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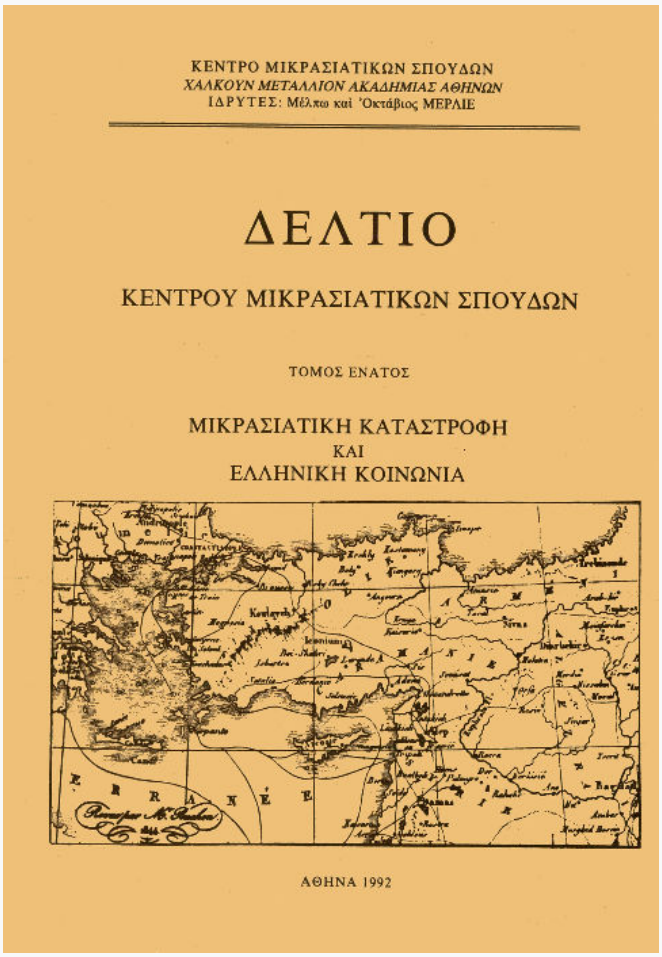

Ο Κοσμάς Πολίτης και η λογοτεχνίας της εξορίας

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KOSMAS POLITIS AND THE LITERATURE OF EXILE

This paper will attempt to assess the impact of the Asia Minor Disaster on the Greek novel by concentrating on the works of writers from Asia Minor and Constantinople which deal directly with aspects of the Disaster, and particularly on the novel by Kosmas Politis, *Στοῦ Χατζηφράγκου* (1962-3).

I shall first provide some basic facts about the prosewriters from Asia Minor and Constantinople; next I shall review the critical and theoretical approaches to the «literature of exile» in an attempt to find a place for the Greek cases in a more general typology; I shall then proceed to point to certain salient features of the relevant novels written by Greeks from Asia Minor and Constantinople. Finally I shall focus on Politis's novel, tracing the way in which he reconstructs his homeland while at the same time implying his spatial and temporal distance from it.

1. *The writers and their backgrounds*

Surveying the writers who lost their homes in the Asia Minor Disaster (I include those who abandoned their homes at any time from 1914 onwards), I was surprised to find that while with the exception of Seferis there were few notable poets, there were enough prosewriters from Asia Minor and Constantinople to make it worth talking about the impact of the Disaster on Greek prose by concentrating on those authors alone. I list a selection of prosewriters in order of age, with their date and place of birth (except in the case of Politis the latter appears also to correspond to the place of their earliest upbringing); where the writers are known by *noms de plume*, their real names appear in square brackets:[1]

1. This is not an exhaustive list; among the names that could be added is that of Xenofon Lefkoparidis (Constantinople, 1898). In addition, as far as the writers from Constantinople are concerned, I have not taken into account whether they were forced to leave or whether they left voluntarily; in either case, they can be treated as exiles.

Kosmas Politis [Paris Taveloudis] (Athens, 1888; in Smyrna 1890-1922)
Stratis Doukas (Moschonisia, 1895)
Fotis Kondoglou [Fotis Apostolelis] (Ayvali, 1895)
Pavlos Floros (Vourla, 1897)
Maria Iordanidou (Constantinople, 1897)
Petros Afthoniatis [Iraklis Ioannidis] (Afthoni, Prokonisos, 1898)
Tatiana Stavrou (Boyacıköy, Bosporus, 1899)
Thrasos Kastanakis (Tatavla, Constantinople, 1901)
Ilias Venezis [Ilias Mellos] (Ayvali, 1904)
Yorgos Theotokas (Constantinople, 1905)
Dido Sotiriou (Aydin, 1909)

Some remarkable facts emerge from these data. First, four of the eleven writers came from Constantinople rather than from Asia Minor. Secondly, if we except Sotiriou, who was born in Aydin (approximately fifty kilometres from the west coast of Asia Minor) and was brought up there and in Smyrna, the rest were all from towns on the west coast (Smyrna, Ayvali, Vourla) or from islands off the west coast (the Moschonisia stand across the entrance to the bay of Ayvali) or in the Sea of Marmara (Prokonisos — also known as Marmaras — lies to the north-west of the Artaki peninsula). None of these writers came from the more easterly regions of Asia Minor such as Pontus.[2]

It is also remarkable that (with the possible exception of Doukas, who actually lived rather a nomadic existence between the two World Wars) none of these writers settled in Thessaloniki, which Yorgos Ioannou called «the refugee capital».[3] Most of them eventually settled in Athens, though in many cases not until after a sojourn in western Europe, either for the purposes of study or for some other reason; some of them were fortunate enough to have left to study in western Europe before the Disaster occurred.[4] All these facts, taken together, lead to the conclusion that most of these authors or their families managed to leave before the capture of the Greek menfolk and before the mass expulsion of the Greek population from Asia Minor (the notable exception was Venezis). They or their families were in a position to make their own arrangements for their settlement in Greece without needing to rely on state assistance. Several of these writers came from well-connected families: Theotokas's father, for instance, was a distinguished jurist and adviser to the

2. Around 1966 the well-know humorist Dimitris Psathas (Trebizond, 1907) published *Γῆ τοῦ Πόντου*. This is not however a novel. It consists of a first section in which the author recounts his childhood memories, while the second and longer section is a «chronicle» of the expulsion of the Pontians, based on the testimonies of various writers.

