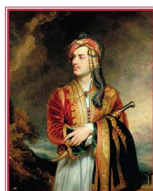


## The Historical Review/La Revue Historique

Vol 18, No 1 (2021)

Historical Review / La Revue Historique

The *H*istorical Review  
La Revue *H*istorique



VOLUME XVIII (2021)

Section de Recherches Néohelléniques  
Institut de Recherches Historiques / FNRS

Section of Neohellenic Research  
Institute of Historical Research / NHRF

### The Ambiguous Construction of a Modern Melancholic Self: Evanthia Kairi's Correspondence, 1814–1866

*Eleftheria Zei*

Copyright © 2022



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

#### To cite this article:

Zei, E. (2022). The Ambiguous Construction of a Modern Melancholic Self: Evanthia Kairi's Correspondence, 1814–1866. *The Historical Review/La Revue Historique*, 18(1), 67–92. Retrieved from <https://ejournals.epublishing.ekt.gr/index.php/historicalReview/article/view/31315>

THE AMBIGUOUS CONSTRUCTION OF A MODERN MELANCHOLIC  
SELF: EVANTHIA KAIRI'S CORRESPONDENCE, 1814–1866

*Eleftheria Zei*

---

*Abstract:* Evanthia Kairi was an author and literary woman who lived during the first half of the nineteenth century (1799–1868). She produced few literary works but left a rich correspondence covering the period from 1814 to 1866; most of her letters are addressed to her elder brother, the priest, philosopher and revolutionary Theophilos Kairis. Generally based on a nineteenth-century perception of melancholy as a romantic, dark, often pathological, condition, that related particularly to women, contemporary historiography considers her as an altogether idiosyncratic, solitary and melancholic intellectual. This article ventures to propose an anatomy of Kairi's melancholic discourse in the light of a modern "active sensibility", that is, as a procedure of construction and deconstruction of a modern *virtuous* self through different life narratives: her moral shaping and education in modern virtues, her strict and complex pattern of social and affective exchanges within the family and her language of solitariness.

---

Evanthia Kairi was an author and literary woman who lived during the first half of the nineteenth century (1799–1868). She did not publish many works: a theatrical play entitled *Νικήρατος*,<sup>1</sup> an ode to Metropolitan Dionysios of Ephesus,<sup>2</sup> two translations of eighteenth-century French works, the *Éloge de Marc Aurèle* by Antoine Léonard Thomas,<sup>3</sup> and the *Conseils à ma fille* by Jean-

---

<sup>1</sup> *Νικήρατος: Δράμα εις τρεις πράξεις υπό ελληνίδος τινός συντεθέν* (Nafplion: Typ. tis Dioikiseos, 1826). See also Walter Puchner, "Νικήρατος," in *Ανθολογία νεοελληνικής δραματουργίας*, vol. 2/1, *Από την Επανάσταση του 1821 ως τη Μικρασιατική Καταστροφή* (Athens: National Bank of Greece Cultural Foundation, 2006), 44–60; Dimitrios Spathis, "Παλαιά λογοτεχνικά κείμενα σε νέες εκδοτικές περιπέτειες," *Ο Ερασιστής* 25 (2005): 356–61; Evanthia Stivanaki, "Ο πατριωτικός 'Νικήρατος' της Ευανθίας Καΐρη," *Παράβασις* 3 (2000): 262–64; Maria Perlorentzou, "Το δράμα Νικήρατος και οι ιταλικές απηχήσεις του," in *Ευανθία Καΐρη: Διακόσια χρόνια από τη γέννησή της, 1799–1999* (Andros: Kaireios Library, 2000), 63–85.

<sup>2</sup> The poem concerns Dionysios' contribution to the Academy of Kydonies: Vassilis Panagiotopoulos, "Μια ωδή της Ευανθίας Καΐρη στον Εφέσσου Διονύσιο τον Καλλιάρχη," *Ο Ερασιστής* 1 (1963): 235–37.

<sup>3</sup> Eighteenth-century poet and literary critic, renowned for his rhetoric elogiums (1732–1785). The French text of the *Éloge* was included in Adamantios Korais' edition of *Μάρκου Αντωνίνου Αυτοκράτορος των εις Εαυτόν Βιβλία IB': Ων προτέθειται το υπό Θωμά του ρήτορος*

Nicolas Bouilly,<sup>4</sup> together with her famous two epistles, *To Women Philhellenes*<sup>5</sup> of Europe and America, constitute the whole of her literary production. A number of her early translations, as well as another theatrical play,<sup>6</sup> never reached publication, while she practically abandoned literary activity after the Greek Revolution. On the other hand, Kairi left a rich correspondence of 229 letters<sup>7</sup> covering the period from 1814 to 1866, most of which are addressed to her elder brother Theophilus Kairis.<sup>8</sup>

Having attracted the attention of Greek historical literature on women since the late nineteenth century, and later of Greek Enlightenment studies

---

*Γαλλιστί γεγραμμένον Εγκώμιον Μάρκου, φιλοτίμω δαπάνη των ομογενών Χίων* (Paris: Typ. I.M. Everatou, 1816), which Korais himself had sent to Theophilus Kairis in February 1817. Evanthia's translation saw the light of day in Syros two years after Korais' death, in 1835.

<sup>4</sup> J.N. Bouilly, *Conseils à ma fille* (Paris, 1811; London: Dulau, 1825), and Evanthia Kairi's translation: I.N. Βούλλος, *Συμβουλαί προς την θυγατέρα μου* (Kydonies: Typ. tis ton Kydonion Scholis, 1820).

<sup>5</sup> "Προς τας Φιλελληνίδας" and "Προς τα Φιλελληνίδας των Ομοσπόνδων επαρχιών της Αμερικής, και ευεργέτιδας της πασχούσης Ελλάδος," *Αλληλογραφία Θεόφιλου Καΐρη*, vol. 2, *Επιστολαί Ευανθίας Καΐρη 1814-1866*, ed. Dimitrios I. Polemis (Andros: Kaireios Library, 1997), 54–61 and 91–93. On their English translation, see Loukia Droulia, "Η πρώτη δημοσίευση και μετάφραση των στροφών 151–158 του Σολωμικού Ύμνου," *Ο Εραμιστής* 12 (1975): 5–6.

<sup>6</sup> Entitled *Ελλάς: Προσωποία* and probably written before 1839; Evanthia perhaps decided not to publish it because of its highly polemical tone: Dimitrios I. Polemis, "Άγνωστον έργον της Ευανθίας Καΐρη: Ή προσωποποία Ελλάς," *Πέταλον* 3 (1982): 69–80. The existence of another poem by Evanthia, suggested by Evgenios Kairis in one of his letters to her, has not been confirmed: Polemis, "Εκ του αρχείου του Θεοφίλου Καΐρη," *Ο Εραμιστής* 12 (1975): 222–24.

<sup>7</sup> Published by Polemis, *Αλληλογραφία*, vol. 2, and vol. 4, *Επιστολαί προς Ευανθίαν Καΐρη 1815–1866* (Andros: Kaireios Library, 1999).

<sup>8</sup> A philosopher of the "Greek Enlightenment", Kairis was known for his educational work in Kydonies and in Smyrna in the prerevolutionary period, his active participation in the 1821 Revolution, and later for the establishment of an orphanage in Andros (1835), in which he applied novel pedagogical methods. Kairis was particularly famous for his opposition to the Othonian government and the Greek Church, as he had introduced a religious doctrine called theosebism, largely influenced by French deism, for which he was persecuted, exiled and imprisoned, where he died. A short selection from the large bibliography on Theophilus Kairis includes: Dimitrios Paschalis, *Θεόφιλος Καΐρης* (Athens: Estia, 1928); Giannis Karas, ed., *Πανελλήνιο Συμπόσιο "Θεόφιλος Καΐρης"* (Athens: Gutenberg, 1988); Karas, *Θεόφιλος Καΐρης: Ο επιστήμονας, ο φιλόσοφος, ο αιρετικός, μια εξέχουσα μορφή των νεοελληνικών γραμμάτων* (Athens: Gutenberg, 2013); Panagiota Kazolea-Tavoulari, *Θεόφιλος Καΐρης: Από τη φιλοσοφική ψυχολογία στη θεοσεβική ηθική* (Athens: Typothito, 2005); Manolis Rassoulis, *Ο μεγάλος αιρετικός: Θεόφιλος Καΐρης* (Athens: Ianos, 2008); Vassileios Kyrkos,

and the history of women,<sup>9</sup> Kairi's literary oeuvre has been studied as a rare, gendered contribution to the Greek Enlightenment. Her correspondence, on the contrary, was either dismissed as a specimen of lower literary value,<sup>10</sup> or studied in an attempt to understand her personality, shadowed as it were by her close relationship with Theophilos, a subject which twentieth-century historical literature has particularly dwelt upon.<sup>11</sup>

In fact, an apparent discrepancy can be observed between Kairi's literary works and her private correspondence. Although in her theatrical plays and her epistles *To Women Philhellenes*, for instance, as well as in several of her letters,<sup>12</sup> she demonstrates her fervent support for women's education, the revolution and the nation, in her correspondence with Theophilos from 1823 Evanthia gradually distances herself from the revolutionary, social, and political events of her time, expressing a lack of public awareness and starting to question the main principles of her education, such as the duty to her homeland (*πατρίς*) and the freedom of the mind, while she manifests an excessive sensibility to small, everyday misfortunes. The discrepancy in the content is also reflected in the discrepancy of literary styles: the elaborate, archaic or enthusiastic language of her early letters is replaced by the exuberance of sorrowful terms in her writings to Theophilos, while after the revolution her letters become shorter, and, especially after her

---

ed., *Θεόφιλος Καΐρης: Αναψηλαφώντας τον βίο του και ξαναδιαβάζοντας το έργο του* (Andros: Etaireia Andrin Epistimonon, 2014). Theophilos Kairis' correspondence has been published by Dimitrios I. Polemis, *Αλληλογραφία Θεόφιλου Καΐρη*, 7 vols (Andros: Kaireios Library, 1997–2003).

