Μουζίκοι.
΄Ο λαός; ΄Όνομα. Σκλάβας πλέμπας δούλα κι ή θρήνη,
Δίκη άποπάνω θεία των άστόχαστων καταδίκη
cαι λογαριάζει και ξεπλερώνει δσο δν άργει.

Τραγουδημένη κλεφτουριά, Γένος, άρματωλίκει;
Τά ξεγραμμένα και τά τριμμένα, ψέματα, άχνοι.
΄Ιδέα, βυζάρτα τών τετρακόσιων χρόνων, ή φρίκη
tώρα, τό μάθημα τών Έλλήνων άδ ις ες υ

tού ραγιά μάνα βιβλική, πλάσμα άρρηκτικό, Ευρυδίκη,
tον πανελλήνιου μεγαλονείρου χρυσοπηγή,κά
μάς τον καθρέφτικας καί στής Πόλης το βασιλικί
tόν ξυπνημένο Μαρμαρωμένο, κυνηγητήο

tού ισλάμ. ΄Η Θράκη προικιό του, δί δόξα! Και άπανωπροίκ
μιά χεί στή στίγμη τούς ώσπερ "Ανατολή, τής "Ιωνίας γλυκοξημέρωμα...

— Οί λύκοι! Οι λύκοι!
κι οι βοσκοί άνάξιοι, λύκοι και οί σκύλοι, κ’ οί άντρείοι, δειλοί.

Στής Πολιτείας τή μάντρα οί λύκοι! Παντού είναι λύκοι!
ξανά στά τάρταρα ίσκιος, τού ψάλτη λατερία κ’ έσυ.
ψόφα δή κέ στάνη. Φέρτε να πιούμε, κούφιο νταηλίκι,

gιά τ’ ύποκάρωμα πού μάς πρέπει, κι όποιο κρασί.

27 τού Αύγούστου 1922

Beyond the poet’s call to arms to the «borderguards» to defend once again the homeland; beyond his assuming the role of «lyre-playing steward» who will serve the hundred-year-old wine of the Greek Revolution to re-kindle the Greeks’ spirits to battle and victory (a role he had played in the Δωδεκάλογος τού Γύφτου following the defeat of 1897); and beyond his lament over the death of the «Μεγάλη Ιδέα», on which the Greeks had «nursed» for four hundred years; what impresses us most in this poem is what Robin Fletcher has aptly called «an orgy of anger, recrimination, hate, bitterness and desperation unparalleled in the rest of his poetry»11. For, in addition to the Western nations

11. Robin A. Fletcher, Kostes Palamas. A Great Modern Greek Poet. 1859-1943. His Life - His...
condemned in the epigraph, Palamas now finds himself forced to attribute the defeat to elements in the Greek state’s institutions and society: journalists, politicians, the army, the people themselves and... the «Bolsheviks» —an important detail, to which I shall soon return.

In the second section of the poem, written a week later (2 September 1922), a «Voice» addresses the «Poet», urging him to find once again «peace and serenity», an expression which serves as a refrain in the poem. For even this «storm» will pass:

Μια μισή των φτώνου, του τρόμου κακή ὧρα,
κι ἀνθρώποι καὶ καρπούς δόλα τά ’ριες ἡ μπόρα.
Τὰ πάντα έν περνοῦν, θὰ περάσει κ’ ἐκείνη
Εἰρήνη σ’ ἐσέ καὶ γαλήνη!

and only Fate will decide whether Greece will be «small» or «great» (an obvious reference to the opposing views of a «μικρά καὶ έντιμη Ἑλλάδα» and the «Μεγάλη Ἰδέα»), whether she will call the «Turk» or the «Frank» master:

Μικρὲς ἢ μεγάλες, γραφτό κι ἢ Θ’ Ἑλλάδες
tὸν Τούρκο ἢ τὸ Φράγκο νὰ λένε ἀφεντάδες,
κανείς τι θὰ γίνει, κανείς τι θὰ μείνει·
(Γαλήνη σ’ ἐσένα καὶ εἰρήνη!)

The section ends with the hopeful message that poetry will triumph over despair:

Γιατί τὸ πολέμιο σὰν παύει τουρφέι,
ἀπάνω ἀπ’ τὰ μαυρα χαλάσματα στέκει
μιὰ Μοῦσα. Ποτὲ τὸ τραγούδι δὲν παύει,
χαρείτε, κ’ οἱ ἔλευπτεροι τάχα, καὶ οἱ σκλάβοι.
Διαβαίνουμε, κι ἢ θα τραγούδι θὰ μείνει,
tῆς φλόγας τὸ θάμα, δροσιά στὸ καμίνι,
γαλήνη τοῦ κόσμου καὶ εἰρήνη!

In the poem’s third part, dated 7 September 1922, the «Poet», unconvinced

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by the «Voice’s» final message, addresses a long «μοιρολόι» to his mother. He
refers once again to the death of the Great Idea, to the decay of Greek society,
to the disappearance of «prophets, heroes, martyrs, saviours», as well as to the
threat of the homeland’s enemies, as in the following stanza:

Μάνα, ή πατρίδα χάνεται,
Μάνα μου, ο δ κόσμος χάνεται.
Τοέτης τξελάτης χύμησε,
με τα σπαθιά με τα δαυλιά,
σπαθιά το του Τούρκου και δαυλιά,
παραμονέυει ο Βούλγαρος,
κι ο Μόσκοβος φοβέρα είναι.
Κι ο Φράγκος ο άρχοντας, οί! πώς
τα σούφρωσε τα φράκια του,
και πώς άνατηκώνοντας
τούς άμινους, παραμέρισε
στό ανταριασμένο διάβα μας,
γιά να μη γιγίξει απάνου μας!