3. Yorgos Ioannou, *Ἡ πρωτεύουσα τῶν προσφύγων*, Athens 1984.

4. Such people had already gone into a kind of exile, acknowledging that their place of origin was a cultural colony of a western European metropolis.

Ecumenical Patriarch, and Politis, though not from such an eminent family, held a position in a bank in Smyrna that enabled him to continue in the same profession after 1922. Those refugees who settled in rural areas and shanty towns were not in a position to become eminent writers.

One last factor that should be mentioned is that, with few exceptions, these writers had not published anything before they left their homes.[5] In most cases it is therefore impossible to compare their writing before and after the Disaster with the aim of tracing the influence of their uprooting on their work. In fact, little literature of note was published by Greeks living in the Oottoman Empire between 1821 and 1922.[6] A question of fundamental importance which therefore poses itself — but which I believe we cannot answer — is whether the sudden emergence of a group of prominent writers from Asia Minor and Constantinople (all born, with the exception of Politis, within a period of fourteen years) was due to the Asia Minor Disaster — in other words, whether it was precisely their experience of exile that made them into writers (Politis, for instance, seems to have written nothing before 1922, when he was 34); or at any rate whether it was exile that made them turn towards prose rather than poetry, since prose lent itself more appropriately to the recording of eye-witness accounts of traumatic historical events.

2. *The Asia Minor Disaster in Greek fiction*

This is not the place to give a general account of the cultural impact of the Asia Minor Disaster in Greece. Nevertheless, that impact could crudely be summed up in two related phrases: the narrowing of geographical horizons, and a national identity crisis.

Quite apart from the humanitarian and economic problem of the absorption of the refugees, it was perhaps the drastic shrinking of a vast Greek nation into the confines of the small Greek state that had the most violent impact on the outlook of Greek writers. The existence of a Greek nation stretching at least as far as the south-east corner of the Black Sea had always held out the promise of future greatness for a Hellenism whose cultural mission was to «bring light to the East». The loss of the Greek Orthodox communities of Asia Minor marked a watershed in Greek literature, and those who entered the

5. Exceptions include Kondoglou's *Pedro Cazas* (1920) as well as a short story by Venezis, clearly influenced by Kondoglou's book and published in the Constantinopolitan magazine *Ὁ Λόγος* in 1922. In addition, Kastanakis apparently wrote his first novel, *Οἱ πρίγκηπες* (published in 1924) before the Disaster.

6. Greek literary activity in Constantinople and Asia Minor has been little studied; it would make a fruitful research topic.

literary scene after 1922 — whether they were refugees or not — felt that their collective experiences had nothing in common with those of their elders. The national συσπείρωση (to use this word punningly as the antonym of «diaspora») brought the need for a radical rethinking of Greece's national values and ideals, which were perceived to be bankrupt because they had rested entirely on the Μεγάλη Ἰδέα. A general air of defeatism pervades the Greek literature of the inter-war period.[7] Yet there were those who sought to build anew on the ruins of the old, and it is for this reason that some of the younger writers were already calling themselves the «Generation of 1930» to distinguish themselves from their elders well before the decade had finished; this was the first time that a «generation» label had been used in a programmatic way in Greek literature.

The post-Disaster generation's search for new ideals is dramatized most vividly in Theotokas's novel *Ἀργώ* (1933-1936), in which a group of young men are depicted setting out on a symbolic voyage in search of ideals amid the political turmoil of Athens in the 1920s. Ἀργώ is just one of many ambitious novels produced by writers of the younger generation during the 1930s; indeed, despite our view today that the most original voices to emerge from the 1930s were those of poets such as Seferis, Elytis, and Ritsos, most writers and critics at the time considered that the greatest innovations were being made in the novel. At all events, one of the chief motive forces behind poetry and prose at the time was the desire to redefine Greekness, both in relation to the ancient past and in the context of contemporary European culture, and to create new and «genuine» values and ideals based on a fusion of Greek tradition with contemporary trends in European culture.

But the national identity crisis had already been manifesting itself during the 1920s in novels that depicted Greek characters in western European environments, partly in an attempt to define the essential features of the Greeks by contrasting them with non-Greeks. The authors of such novels appeared to believe that the quality of the Greek character needed to be tested according to European standards. This cosmopolitan fiction was practised particularly by Kastanakis, who from his viewpoint as a teacher of Modern Greek in Paris produced a succession of novels providing rather unflattering views of the

7. This defeatism is exemplified particularly in Myrivilis's *Ἡ ζωὴ ἐν τάφῳ* (1924-1930). It is pertinent to mention Myrivilis in the context of Asia Minor writers, since, until 1922 and especially prior to 1912, his native Lesbos — barely ten kilometres from the mainland — formed a single cultural area along with Ayvali and the Moschonisia (it is relevant to note also that Kondoglou, in addition to his *nom de plume*, bore the characteristically Lesbian surname Apostolelis, and that Politis was the product of a marriage between a Lesbian father and an Ayvaliot mother); for this reason Myrivilis felt the loss of the Asia Minor dimension of Hellenism almost as acutely as the refugees themselves.