<sup>9</sup> Evdokia Olympitou, *Μπουμπουλίνα, Καΐρη, Μαυρογένους: Οι γυναίκες του Αγώνα* (Athens: Ta Nea, 2019), where the writer includes all previous bibliography on Evanthia Kairi. See, in particular, Koula Xiradaki, *Ευανθία Καΐρη (1799–1866): Η πρώτη Ελληνίδα που κατέκτησε τη μόρφωση* (Athens: s.n., 1956); Sophia Denissi, "Η Ευανθία Καΐρη και το έργο της στο πλαίσιο της γυναικείας δημιουργίας της εποχής της," in *Ευανθία Καΐρη: Διακόσια χρόνια από τη γέννησή της*, 27–43; Eirini Rizaki, *Οι "Γράφουσες Ελληνίδες": Σημειώσεις για τη γυναικεία λογοσύνη του 19ου αιώνα* (Athens: Katarti, 2007), 134–44.

<sup>10</sup> Dimtrios I. Polemis, "Η αλληλογραφία του Θεόφιλου Καΐρη με την αδελφή του Ευανθία," *Ο Εραμιστής* 19 (1993): 275–96.

<sup>11</sup> Aikaterini Koumariou, "Το σύνδρομο της 'αδελφικής φιλίας': ένας σκόλιος δρόμος," in *Ευανθία Καΐρη: Διακόσια χρόνια από τη γέννησή της*, 97–104; Kyriakos Deloroulos, "'Υγίαινε, αγαπητέ και περιπόθητε αδελφέ...': απόπειρα προσωπογράφησης της Ευανθίας Καΐρη μέσα από τις επιστολές της," in *Ευανθία Καΐρη: Διακόσια χρόνια από τη γέννησή της*, 105–24.

<sup>12</sup> To Adamantios Korais, to Leontios Kampanis, even to her brother Evgenios, or in answer to an unknown female friend's letter, which probably concerned the rights of the inhabitants [refugees?] of Kydonies and Moschonissia: *Αλληλογραφία*, 2:88–89, December 1827.

brother's death, her narrative gradually acquires a more detached, matter-of-fact or formal style. Only in her letters to Spyridon Glafkopidis – a disciple of Theophilos who was convicted and imprisoned along with him – does she manifest some traces of melancholic discourse, strung together with her narrative of her disputes with the Greek government and the serious financial problems she faced after the revolution.

This switching between a “public” and “private” discourse has escaped contemporary historiography, which tends to classify her in the category of an altogether solitary, idiosyncratic intellectual.<sup>13</sup> One could, of course, argue that in her melancholic discourse Evanthia goes through the whole spectrum of cyclothymic symptoms embedded in modern pathological melancholia, ranging from restlessness, anxiety and fear, to sadness, inertia and lack of interest, a cluster of symptoms which until the early twentieth century defined successive attempts to be understood and encompassed in a variety of medicinal and psychological terms.<sup>14</sup> Her letters, nevertheless, contain no insinuation whatsoever of a medical history associated with her melancholic outbursts. Instead, she attributes her mood swings not only to her particular misfortunes, but also to the intellectual and social context in which she finds herself attached, and which causes her unhappiness.

Recently the question has been raised whether her melancholy could be integrated in a general pattern of nineteenth-century romantic reaction to post-revolutionary changes,<sup>15</sup> particularly affecting the women of the revolution, as it is also met in the writings of other contemporary women, such as Elissavet Moutzan-Martinengou, or Manto Mavrogenous, although they do not offer as rich a documentary material as Evanthia Kairi's correspondence.<sup>16</sup> Expanding

---

<sup>13</sup> Dimitrios Paschalis, *Εβανθία Καΐρη (1799–1866)* (Athens: Estia, 1929), 32–33. In one of his earlier publications concerning her correspondence with Theophilos, Dimitrios Polemis criticises her detachment as a typical specimen of female indifference to politics and of inconsequence towards her greater “national” debt as an intellectual. He described her as a self-centred woman unsuited to an intellectual career, obsessed by her elder brother, by whose philosophical work she was diminished, brooding over her celibacy and solitude: Polemis, “Η αλληλογραφία,” 275–96.

<sup>14</sup> Such as eighteenth-century *hypochondria* and *hysteria*, nineteenth-century *neurasthenia* and *depression*, or early twentieth-century *periodic psychoses* and *manic-depressive psychoses* (under the influence of psychoanalysis): Jennifer Raden, *Moody Minds Distempered: Essays on Melancholy and Depression* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 58–72.

<sup>15</sup> For a general perception of melancholy as a nineteenth-century romantic, dark reaction to modernity, see also Michael Löwy and Robert Sayre, *Εξέγερση και μελαγχολία: Ο Ρομαντισμός στους αντίποδες της νεωτερικότητας* (Athens: Enallaktikes, 1992).

<sup>16</sup> Olympitou, *Οι γυναίκες του Αγώνα*.

on this path and attempting to historicise Evanthia's melancholy, I propose to venture an anatomy of her melancholic discourse as an ambiguous procedure of construction of a modern intellectual self, through three different life narratives:<sup>17</sup> her female enlightened education as a scholar immersed in moral, civic and patriotic values, such as national duty; her social and emotional relations in a strict, gendered hierarchy of siblings; and, finally, through her narrative of solitariness.

### *Melancholy and the Modern Scholar*

The indirect contestation of Freud's famous essay on *Mourning and Melancholia*<sup>18</sup> by Benjamin's work *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* opened a historiographical debate on melancholy as a historical condition of loss.<sup>19</sup> Only quite recently has the Enlightenment been studied as a culture of a dynamic conception of melancholy, a state of mind endeavouring to cope with violent social and intellectual changes, not only by resigning and brooding in morbid thoughts and emotions but, also, even mainly by criticising and coming to grips with modern realities.<sup>20</sup> It was Denis

---

<sup>17</sup> On exploring private correspondence before and after Foucault's influence (as life narratives, as construction of the *self* and the *other*, as a relation between different systems of consciousness: words and reality, presence and absence, public and private), see Dimitra Vassiliadou, "Auto/Pathographies in situ: 'Dying of Melancholy' in Nineteenth-Century Greece," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Auto/Biography*, ed. Julie M. Parsons and Anne Chappell (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 210–13, with an extensive bibliography; Vassiliadou, "Επίμετρο. Επιστολογραφία: Μια άλλη αφήγηση του πραγματικού," *Στον τροπικό της γραφής: Οικογενειακοί δεσμοί και συναισθήματα στην αστική Ελλάδα 1850–1930* (Athens: Gutenberg, 2018), 211–61. On the contribution of female correspondence to the construction of an eighteenth-century female self, see, in particular, Dena D. Goodman, *Becoming a Woman in the Age of Letters* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009).

<sup>18</sup> Sigmund Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," *The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. James Strachy (1917; London: Hogarth, 1953–1974), 14:243–58.

<sup>19</sup> Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. John Osborne (1928; London: New Left Books, 1977). For baroque tragedy in particular, and the relation between loss, loyalty and the betrayal of the beloved object, see Ilit Ferber, "Melancholy Philosophy: Freud and Benjamin," *Erea* 4, no. 1 (2006): <https://doi.org/10.4000/erea.413>. On philosophical melancholy, see also Hagi Kanaan and Ilit Ferber, eds., *Philosophy's Moods: The Affective Grounds of Thinking* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2011), pt. 3, "Melancholy", 51–101, and pt. 4, "Anxiety, and 141–56.

<sup>20</sup> The first to point out the lack of cultural, social or political approaches of modern *melancholia* in contemporary historiography was G.S. Rousseau, "Psychology," in *The Ferment of Knowledge: Studies in the Historiography of Eighteenth-Century Science*, ed. G.S. Rousseau and Roy Porter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 205.

Diderot who distinguished active from inactive sensibility (*sensibilité active* and *sensibilité inerte*), the former inextricably connected with morality and *virtue*, and particularly expressed by the shedding of tears.<sup>21</sup> At the very heart of the Enlightenment scientific distinctions, the disease of *melancholia* is turned into a general culture of virtuous *sensibility*,<sup>22</sup> which seeks comfort or appeasement, often in religion,<sup>23</sup> rather than a bodily cure. Opposed to the inactiveness and isolation of the humanistic “melancholia of scholars”,<sup>24</sup> an early modern perception of

---

<sup>21</sup> But which often acquires an equally negative aspect with that of the inactive sensibility: Marco Menin, “Les larmes de Suzanne: La sensibilité entre moralité et pathologie dans *La Religieuse* de Diderot,” *Recherches sur Diderot et l’Encyclopédie* 51 (2016): 25–28. Besides, if one reads through the lines of Carl Becker, Diderot himself seems to offer the perfect example of the modern melancholic scholar: Carl Becker, “The Dilemma of Diderot,” *Philosophical Review* 24, no. 1 (1915): 54–71.

<sup>22</sup> On the eighteenth-century associations of *sensibility*, *sentiment* and the notion of *soul*, see John Mullan, “Hypochondria and Hysteria: Sensibility and the Physicians,” *Eighteenth Century* 25, no. 2 (1984): 141–74; Mullan, *Sentiment and Sociability: The Language of Feeling in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988); Roy Porter, “The Rage of Party: A Glorious Revolution in English Psychiatry?,” *Medical History* 27 (1983): 35–50. Still Rousseau holds the eighteenth-century conception of the “soul” responsible for nineteenth- and early twentieth-century dichotomies between body and mind: G.S. Rousseau, *The Languages of Psyche: Mind and Body in Enlightenment Thought* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991). See the elaboration of the historiographical concept in the context of the French *Histoire des sensibilités*, inaugurated by Lucien Febvre’s article “La sensibilité et l’histoire: Comment reconstituer la vie affective d’autrefois?,” *Annales d’histoire sociale* 3, no. 1–2 (1941): 5–20. Besides, the *Encyclopaedia* makes the distinction between melancholy as a sentiment, as a moral (theological) and as a medicinal concept, to which Diderot devotes the majority of pages: “Mélancholie,” *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, par une société de gens de lettres* (Neufchatel: Samuel Faulche, 1765), 307–11. See also Philippe Huneman, “Les théories de l’économie animale et l’émergence de la psychiatrie de l’Encyclopédie à l’aliénisme,” *Psychiatrie sciences humaines neurosciences (PSN)* 2 (2004): 47–60.

<sup>23</sup> Jeremy Schmidt, *Melancholy and the Care of the Soul: Religion, Moral Philosophy and Madness in Early Modern England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007).