The «Voice» responds, insisting again that «Hope», «Faith» and «Love» still
exist, and that the poet’s lyre may become a «flag» in the midst of «danger».
The «Poet» remains unconvinced, however, and the poem ends with a quatrain
repeating the theme of the first part:

Τής λύρας κάμε σκοινιά τίς κόρδες γιά μιά κρεμάλα,
ή στα σκουπίδια, να μή βαραίνει μας τή φευγάλα!
"Α! ή σαστισμάρα! Τής φαγομάρας οί σκουλήκι...
Στής Πολιτείας τή μάντρα οί λύκοι! Παντού είναι λύκοι!

I would like now to discuss briefly the reference to the Bolsheviks in the
first part, which must be linked to the mention of the «Muscovite» in the
second, for it was this element that provoked a controversy over the poem in
October 1922.

Palamas was probably influenced here by articles that appeared in the
newspapers 'Η Καθημερινή and Χρονικά in late August 1922, in which the
communists were blamed for the impending disaster in Asia Minor12. In 'Η
Καθημερινή (24 August), specifically, the view was expressed that the Greek
and Bulgarian communists had collaborated with Kemal13. Based on this
evidence, I would suggest that the «Bolsheviks» Palamas refers to in the poem are

Greeks. This view is further supported by the fact that, with the exception of the epigraph, the whole first section of the poem deals with the internal elements responsible for the catastrophe. But Palamas also knew of the treaty of friendship signed by Lenin and Kemal in March 1921 —partly as a result of the participation of Greek forces on the side of the Tsar in the Ukraine in the early months of 1919— and it is to the external communist factor that he is referring in the second part («κι ο Μόσκοβος φοβέρα είναι»).

The question of Palamas’ attitude toward communism is beyond the limits of my topic, as is that of the Greek communists’ stance toward the Asia Minor campaign. It is, however, useful to consider a «poetic response» to Palamas’ «Λύκοι», namely that of Kostas Varnalis, who in November 1922 published his poem «Λευτεριά», also in the journal Μούσα, with the epigraph «Λύκοι - Μπολσεβίκοι. Κ. Παλαμάς.» The poem is not about the Asia Minor Disaster, but rather a revolutionary piece in which an «idealist» poet —presumably Palamas— learns that:

Τη λευτεριά δεν τη ζητάν με παρακάλη: τήνε παίρνουν με τά ίδια χέρια μοναχοί.

The poem ends with an image of the revolution, with the final stanza portraying the «imbecile poets» being «torn apart» by the «wolves»:

Μέσα σε φλόγες και καπνούς, άνάμαλη είδα να ξετρέχει τούς "Ανομούς γηγάντα ή Δίκη" ξάφνου του σάλαγου κοπή· γέλια μέ φτάσαν στριγά: σπάραζαν τούς μωρούς Ποιητές οί Λύκοι.


16. See the article by Philip Carabott «The Greek “Communists” and the Asia Minor Cam­aign» in the present issue of the Δελτίο τοῦ Κέντρου Μικρασιατικῶν Σπουδῶν.

This was not the first time Varnalis criticized Palamas’ poetry: in Τὸ Φῶς ποῦ καίει, also published in 1922 (but completed before the Asia Minor Disaster took place), he placed Palamas in the category of poets practicing the «art of morons» («ἡ τέχνη τῶν μωρῶν»). As for Palamas, in 1924 he criticized that work for its «raging Bolshevism» («ἀφρισμένος μπολσεβικισμός»)\(^{18}\). Despite these negative exchanges\(^{19}\), however, there was mutual respect between the two poets. Palamas’ differences with Varnalis were based on ideological, not poetical, grounds, and specifically on their opposing views of the «Μεγάλη Ἰδέα». Palamas’ response, less than a year after the Asia Minor Disaster, to an interviewer’s question concerning the main ideology expressed in his work is particularly illuminating:

— [...] Ο’ Καραϊσκάκης. 'Ἡ Πατρίδα. 'Η Ψυχή. Καὶ πρὸ καὶ μετὰ τὸν πόλεμον πολλὲς νέες ἱδέες ἔφανεν καὶ εἰκινήθηκαν. 'Ανάμεσα σ’ αὐτές καὶ η Ὀσιανιστική. "Ὁ χι πα ή ἱδέα τῆς Πατρίδας, μά ή ἱδέα μίας ἑπταχισμένης Ἀνθρωποποτήτας. Στὴ Ρωσία ή ἱδέα ἐπιχώρησε πιὸ πολὺ. 'Ο Κόμμουνισμός. Μά καὶ έδω ή ἱδέα αὐτὴ εἶχε τὴν ἐπιδράσα της. Καὶ βέβαια κι έδω ήν βγεί ποίησι ἀπὸ τὴν ἱδέα αὐτή ἄκαλς να βγεῖ. Μά ή ἀντίληψη τῶν καινούργιων ἰδεῶν ἵσως δὲν εἶναι τόσο κοντά σ’ ἐμέ. Σ’ ἐμε τὸ μεγάλο Ἰδανικό εἶναι ἄλλο. Εἶναι η «Μεγάλη Ἰδέα».
— Δηλαδή ή πατριωτική ἱδέα;
— Ναί. Καθαυτὸ Ἡ Μεγάλη Ἰδέα. 'Ὁ Μαρμαρωμένος Βασιλιάς\(^{20}\).