Greek *déracinés* abroad.[8] Similarly, there were several novels about Greeks who have studied or worked abroad and subsequently return to their country, which they observe with the eye of a critical outsider. Two novelists with clearly facsist leanings sum up their views in the symbolic titles of two of their novels, Afthoniatis in *Μετανάστες* (1930)[9] and Floros in *Ἄποικοι* (1934). Afthoniatis's mouthpiece-character, a Greek from Asia Minor, who emigrated to Alaska and became rich, visits Greece after a long absence; while he expresses the view that the Greeks should be working in their own country as they do when they become immigrants abroad (i.e. hard!), he believes that Greece is governed by «ντόπιοι ξένοι» who are devoid of conscience. A similar view is expressed by Floros's character Valeris, a German-educated industrialist who believes that the Greeks behave like colonists or settlers in their own country,[10] exploiting it only for personal gain, and who attempts to put his own ideals into practice by founding an eugenics institute called «Ἵδρυμα τῆς Ἀρχοντιᾶς» in order to further the superiority of the White Race; finally, realizing that his dream cannot be fulfilled there, he abandons Greece and, like Afthoniatis's characters, becomes a wanderer. These novels, like Theotokas's *Ἀργώ*, are typical of the fashion of the time for *romans d'idées* containing long discussions about «the state of Greece».

Since alienation and uprootedness are characteristic themes of European fiction between the two World Wars, we cannot necessarily impute their presence in Greek fiction to the effect of the Asia Minor Disaster. For this reason we are on safer ground if we concentrate on those novels[11] that deal explicitly with the Disaster and its consequences. The Disaster manifests itself in three chief forms:

(a) the evocation of life in Asia Minor or Constantinople before the Disaster: this is the chief setting of Theotokas's *Λεωνὴς* (1940), Venezis's *Αἰολικὴ*

8. Kastanakis could perhaps be characterized as an expatriate rather than an exile: in most of the numerous volumes of fiction he published before the Second World War his writing, which displays his constant desire to shock and surprise with the unpredictable behaviour of his amoral characters, is «a pot-pourri of the avant-garde and the decadent», as Mary McCarthy has characterized expatriate literature («Exiles, expatriates and internal émigrés», *The Listener*, no. 86 (1971), pp. 705-8; quoted and commented on by Andrew Gurr, *Writers in Exile: the Identity of Home in Modern Literature*, Brighton and Atlantic Highlands 1981, p. 18). The exception to this rule, the totally unrealistic *Ἡ φυλὴ τῶν ἀνθρώπων* (1932), is set in Niochori, Constantinople, after 1922, yet not a single Turkish character appears in it.

9. I have not been able to find a copy of Afthoniatis's first book, a collection of short stories with the indicative title *Πρόσφυγες* (Paris 1929).

10. Compare Kastanakis's satire on Greek intellectuals, *Πρίγκηπες* (1924), in which they are characterized as «metics» both in Greece and in France.

11. I should make it clear that I am confining myself to novels alone. Volumes of short stories were also published by Tatiana Stavrou, Theotokas, Venezis and others.

γῆ (1943), Kastanakis' *Ὁ Χατζὴ Μανουὴλ* (1956), Politis's *Στοῦ Χατζηφράγκου* (1963), and Iordanidou's *Λωξάντρα* (1963);

(b) narratives of war, captivity and/or expulsion: Doukas's *Ἱστορία ἑνὸς αἰχμαλώτου* (1929), Venezis's Τὸ νούμερο 31328 (1931), Sotiriou's *Ματωμένα χώματα* (1962), and chapter 5 of Theotokas's *Ἀργώ* (1933);

(c) depictions of the economic, social, and (particularly) psychological difficulties faced by the refugees on arrival in Greece: these form the basis of Stavrou's *Οἱ πρῶτες ρίζες* (1936) and Venezis's *Γαλήνη* (1939), but also appear as a minor theme in other novels.

After the early 1940s the Asia Minor theme submerges under the pressure of new events; then there is a gap of twenty years until three books appeared around the fortieth anniversary of the Disaster.[12] Nevertheless, we should not forget that Theotokas wrote *Λεωνὴς* in 1939-40 precisely because the coming of war reminded him of his childhood during the earlier world upheaval. One novel that did appear during the period 1943-1962 is *Ὁ Χατζὴ Μανουήλ*, which however transfers the typically Kastanakian cosmopolitan mix of financial, sexual and political intrigue to Constantinople before 1922. We should also add Sotiriou's first novel. *Οἱ νεκροὶ περιμένουν...* (1959), which relates a girl's experiences, beginning in 1918 in Aydin and Smyrna and continuing through the problems of προσφυγιὰ up to the time at which she is narrating her story, namely during the German Occupation.

Most of the works cited above clearly draw significantly on the writers' own experiences, although this is not the case with *Ἱστορία ἑνὸς αἰχμαλώτου* and *Ματωμένα χώματα*, whose authors explicitly claimed to be retelling the written reminiscences of others.[13]

The works in categories (a) and (c) tend to present explicit or impolicit comparisons between the old and the new homelands. Those that deal with life in the lost homeland — whether their intended readership consisted of fellow-refugees or native ἑλλαδίτες — are necessarily written from a spatial and temporal distance which imparts a rosy hue to the social and natural environment from which the authors and their characters have been expelled. The lost homeland becomes a timeless, idyllic and exotic East connoted by camels, tobacco smugglers,[14] and wrestlers; but it is particularly characterized by a

12. One might mention, in addition, Kondoglou's *Τὸ Ἀϊβαλί, ἡ πατρίδα μου* (1962), a collection of miscellaneous texts written at various times.