<sup>24</sup> Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (Oxford: Henry Cripps, 1621), 4 vols. Here we refer to the edition of the Ex-Classics Project, 2009. On his social approach, see also Alexandra Rassidakis, *Περί μελαγχολίας* (Athens: Kichli, 2012), 129–54. What Burton calls “the misery of Scholars” (*Anatomy of Melancholy*), Marcilius Cagnatus (professor of medicine at the university of Rome, 1543–1612) classifies “melancholia” as one of the five most common maladies, almost inseparable from students: *De sanitate tuenda. [Liber Secundo]: De Arte Gymnastica* (Padua: Franciscum Bolzettam, 1605), 155–56. On the melancholy of the early modern intellectual, see also Nikos Karapidakis, “Κατάθλιψη και μελαγχολία: Τα Έρωτήματα και Αποκρίσεις Ξένου και Αλήθειας’ του Λεονάρδου Ντελλαπόρτα,” *Τα Ιστορικά* 47 (2007):

intellectuality,<sup>25</sup> late seventeenth and eighteenth-century English and French conceptualisations of *anxiety* (*inquiétude*) elaborated on socially active versions of melancholy, which would play the role of “universal incitements” in social systems, curbing great passions by legal or moral codes, such as those torn apart by religious oppositions, or oppressed by modern absolute monarchies: John Locke’s *desire* and *uneasiness*,<sup>26</sup> the *ennui*, so dreaded though by Condillac,<sup>27</sup> or the *impatience* of the English, which, according to Montesquieu, risks becoming the national *spleen*, “*la maladie anglaise*”, if not properly used,<sup>28</sup> all the above

---

275–315, who approaches Dellaporta’s poem both as a philosophical treatise upon melancholy and as a staging of a melancholic intellectuality.

<sup>25</sup> See also the debate on the ambiguous theme of the “melancholic genius”: scholars’ melancholy, if tempered, could produce an uncommon level of wit, wisdom and creativity, rising above mainstream *melancholia*: Michael A. Screech, *Montaigne and Melancholy: The Wisdom of the Essays* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000). It dates back to the famous pseudo-Aristotelian problem, which influenced medieval and early modern European philosophy and medicine: Aristotle, *Μελαγχολία και ιδιοφυΐα: Το 301ο πρόβλημα*, trans. Aloe Sideri (Athens: Agra, 2001). See also Noel L. Brann, *The Debate over the Origin of Genius During the Italian Renaissance: The Theories of Supernatural Frenzy and Natural Melancholy in Accord and Conflict on the Threshold of the Scientific Revolution* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), according to which it was Marcilio Ficino who reconciled the negative and positive aspects of the “melancholic intellectual” in early modern society. Winfried Schleiner, in his *Melancholy, Genius and Utopia in the Renaissance* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harassowitz, 1991), observes a gradual transition in early modern thought from the positive reception of the melancholic genius to its regarding as a disorder of a suffering imagination.

<sup>26</sup> John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding and a Treatise on the Conduct of the Understanding* (1690; Pittsburgh: C.H. Kay, 1847), 149–65.

<sup>27</sup> L’Abbé de Condillac, *Traité des sensations, à Madame la Comtesse de Vassé*, vol. 1 (1754; London: Barrois/Didot, 1788), 34–35. As Paul Hazard had already pointed out in the 1940s: *La Pensée Européenne au XVIIe siècle: de Montesquieu à Lessing* (Paris: Boivin, 1946), 362–63.

<sup>28</sup> Which Montesquieu attributes to the English climate as well as to the English economic and social system based on private interest: *L’esprit des lois*, book 19, chap. 27. See also Diego Vernazza, “Montesquieu et la problématique de l’inquiétude,” in *(Re)Lire l’Esprit des Lois: Études réunies*, ed. Catherine Volpilhac-Augier and Luigi Delia (Paris: Éditions de la Sorbonne, 2014), 33–45. It appears that a new melancholic vocabulary is introduced through a French eighteenth-century literature concerning England; on the eighteenth-century French terminology of English melancholy (*mélancolie*, *tristesse*, *ennui*), see also Jeffrey Hopes, “‘La Maladie anglaise’ in French Eighteenth-Century Writing: From Stereotype to Individuation,” *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 44, no. 2 (2011): 109–32. Cecil A. Moore has characterised the English eighteenth century as the “Age of Melancholy” because of the constantly recurrent theme of melancholy in its poetry and the statistics of suicide in the country: *Backgrounds of English Literature, 1700–1760* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1953), 179–238. On a distinct female current in eighteenth-century English literary melancholic trends: Sabine



intellectual and emotional trends being par excellence assimilated and promoted by the “modern scholar”, a theme which would only start to include women scholars.<sup>29</sup> Hence the association of modern melancholy with social or political upheavals, such as the French Revolution, explored by recent historiography;<sup>30</sup> or its connection with a modern civic gendered education, which I venture to approach here, in the case of young Evanthia’s intellectual and moral education.

### *Learning the “Duty to her Homeland”*

In 1808 Evanthia’s mother, Assimina Kampanaki (or Kampani), migrated for unknown reasons from the island of Andros to Kydonies (Ayvalik), on the eastern Aegean coast, with her two younger daughters, Evanthia and Sophia.<sup>31</sup> They would live with her mother’s brother Sophronios Kampanakis, who served as vicar there, and her brother Theophilos, at the time director and teacher of the Academy of Kydonies.

Before 1821, Kydonies had developed into an important commercial and educational centre, due to a flourishing Greek Orthodox urban milieu, which enjoyed special privileges from the Ottoman administration as well as quasi-independence from the ecclesiastical centres of the eastern coast.<sup>32</sup> Before the destruction of the city by the Ottomans in 1822, progressive educational and

---

Blackmore, “‘To Pictur’d Regions and Imagin’d Worlds’: Female Melancholic Writing and the Poems of Mary Leapor,” in *The Literature of Melancholia*, ed. Martin Middeke and Christina Wald (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 67–85.

<sup>29</sup> See also the exclusion of female genius and the adoption of male metaphors by groundbreaking early modern women literary writers: Anne Julia Zwierlein, “Male Pregnancies, Virgin Births, Monsters of the Mind: Early Modern Melancholia and (Cross-) Gendered Constructions of Creativity,” in Middeke and Wald, *Literature of Melancholia*, 35–49; Anne C. Vila, “‘Ambiguous Beings’: Marginality, Melancholy, and the *Femme Savante*,” in *Women, Gender and Enlightenment*, ed. Sarah Knott and Barbara Taylor (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 53–69.

<sup>30</sup> As for instance in eighteenth-century “drastic descriptions” of the French revolutionary events: Peter Fritzsche, “The Melancholy of History: The French Revolution and European Historiography,” in Middeke and Wald, *Literature of Melancholia*, 116–29.

<sup>31</sup> According to the only surviving letter by Evanthia from before 1814: Dimitrios I. Polemis, “Σημειώματα,” *Πέταλον* 3 (1982): 208–9.

<sup>32</sup> On the history of the city until its destruction, see the extended information given by M.C.D. Raffanel (attached to the French consulate in Smyrna and “eyewitness to the principal events”), *Histoire des événements de la Grèce depuis les premiers troubles jusqu’à ce jour* (Paris: Dondey-Dupré, 1822), 193–202. For an earlier bibliography: Georgios Sakkaris, *Ιστορία των Κυδωνιών*, 3rd ed. (Athens: Syllogos pros Diadosin Ofelimon Vivlion, 2005); Ioannis N. Karaplias, *Ιστορία των Κυδωνιών*, 2 vols. (Athens: Typ. Ger. S. Christou, 1949–1950). See

intellectual circles revolved around the Academy of Kydonies and important scholars of the Greek Enlightenment, such as Benjamin of Lesbos (1798–1812) and Theophilos Kairis (1812–1821), fervently supported by Adamantios Korais, but constantly hindered by the conservative ecclesiastical circles of Constantinople.<sup>33</sup>

Through Theophilos and his relations with the academy, 15-year-old Evanthia<sup>34</sup> entered the educated circles of the city. Although contemporary sources report that female social life and behaviour in Kydonies was limited,<sup>35</sup> it seems that Evanthia participated to a certain degree in social life as she befriended the Chatzianargyros family of city notables, in particular their daughters, and received the visits of the well-known publisher Ambroise Firmin-Didot,<sup>36</sup> a friend of Theophilos. She took courses in philosophy and mathematics, both subjects taught by her brother in the academy. Although recent bibliography has shown that sciences were less perceived as a male domain in the eighteenth and the early nineteenth century than nowadays,<sup>37</sup> Evanthia still represents a rare, uncommon female presence in a traditionally male world of knowledge.<sup>38</sup> Her education in languages<sup>39</sup> – ancient Greek, Italian and French – came in handy

---

also Ioanna Petropoulou, “Τύρω από την ιστοριογραφία των Κυδωνιών,” *Δελτίο Κέντρου Μικρασιατικών Σπουδών* 3 (1982): 231–41.

<sup>33</sup> Roxane D. Argyropoulos and Paschalis M. Kitromilides, “Ο Διαφωτισμός στον χώρο της Αιολίδας,” in *Μυτιλήνη και Αϊβαλί (Κυδωνίες): Μια αμφίδρομη σχέση στο βορειοανατολικό Αιγαίο*, ed. Paschalis M. Kitromilides and Panagiotis Michailaris (Athens: Institute for Neohellenic Research of the National Hellenic Research Foundation, 2007), 61–68.

<sup>34</sup> She herself gives her age in her letter to Korais: *Αλληλογραφία*, 2:15, Andros, 2 August 1814.

<sup>35</sup> Where women were reported to leave the house only once a year: Ambroise Firmin Didot, *Notes d'un voyage fait dans le Levant en 1816 et 1817* (Paris: Didot, [1826]), 376.

<sup>36</sup> Who stands in awe of young Evanthia's exceptional education: *Ibid.*, 375.

<sup>37</sup> Gila C. Leder, “Gender and Mathematics Education: An Overview,” in *Compendium for Early Career Researchers in Mathematics Education*, ed. Norma Presmeg and Gabriele Kaiser (Cham: Springer, 2019), 289–90.