Indeed, in 1925, while distancing himself from the ideology of Τὸ φῶς ποῦ καίει, he praised the work’s poetic qualities:

["Ο"]σο κι ἐν εἶναι ἡ ἱδεολογία του ἀποκρουστική γιὰ τοὺς πιστοὺς τῶν ἑθνικῶν παραδοσῶν ποῦ έχει τὴν τιμή μ’ ἐκείνους να συγκαταλέγομαι, διόκειν εἶναι ποίησισ τῆς ποῦ ἀξιόμενο αὐτοῦ. Διόκεις προσεχτικά καὶ ὑποσκήπτε γαληνά να κοιναχτεῖ ἀπὸ διοὺς ἔρωτεύονται, καθὼς ἔγω, τὴν Πολυμνιο\(^{21}\).

That same year (1925) Varnalis dedicated the first edition of 'Ὁ Σολωμός

19. The confrontation between Palamas and Varnalis has been discussed by Maras, pp. 60-63, and Papaioannou, pp. 44-51.
χωρίς μεταφυσική to Palamas, and some time later re-wrote the final stanza of «Λευτεριά», eliminating the reference to «μωρούς ποιητές»\(^\text{22}\).

Before leaving Varnalis, it is important to mention that, although the Asia Minor Disaster as a theme is not dealt with in his poetry\(^\text{23}\), he wrote an essay on the event published as a newspaper article («Η Μικρασιατική Καταστροφή») in 1935\(^\text{24}\). He blames the Greek «κεφαλαιοκρατία» and both Greek political parties (Venezelist and Royalist), as well as British imperialism, for the defeat and the subsequent suffering of the common people, and cauterizes the Greek authorities who held the communists responsible.

Palamas once again took up the Asia Minor theme in his poetry in early November 1922, this time to speak of the plight of the refugees. «Τό Τραγούδι τῶν Προσφύγων» is a long-winded poem in which several well-known themes reappear (the poet’s role in the resurrection of the race; Greece’s eternal place in history; the unification of all Greeks, having one «mother» and one «soul»; the dead bearing seeds of new heroes), all indicative of a renewed optimism characterized by the refrain:

Μακριά κ’ ή ἀπελπισία, μακριά καί ὀργή καί θρήνος!

Indeed, in only four of the poem’s twenty-one stanzas does he deal with the refugee theme itself:

— Κι έσείς, χαρά καί ή φτώχια σας, τοῦ δόλου κι έσείς καμάρια,
ικέτες τόρα ἀπλώνοντας τό δίσκο τοῦ χεριοῦ,
τῆς ἄργατίας, τῆς ἀρχοντιάς δαρμένοι, ἀπομεινάρια
τῆς φλόγας καί τοῦ μαχαιριοῦ,
τά κλαίτε έσείς τά πάντα σας, σπίτια, ἀγαθα, θεία δώρα,
pαρατημένα, ἀφανισμένα, πλάσματα, πουλιά,
ὅπου ὅρογον ὁ Ἑρωτας, θερίζει ὁ χάρος τῶρα,
pαίει κι ἡ πατρίδα κι ἡ φωλιά.
Στάχια ὅπου χρύσωναν τῇ γῆ, μαυρολογάν κοράκοι.
Τὰ δάκρυα καταπίνοντας, ζητάτε (ὅιμέ ή στιγμή
ποῦ σᾶς τρυπάει τά σαβωκά σαράκι καὶ φαρμάκι,
γωνιά ζητάτε καὶ ψωμί.

\(^{22}\) It is not known at what date this re-writing took place. In Varnalis’ Ποιήματα (’Εκλογή) of 1954 and Ποιητικά of 1956 the poem is printed in its revised form. Interestingly, in the February 1935 issue of the journal Νέοι Πρωτοπόροι the poem was re-printed in its original form with an introduction by the editors. However, as Dr. Theano Michailidou has indicated to me, this may have been without Varnalis’ permission, since the poet’s quarrel with Palamas had ended in 1925.


\(^{24}\) Varnalis, Φιλολογικά ’Απομνημονεύματα, pp. 262-69.
While Palamas’ sympathy for the refugees’ misery is evident in these lines, and while he goes on to urge the Greeks to give them a helping hand, his own rage over the Disaster has clearly subsided, and even his critical disposition appears to have diminished.

Over the next nine years Palamas wrote five other poems containing direct references to the Disaster: «Γνώμες, καρδιές, όσοι ’Έλληνες» (1925); «Η Πατρίδα στους Νεκρούς της» (1929); «Χρυσόστομος» (published 1931), a hymn in praise of the martyred Metropolitan bishop of Smyrna; and «Στόν φίλο Μιχαήλ Άργυρόπουλο» (1931) and «Στόν ποιητή ’Απόστολο Μαμ-μέλη» (1931), addressed to poets from Asia Minor whom Palamas held in esteem. It is the optimistic tone that stands out in most of these poems, something that comes very close to the expression of a continued belief in the «Μεγάλη ’Ιδέα», such as was found in his remarks in the 1923 interview cited above. Clearly this belief, though strongly shaken by the Asia Minor Disaster, was too deeply engrained in the poet’s consciousness ever to be extinguished.

C. P. Cavafy was fifty-nine years old and in his poetic prime at the time of the Asia Minor Disaster, the news of which reached him in another corner of the Diaspora. A first element in his response to the events is, I believe, the «unpublished» poem «Πάρθεν». The piece was written in March 1921, as Greece celebrated the one-hundredth anniversary of its War of Independence and the Greek army, advancing toward the interior of Asia Minor and encountering Kemalian troops well equipped by the Italians, French, and Russians, had already suffered serious losses25. Remembering an earlier phase in the Greek-Turkish conflict, Cavafy, speaking with a degree of emotion rarely found in his poetry26, bridges the gap between the end of Byzantium and the


beginning of the end of the «Μεγάλη Ίδέα»; between two frontiers of Hellenism, Alexandria and the distant Pontus:

ΠΑΡΘΕΝ

Αὔτες τές μέρες διάβαζα δημοτικά τραγούδια, γιά τ’ άθλα τών κλεφτών και τούς πολέμους, πράγματα συμπαθητικά· δικά μας, Γραικικά.