13. In recent novels by Yorgos Michailidis (b. 1938: *Τὰ φονικά*, Athens 1991) and Evangelia Tessi (born c. 1932: 'Ανατολικὰ τ' 'Αρχιπελάγου) we observe a younger generation basing their narratives on stories of life in Asia Minor told them by older relatives. In Michailidis's novel, as in Evgenia Fakinou's *Τὸ ἕβδομο ροῦχο* (1983), the Asia Minor Disaster is seen as just one of several cataclysmic components that make up 20th-century Greek history.

14. The Greek tobacco smugglers are presented as doing their patriotic duty by defrauding the *French*-run *Turkish* state tobacco monopoly, the Régie Turque!

cosmopolitan nobility and generosity of behaviour, material wealth, open spaces, and a fertile soil that willingly bears abundant fruit (the recurrent word that sums up this last condition of plenty is the — characteristically Turkish — μπερεκέτι). All this is contrasted with the temporal reality of a narrowly confined Greece, with its arid landcape and its uncouth, hostile and inhospitalbe inhabitants, where the superior education and the (now lost) wealth of the refugees are of no avail.[15]

Most of all, though, in the novels dealing with life before the expulsion from Eden there is a sense of belonging, of ἰθαγένεια, expressed not only through personal memories and nostalgic reveries but through the collective historical memory, which stretches back to various stages in the Greek history of Asia Minor and Constantinople. Thus the narrator of *Αἰολικὴ γῆ* excitedly retells the brigand stories told him by his grandparents; the schoolboys in *Λεωνὴς* are proud to live in Constantinople, whose vast empire was once ruled by their own people; and the narrator and some of the characters of *Στοῦ Χατζηφράγκου* frequently refer to the ancient history of Smyrna, which begins with their compatriot Homer himself.[16] The imagery of soil and roots is evident even in some of the titles of the works mentioned, and it constitutes a powerful symbol within the text of both *Οἱ πρῶτες ρίζες* and *Γαλήνη*. In *Οἱ πρῶτες ρίζες* one of the older characters, who can never see Athens as anything but a foreign country, pictures her generation as the «first root» sunk into this dry, barren soil, from which their children will emerge;[17] at the end of *Γαλήνη* a young girl (symbolically named Αὐγή), whose refugee mother has died but who is herself too young to remember the lost homeland, is depicted as symbolically integrating herself into her new homeland by filling her hands with the earth that covers her mother's grave.[18]

As for the eye-witness accounts of war, captivity and expulsion, their authors had to face serious problems. One of these, which affected Venezis's *Τὸ νούμερο 31328*, was how to describe the indescribable: how to make literature out of the real-life experience of violence, rape and murder. Perhaps it is the numbing of the narrator's emotional responses to what he witnesses that is the

15. On the cultural difference between the Asia Minor refugees and their indigenous hosts see Renée Hirschon, *Heirs of the Greek Catastrophe: The Social Life of Asia Minor Refugees in Piraeus*, Oxford 1989, especially pp. 10-14 and 30.

16. For more on this, see my introduction to Kosmas Politis, *Στοῦ Χατζηφράγκου*, Athens 1988, pp. 48*-49*. References to the text of *Στοῦ Χατζηφράγκου* are made to this edition.

17. Tatiana Stavrou, *Οἱ πρῶτες ρίζες*, Athens 1936, p. 243; a similar image is used by another older character on p. 224. Both are reminsiscent of the end of Seferis's *Μυθιστόρημα* (1935).

18. For further discussion of the theme of nostalgia in the refugee novels see P. Mackridge, «The two-fold nostalgia: lost homeland and lost time in the work of G. Theotokas, E. Venezis and K. Politis», *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*, vol. 4 (1986), pp. 75-83.

most harrowing message of this book. Nevertheless, the suffering of the captives and the refugees as a collective experience of the race is vividly implied by the fact that to each chapter of the later editions of *Τὸ νούμερο 31328* Venezis added an epigraph taken from the Psalms, which could be taken to refer to the Babylonian captivity.[19] In *Ματωμένα χώματα* Sotiriou faced the problem of individualizing her central character, who narrates his own story; in the end he is such a typical representative of the collective whole that his individuality is swallowed up in a plethora of realia, and the relentless advance of real history does not allow sufficient leeway for the *fictional* causality that one normally expects from the plot of a novel.

Finally, an important consequence of the decision by all these novelists to write about the Disaster (and what preceded and followed it) was their adherence to realistic narrative. Because of the partially documentary purpose behind these novels, they do not display the modernistic experimentation with form and content that was beginning to show itself during the 1930s in the work of non-refugee fiction-writers such as Melpo Axioti, Yannis Beratis, N.G. Pentzikis, Yannis Skarimbas and Stelios Xefloudas.

3. *The literature of exile*

During the last few decades there has been a huge spate of conferences, books and articles devoted to «exile literature». The literature that has attracted most attention has been that of the German-speaking countries under Nazi control between 1933 and 1945, when the majority of German-speaking writers (not all of them by any means of Jewish origin) emigrated to Britain, America, and elsewhere, in order to escape persecution and censorship. Secondly there were the literary emigrés from the Soviet Union and those eastern European countries that were under Soviet control. The third chief group has consisted of Spanish-speaking writers, first those who left Spain under the dictatorships of Primo de Rivera and Franco, and secondly the large band of writers who have been exiled, particularly since the Second World War, from various Latin American countries.