<sup>38</sup> Paschalis M. Kitromilides, “The Enlightenment and Womanhood: Cultural Change and the Politics of Exclusion,” *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 1 (1983): 39–41. For the influence of Enlightenment educational theories concerning the Greek state's attitude towards female education during the postrevolutionary period, see also Eleni Fournaraki, *Εκπαίδευση και αγωγή των κοριτσιών: Ελληνικοί προβληματισμοί (1830–1910): Ένα ανθολόγιο* (Athens: Historical Archive of Greek Youth, 1987), 13–17.

<sup>39</sup> Sophia Denissi also attributes her education in languages and literature to an end-of-century Phanariot culture in Kydonies, which encouraged public appearance of women: “The Greek Enlightenment and the Changing of the Cultural Status of Women,” *Comparaison* 12 (2001): 43.

for her translation exercises: it was through translation, the particular vehicle of European Enlightenment ideas in the Ottoman Empire,<sup>40</sup> that her elderly mentor, Korais, wished to shape her into a modern scholar of the Enlightenment, capable of passing her knowledge on to other women, independent of their social status, and to promote female education in the Greek “nation”.<sup>41</sup>

In order to fulfil this elevated task, Evanthia should acquire the “art of living” (*τέχνη του βίου*), that is, the virtues of *modesty* and *decency*, by reading classic philosophy (Socrates and Plutarch), and the French and English moral literature of her time.<sup>42</sup> She therefore launched into the translation of Madame Guizot’s *Contes*,<sup>43</sup> but her elderly mentor soon changed his mind, fearing that Guizot’s work might be difficult for the young scholar, unfamiliar with French customs, to understand.<sup>44</sup> Korais proposed instead the *A Father’s Legacy to his Daughters* by John Gregory (1774)<sup>45</sup> and the *De l’éducation des filles* by L’abbé de Fénelon (1681).<sup>46</sup> Her first

---

<sup>40</sup> Alexandra Sfoini, *Ξένοι συγγραφείς μεταφρασμένοι ελληνικά 1700–1832: Ιστορική προσέγγιση του ελληνικού μεταφραστικού φαινομένου* (Athens: Institute of Historical Research of the National Hellenic Research Foundation, 2019); Anna Tabaki, “Νεοελληνικός Διαφωτισμός: Η διαμεσολάβηση του μεταφραστικού εγχειρήματος,” in *Στέφανος: Αφιέρωμα στον Βάλτερ Πούχνερ*, ed. Iossif Vivilakis (Athens: Ergo, 2007), 1227–39.

<sup>41</sup> Anna Tabaki, “Η οπτική του Κοραή για τη λογοτεχνία και το θέατρο,” *Παράβασις* 2 (1998): 94 [the same article is also in Tabaki, *Περί Νεοελληνικού Διαφωτισμού: Ρεύματα ιδεών και διάυλοι επικοινωνίας με τη δυτική σκέψη* (Athens: Ergo, 2004), 183–211]. See also Dimitrios I. Polemis, ed., *Αλληλογραφία Θεόφιλου Καΐρη*, vol. 1, *Επιστολαί Θεόφιλου Καΐρη 1814–1839* (Andros: Kaireios Library, 1994), 15–20: Korais’ letters to Evanthia and Theophilos of 16/28 January 1815 and 7/10 June 1819.

<sup>42</sup> Denissi, “Greek Enlightenment,” 44.

<sup>43</sup> Pauline de Meulan, married to François Guizot, historian and politician. The full title was: *Les enfants: contes à l’usage de la jeunesse* (ca. 1820); she has published several *Contes* during the nineteenth century. See also Robin Bates, “Madame Guizot and Monsieur Guizot: Domestic Pedagogy and the Post-Revolutionary Order in France, 1807–1830,” *Modern Intellectual History* 8, no. 1 (2011): 31–59.

<sup>44</sup> Adamantios Korais, *Αλληλογραφία*, vol. 3, *1810–1816* (Athens: Omilos Meletis Neollinikou Diaforismou, 1979), 372–73: letter to Theophilos Kairis, 28 January 1815.

<sup>45</sup> Eighteenth-century Scottish physician and moralist (1724–1773); see also Mary Catherine Moran, “Between the Savage and the Civil: Dr John Gregory’s Natural History of Femininity,” in Knott and Taylor, *Women, Gender and Enlightenment*, 8–29. Related to the development of a European upper-class bourgeoisie, an important part of this moral literature concerned women’s education, a theme also treated in women literary authors of the period: Jessica R. Evans, “Female Roles and Moral Education in Maria Edgeworth’s Works” (PhD diss., Middle Tennessee State University, 2013).

<sup>46</sup> A late seventeenth-century French theologian, royal tutor and early reformer of political ideas (1651–1715). Adamantios Korais, *Αλληλογραφία*, 3:273, 376–80. Theophilos

published translation is that of the *Éloge de Marc-Aurèle* by Antoine Léonard Thomas, proposed again by Korais. *Marc-Aurèle* would be followed by the translation of Jean-Nicolas Bouilly's *Conseils à ma fille*; according to Evanthia, it was Korais again who had sent the *Conseils* to her along with other French works; she had read the book in 1819 and decided to translate it "for her own benefit".<sup>47</sup>

One of the common threads in the three oeuvres of Fenelon, Gregory and Bouilly that was important for the scholarly shaping of young Evanthia is the education of young girls in the duty to their country. Eighteenth-century middle and upper *bourgeois* ethics<sup>48</sup> had introduced a novel kind of gendered virtue, that of civic *duty* and *consequence*, which women owed as much to their countries as to their families.<sup>49</sup> Fenelon, in the late seventeenth century, advises a formal organised "instruction of women in their duties", not only to become appropriate mothers and household mistresses, but also

---

advised her against the publication of her translation, because he feared conservative reactions.

<sup>47</sup> See her introduction to Bouilly, *Συμβουλαί προς την θυγατέρα μου*, η' [viii].

<sup>48</sup> On the moral aspect of education in women of the inferior classes, see Deborah Simonton, "The Education and Training of Eighteenth-Century English Girls, with Special References to Working Classes" (PhD diss., University of Southern Denmark, 1988). Nineteenth-century "popular education" of women opened the debate between class and gender in education: see, for instance, the articles by Keith Flett (Sex or Class: The Education of Working-Class Women, 1800–1870"), June Purvis ("We Can No Longer Pretend that Sex Stratification Does Not Exist, Nor That It Exists But Is Unimportant" (M. Eichler)) and Meg Gomersall ("Woman's Work and Education in Lancashire, 1800–1870: A Response to Keith Flett") in *History of Education* 18, no. 2 (1989).

<sup>49</sup> See Andreas Hellerstedt's introduction, in Hellerstedt, ed., *Virtue Ethics and Education from Late Antiquity to the Eighteenth Century* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018), 19–27. Ethics which were primarily introduced by male thinkers: Sylvana Tomaselli, "Civilization, Patriotism and Enlightened Histories of Woman?," in Knott and Taylor, *Women, Gender and Enlightenment*, 117–35. According to Caroline Franklin, the rise of nationalism in France and Britain after the war in 1793 reversed attitudes towards women's patriotism in both countries: the Jacobin administration in France and Pitt's Tory government in England underlined the masculinisation of patriotism and political virtues: Franklin, "Romantic Patriotism as Feminist Critique of Empire: Helen Maria Williams, Sydney Owenson and Germaine de Staël," in Knott and Taylor, *Women, Gender and Enlightenment*, 551–64. Early nineteenth-century Greek moral education presented two main trends, one religiously biased, recommending a strict canonisation of women's moral behaviour, and the other, often translated from its European correspondents, introducing practical rules of "social behaviour" (*χρηστοθήθειες*): Anna Matthaiou, *Οικογένεια και σεξουαλικότητα μεταξύ παράδοσης και νεωτερικότητας: Ελληνικές μαρτυρίες 17ος–19ος αιώνας* (Athens: Melissa, 2019), 152–90.

to contribute to the “strength and the felicity of their country” through the – moderate – satisfaction of their intellectual quests.<sup>50</sup> Addressing his daughter Flavie, Bouilly revives the classical ideal of female patriotism as an extension of patriarchal devotion, in the person of medieval Télésile, who stands up against Charles the Bold to protect her country and her father;<sup>51</sup> while Gregory insinuates the existence of a “patriotic duty”, urging women to be married “for the good of the public”, which nevertheless he is not patriotic enough to wish for his own daughters.<sup>52</sup> This new recommended array of female civic duties reproduced the male civic duties praised in Thomas’ *Éloge* on Emperor Marcus Aurelius (AD 121–180): the study of “male philosophy”, which fought against human degradation by tyranny, the virtues of bravery and sageness in war, of frugality in life, of truth and faithfulness in friendship, of firmness and justice in mind.<sup>53</sup>

Thus, under the awed shadow of Korais, and not without the consent of Theophilos, 15-year-old Evanthia was systematically trained in the principles and rhetoric of a modern *duty to the “homeland”*, as reflected for instance in her epistles *To Women Philhellenes*, or in her introduction to *Νικήρατος*,<sup>54</sup> entitled “Προς τας Ελληνίδας”. Although she followed contemporary patterns of female education, as we will also see below, she is supposed to assume the duties of a male Enlightenment scholar: a merged gender intellectual and moral shaping, clearly invested in the main characters of her play, Nikiratos himself and his daughter Cleonike,<sup>55</sup> which could account for a gender-indistinct, certainly

<sup>50</sup> François de Fénelon, *De l’éducation des filles* (Paris: P. Aubouin 1687), chap. 11.

<sup>51</sup> John Gregory, *A Father’s Legacy to his Daughters* (Dublin: Thomas Ewing & Caleb Jenkin, 1774), 62–63.

<sup>52</sup> Bouilly, *Conseils à ma fille*, 176–87.

<sup>53</sup> Antoine Léonard Thomas, *Essai sur les éloges, suivi par l’Éloge de Marc-Aurèle* (Toulouse: Vieusseux, 1819), 2:233–39. Besides, Marcus Aurelius’ *Meditations* is the treatise par excellence on the duties of the ideal man of government which has strongly influenced modern European philosophical thought.

<sup>54</sup> Where she refers to her “great debt” towards the nation that urged her hand to write this play: *Νικήρατος*, 9.