Διάβαζα καί τά πένθημα γιά τόν χαμό τής Πόλης «Πήραν τήν Πόλη, πήραν την’ πήραν τη Σαλονίκη». Καί τήν Φωνή πού ἔκει πού οἱ δυὸ ἐγέλαν, «ζερβά ὁ βασιλιάς, δεξιά ὁ πατριάρχης», ἀκούσθηκε κι εἶπε νὰ πάγουν πιὰ «πάγωτε παπάδες τά χαρτιά καί κλείστε τά Βαγγέλια» πήραν τήν Πόλη, πήραν την’ πήραν τη Σαλονίκη.

"Ομως ἀπ’ τ’ άλλα πιὸ πολὺ μὲ ἄγγιξε τό άσμα τό Τραπεζούντιον μὲ τήν παράξενη του γλώσσα καί μὲ τήν λύπη τών Γραικών τών μακρυνών εκείνων ποὺ ἵσως ὁλο πίστευαν ποὺ θὰ σωθοῦμε ἀκόμη.

Μά ἀλοίμονον μοιραίον πουλί «ἄπαί τήν Πόλην ἔρται» μὲ στό «φτερούλιν ἅθε χαρτίν περιγραμμένον κι οὐδὲ στήν άμπελον κονεύ’ μηδὲ στό περιβόλι, ἐπῆγεν καί ἐκόνεψεν στοϋ κυπαρίσ’ τήν ρίζαν». Οἱ άρχιερεῖς δὲν δύνανται (ὅ δὲν θέλουν) νὰ διαβάσουν «Χέρας υἱόν Γιανίκας ἐν» αὐτὸς τὸ παίρνει τὸ χαρτί, καί τὸ διαβάζει κι ὁλοφυρέται.

«Σιτ’ ἀναγνώθ’ σιτ’ ἀνακλαίγ’ σιτ’ ἀνακρούγ’ τήν κάρδιαν. Ν’ ἀλὰς ἐμᾶς νὰ βάι ἐμᾶς, ἡ Ῥωμανία πάρθεν».

Less than a year later, in early February 1922, when the situation at the front had become so uncertain that the Asia Minor Greeks felt compelled to create the «Asia Minor Defense» («Μικρασιατική Αμυνά»), with the even less certain support of the Greek High Commissioner Stergiadis27, Cavafy wrote and published «Υπέρ τής Αχαϊκής Συμπολιτείας Πολεμήσαντες». A fictitious Achaian poet, exiled in Alexandria during the corrupt reign of Ptolemy Lathyros, writes an epigram on the defeat of the Achaian League by the Romans thirty-seven years earlier, in 146 B.C., at Lefkopetra in Corinth. Diaios and Kritolaos were the unworthy generals of the League, which, according to the historian Constantine Paparrigopoulos, "ὑπῆρξεν ἡ τελευταία ὑπόσσον

27. See Angelomatis, pp. 127-136.
λόγου άξια ἀπόπειρα, ἢ τὸ ἐνταῦθα ἐλληνικὸν ἕθος ἐπεχείρησεν ἵνα δι-
ατηρήσῃ αὐτοτελὴ ὑπαρξὲν καὶ ἀνεξαρτησίαιν»28:

ΤΗΣ ΑΧΑΪΚΗΣ ΣΥΜΠΟΛΙΤΕΙΑΣ ΠΟΛΕΜΗΣΑΝΤΕΣ

"Ἀνδρεῖοι σεῖς ποὺ πολεμήσατε καὶ πέσατ' εὐκλεῶς:

τὸς πανταχοῦ νικήσαντας μὴ φοβηθῶντες.

"Αμομοι σεῖς, ἢν ἔπεισαν ὁ Δίαιος καὶ ὁ Κριτόλαος.

"Οταν θὰ θέλουν οἱ Ἑλληνες νὰ καυχηθῶν,

«Τέτοιους βγάζει τὸ ἕθος μας» θὰ λένε

gιὰ σάς. Ἐτσι θαυμάσιος θὰ ἦν ὁ ἐπαίνος σας.—

ΤΗΣ ΑΧΑΙΚΗΣ ΣΥΜΠΟΛΙΤΕΙΑΣ ΠΟΛΕΜΗΣΑΝΤΕΣ

"Εγράφη εν Ἁλεξάνδρει ὑπὸ Ἀχαιοῦ

ἐβδομον ἔτος Πτολεμαίου, Λαθύρου.

As early as 1926, within the literary circles surrounding the poet, a link had
been suggested between the poem and the events of 1922; indeed, it was said
that the poem’s «subtitle» should be «Ἡ ἀπώλεια τῆς Ἰωνίας»29. According to
witnesses, Cavafy was annoyed at this identification of an ancient historical
event with contemporary history. Bryn Davies, a British visitor to the rue
Lepsius in 1930, reported:

When I was talking to Cavafy in 1930 I had just had the poem about
the Achaean League translated to me, and had been told that it had a
special significance in view of what happened in 1922. It was this he said,
he could not understand and evidently, from the very detailed account he
gave me of the Achaean League, he had actually been thinking in terms
of what he called an entirely futile and inexplicable revival, with no
relation whatever to modern events at all. What struck me at the time
was that he spoke of the Achaean League as though it was a purely
contemporary event30.

