# Migración e hibridez o los extranjeros de la literatura griega contemporánea

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**Resumen:** El entendimiento de la literatura bajo un enfoque transnacional permite estudiar aspectos que cuestionan de manera contundente ciertos supuestos literarios tradicionales relacionados con el género literario, la función del escritor o su identidad personal. Grecia, en tanto que país de emigrantes, nos ofrece ejemplos de la literatura contemporánea multilingüe que llaman la atención sobre algunos de estos aspectos, desde el punto de vista de los estudios sobre la diáspora y las migraciones, así como del multilingüismo y el multiculturalismo. Este artículo se servirá de los casos de siete autores griegos modernos para ilustrar la importancia de la experiencia de la diáspora griega en relación con la creación literaria y los dilemas identitarios. Se espera poner de relieve la necesidad de considerar la práctica de la autotraducción y la relación entre *xenitiá*, identidad y pertenencia en el estudio de las obras de emigrantes griegos.

**Palabras claves**: hibridez – migración – transnacionalismo – literatura griega contemporánea – autotraducción – *xenitiá*.

# MIGRATION AND HYBRIDITY OR THE OUTSIDERS OF CONTEMPORARY GREEK LITERATURE

**Abstract:** In a globalised world, the understanding of literature under a transnational approach brings to light aspects that profoundly challenge some traditional literary assumptions in terms of literary genres, writing roles and even personal belonging. Greece, as country of migrants, provides us with the case of contemporary multilingual literature that draws attention to some of these aspects, from the point of view of diaspora and migrant studies, as well as multilingualism and multiculturalism. This paper shall focus on the case of seven Modern Greek authors, to illustrate the importance of the experience of Greek diaspora in connection with literary creation and identity dilemmas. By doing so, it is our intention to underline the need for a rethinking of the practice of self-translation, and the relationship between *xenitia*, identity and belonging in the study of what we call Modern Greek migrant literature.

**Keywords**: Hybridity – migration – transnationalism – Modern Greek Literature – Self-translation – *xenitia*.

"Ils [Greek immigrants] ont sur le front une ride supplémentaire,
qui n'est pas due au temps, mais à la distance".

Vassilis Alexakis, *Le Cœur de Marguerite*

## Introduction

Migration and diaspora are nowadays key words in today's globalised world. Both migration and diaspora studies are interdisciplinary fields, which became extremely popular in the past three decades and proliferated in political, cultural and literary ways, among others.

This paper's intention is to present a brief description of the history of Greek migration, leading and focusing on recent years, in order to highlight its impact on the current literary arena.

Following that, we intend to demonstrate how seven Greek multilingual contemporary writers, although very different to each other, represent a similar literary genre. Doing that, we shall prove the usefulness of a transnational approach when it comes to the study of Modern Greek literature related to migration, like it has been previously done in studies comparing migration situations in Greek theatre plays (Frangkou, 2018) or the writing of short stories by Greek Australian writers (Garivaldis, 2010). Although much has been said already around the internationalisation of literatures, mostly in English and French (see Bate, 2004; Walkowitz, 2007; Dutton, 2016, among others), under the light of a postcolonial approach, this has not been the case for Modern Greek authors.

Secondly, we shall highlight the challenges that such an approach might pose in literary terms, while underlining other important concepts and practices, such as self-translation and scriptotherapy.

## Migration in Greece and Greek Diaspora

Greece has traditionally been a country of migrants. This had, and still has, an impact in all aspects of modern life, and could actually be considered part of their idiosyncrasy and identity, as Stavrakopoulos (2003) points out when saying: 'Greeks, ancient and contemporary alike, have done their share of travelling —to fight wars, to get acquainted with exotic cultures and customs, to do commerce, to study. They have spoken about their travelling experiences so extensively, and in such multiple ways, that some, like Cavafy and Seferis, consider travelling and relocating integral parts of Greek identity'.