<sup>55</sup> Probably modelled on Evanthia’s early readings, that is on the personality of Télésile in de Bouilly’s *Conseils* and in her own translation: *Συμβουλαί προς την θυγατέρα μου: Θυγατρὸς ηρωισμὸς*, 121–36; or on Marcus Aurelius himself. Besides, Theophilos himself should serve her as the perfect model of the philosopher who fights for his country: Theophilos Kairis, *Το ημερολόγιο του Ολύμπου*, ed. Dimitris Kyrtatas (Athens: Gutenberg, 2021). Evanthia Stivanaki underlines the autobiographical aspects of *Νικήρατος*: “Ο πατριωτικός ‘Νικήρατος’ της Ευανθίας Καίρη,” 262–64; Dimitrios Spathis, on the other hand, sustains that the play is more important for its novel romantic dramatisation of historical events in Messolonghi,

bodiless discourse of melancholy in her private correspondence, as opposed to her language of female patriotism in her public epistles.<sup>56</sup>

### *A Melancholy that Questions Everything*

In 1820 Evanthia's mother died of illness. In 1821 the revolution broke out in Kydonies, which was soon destroyed by the Ottoman forces. Evanthia, her uncle Sophronios and her godmother Anneza Smyrnaïou, whom she had invited over from Andros in 1819<sup>57</sup> – her youngest sister Sophia must have died before 1821 – sought refuge on the island of Psara, and from there went to Andros, where she remained until the summer of 1824. Then she followed the family of her younger brother Dimitrios (Dimitrakis) to Syros, where she settled for the next 15 years.<sup>58</sup> In the summer of 1839 she returned once again to Andros, where she would live for the rest of her life, refusing to travel because of her deep fear of the sea.<sup>59</sup>

In her letters to Theophilos during the early years of her stay in Andros (1821–1824), she adopts the patriotic enthusiastic discourse of her literary works. In 1822 she rejoices that her brother is fulfilling “the debt to the common homeland (*πατρίδα*)”, which he himself has taught her, along with the duty to sacrifice one's life for its freedom,<sup>60</sup> and in 1823 she is happy to hear that “the affairs of the nation (*γένος*)” have started to look up.<sup>61</sup> Since 1823, though, her language of duty gradually gives way to a discourse of frustration and protest against this “debt” which takes her brother away from her and stalls his letters.

---

as well as its bold political criticism, than its autobiographical references: Spathis, “Παλαιά λογοτεχνικά κείμενα,” 356–61.

<sup>56</sup> And which distinguishes Evanthia's public patriotism from the end-of-century female nationalist narratives, such as Kalliroe Parren's, investing in class distinctions and in a female, motherly morality, superior to that of men: Efi Avdela and Angelika Psarra, “Engendering ‘Greekness’: Women's Emancipation and Irredentist Politics in Nineteenth-Century Greece,” *Mediterranean Historical Review* 20, no. 1 (2005): 67–79.

<sup>57</sup> *Αλληλογραφία*, 2:17–18, Kydonies, 20 April 1819.

<sup>58</sup> The island of Syros served as a current destination of refugees and merchants from the Aegean: Angeliki Fenerli, “Νέα στοιχεία για την πρώτη εγκατάσταση των προσφύγων στην Ερμούπολη,” in *Σύρος και Ερμούπολη: Συμβολές στην ιστορία του νησιού 15ος–20ός αι.*, ed. Christina Agriantoni and Dimitris Dimitropoulos (Athens: Institute for Neohellenic Research of the National Hellenic Research Foundation, 2008), 77–86, and Christos Loukos, “Μερικές επισημάνσεις για τους κατοίκους της Ερμούπολης τον 19ο αιώνα: γεωγραφική προέλευση, εγκατάσταση στο χώρο, επαγγέλματα, κοινωνικές σχέσεις,” in Agriantoni and Dimitropoulos, *Σύρος και Ερμούπολη*, 105–25.

<sup>59</sup> *Αλληλογραφία*, 2:287, Andros, 8 June 1865.

<sup>60</sup> *Αλληλογραφία*, 2:18–19, Andros, July 1822.

<sup>61</sup> *Αλληλογραφία*, 2:25–26, Andros, 15 May 1823.

“Taught to tell the truth,” she confesses that the view of the Ottoman fleet in the Aegean causes her less sorrow than the thought that she might not see him again;<sup>62</sup> she “sheds burning tears” because she has spent a whole year away from him, without seeing him and without his guidance, until her melancholic outburst, in which she relegates patriotic duty to the freedom of the mind:

You will tell me again, dear brother, that for the sake of the country’s freedom we should suffer a great deal. Yes, I think that I can suffer the greatest misfortunes one can imagine for my country’s love, but when the thought enters my mind that I cannot enjoy the real freedom of the mind, indispensable to the freedom of the body, because he who taught me this freedom is away, then my grief becomes immense.<sup>63</sup>

Until 1824 her classical education served her more as a pretext to hide from historical reality than to participate in it. In 1823 she wrote to Theophilos: “I have long started to read the *Peloponnesian War* [by Thucydides] in order to forget the current one,” and she loses herself in reverie of the classical landscape of Attica, the Persian Wars and the prison of Socrates, which her brother describes to her after his visit.<sup>64</sup> Events such as the enemy Ottoman fleet’s presence in the Aegean or even the destruction of the island of Chios attract her attention only because her brother asks her to report on them. “I wonder, my brother, why you ask me to keep a diary of whatever unusual events would happen in this place, for I have lived here for more than two years now and I have seen or heard nothing which merits inquiring about,” she wrote to Theophilos from Andros on 26 June 1823.<sup>65</sup> And yet a series of severe tax riots had broken out on the island during the summer of 1822, dividing the local society and pitching the local against the revolutionary authorities,<sup>66</sup> to which she devotes no more than a short laconic reference, in relation again to Theophilos.<sup>67</sup> Later, she would appear equally unaware of the rivalries between the inhabitants of Syros and the refugees from the eastern Mediterranean coast (Smyrna, Kydonies) and the Aegean, established

<sup>62</sup> *Αλληλογραφία*, 2:27, Andros, 2 June 1823.

<sup>63</sup> *Αλληλογραφία*, 2:32, Andros, 19 September 1823.

<sup>64</sup> *Αλληλογραφία*, 2:28–30 and 30–32, Andros, 26 June and 19 September 1823.

<sup>65</sup> *Αλληλογραφία*, 2:29, Andros, 26 June 1823.

<sup>66</sup> Dimitris Dimitropoulos, *Τρεις Φιλικοί, έπαρχοι στην Άνδρο: Από το επαναστατικό σχέδιο στην κρατική διοίκηση (1822–1825)* (Athens: Institute of Historical Research of the National Hellenic Research Foundation, 2020), 61–102.

<sup>67</sup> She fears that his [re-]election as representative of Andros in the National Assembly will bring trouble, because of the dissensions (*διχοστασίαι*) in the island: *Αλληλογραφία*, 2:33–35, 2 May 1824; On the re-election of Theophilos: *Αλληλογραφία*, 1: 88–89; Dimitropoulos, *Τρεις Φιλικοί*, 103.

on the littoral zone of the island, where the new port-city of Ermoupoli was to be created; and yet she had lived among them for 15 years. Besides, she constantly flees reality by returning to the delights of the nature and rural life.

During her stay in Syros with Dimitrios' family, Evanthia would finally give way to a permanent discourse of gloom: "in Andros my sorrow was great, here it is lethal".<sup>68</sup> The terms *despondency* (*αθυμία*), *sorrow* (or grief, *θλίψις*) and *sadness* (*λύπη*) are to be found practically in every letter along with a tearful<sup>69</sup> and sighful vocabulary, while the language of *patriotic duty* has been almost abandoned entirely. The main reasons she gives for her grief is the absence, the damaged health, and the political misfortunes of her brother. She constantly regrets his physical absence, imposed on her by his duties to the revolution and the political reality of their time; but she regrets even more what she takes as long silences to her letters, which she certainly attributes to the difficulties of correspondence during the revolution and to her brother's heavy schedule of activities, but which are beginning to feel like betrayals:

Through Giannakis' letters to Dimitrios I hear that you are keeping well in your health; from those who arrive here, that you have started teaching; but from my dear brother not a single letter about his wished-for health, not an answer to my own letter; for which my sorrow has no end, and I worry about him. If ever, loved brother, I thought that I received no letters from you because you had no time to write, I cannot do so anymore, no matter how much I try.<sup>70</sup>

In fact, their correspondence, scarce during the revolution, intensifies from 1835 only to become rare again after 1840, during Theophilos' travels in Europe (in France and England); it finally ends in 1844, when Theophilos also establishes himself in Andros.<sup>71</sup>

In Syros Evanthia gives free vent to a deep growing general discomfort: against her intellectual shaping (perhaps also against the brother that had shaped her), which tied her down to an austere, virtuous and dutiful self through the most sublime bond, the "debt to freedom and the nation"; against her own overwrought sensibility: addressing Theophilos in 1836, she regrets

---

<sup>68</sup> *Αλληλογραφία*, 2:37, Syros, 13 October 1824.

<sup>69</sup> On the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century "discours larmoyant" and its communicative functions: Anne Vincent-Buffault, *Histoire des larmes: XVIIIe-XIXe siècles* (Marseille: Rivages, 1986), where the writer describes the transition from the tearful discourse for a generalised virtue, indispensable to moral education, to crying over individual fates. See also Tom Lutz, *Crying: The Natural and Cultural History of Tears* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999).

<sup>70</sup> *Αλληλογραφία*, 2:186, Syros, 15 March 1838.

<sup>71</sup> Polemis, "Η αλληλογραφία," 280–87.



that she will never reach the level of happiness of those who, like her brother, do not feel sorrow at inadvertent human misfortunes, and are not “dominated by passions”;<sup>72</sup> for she herself “frets and feels sad at the slightest mishap”.<sup>73</sup> Finally, in an enigmatic passage of a letter addressed to the wife of her printer Konstantinos Tombras,<sup>74</sup> she lashes out against “society” which constantly causes her unhappiness, despite the sacrifices of freedom and the many sacred duties she suffers for its sake.<sup>75</sup> What is this “society” she revolts against?