I am applying the term «literature of exile» to certain works written by Greeks from Asia Minor and Constantinople even though I am conscious of the factors that distinguish the Greek phenomenon from those I have just referred to. Perhaps it would be wise to examine some of these differences before trying to establish the similarities.

19. These epigraphs were not inserted until after the second edition (1945).

A recent «biographical dictionary» of twentieth-century literary exiles[20] contains entries on a huge number of authors who have left their countries for political reasons or who have suffered forced internal exile for their political beliefs: these include Kazantzakis (an odd choice, in my opinion), Ritsos, Elytis, and Vasilikos, but no Greek writer from Asia Minor or Constantinople. Most of the scholarly work done on «exile literature» assumes that the authors concerned have left their countries for some foreign country,[21] either as a result of banishment by their government or in order to escape harassment, persecution, imprisonment, execution, or censorship (here the case of Ritsos would not seem to fit). In the majority of cases, these authors have been exiled by dominant members of their own ethnic group, and they have moved to countries whose chief language is not their own; they have therefore faced the dilemma of either continuing to write in a language which is not the one they hear and see around them (this is the choice of the vast majority), or else struggling to master the language of their host country well enough to be able to employ it for literary purposes (this is the case of Vladimir Nabokov and, more recently, of Joseph Brodsky). Another distinguishing factor is that literary exiles — or at least those who continue to write in their native language — tend to assume that they will eventually return to their own country once the conditions are favourable.

There seems to be no room in such a typology for writers such as the Greeks from Asia Minor and Constantinople who were expelled from their homelands as a result of vast political upheavals and settled in a country whose inhabitants belonged to the same ethnic group and spoke the same language —people, in other words, who were refugees in a country that was theoretically their own but with which they may have had little or no previous contact. The unusual nature of the Greek case was made clear to me while I was supervising a doctoral thesis on the Pontic theatre in Greece, that is, the composition and performance of plays in Pontic dialect in front of audiences consisting of Pontian refugees and their families in Greece.[22] No parallel could be found elsewhere in the world for theatrical activity carried out in a particular country through the medium of a dialect of the chief language of that country — yet carried out by a community that was not native to that country, but which had settled there from somewhere else. The Greek writers from Asia Minor and Constantinople are distinguished from the other cases I have mentioned by the fact that they have been expelled by members of a different ethnic group, not

20. Martin Tucker (ed.), *Literary Exile in the Twentieth Century: an Analysis and Biographical Dictionary*, New York and London 1991.

21. M. Tucker (op. cit., p. xv) calls this «extranational exile».

22. Patricia Fann, «The reconstruction of homeland in modern Pontic Greek theatre», unpublished Oxford D. Phil. thesis, 1991.

because of their political beliefs but because of their ethnic identity; and there has been no question of them or their fellow-refugees returning to settle in their original homelands.

Yet the refugees for Asia Minor suffered at least as acutely as anyone else the loss, the pain, the shock, and the feelings of separation, solitude and nostalgia that are normally said to constitute the experience of the exile, who has been cut off from homeland, local customs and childhood experiences. Indeed, for those who lost friends and relatives or saw their homes and property destroyed or who were themselves maltreated their suffering was more acute than that of the majority of writers exiled from other countries (excluding, of course, the Jews). The Greek refugee writers, like other exiled authors, often express quite directly the experiences of exile, whether these be the memory of life before the crisis, the actual traumatic process of uprooting, or the problems of settling in the new environment.

There must be similar cases in other literatures, but they are not easily accessible. The Armenian experience in Asia Minor has been similar to the Greek one; the biographical dictionary referred to above contains an article entitled «Armenian writers in exile», although significantly it does not deal with refugee writers in the (former Soviet) Republic of Armenia. The case of the Moslems transferred from Greece to Turkey in and before 1923 seems not to have produced any exile literature.[23] However, there is certainly a parallel in the work of Greek-Cypriot refugees from Turkish-occupied areas of Cyprus (e.g. Kyriakos Charalambidis).

«An exile [...] may be defined as a refugee [...] who has found a place after much wandering and one who begins the equally tortuous routes of wandering through memory and yearning».[24] «An exile is someone who inhabits one place and remembers or projects the reality of another».[25] Such definitions as these, suggested by specialists in «exile studies», apply as much to Greek as to other literary exiles. The nostalgia for the past that haunts the writing of the Greek exiles is typical of exiled writers: «The exile lives in two different times simultaneously, in the present and in the past. This life in the past is sometimes more intense than his life in the present and tyrannizes his entire psychology».[26] The fictional characters created by such writers tend to share this same sense. As

23. I am grateful to Dr. Celia Kerslake and Dr. Turgut Kut for confirming the absence of literature in Turkish about the explusion of the Moslems from Greece under the Treaty of Lausanne.

24. M. Tucker, op. cit., p. xvi.

25. Michael Seidel, *Exile and the Narrative Imagination*, New Haven and London 1986, p. ix.

26. Joseph Wittlin, quoted in Paul Tabori, *The Anatomy of Exile: a Semantic and Historical Study*, London 1971, p. 32.

for the future, «exile attacks identity by threatening continuity and one's ability to project a self located in time and space confidently toward the future».[27]

Exiles take their space and their time with them when they leave their homeland. For this reason, as the exiled Cuban poet Octavio Armand has written, exile is not necessarily an exclusively negative experience for the writer; it can, indeed, be positively enriching:

> Exile is not only alienation. It can also be a cosmopolitism,[28] albeit an involuntary and painful one. The experience of transposition, which is deeply related to translation, implies the possible convergence of two upaired spheres, that of the exile and that of the host. People in exile are never completely dispossessed; like snails, they carry their homes everywhere: the languages, customs, traditions of their countries. They transpose and translate: they live between two shores.[29] Their homes and landscapes live within them, although they are no longer places of physical dwelling. Seen in this way, exile becomes a staggering enlargement of a landscape's four walls. When people are uprooted, those walls become windows. The exile's very existence represents an endless challenge to immensity and formlessness. A permanent construction and reconstruction of what has been lost, and at the same time a cautious, laborious appropriation of what is discovered, in other words, what is different.[30]

Others have pointed out how the experience of exile makes writers not only extraordinarily rich repositories of the memories they have brought from their homelands but also particularly acute observers of their host countries, which they look upon with the critical and often amused eye of one who has been born and bred elsewhere.