And according to Yannis Sareyannis:

Πολλοὶ Ἀλεξανδρινοὶ θὰ θυμοῦνται τὴν ἀγανάκτησιν του, ὅταν ἦκουε
νὰ του λένε ὅτι τὸ «Ὑπὲρ τῆς Ἀχαϊκῆς Συμπολιτείας πολεμήσαντες»
tου τὸ εἰς ἐμπνεύσει ἡ Μικρασιατικὴ Καταστροφή, ὅτι τὸ θέμα του

Athens [1957], p. 358.
38; see also Savidis, Μικρά Καβαφικά, vol. 1, p. 350.
How much credence we should pay to Cavafy’s protestations is open to debate. However, while it is true that he did not respond poetically to the Disaster in the direct manner of Palamas —only one example of the almost diametrical opposition between their respective poetics—I believe that we may at the very least perceive in «'Υπέρ τής 'Αχαϊκής Συμπολιτείας Πολεμήσαντες» what George Savidis has called the «echo» of «Cavafy’s anguish over the impending Asia Minor Disaster». For this is, in fact, one of three poems written (or re-written) during the two-month period between December 1921 and early February 1922—a time when, as we have seen, fears over the outcome of the Asia Minor Campaign were growing—in which Cavafy treats the theme of military defeat. More specifically, each of the three deals with one of the important battles of the Hellenistic Greek kingdoms against the Roman army, all of which ended in defeat and led to complete takeover by Rome.

The other two are «Τεχνουργός Κρατήρων», where the Battle of Magnesia in 190 B.C. is named in the final verses:

ώς δέκα πέντε χρόνια πέρασαν άπ’ τή μέρα
πού ἔπεσε, στρατιώτης, στής Μαγνησίας τήν ήτταν.

and «Πρὸς τόν 'Αντίοχο 'Επιφανῆ», where reference is made to the Battle of Pydna in 168 B.C., once again at the poem’s conclusion:

32. In 1946, in his celebrated lecture «Κ. Π. Καβάφης, Θ. Σ. "Ελλοτ Παράλληλο", George Seferis once again proposed the link between ancient and modern history in Cavafy’s poem, and also suggested that the atmosphere of decay which is described in other of Cavafy’s Hellenistic poems must be connected with that of Greece on the eve of the Asia Minor Disaster (George Seferis, Δοκίμιας, 3rd ed., Athens 1974, vol. 1, pp. 328-35). His analysis provoked a reaction on the part of Timos Malanos, who in 1948 argued that «ενώ πράγματι τό ποίημα δημοσιεύτηκε στις 2 Φεβρουαρίου, η Μικρασιατική καταστροφή —τόσο άπροσδόκητη, για μάζι εδώ στήν 'Αλεξάντειρα— έγινε μονάχα τόν Αύγουστο, δηλαδή έκειτα από έπτα Δόξηληρος μήνες» (Καβάφης 2, pp. 139-140). To this argument Seferis responded in turn that, for Cavafy, «η πραγματική καταστροφή —τά επακόλουθά της δεν ήταν διόλου άπροσδόκητα— ήταν η εσωτερική κατάρρευσή του ’20. Αυτή ήταν το κορύφωμα τῆς πολιτικῆς τῶν Λαθύρων στα χρόνια έκείνα» (George Seferis, «Υπολόγισμα στή δοκιμή "Κ. Π. Καβάφης, Θ. Σ. "Ελλοτ Παράλληλο""», presented by G. P. Savidis, Η Λέξη, 23 [March-April 1983], p. 195).
33. Savidis, Μικρά Καβαφικά, vol. 1, p. 349.
34. See Savidis, Μικρά Καβαφικά, vol. 1, pp. 349-351 (in his essay «Κρίσιμες μάχες τοῦ 'Ελληνισμοῦ στήν ποίησιν τοῦ Καβάφη»).
Moreover, in 1925 Cavafy created an imaginary sequel to the Battle of Lefkopetra treated in «'Υπέρ τής 'Αχαϊκής Συμπολιτείας Πολεμήσαντες», with the poem «Εις 'Ιταλικήν παραλίαν». This may perhaps be considered one last element in his response to the Asia Minor Disaster, if, as it has been suggested, there is a parallel between the wealthy Greek youth of Magna Graecia witnessing Roman ships as they unload the «booty from Corinth», and his counterparts of 1922 witnessing the tragedy of the refugees:

ΕΙΣ ΙΤΑΛΙΚΗΝ ΠΑΡΑΛΙΑΝ

Ό Κήμος Μενεδώρου, Ίταλιώτης νέος,
τὸν βίον του περνά μέσα στές διασκεδάσεις·
ὡς συνειθήσον τούτοι οί ἄπ’ τὴν Μεγάλη Ἐλλάδα
μές στὰ πολλὰ τὰ πλούτη ἀναβραμέμνοι νέοι.

Μά σήμερα εἶναι λιαν, παρὰ τὸ φυσικὸ του,
σύννους καὶ κατηφής. Κοντά στήν παραλίαν,
μὲ ἄκραν μελαγχολίαν βλέπει ποῦ εκφορτώνουν
τὰ πλοία μὲ τὴν λείαν εκ τῆς Πελοπόννησου.

Λάφυρα ἐλληνικά: ἡ λεία τῆς Κορίνθου.

"Α σήμερα βεβαίως δὲν εἶναι θεμιτόν,
δὲν εἶναι δυνατὸν ὃ Ἰταλιώτης νέος
νά 'χει γιά διασκεδάσεις καμιάν ἐπιθυμίαν.