### *A Local Declining Aristocracy: Depressive Celibacies and Overwhelming Patriarchies*

Evanthia was born into the Kairis family through her father and into the Kampanis house through her mother. Both her parents belonged to the ancient aristocracy of Andros, which suffered the economic and social repercussions of the revolutionary and postrevolutionary period. While Dimitrios’ commercial enterprises<sup>76</sup> seem to have flourished during the revolution, the postrevolutionary period brought about the deterioration of his economic situation and the severe financial problems with which his family was confronted, along with Evanthia: a common fate for small merchant enterprises, which could not survive recurrent crises in the Aegean and could not compete with the strategies of larger commercial companies established in Ermoupoli in the 1830s.<sup>77</sup> Economic deterioration provoked a collective melancholic ambiance in the island, which

---

<sup>72</sup> One of the prevalent modern ideas about women’s education is that it should be controlled by reason, emotions being dangerous to their individual and family happiness, an idea shared by both male and female authors of eighteenth-century literature: Michèle Cohen, “Gender and ‘Method’ in Eighteenth-Century English Education,” *History of Education* 33, no. 5 (2004): 585–95.

<sup>73</sup> *Αλληλογραφία*, 2:116, Syros, 31 January 1836.

<sup>74</sup> On Tombras, see Philippos I. Iliou, *Από την αλληλογραφία του Κοραή, ανέκδοτα και ξεχασμένα γράμματα* (Athens: s.n., 1953), 122.

<sup>75</sup> *Αλληλογραφία*, 2:97–98, ca. 1834.

<sup>76</sup> Evanthia’s father, Nikolaos Tommazos Kairis, ran a commercial enterprise, which was passed down to her younger brother Dimitrios: Dimitrios Polemis, “Καίρικά οικογενειακά έγγραφα,” *Πέταλον* 4 (1984): 6.

<sup>77</sup> Particular the Chiote companies: Gelina Harlaftis, *Ιστορία της ελληνόκτητης ναυτιλίας, 19ος–20ός αιώνας* (Athens: Nefeli, 2001), 152. Besides, the gradual deterioration of transit commerce and of the international role of Ermoupoli in the second half of the nineteenth century led local entrepreneurs to invest in industry and the local market: Christina Agriantoni, “Προσαρμογές του επιχειρηματικού κόσμου της Ερμούπολης στο δεύτερο μισό του 19ου αιώνα,” in Agriantoni and Dimitropoulos, *Σύρος και Ερμούπολη*, 143–53.

influenced Evanthia: “The only news to be heard now in Syros are the failures of companies, companies of friends, of acquaintances, of strangers,” Evanthia wrote in 1837, seeking her brother’s comfort.<sup>78</sup>

These insular aristocracies, which had replaced the ancient Latin aristocracy in their feudal estates from the seventeenth century,<sup>79</sup> generally preserved the ancient system of primogeniture. Firstborns, both male and female, had priority in the distribution of patrimonial property, while younger children were often left with little or no property at all. Consequently, younger daughters could remain unmarried because they had no dowry, obliged to attach themselves to the firstborn’s household as guests or auxiliaries, while younger sons were forced to migrate and make their fortune elsewhere.<sup>80</sup> Presumably intended to compensate for the division and deterioration of properties by maintaining ancient social privileges,<sup>81</sup> these forced-celibacy systems had important demographic, economic and social implications. On the other hand, they constructed particular patriarchal relations, especially among siblings,<sup>82</sup> and

---

<sup>78</sup> *Αλληλογραφία*, 2:166, Syros, 8 July 1837.

<sup>79</sup> Elias Kolovos, *Όπου ήν κήπος. Η μεσογειακή νησιωτική οικονομία της Άνδρου σύμφωνα με το οθωμανικό κτηματολόγιο* (Heraklion: Crete University Press, 2017), 46–47; see also Paschalis, *Εβανθία Κάϊρη*, 6.

<sup>80</sup> European historiography, on the other hand, has shown that as intellectual careers were often forced on the younger male members of early modern feudal aristocracy, this compulsory *scholarship* often generated feelings of bitterness and frustration, which added to the general modern stereotype of the melancholic intellectual: Marie-Christine Vinet, “De l’économie de la mélancolie du scholar: Figures du pharmakon chez Robert Burton” (MA diss., University of Montreal, 2017), 64–65. It is interesting to note here that male celibacy in the Kairis and the Kampanis branches, on the contrary, seemed to observe birth order, since it was the corollary of ecclesiastical and intellectual careers of their male firstborn members.

<sup>81</sup> Based largely on dowry arrangements and marital strategies, these politics of inheritance favoured female over male primogeniture rights, thus developing a prestigious milieu of well-to-do testators and heiresses in the Aegean, who preserved the memory of their ancient, “feudal” distinction even when they had lost their real economic and social power after the revolution: Eleftheria Zéi, “Dotations des filles, dotations des fils et transformations sociales dans l’Archipel grec au XVIIIe siècle: premières hypothèses,” *Annales de Démographie Historique* (forthcoming).

<sup>82</sup> Bernard Vernier, *Η κοινωνική γένεση των αισθημάτων: Πρωτότοκοι και υστερότοκοι στην Κάρπαθο*, trans. Evgenia Tselenti, ed. Evthymios Papataxiarchis (Athens: Alexandria, 2001), 157–217. Originally published as *La genèse sociale des sentiments: Aînés et cadets dans l’île grecque de Karpathos* (Paris: EHESS, 1991). Although the system of primogeniture seems to have been abandoned on Andros by the early nineteenth century, relevant practices did not cease to exist, as for instance in the village of Ammolochos, in the northern part of the island, according to the inquiry conducted in 1833 by the Greek Ministry of Justice: Georg Ludwig von Maurer, *Das*

are supposed to have developed melancholic gendered subjects,<sup>83</sup> a context in which Evanthia's celibacy ought to be considered.

The social circumstances of Evanthia's celibacy are obscure. Was it a forced celibacy, because she was deprived of a dowry, being the youngest child of the Kairis family?<sup>84</sup> Polemis refers to the possibility of a broken promise of marriage, based on a letter from Theophilos to Evanthia in 1835.<sup>85</sup> On the other hand, a nineteenth-century literary tradition represented her as a handsome gifted woman who turned down numerous, socially important offers of marriage.<sup>86</sup>

Primogeniture and forced-celibacy practices bring out relations between siblings. The study of siblings has very recently acquired an autonomous importance in the history of modern middle- and upper-class families, reflected in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literature,<sup>87</sup> and particularly for the history of what Leonore Davidoff calls the "long families" of the late eighteenth century,<sup>88</sup> as was the case of the Kairis and Kampanis houses, which branched

---

*griechische Volk in öffentlicher, kirchlicher und privat-rechtlicher Beziehung vor und nach dem Freiheitskampfe bis zum 31 Juli 1831* (Heidelberg: Mohr, 1835), here from the Greek edition: *Ο ελληνικός λαός: Δημόσιο, ιδιωτικό και εκκλησιαστικό δίκαιο από την έναρξη του αγώνα για την ανεξαρτησία ως την 31η Ιουλίου 1834*, ed. Tasos Vournas (Athens: Tolidis, 1976), 109–10, 150; Dimitrios Paschalis, *Νομικά έθιμα της νήσου Άνδρου, ήτοι τοπικά εν Άνδρω συνήθειαι περί του οικογενειακού και του κληρονομικού δικαίου, εμπορικών συμβάσεων, αγροτικών εκμισθώσεων κλπ.*, (Andros: s.n., 1925), 154–57. On the other hand, the revolution has generally upset patterns of marriage and celibacy in the islands: Matthaïou, *Οικογένεια και σεξουαλικότητα*, 226–27.

<sup>83</sup> Different feudal norms of forced virginity, religious or secular, and marriage regulations, are considered to have particularly afflicted early modern youth with melancholy, have been related to the development of European urban societies: Burton, *Anatomy of Melancholy*, I 3: 4, 342–43. See also the religious melancholy ("mélancolie religieuse"), introduced by Diderot one century later, which would menace young female religious devotees: Menin, "Les larmes de Suzanne," 29.

<sup>84</sup> She appears to be belatedly provided in Theophilos' testament, in which he leaves her his part of the patrimonial fortune after his death; his testament is currently on display in the Kaireios Library, in Andros.

<sup>85</sup> *Αλληλογραφία*, 4: letter n. 53.

<sup>86</sup> Dimitrios S. Balanos, "Εβανθία Καΐρη (1799–1866)," *Ημερολόγιον της Μεγάλης Ελλάδος*, vol. 6 (Athens: I.N. Sideris, 1927), 373 (based on Dora d'Istria's portrait of Evanthia: Dora d'Istria, *Les femmes en Orient*, vol. 1, *La péninsule orientale* (Zurich: Meyer & Zeller, 1859), 371–73).

<sup>87</sup> Valerie Sanders introduces the term of nineteenth-century "sibling culture": *The Brother–Sister Culture in Nineteenth-Century Literature: From Austen to Wolf* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002).

<sup>88</sup> Leonore Davidoff, *Thicker than Water: Siblings and their Relations, 1780–1920* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

out in several islands of the Greek archipelago.<sup>89</sup> These dispersed families, which constituted large, complex and all-encompassing webs of kinship,<sup>90</sup> also functioned as economic, social and cultural networks which were often held together by “close marriages”, sibling intimacy or incest.<sup>91</sup> Such networks often kept siblings unknown to each other for quite long stretches of time: Evanthia met her 15-year-old brother Theophilos probably for the first time in her life upon arriving in Kydonies.<sup>92</sup> On the other hand, in his pioneering work on the construction of social emotions in the islands, Bernard Vernier had already studied love among siblings in primogeniture systems as a social performance of authority and submission.<sup>93</sup>

If the commercialisation of Andros’ aristocracy had reduced the economic effects of firstborn rights after the revolution, it had nevertheless retained their social and symbolic performance. Birth order defined a ranking of reference: in Evanthia’s correspondence, the whole family “paid” or “addressed respects” (*προσκυνοῦσι, προσαγορεύουσι*) to Theophilos, as well as to his uncle Sophronios, while Evgenios, Ioassaf, Dimitrios, Maria, Laskaro and Evanthia<sup>94</sup> were “embraced” (*ασπαζόμεθα*). Especially in a family without parents – Evanthia’s father has died in 1794, and her mother in 1820 – the firstborn exercised, even remotely, a patriarchal authority over the family and property affairs and arrangements: Evanthia never ceases to inform Theophilos on the other members of the family, on the commercial affairs and gains of the youngest, Dimitrios, on the financial problems which pile up after the revolution, and to which Theophilos is often called on to give advice or remedy. Birth order defines the hierarchisation of responsibilities and roles towards the female and younger members of the

---

<sup>89</sup> Eleftheria Zei, “New Perspectives in Local Politics before and during the Greek Revolution: Consular Institutions in the Greek Archipelago (Late Eighteenth–Early Nineteenth Century),” in Elias Kolovos and Dimitris Kousouris, eds., *The Greek Revolution of 1821 in the Age of Revolutions* (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming), 230.