Many authors (Kanarakis, 2012; Korma, 2017; and Tziovas, 2009) speak about the phenomenon of Greek migration and its different destinations over the years. Hassiotis (1993) states that the fall of Constantinople in 1453 marked the beginning of the modern Greek diaspora. The growing trade exchanges in the Mediterranean area and the subsequent period of Ottoman domination entailed important migratory waves of Greeks, first to Europe and Egypt and then to the rest of the globe. From this point in time on, he differentiates three big periods in the history of the Greek diaspora:

- During the Turkish domination, from the end of 14th century and mid-15th century until the establishment of the Greek nation in 1830, when Greeks moved mainly to the north and south of Italy, European big harbours and trade centres.
- From 1830 and World War II: during this period, Greeks either followed in the footsteps of previous immigrants or went to new areas of the west Mediterranean, USA, south of Russia and the Caucasus region.
- The post-junta years from the mid-40s to the 80s, where the most popular destination was the USA, mostly due to the commercialisation of Greek agriculture. New areas were also explored nevertheless, mainly Canada, Australia and Western Europe, with Germany as the most popular host country.

'[T]he golden age of the Greek diaspora', according to Tziovas (2009: 158), were the 'years between 1880 and 1930', because 'important commercial activities were developing while mass migration to the USA was gathering momentum towards the end of the nineteenth century and then again after 1922'. The failure of the 'Megali Idea' project, to unify all Greeks into a nation estate with its centre in Constantinople, the Greco-Turkish War and the humiliating defeat of the Greek Army in 1922, or Disaster of Smyrna, were powerful motives for Greeks to seek new destinations. However, the numerous political, economic and social vicissitudes experienced by Greece after 1930 are equally of particular interest and

have a direct influence on the massive and constant aspect of the modern Greek diaspora. The dictatorship of Metaxas (1936-1941); World War II (1939-1945), which for Greece meant both the Greco-Italian War (1940-1941) and the German invasion (1941-1944); the Greek Civil War (1946-1949) and the subsequent turbulent post-war reconstruction; and last but not least, the Colonels' military dictatorship, the Junta, (1967-1974) together with the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974, make it easy to understand the recent reasons for Greeks to emigrate. The particularly disastrous situation of Greece since November 2004, after admitting manipulation of their numbers to appear to be in agreement with the Maastricht criteria and the subsequent draconian austerity measures approved from January 2010, explain why many Greeks have migrated to different parts of the globe during the last decade too. After the third, and latest, bailout programme in August 2018 and so many years of particularly tough austerity measures, the reality remains that Greece is still a country of migrants.

Understandably, migration entails speaking about all possible types of exile and diaspora, in the sense of leaving and putting distance (either temporarily or permanently) between oneself and the birth country. It is therefore synonymous with rupture with origins and roots.

In Greek, nevertheless, diaspora means more than that. As Hassiotis (1993: 19) acknowledges, diaspora is 'το τμήμα εκείνο του ελληνικού λαού, το οποίο, παρ'όλο που εκπατρίστηκε για διαφόρους λόγους και εγκαταστάθηκε, έστω και με σχετική μόνομονιμότητα, σε χώρες ή περιοχές εκτός του εθνικού χώρου, εξακολούθησε να συντηρεί με ποικίλους τρόπους τους υλικούς, τους πολιτιστικούς ή έστω τους συναισθηματικούς του δεσμούς με τη γενέτειρα και τη χώρα της άμεσης ή παλαιότερης καταγωγής του' [the section of the Greek people who, despite the fact that, for different reasons, left the home country and settled in other countries or regions outside the national borders, even if it is only temporarily, kept on maintaining, through different means, the material, cultural or even sentimental bonds with the native land and the country of their recent

or ancient origins]. Interestingly, Tamis (2005: 7) presents a very similar point of view: 'The term "Hellenic Diaspora" characterizes those Greek, who despite their temporary or permanent expatriation to foreign lands for any reason, continue to maintain cultural, political, economic or social relations with their country of ancestry and descent'.

So, even if for some members of the diaspora, the home country or the mother tongue might not be a pure reality anymore, their sense of belonging and identity keeps its strength and moves on from generation to generation. Up to today Greeks all over the world organize themselves in associations and communities (in some countries with a very long history). They try to maintain their bonds with Greece, the culture and traditions, also their language, beyond the borders of the homeland (that they may, or may not, visit often). It is highly important to note that, Orthodox religion and churches play a major role in this aspect, for they serve as powerful amalgamating elements around which life as a community abroad evolves. Having said that, this paper focuses in a particular and quite romantic way to understand and define diaspora and puts it in connection with the production of a particular type of literature.