Finally, in closing this discussion of Cavafy's response to the Disaster, evidence of a different kind may, I believe, be cited. This is the testimony of Polys Modinos, Cavafy's younger friend who visited him shortly after the burning of Smyrna:

Μέσα Σεπτεμβρίου 1922, εἴχε συντελεσθεί ἡ καταστροφή τοῦ ἐλληνισμοῦ τῆς Μικρᾶς Ἀσίας, τὸ ἕξερχομαι καὶ ὁ ἄφανσιμος. Ὅ Καβάφης, καθισμένος στῇ συνηθισμένῃ θέσῃ του στὸ σαλόνι, σκυθρωπὸς, ἀμίλητος καὶ περίλυπος. Ἡμασταν μόνοι. Ξαφνικά μὲ πνιγμένη

35. Savidis (Μικρά Καβαφικά, vol. 1, p. 350) writes: «Τρία χρόνια μετά τὴν καταστροφή τῆς Σμύρνης, καὶ ἐνώ ἀκόμα τὸ παλιρροιακὸ κόμα τῆς προσφυγῆς κατακλύζει τὸ ἐλληνικὸ κράτος ὄσο καὶ δλὸ τὸν ὑπόλοιπο Ἐλληνισμό, ὁ Καβάφης θα δημοσιεύσει ἕνα πικρὸ ποίημα μὲ στόχο τῶρα τὴν ἐπιπόλαισιν συναισθηματικὴ ἀντίδρασιν ὑδραγμένοι πλούσιοι καὶ τρυφηλὸν νέον τοῦ Μείζονος Ἐλληνισμοῦ ἀπέναντι στὴν τραγωδία τῶν ἔξωξμένων ἀδελφῶν τους.»
While it is Cavafy’s emotional response to the Disaster that is being described here, it is nonetheless significant that this response is connected to his poetry. In identifying the loss of Smyrna with that of Ionia and of the «Gods», Cavafy is consciously referring to his earlier, lyrical poem «'Ιωνικόν» (published in 1911), in which the land of Ionia is that «loved by the Gods», immortal protectors and guarantors of the continuity of Greek civilization.

Kostas Karyotakis came of age during the years between the First World War and the exchange of populations (he was twenty-six in 1922), and much has been written on the role this experience played in creating the general climate of despair and decadence that often characterizes the poetry not only of Karyotakis but of other writers of the «generation of 1920». In my discussion, however, I will concentrate exclusively on those texts of Karyotakis which are connected to the events of the Disaster itself.

Karyotakis’ poetic response consists essentially of two poems, both published in the collection 'Ελεγεία καί Σάτιρες in late 1927: «[Όταν άνθη έδέντε...» (included in the second series of the 'Ελεγεία), and «Είς Άνδρέαν Κάλβον» (included in the Σάτιρες)01.

The circumstances surrounding the revue’s composition (reported by Ch. G. Sakellariadis, «Ο Καρυωτάκης έπιθεωρησιογράφος», Νέα Εστία, 27, 320 [15 April 1940], pp. 474-482; see now K. G. Karyotakis, Τά Ποιήματα (1913-1928), ed. Π. G. Σαβίδης, Athens 1992, p. 393-394) prevent us from giving these verses the same weight as Karyotakis’ other texts dealing with the events of the Disaster. I believe that they may, however, be considered indicative of a satirical attitude toward the Campaign, in view both of the satirical tenor of the entire revue (see G. P. Savvidis, Στά Χνάρια τού Καρυωτάκη. Κέιμενα 1966-88, Athens 1989, p. 78) and of the context in which they are sung, as told by Sakellariadis (quoted in Karyotakis, Τά Ποιήματα (1913-1928), p. 394): «...Στό τέλος τής πράξης, διόλου οι άντρες συλλαμβάνονται ως άνυπότακτοι και μπαίνουν στη γραμμή για να πάνε δολο στο μέτωπο, κι αυτοί, την ανάγκη κάνοντας φιλοτιμία, τραγουδούν τό [τελικό, έκ πρώτης θυσίας ξεκάρφωτο] τραγούδι». I would, in any case, disagree with Christos Alexiou, who
Savidis was the first to suggest that «[Όταν άνθη έδένατε...]» «apparently is addressed to the soldiers who were killed in the Asia Minor Campaign»:

[ΟΤΑΝ ΑΝΘΗ ΕΔΕΝΑΤΕ...]

"Όταν άνθη έδένατε στά τεφρά μαλλιά σας, και μές στήν καρδιά σας άντηχουσαν σάλπιγγες, κ’ ήρθατε σε χώρα πιο μεγάλη τώρα — οι άνθρωποι με τά έξαλλα πρόσωπα, τά ρίγη, είχαν δλοι φύγει.

"Όταν άλλο έπήρατε πρόσταγμα, άλλο δρόμο, σκύβοντας τόν ώμο, τήν βαθειάν άκοντας σιωπή, τούς γρύλους, στήν άκρη τού χείλους ένα στάχυ βάζοντας με πικρία τόση — είχε πιά νυχτώσει.

Κι οταν εκκινήσατε λυτρωμένα χέρια πάνιν από τ’ αστέρια, κι οταν στό κρυστάλλινο βλέμμα, πού άνεστράφη, ο ουρανός έγραφη, κι οταν διπότατε τό λαμπρό στεφάνι — είχατε πεθάνει.