<sup>90</sup> Eleanor Gordon, review of *Thicker than Water: Siblings and their Relations, 1780–1920*, by Leonore Davidoff, *Reviews in History*, no. 1362, <https://reviews.history.ac.uk/review/1362>, accessed 28 June 2021.

<sup>91</sup> The study of eighteenth-century incest, in particular, offers a key to understand modern family in its social and cultural context: Seth J. Denbo, “Speaking Relatively: A History of Incest and the Family in Eighteenth-Century England” (PhD diss., University of Warwick, 2011).

<sup>92</sup> Olympitou, *Οι γυναίκες του Αγώνα*.

<sup>93</sup> Vernier, *Η κοινωνική γένεση των αισθημάτων*, 299–306.

<sup>94</sup> Evanthia was the third sister, but from 1821 onwards she was the youngest of all, since the fourth and youngest sister had died earlier in Kydonies: Polemis, “Καϊρικά οικογενειακά έγγραφα,” 6.

family. The duty to marry a sister or a niece<sup>95</sup> falls on the eldest brother, which, when “unaccomplished”, causes a heavy emotional burden, as in the case of Theophilos’ duty to marry off Evanthia;<sup>96</sup> the lodging and subsistence of a celibate sister depends on the only married brother, as he inherited the patrimonial commercial business. In a parentless family, finally, the eldest brother also acts as a substitute father, a model of relationship which, in Evanthia’s case, is enforced by a quite current eighteenth-century discursive pattern of father-to-daughter education.<sup>97</sup> Until 1831 Evanthia addresses her brother Theophilos as “brother and master” (*διδάσκαλε*), looks up to him “for his virtue and his wisdom”,<sup>98</sup> and devotes her time to his scientific and philosophical interests,<sup>99</sup> while he closely inspects her lectures. It is only after 1835, when Evanthia has reached 36 years of age, that she ventures to break the father/master-daughter/disciple pattern, and to acknowledge the brother–sister relationship by addressing Theophilos as “dear and much missed brother” (*αγαπητέ και περιπόθητε αδελφέ*).<sup>100</sup> Theophilos himself will always address her as “dear Evanthia”.<sup>101</sup>

This belated transition from brotherly authority to sibling’s relationship, which coincides chronologically with the climax of her melancholic discourse, as shown above, also marks the construction of Evanthia’s belated and ambiguous womanhood.<sup>102</sup> While intellectual adulthood appeared as Evanthia’s unique

<sup>95</sup> *Αλληλογραφία*, 2:160, Syros, 13 March 1837.

<sup>96</sup> Theophilos wrote to her from Paris (5 September 1842): “How much would it lift the burden of gloom (*αθυμία*) that depresses me, if I could fulfil my debt to my beloved sister.” Polemis, “Η αλληλογραφία,” 292.

<sup>97</sup> Revived in Gregory’s and Bouilly’s texts, mentioned above, which young Evanthia is given to read and translate by her elder mentor Korais; besides, the latter addresses her as “my beloved daughter Evanthia”, or “beloved little daughter” (*φιλη θυγάτηρ-φιλον θυγάτριον*): *Αλληλογραφία*, 1:15–18, 16/18 January 1815, and sends her “fatherly embraces”: Paschalis, *Εβανθία Καίρη*, 11–12, while she styles him “most respected father”: *Αλληλογραφία*, 2:15, 2 August 1814. A pattern which reproduces an early modern patriarchal model of young girls’ upbringing, reinforced by the Reformation: Adroniki Dialeti, “Ο ιππότης, ο ιερέας και ο πατριάρχης: Όψεις του ανδρισμού στη μεσαιωνική και πρόωμη νεότερη Ευρώπη,” in *Το φύλο στην ιστορία: Αποτιμήσεις και παραδείγματα*, ed. Glafki Gotsi, Adroniki Dialeti and Eleni Fournaraki (Athens: Asini, 2015), 218.

<sup>98</sup> *Αλληλογραφία*, 2:26, Andros, 15 May 1823.

<sup>99</sup> Roy MacLeod and Russell Moseley, “Fathers and Daughters: Reflections on Women, Science and Victorian Cambridge,” *History of Education* 8, no. 4 (1979): 321–33.

<sup>100</sup> A pattern and a reference which she also observes in her relation with Spyridon Glafkopidis, some 20 years younger than her.

<sup>101</sup> Polemis, “Η αλληλογραφία,” 289.

<sup>102</sup> On the cultural, historical and social construction of female youth in early modern Europe: Elisabeth S. Cohen and Margaret Reeves, eds., *The Youth of Early Modern Women*

premature achievement,<sup>103</sup> she never fulfilled the primary structural conditions of womanhood in a prerevolutionary insular society: normative discourses of adulthood in different insular and continental regions of the Ottoman Empire<sup>104</sup> connected womanhood with the right to receive patrimonial property and get married. She would have to create a modern female adulthood through a long, solitary and subjective procedure, through her education and her private teaching.<sup>105</sup>

Finally, was Evanthia's celibacy due to the devotion to her brother as an asexual, moral and emotional substitution of a husband–wife relationship?<sup>106</sup> If this aspect of her relationship with Theophilos has been of focus in the Greek bibliography,<sup>107</sup> perhaps it should not be considered independently of the secular and religious context of morality in which she was shaped. Besides her early virtuous education described above, she had apparently assimilated the principles of Theophilos' religious doctrine of theosebism (θεοσέβεια), a mixture of theology, science and ethics,<sup>108</sup> which permitted marriage only among disciples. In the rare occasions in which she refers to those principles in her letters, she seems familiar with them;<sup>109</sup> besides, she read the third volume of Louis Cousin-Despréaux's *Les leçons de la nature*,<sup>110</sup> sent to her by her brother,

---

(Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018), 11-31; see also José Gentil Da Silva, “Η ιστορικότητα της παιδικής ηλικίας και της νεότητας στην πρόσφατη ιστορική παραγωγή,” in *Ιστορικότητα της παιδικής ηλικίας και της νεότητας*, 2 vols. (Athens: Historical Archive of Greek Youth, 1986), 37–78.

<sup>103</sup> Paschalis, *Εβανθία Καΐρη*, 15

<sup>104</sup> Matthaiou, *Οικογένεια και σεξουαλικότητα*, 145–46.

<sup>105</sup> See also the procedure of constructing a female, autonomous self through the discourse of female teachers in the Ottoman Empire: Maria Preka, *Δασκάλες στα χρόνια του αλυτρωτισμού: Μικρές ιστορίες, μεγάλες περιπλανήσεις* (Athens: Hellenic Open University Press, forthcoming).

<sup>106</sup> See the spectre of a relevant problematic and bibliography in Dimitra Vassiliadou, “Love in Families,” in *A Cultural History of Love in the Age of Industry*, ed. Sonya Lipsett-Rivera (London: Bloomsbury, forthcoming), 12–13.

<sup>107</sup> See the interpretation of Evanthia's relationship with her brother by Delopoulos, “Υγίαινε, αγαπητέ και περιπόθητε αδελφέ.”

<sup>108</sup> Theophilos Kairis, *Γνωστική: Στοιχεία φιλοσοφίας*, intro. Niketas Siniosoglou (Athens: Evrasia, 2008); Kazolea-Tavoulari, *Θεόφιλος Καΐρης*.

<sup>109</sup> She is also reported to have been buried with a civil ceremony, in accordance with the precepts of theosebism: I.P. Z[ografos], “Θεόφιλος Καΐρης,” *Μικρασιατικών Ημερολόγιον έτος 1911* (Samos: Typ. Mikrasiatikou, 1911), 376.

<sup>110</sup> Louis Cousin-Despréaux, *Les leçons de la nature ou l'histoire naturelle, la physique et la chimie, présentée à l'esprit et au coeur* (Lyon: Perisse, 1829). She mentions it in *Αλληλογραφία*, 2:128, Syros, 26 March 1836.

an oeuvre which strongly reflects Kairis' system of everyday morality, serving as a bridge which connects the soul to the human body and its natural functions. Consequently, her allusions to the "freedom of the body"<sup>111</sup> seem to be made more in the context of an enlightened virtuous discourse than in a literal somatic framework, which, in any case, would be contrary to her moral education. Had she come in contact, through her Enlightenment readings, with early modern medicinal literature, establishing the biological relation between forced celibacy and female *melancholia*,<sup>112</sup> or with early nineteenth-century psychiatric literature on women's melancholy,<sup>113</sup> we know nothing of it as yet. Evanthia's only bodily effusion in her letters are her ever-flowing tears of sorrow, an ungendered expression, besides, which befits the modern scholar, as shown above.

Evanthia's discourse is ambiguous when relating her celibacy to her melancholic turns. Indifferent though she appears towards her marital status during her youth, she does not fail to express a certain regret for her celibacy after the revolution, while at the same time she declares herself to be conscious of the fact that marriage does not necessarily constitute a way to happiness.<sup>114</sup> Besides, she has learnt from her early education that "living in happiness" (*ευδαιμόνως*) in the "Enlightenment" context is primarily achieved through intellectual and moral exercises,<sup>115</sup> while, in a letter to her niece Evanthia, she criticises rich and ostentatious weddings, which "make the sorrow of the parents and the joy of the merchants".<sup>116</sup>

Under the above overwhelming intellectual and social patriarchy, which, even when craved for, crushes her in its embrace, Evanthia is attached to her

---

<sup>111</sup> See above, 22.

<sup>112</sup> Which treated "female melancholia" as a particular disease, originating in menstrual disorders and the reproductive functions of the female body; see, for instance, the works of Luis Mercado (a Spanish royal physician), *Gynaeciorum libri IIII* (1586), Rodrigo de Castro Lusitano (a Portuguese-Jewish physician), *Universa muliebrium morborum medicina* (1603) and Guillaume de Baillou, *De virginum et mulierum morbis liber* (1643).