Writers of certain periods — especially the ages of Romanticism and Modernism — have deliberately sought out and cultivated exile, feeling that separation from one's homeland is a necessary precondition for writing. In fact, in the twentieth century, exile has often been seen — particularly by the Existentialists — as the condition of modern man, so that the territorially exiled writer is in the best possible position to write about the spiritual alienation from one's environment and one's self that is experienced by the modern consciousness.[31]

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27. Robert Edwards, «Exile, self and society», in Maria-Inés Pope (ed.), *Exile in Literature*, Lewisburg, London and Toronto 1988, p. 20.

28. This sense of cosmopolitanism was clearly shared by Kosmas Politis — hence his *nom de plume*.

29. This metaphor is particularly appropriate for the Greek writers who were forced to migrate from one shore of the Aegean to another.

30. Octavio Armand, «Poetry as *Eruv*: on the condition of exile», *Index on Censorship*, vol. 18, no. 3 (March 1989), p. 21.

31. «Exile [...] is not a prison house: it is in exile that a writer is most at home» (R. Parthasa-

We should add, of course, that Christianity looks upon exile from Eden as the inescapable state of fallen humankind: we are all «children of Eve». Be that as it may, for many refugees and émigrés exile becomes «a permanent inner state of being».[32] Homelessness becomes a home in itself: a «"being-at-home" in "not-being-at-home" in the world», as one critic finds expressed in Joseph Brodsky's poetry.[33]

The re-creation of the lost homeland through the imagination and the act of writing is constantly stressed by theorists and practitioners of exile literature. In their writing they produce a new home, which is no longer a geographical location but an imaginary space: «For the exile, native territory is the product of heightened and sharpened memory, and imagination is, indeed, a special homecoming,» wrote Nabokov.[34] «In exile,» writes one critic, «the expression of the desire for home becomes a substitute for home.»[35]

I therefore end this theoretical and comparative section with the proposal that the typology of «exile literature» should include a category that would cover cases such as that of the Greek writers from Asia Minor and Constantinople, where an ethnic minority living in one country is expelled (in accordance with a policy of «ethnic cleansing», as we have become accustomed to hearing it called in the former Yugoslav republics) to another country in which that ethnic group forms the majority of the population. Kosmas Politis's novel *Στοῦ Χατζηφράγκου* (1963) seems to me to be particularly suited to such a critical approach.

4. *Exile and Kosmas Politis's* Στοῦ Χατζηφράγκου

Kosmas Politis occupies an idiosyncratic place among the refugee writers for various reasons. He was the oldest of the group, yet he had published nothing before the Disaster, which took place when he was already thirty-four years old; he was also the last of the already know authors to reveal himself as a refugee writer. Secondly, he was born in Athens, although he lived continuously in Smyrna from the age of two (1890) until 1922. And thirdly, he would never have explicitly written about the refugee experience had he not survived

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rathy, «The exile as writer: on being an Indian writer in English», *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, vol. 24, no. 1 (1989), p. 2).

32. Sidney Rosenfeld, «German exile literature after 1945: the younger generation», in Lagos-Pope, op. cit., p. 339.

33. George L. Kline, «Variations on the theme of exile», in Lev Loseff and Valentina Plukhina (ed.), *Brodsky's Poetics and Aesthetics*, London 1990, p. 78.

34. Vladimir Nabokov, *The Gift*, New York 1965, p. 187.

35. Seidel, op. cit., p. 11.

into old age: before he wrote *Στοῦ Χατζηφράγκου* at the age of seventy-four there was practically nothing in his work that could have been readily interpreted as the work of a refugee writer.

He appears not to have published any writing of his own[36] before his first two novels, *Λεμονοδάσος* (1930) and *Ἑκάτη* (1933), each of which follows the attempts of an educated and cultivated male character to find some ideal love; both novels are set in contemporary Athens and various vacation resorts in Greece, with no references either to the characters' childhood and adolescence or to Asia Minor. His punning pseudonym, Kosmas Politis, seemed to present the image of a thoroughly modern and much-travelled man of the world, at home in the modern city and taking holiday trips to the Greek islands. This image was shaken when, like other Greek novelists after the establishment of the Metaxas regime, he appeared to retreat from the present into an adolescent past in *Eroica* (1937), where he placed his teenage characters in the setting of a fictitious but cosmopolitan town at some time during the first decade of the twentieth century (although the toponyms are fictional, the town bears some physical resemblances to Patras, where he was working as a bank manager). Here the search for ideal love is still a central theme, but this time, behind the characteristically mixed tone of idealism and cynicism adopted by the Politean narrator, the failure of the characters in their quest takes on a more sombre tone as the novel becomes an elegy for a lost Eden from which the characters have been cast out as a result of their first taste of love: some have been punished by death, while the survivors have been scarred for life.[37]

Eroica was followed by *Τὸ Γυρὶ* (1945), which depicts an alienated intellectual in Patras before the Second World War, but which also concentrates on the other characters (particularly the children) who live in his neighbourhood. Unlike the privileged adolescents of *Eroica* who come from prosperous families, the children of *Τὸ Γυρὶ* belong to the working class — a new departure in the novels of Politis, whose political affiliations were by now firmly with the Left. Despite an attempt to produce an allegorical novel set in Latin America, in which he attempted to express his attitude towards the Greek Civil War,[38] seventeen years were to pass between *Τὸ Γυρὶ* and the publication of his next novel, *Στοῦ Χατζηφράγκου*.