The poem’s progression is, I believe, clear. In the first stanza, the soldiers’ optimistic departure, accompanied by «flowers» and «trumpets;» their arrival in a now «larger» country (Smyrna or Anatolia: the adjective «μεγάλη» cannot but remind one of the «Μεγάλη Ίδέα»); and their discovery, upon arrival, of having already been abandoned by those who, through their unbridled enthusiasm («τά έξαλλα πρόσωπα») and patriotic fervour («τά ρίγη» — we think of «έθνικα ρήγη»), brought them there. In the second stanza, the new «orders»


and new road: that of retreat, with the humiliation it implies («σκύβοντας τὸν ὄμο»); where silence, broken only by the sound of crickets, has replaced the trumpets’ blare; and where bitterness and darkness prevail. In the third stanza, in which the repetition of «όταν» is accelerated, more positive images are once again suggested: liberation («αλυτρωμένα χέρια»); movement toward the heights («ὁ οὐρνός»); the crown of glory; all, however, gotten too late, or better, only through death. The condemnation of those responsible for the Asia Minor Campaign and its ultimate failure —although the Campaign is never directly referred to in the poem— as well as the sympathy expressed for the soldiers’ plight fit into the larger framework of Karyotakis’ well-known antimilitaristic stance, the first and clearest expression of which is found in «Μιχαλιός» (in the Σάτιρες), written in 1919, after the landing of greek troops in Smyrna, but containing no allusions to any specific historical event. The antimilitarism of «[Όταν άνθη έδένατε...]» reappears in the poem «Είς Άνδρέαν Κάλβον», this time with a direct reference to the Asia Minor Campaign. Karyotakis compares the military ideals of the Greek Revolution, sung by Calvos, when arms served the cause of Independence, with the present state of the army’s moral decay, where the field of battle is replaced by the coffee house and dance hall, and the sole purpose of military strength is to exercise power: clearly an allusion to the growing role of the military in Greek politics, which culminated in the Dictatorship of General Pangalos in mid 1925 (which Karyotakis directly satirizes in the poem «Η Πεδίας καί τό Νεκροταφείον»). I will cite only those stanzas (verses 31-45) which pertain to our subject:

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Ή, ἄν προτιμάς, ἐξύμνησον,
ἀντίς γεγυμνωμένων
ξιφών, δοσα μαστίγια
πρὸς θρίαμβον ἐπισείονται
tῶν καφενείων.

Ἰπποὺς δὲν ἐπιβαίνουσι,
ἀμή τὴν ἐξουσίαν
καὶ τοῦ λαοῦ τὸν τράχηλον,
ἰδοὺ, μάχονται οἱ ἥρωες
μέσα εἰς τὰ ντάνσιγκ.
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40. See Hokwerda, p. 66.
41. See the analysis of the poem by Papakostas, pp. 62-71.
What is of particular interest here is, of course, the third of these stanzas, with its direct reference to the «laurels of Sakaria». The Greek offensive launched against Kemal’s troops in June 1921, which had resulted in several victories as it approached Ankara and had earned praise for the Greek army in the Greek and foreign press, was stopped in August by a Turkish counterattack and brilliant victory at the Sakaria River, which proved to be decisive in the final outcome of the Asia Minor Campaign. Karyotakis, condensing into one image a long series of events, which included the successive handing over of power from one government to another, appears to be satirizing here the rapid degeneration of whatever victories had been won in the name of «Freedom», into the «slavery» of military dictatorship.

Another aspect of the Asia Minor Disaster, the plight of the refugees, elicited a response from Karyotakis in the form of a «short short story» entitled «'Ένας Πρακτικός Θάνατος». It constitutes the second part of a «triptych» of three such texts written in January 1928 under the general title «Τρεις Μεγάλες Χαρές». The subject of each of the three pieces is entirely different (the two others are entitled «'Ό Καλός Υπάλληλος» and «Δεσποινίς Bovary»); they are, however, thematically connected by the common conclusion which each one ends: «Είναι ευτυχής». A conclusion full of irony, for each story tells not of happiness but of tragedy. The irony is reinforced not only by the general title, but also by the sarcasm of the epigraph that follows it, Solomos’ verse «Όμορφος κόσμος, ήθικός, άγγελικά πλασμένος».

Although «'Ένας Πρακτικός Θάνατος», by virtue of its genre, technically
does not fall within the scope of this paper\textsuperscript{47}, it should, I believe, be cited here. The «office» (meaning «government office») theme, with the opposition between bureaucracy and human needs it implies, is, of course, an important one in Karyotakis’ poetry (for example «Γραφιάς», «[Μίσθια δουλειά...]», «Δημό­σιοι Ỳπάλληλοι»). And the story, drawn from the personal experience of his assignment as supervisor in the «Γραφείο ʾΕποπτείας ʾΕγκαταστά­σεως Προσφυγών» from 18 December 1923 to 28 February 1924\textsuperscript{48}, attests eloquently to Karyotakis’ particular sensitivity to the fate of the refugees, and especially of the children: in May 1927 he published a two-part article on the national orphanages and boarding-schools («Τά ʾΕθνικά ʾΟρφανοτροφεία καί Οικο­τροφεία»), in which he emphasized the urgent need for such institutions in view of the large influx of refugees following the Disaster\textsuperscript{49}.

47. At the same time, however, it constitutes, by virtue of its length, an exception within the body of prose literature on the Asia Minor Disaster, made up of short-stories and novels. It is not mentioned in the only existing systematic study of this literature, Doulis’ \textit{Disaster and Fiction. Modern Greek Fiction and the Impact of the Asia Minor Disaster of 1922}.