<sup>113</sup> On the biological interpretation of female *melancholia* in nineteenth-century medicinal literature, see the rich bibliography on the subject: Dimitra Vassiliadou, *Στον τροπικό της γραφής*; Vassiliadou, "Auto/pathographies in situ," 213–15. Evanthia should be familiar, though, with her brother's theory on the role of the brain and the neurological system on human cognitive functions and conscience, included in his philosophical oeuvre.

<sup>114</sup> *Αλληλογραφία*, 2:176–77, 225–26, Syros, 26 September 1837, and Andros, 17 November 1842.

<sup>115</sup> Korais, for instance, points out to her that it is impossible to live in happiness without virtue: *Αλληλογραφία*, 1:16, 16/28 January 1815.

<sup>116</sup> *Αλληλογραφία*, 2:253, Andros, 5 November 1860. Yet, she supports and recommends the matchmaking between Glafkopidis and her brother's Dimitrios sister-in-law, Katingo Bisti.

brother Dimitrios' household, in the patrimonial house he probably inherited, and later to his new place of establishment in Syros. Yet she would have preferred to live with Theophilos in a place of "their own", when in 1824 she was invited to Nafplion to teach the children of the president of the National Assembly:<sup>117</sup> that would be her conception of "independence", but her plans soon fail, owing to a typhoid epidemic in the city.<sup>118</sup> In 1844 Theophilos returned to Andros; yet he did not lodge with his sister. He spent his days and nights in the orphanage, where he resumed his teaching.<sup>119</sup> But the Greek state and the Ministry of Justice took up his persecution on the grounds of his philosophical doctrine and teaching, and a court in Syros sentences him to prison, where he died in 1853. After the death of Dimitrios in 1861, Evanthia lived alone in the patrimonial house in Chora, where she probably gave private courses to young girls, as she did in Syros.<sup>120</sup> Yet, she was finally obliged to cease her educational activity by order of the authorities on the grounds that she had no official permission to teach, besides the fact that Andros was not deprived of a public school for girls.<sup>121</sup>

*A Language of Solitude Amid Fully Inhabited Spaces: The Construction of a Modern Woman Writer*

Evanthia does not lead a solitary life; far from it. She admits spending her days with a full household of uncles, aunts, nephews, nieces, spiritual kin and a small but faithful selection of family "friends", such as the family of the merchant Dimitros Zeis, and the daughters of the Kydonies notable Chatziathanassiou, who had moved to the Cyclades after the destruction of their city. In their company she often passes her evenings and goes on excursions in their country estates; in

---

<sup>117</sup> *Αλληλογραφία*, 2:38, Syros, 13 October 1824.

<sup>118</sup> *Αλληλογραφία*, 2:39, Syros, 24 October 1824.

<sup>119</sup> Polemis, "Η αλληλογραφία."

<sup>120</sup> She probably has never served publicly as a teacher in schools for girls: Sidiroula Ziogou-Karastergiou, *Η μέση εκπαίδευση των κοριτσιών στην Ελλάδα (1830–1893)* (Athens: Historical Archive of Greek Youth, 1986), 44.

<sup>121</sup> See the letter of Andros mayor M. Birikos (1865): *Αλληλογραφία*, 4:140, Andros, 16 September 1865. It is suggested that the real reason of this prohibition appears to have been the authorities' concern that Evanthia would convert her pupils to her brother's heretical ideas: Olympitou, *Οι γυναίκες του Αγώνα*. On the other hand, this enforcement could also reflect a mid-century effort by the Greek state for the reformation of women's education and the professionalisation of women teachers: Fournaraki, *Εκπαίδευση και αγωγή των κοριτσιών*, 24–29; Alexandra Lambraki-Paganou, "Η εκπαίδευση των Ελληνίδων κατά την Οθωνική περίοδο" (PhD diss., National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, 1988), 131.



Syros she goes twice to a ballroom dance<sup>122</sup> – besides, she loves the spectacle of dancing,<sup>123</sup> although she finds peasant dances tasteless and graceless.<sup>124</sup> She has a restricted but uncontested circle of public male contacts: in 1825 she visits the Mavrokordatos family in Syros,<sup>125</sup> in 1827 she meets with the Protestant cleric John Hartley, when he comes to visit in Syros, and in 1828 with the American philhellene Henry Post, who lives on the island.<sup>126</sup> She corresponds with Georgios Laskaridis,<sup>127</sup> the publisher Ambroise-Firmin Didot, Adamantios Korais, while she addresses King Otto, a circle covering a large geographical span, from the Aegean islands (Andros, Syros, Santorini, Naxos, Aegina, Hydra) and the continent (Nafplion, Tripolitsa) to Paris, Marseille, London and Manchester.

Judging from her correspondence, as well as from the signatures at the end of her two epistles to *To Women Philhellenes*,<sup>128</sup> she also influenced an all but insignificant female circle, including women from the Aegean islands,<sup>129</sup> Athens, Salona (Amfissa) and Livadia, who are also her readers. Finally, she probably participated in the religious sociability of theosebism, as she kept frequent contact with her brother's disciples after his death.<sup>130</sup>

And yet Evanthia has always described herself to Theophilos as leading a solitary and secluded existence after her return from Kydonies. Her language of solitariness, although a common literary topos, could also describe a breach of social and gendered norms in a small insular society: cohabitation and female

<sup>122</sup> *Αλληλογραφία*, 2:72–73, Syros, 24 November 1825.

<sup>123</sup> *Αλληλογραφία*, 2:44–45, Syros, 24 November 1824.

<sup>124</sup> *Αλληλογραφία*, 2:34, Andros, 2 May 1824.

<sup>125</sup> *Αλληλογραφία*, 2:70, Syros, 11 October 1825.

<sup>126</sup> *Αλληλογραφία*, 2:84–85, Syros, 12 November 1827, where she refers to Hartley as “the American priest”; Polemis, “Ο Θεόφιλος Καΐρης και οι προτεστάνται μισσιονάριοι εις το Αιγαίον,” *Πέταλον* 4 (1984): 83, 92. On the penetration of Protestant philhellenes in the islands and the relevant bibliography, see also Maria Christina Chatziioannou, *Στη δίνη της Χιακής καταστροφής (1822): Διασταυρούμενες ιστορίες και συλλογική ταυτότητα* (Athens: Institute of Historical Research of the National Hellenic Research Foundation, 2021), 35–44.

<sup>127</sup> A member of an important commercial house of Chios: Gelina Harlaftis, “Το επιχειρηματικό δίκτυο των Ελλήνων της διασποράς: Η ‘χιώτικη φάση’ (1830–1860),” *Μνήμων* 15 (1993): 69–119.

<sup>128</sup> *Αλληλογραφία*, 2:54–61, Nafplion, 17 April 1861, and 91–93, Syros, 13 August 1828.

<sup>129</sup> As, for instance, the letter sent by Alexandra N. Kaloudi from the island of Kea shows: *Αλληλογραφία*, 1:29–30, 12/24 April 1833.

<sup>130</sup> *Αλληλογραφία*, 4:40.

socialisation, male solitude and sleepless nights.<sup>131</sup> Evanthia prefers to write her letters in the quiet solitude of the night, when “everyone in the house is asleep” and the moon brings peace to her restless mind,<sup>132</sup> when she can imagine the presence of an absent correspondent.<sup>133</sup> It is particularly by appropriating the solitude of the night that she can really imagine a self of her own, outside the imposed contexts of education and family, that she can re-create herself as a woman writer.

It would seem that correspondence for Evanthia is a pretext. It appears that she usually made several undated drafts of her letters before sending them, a few of which were probably never sent.<sup>134</sup> Besides, she did not sign her publications: was this anonymity a nineteenth-century female literary pattern of self-effacement,<sup>135</sup> or was it her way of deconstructing and reconstructing herself? One thing is for sure, what really impassions her is the very act of writing, which she stages carefully, lying in wait for the appropriate hour of the night, imagining postures, gestures, pictures and thoughts that will accompany it. It is through the act and its gestures, perhaps as much as through the text itself, that she finally reconstructs a female intellectual self of her own. In 1825 she wrote to Theophilos: “You know that I find great pleasure to take the pen in my hands and imagine that I write, to imagine that I never stop writing if I have anything to write, and I wish there were some way to expose what I imagine when I write.”<sup>136</sup>

### *Conclusion*

In this article I have tried to approach Evanthia Kairi’s melancholic turn in her discourse, as manifested in her correspondence with her elder brother Theophilos during the Greek Revolution and until his death in 1853. I ventured to analyse her melancholic discourse as a complex and gendered ambiguous procedure of self-construction, as a culture of “active sensibility” related to the modelling of the “modern scholar”, particularly promoted by the French and English “Enlightenment”, through which she has been shaped by her famous scholarly mentors, Adamantios Korais and Theophilos Kairis. Against the

---

<sup>131</sup> Eleftheria Zei, “Όψεις της νύχτας,” in *Ελλάδα της θάλασσας*, ed. Spyros I. Asdrachas, Anastasios Tzamtzis and Gelina Harlaftis (Athens: Melissa, 2004), 87–92.

<sup>132</sup> *Αλληλογραφία*, 2:28, Andros, 26 June 1823.

<sup>133</sup> *Αλληλογραφία*, 2:295, to an unknown recipient (after 1850).

<sup>134</sup> *Αλληλογραφία*, 2:11.

<sup>135</sup> Rizaki, *Οι “Γράφουσες Ελληνίδες”*, 144.

<sup>136</sup> *Αλληλογραφία*, 2:64, Syros, 18 August 1825.

background of the hardships of the revolution and of an inimical Greek state, this procedure unfolds through different life narratives. Both her scholarly education on Enlightenment patriotic virtues, such as freedom and the duty towards one's homeland/nation, and her patriarchal, socially overwhelming sibling relations, were developed within two strict, normalising intellectual and social frameworks, which could account for her language of restlessness, anxiety, protest and depression. It is finally through her individualisation of melancholic seclusion and the female appropriation of solitariness that she appears to create her self-image as a modern woman writer, sitting alone, bent over her writing in the small hours of the night.

*University of Crete*