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36. I put it like this because Politis claimed to have previously published a French translation of a poem by Yannis Skarimbas; but I have not been able to trace it.

37. For a further discussion of this novel see my introduction in Kosmas Politis, *Eroica*, Ermis, Athens 1982. It is probable that a reading of *Eroica* inspired Theotokas to write his own «μυθιστόρημα τῆς ἐφηβείας», *Λεωνής*, which, unlike Politis's, is explicitly set in a real-life lost homeland.

38. An extract from this unfinished novel, *Santa-Barbara*, was published in the newspaper *Ἡ Μάχη*, 6 November 1949. It has been republished in *Διαβάζω*, no. 116 (10 April 1975), pp. 40-42.

With hindsight, we can see another meaning in the *nom de plume* Kosmas Politis: the man without a home. In a sense, the chief characters of all his previous novels were searching for some kind of home, but their existential search always ended in failure. In *Στοῦ Χατζηφράγκου* Politis at last found his home though memory, imagination, and writing; the novel itself became his homeland. Here Smyrna had become a city of the mind. It has been said that Smyrna itself (which is unnamed throughout the book, despite the wealth of local toponyms) is the protagonist of Politis' novel.[39] The subtitle, «Τὰ σαραντάχρονα μιᾶς χαμένης πολιτείας», suggests that Politis thought of his book as a «μνημόσυνο» for Smyrna, just as one might write a memoir of a dead friend so as to preserve his memory.

The main action of *Στοῦ Χατζηφράγκου* is set in a Greek working-class district of Smyrna in 1901-2. Although the narrator is conscious that Smyrna is — as Cavafy would have put it — «παλαιόθεν Ἑλληνίς», he is more interested in the living human presence than in the traces of a glorious past. As one of the characters puts it, «Πατρίδα εἶναι τὸ χῶμα, ὁ τόπος, τὰ χωράφια κι οἱ θάλασσες καὶ τὰ βουνά. Πατρίδα εἶναι οἱ σημερινοὶ ἀνθρῶποι» (p. 148). In *Στοῦ Χατζηφράγκου* Politis displays a vivid and powerful sense of *place*. As for his «σημερινοὶ ἄνθρωποι», they belong almost entirely to the working class, and Politis's social critique is constantly manifest in the constrasts that he draws between his characters and the rich and powerful figures who live a shadowy existence in the background. But not all the characters are Greek: apart from the Turkish officials (among them a policeman who is himself a refugee from Greece), a significant role is played by the Jewish Simonas family. Their presence gives Politis the opportunity, sometimes explicitly and sometimes implicitly, to compare the fate of the Greeks with that of the Jews, another «chosen race» with an ancient history which has been condemned either to wander over the face of the earth, to avoid persecution or to undergo mass slaughter.

Στοῦ Χατζηφράγκου bears an epigraph, signed «Κ.Π.»: «Καταφέρανε νά 'χω στὴν πατρίδα μου τὸ αἴσθημα τοῦ ραγιᾶ». This expression of the sense of being a foreigner in his own country, of being colonized[40], which was no doubt shared by many of the refugees in Greece, is all the more poignantly ironic when we consider that, technically, Politis was not a *raya* (a non-Moslem subject of the Ottoman Empire) even when he was living in Smyrna;[41] yet he is implying that he feels even more alien in modern Athens — not only as a refugee but as a Leftist — than he ever did under Ottoman rule.

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39. Again with hindsight, we can see the fictional town of *Eroica* as possessing some features of Smyrna.

40. The contrast with Floros's characters is marked: Politis's characters — those who survive the Disaster — are the colonized, not the colonizers.

41. I am assuming that Politis held Greek citizenship while he lived in Smyrna.

In one of the frequent leaps forward from the time of the main action, the narrator tells of the death of one of the characters, a shoe-black, during the German Occupation in Petralona, where he had brought his shoe-cleaning equipment with him, «ἐδῶ στὴν ξενιτιά» (p. 114): Greece is a place of exile rather than a place of refuge. The refugee is dispossessed. Nowhere is this more clearly expressed than in the case of Yakoumis, who had been a market-gardener in Smyrna, where he cultivated his own plot of land, which he had inherited from his father. During the stampede to the harbour to escape the Turks in 1922, his wife had miscarried and died, and the blood of both wife and baby son had seeped into their native soil. Thus he has lost his property, his wife and his child, and forty years after he settled in Athens he is still a hired labourer employed to tend a rich industrialist's garden; his one ambition in his old age is to own his own tools (the means of production!). The alienation of the exile is fourfold: geographical, cultural, psychological and economic.

Στοῦ Χατζηφράγκου claims to be based on the narrations of others,[42] and it is probable that Politis drew many of his «memories» from various publications by other Smyrniots about their town. In fact, it is difficult to pinpoint a single narrative voice.[43] One could say that, just as Smyrna is the novel's collective protagonist, so its collective narrator too is Smyrna (or at least working-class Smyrna). One of the narrative voices talks of «ἡ μνήμη ποὺ ἱστορεῖ» (p. 237), implying that the narrator is memory itself. The constant leaps into the future from the time of the chief plot stress the temporal distance between the events narrated and the circumstances of the narration.