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ρα, μὲ φανταστικούς τοίχους. Μπόγοι, κασέλες, κουβέρτες απλωμένες, ξύλα βαλμένα στή γραμμή, έσχημάτιζαν τετράγωνα, τά μαχητικά τετράγωνα τής τελευταίας άμυνης. Σ’ αυτές τίς φωλιές άκινητούσαν ή έσάλευαν πένθιμα σκιές άνθρώπων. Τρείς-τρείς, πέντε-πέντε, σκορπισμένοι άνάμεσα σε ρυπαρά ρούχα και ύπολείμματα επίπλων, ήταν σα να ψιθύριζαν παραμύθια ή να προσπαθούσαν σιγά ν’ άποτινάξουν τό σκοτάδι.

Τώρα ή άποθήκη φωτίζεται άπό ένα κερί. Κάποιο δέμα τυλιγμένο με καθαρό άσπρο πανί έχει τοποθετηθεί κάθετα προς τον τοίχο, χάμου. Είναι τό μικρότερο από τά έξι παιδιά τής 'Αρμένισσας, πού πέθανε λίγες ώρες μετά τήν εγκατάστασή τους. Τ’ άδελφια του παίζουν έξω στόν ήλιο. 'Η μητέρα, ξαλαφρωμένη, παραστέκει γιά τελευταία φορά τό μωρό της. Οί άλλες γυναίκες τή μακαρίζουν, γιατί θά μπορέσει νά πάει δουλειά. Είναι σχεδόν εύτυχής. Και ο νεκρός άκόμη περιμένει μὲ τόση αξιοπρέπεια...  

While it would be misleading to draw general conclusions from what is only part of a much larger study, the texts discussed in this paper bring to light at least one point: that the immediate poetic response to the Asia Minor Disaster was a polyphonous one. For it includes not only voices of «lament» and of «praise», but also voices of doubt, contestation, and criticism, reflecting a profound historical, political, and social consciousness.

Over the following two decades the Asia Minor Disaster elicited new responses on the part of Greece’s poets, the most significant of which is surely Seferis’ Μυθιστόρημα (1935)51. As the experience became an increasingly distant memory, it was replaced in the poetic consciousness by the more recent tragedies that have marked the history of modern Hellenism, until finally, in our time, it seems almost to have been forgotten. It is significant that in one of the latest poems (1966) having to do with the events of 1922, or more precisely, in this instance, with their legacy forty-four years later, «forgetfulness» is one of the central themes: not that of the living, however, but, as the poet tells us on an ironical note, of the dead. I would like to conclude by quoting, without
further comment, George Geralis’ “'Αναζητήσεις μέσω τοῦ 'Ελληνικοῦ 'Ερυθρού Σταυρού”52:

ΑΝΑΖΗΤΗΣΕΙΣ ΜΕΣΩ ΤΟΥ ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΟΥ ΕΡΥΘΡΟΥ ΣΤΑΥΡΟΥ

"Όταν κατασιγάζει ο άλαλαγμός
άπο το πρώτο ήμίχρονο,
κι ένω προβάλλει το έναγώνιο ερώτημα
άν ώς το τέλος θα προηγείται ο "Αρης,
συνήθως μεταδίδονται οι «'Αναζητήσεις
μέσω τοῦ 'Ελληνικοῦ 'Ερυθρού Σταυρού».
Σχεδόν πανομοιότυπα: 'Η 'Αγγελική
αναζητεί τον σύζυγό της Γαβριήλ Γαβριήλογλου
εκ Πισιδίας. 'Εξηςπανίσθη
κατά την Μικρασιατικήν καταστροφήν
έν έτει 1922. 'Εκτοτε
ή 'Αγγελική στερείται ειδήσεών του..." Τό παράδοξο
dεν είναι, βέβαια, η αναμονή
σαφάντα τέσσερα χρόνια, όταν σκεφτεί κανείς
εκείνους ποι έξησαν διαστήματα τρομαχτικά
χωρίς να περιμένουν τίποτα (κι ας άφησουμε πιά,
γιατί παράγινε, τών αγαλμάτων τη μοίρα).
Τό παράδοξο
eίναι η σιωπή του Γαβριήλ, ποιό άγνοώντας
tις τόσες δυνατότητες επιστροφής
— η έστω μιας κάποιας επικοινωνίας —
tό ουράνιο φέγγη χαίρεται και στών άγγέλων
tό ουδέτερο κάλλος έντρυφά, κι άσυλλόγιστα
άπό την ύπεργήινη μουσική μεθυσμένος,
της σιωπήν τη θαλερήν άγκάλη έλησμόνει.
Κι έκείνη
μέσω τοῦ 'Ελληνικοῦ 'Ερυθρού Σταυροῦ
επίμονα εκπέμπει
τό ραδιοφωνικό της άγγελμα
άνάμεσα σε δύο ήμίχρονα Πιστή
σε διά άπό τους πατέρες διάδρομο,
tό χρέος της έκτελεί, τό μήνυμα της άκούει
και ήσυχη πιά, μπορεί να παρακολουθήσει,
— ίσως με έγνοια για τη δόξα του έγγονού —
άν ώς το τέλος θα προηγείται ο "Αρης.

52. In the collection Κλειστός Κήπος, Athens 1966.
NOTE

This paper was given first in the lecture series «The Asia Minor Greeks» sponsored by the Alexander S. Onassis Center for Hellenic Studies at New York University, 7-28 February 1992, and then at the Colloquium on «The Asia Minor Disaster and Greek Society» organized by the Centre for Asia Minor Studies in Athens, 10-12 September 1992. I am grateful to Dr. Theano Michailidou, Professor G. P. Savidis, and Professor Alexander Kitroeff for bibliographical and historical references, and to Professor Panayotis Moullas and Professor Nasos Vayenas for their helpful observations as discussants at the Colloquium.