But such «prolepses» also stress the *spatial* distance that separates the author and reader from the events of the past. One of the other means by which this distance is connoted is the use of the so-called «λαϊκὸ ὕφος» with its abundant regionalisms in vocabulary and grammar. Whereas there is no trace of such usages in Politis's previous books, in *Στοῦ Χατζηφράγκου* he follows writers such as Kondoglou, Myrivilis and Prevelakis in attempting to create a style which combines standard written demotic with linguistic features appropriate to the oral usage of the local working-class characters.[44] Politis introduced so many local Smyrniot words into both the narrative and the dialogues of his novel that he felt obliged to append a glossary at the end, in addition to the footnotes in which he interprets phrases spoken by the Turkish characters. The use of regionalisms and Turkish phrases contributes to the effect of documentary authenticity at which Politis was aiming. Other factors contributing to this «reality effect» are of course the historical references (including the blood libel

42. See his note on p. 5 of *Στοῦ Χατζηφράγκου*.

43. See my introduction to *Στοῦ Χατζηφράγκου*, pp. 29*-32*.

44. By contrast, regionalisms are far less prominent in Theotokas' *Λεωνὴς* and Venezis' *Αἰολικὴ γῆ*.

against the Jews[45]). But most of all *Στοῦ Χατζηφράγκου* is full of details about customs and ways of life, following the tradition of «ἠθογραφία». One of the chief aims of such details as Yakoumis's extended description of kite-making and kite-flying (pp. 140-143) is to preserve for posterity the intricate details of a real custom, but it also has a symbolic purpose: the picture of the flying kites attached by their strings to the city below is described as if it were the city itself that is rising into the sky in an «ἀνάληψη»; Smyrna becomes transfigurated as a city of the soul.

To a large extent the inspiration of *Στοῦ Χατζηφράγκου* is spatial. Not only the novel's title, but many of the individual chapter headings refer to places. The text of the novel is scattered with a wealth of toponyms (many of them Turkish) which now strike us as exotic; but it is this very foreignness that connotes the unbridgeable spatial chasm separating the author's familiar *«πατρίδα»* from his alien «ξενιτιά». As I have pointed out elsewhere[46], the very articulations of the plot are sometimes dictated by spatial rather than logical or chronological factors: for instance, the narrator may leave off following the actions of one character and start describing those of a second who happens to be passing the same spot at the same time. I have also stressed the way that Politis frequently follows a character on a walk through the streets as he goes from one part of town to another. The character's route provides the author with an opportunity to describe the streets through which the character passes, with their various sights, sounds and smells. It is significant that on the return journey the character invariably follows a different route, so that Politis can evoke yet another aspect of the town's topography. The streets that the characters walk along are the equivalent of the pathways of Politis's memory, on which the plan of the whole city is etched in bold relief.

Yet all is not idyllic in the half-real, half-imagined Smyrna of 1901-2. The most violent of the leaps forward in time is the one contained in the (unnumbered) section entitled «Πάροδος» which is inserted between chapters 7 and 8, near the mid-point of the novel. Here the speaker is Yakoumis, who was one of the boys in the Hadzifrangou quarter in 1901-2. It is now 1962, and Yakoumis talks not only about his present circumstances and about his memories of sixty years before, but also about the fire of Smyrna in September 1922. Till then, the lives of the boys have been more or less carefree. The «Πάροδος» reminds the reader abruptly and violently of the *historical* tragedy that lies ahead. Yet after the «Πάροδος» things start to go bad in the plot of 1901-2, and the idyll

45. For details of this event based on oral narratives see Dimitris I. Archigenis, *Λαογραφικὰ Α΄: Οἱ νταῆδες τσῆ Σμύρνης*, Athens 1977, pp. 84-94. I am grateful to Eva Broman for referring me to this book, which I din not know about when I wrote my introduction to *Στοῦ Χατζηφράγκου*.

46. See my introduction to *Στοῦ Χατζηφράγκου*, pp. 51*-54*.

turns into tragedy as two of the boys among the chief characters meet a violent death caused ultimately by the problems of puberty. The wedge of alien time introduced into the hitherto idyllic memory-narrative contrives to overturn the smooth progress of fictional events, thus ensuring that from now on the fictional plot is inextricably bound to the inexorable onward march of *later* history: just as Smyrna is doomed to be destroyed in 1922, so two of the characters are doomed to a futile death in 1902, as though the same violent human urges are responsible for both. Perhaps the tragic death of the two boys, Aristos and Stavrakis, whose fatal quarrel is over something purely imaginary (namely, a mermaid), symbolizes the mutual slaughter of Greeks and Turks for the sake of the nationalist idea.

Exile, voluntary or involuntary, has been a powerful motive force in Greek fiction since the 1880s, when Vizyenos and Papadiamandis began recreating the lost homelands of their childhood from which their pursuit of education in various metropolises had succeeded in alienating them. The tension between their present unhappy situation and the world they remembered produced a nostalgia that in turn nurtured their desires and dreams. Yet the past that they recalled in their writings was not all idyllic; indeed, many of the childhood experiences they recount are positively traumatic.

The case of the Asia Minor writers is however different in kind, since, whereas Vizyenos and Papadiamandis could — and did — return to visit their native Thrace and Skiathos respectively, the refugees from Asia Minor had no homeland to return to. One can imagine how deep and painful the wound of 1922 was for Politis when one considers that it took him forty years to be able to face the challenge of dealing with it openly in a work of literature.