Because of this strong bond that immigrants kept (and still keep) with Greece, Greek diaspora has always been considered to be part of a cultural periphery, whose existence complimented Greece beyond its natural borders and helped the formation of the concept of 'nation' during the 19th century. Nowadays, the numbers and distribution of the Greek diaspora all over the world have changed, as well as its importance, but it is imperative to take it into consideration when we speak about Greek literature. Otherwise, we would be either forgetting writers like CP Cavafy or Stratis Tsirkas —to mention just two authors— or ignoring the fact that they belonged to the Greek diaspora in Egypt: Cavafy, born at the end of the 19th century in Alexandria, lived in this city most of his life, as well as in England, Constantinople, and France. As for Tsirkas, he lived in Cairo (his hometown), Alexandria, and then Athens. Both were part of the Greek community in

Egypt, one of the most important in the Greek diaspora, and their works were and still are instrumental in the recognition of Greek literature all over the world.

Lastly, it is worthy to note that, in terms of population movements, there are two main different perspectives in understanding the migratory phenomenon and its consequences. Some authors, like Kaloudis (2008), have quite a negative perception: 'Diaspora has always been an important feature of Greek history and will remain as such; it is an unfortunate characteristic of small countries and especially those which have experienced constant tragedies'. Luckily this idea is confronted by some authors with a more rewarding understanding, like South African writer Breyten Breytenbach (1994), who connects exile and literature, by stating:

> 'The history of exile, of people being displaced or being forced to become refugees, is as old as that of organized communal life, as ancient as the mountains… what is it really like to be exercising the "dur métier de l'exil", to be "climbing up and down other people's staircases"…? … It is, when you are a writer, to be living *elsewhere* (*ailleurs*), to be writing *differently* (*autrement*). You live in an acquired linguistic zone like going dressed in the clothes of the husband of your mistress. … You live and you write in terms of absence, of absent time (or in terms of a questioned present time). … True, you never really relax. You never completely "belong". And yet — your situation is probably a blessing in disguise. … For better or for worse you are an outsider. … If so you are privileged. … Take heart then. Lady Luck has smiled upon you!'.

## Migration and Literature

Despite the fact that it refers to such an old and complex reality, the term 'diaspora' has only become extremely popular and conceptually multifaceted in the last 20 to 30 years. Quite a few authors speak about common

core elements that different diasporas share[1]. Due to the appropriateness to this study, I would like to refer to some of the main characteristics mentioned by Kanarakis (2012), which are: migration, displacement and dispersion, nostalgia and maintenance of memories of the homeland, even if idealised, and a 'deliberate preservation of a distinctive identity in the host society and a strong and continuing ethnic group consciousness'[2]. This is something that Brubaker (2005) shares in his analysis of the three, according to him, core elements of diaspora: dispersion, homeland orientation and boundary maintenance[3].

In terms of the ethnic consciousness and the maintenance or preservation of a strong identity, it is not too difficult to imagine a logical and inevitable link between migration, writing and identity. The memories, the sense of belonging, the sentimental and physical ties that migrants hold in relation to the places they leave or consider theirs, have an impact on the makeup of their identity, both personal and narrative, and its acknowledgement provides new insights into the creative power of exile and diaspora.

With reference to memories and maintenance, Kanarakis (2012) explains that for the second and later generations of migrants the sentimental ties and bonds are normally symbolic and non-territorial. He equally makes the point about the fact that even though different diasporas present similarities across time and space, 'diaspora does not remain the same but

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1 See J. A. Armstrong, 'Mobilized and proletarian diasporas', *American Political Science Review* 70/2 (1976) 393-408; J. Clifford, 'Diasporas', *Cultural Anthropology* 9/3 (1994) 302-38; R. Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction*. Seattle, 1997; S. Hall, 'Cultural identity and diaspora', in J. Rutherford (ed.) *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*. London, 1990, 222-37; W. Safran, 'Diasporas in modern societies: Myths of homeland and return', *Diaspora* 1/1, 1991, 83-99; K. Tölölyan, 'Rethinking diaspora(s): stateless power in the transnational moment', *Diaspora* 1/1, 1996, 3-36.

2 G. Kanarakis, 'The Greek diaspora in a globalised world', 295.

3 R. Brubaker, 'The "diaspora" diaspora', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 28/1 (2005) 1-19.

keeps changing as the times and societies change'[4]. This brings us to the recurring concept in diaspora studies 'changing same', enunciated by Paul Gilroy (1994)[5] in terms of the multi-generational change and correlation with the past. The concept of 'sameness and difference', coined by Anne-Marie Fortier (1998), draws on the previous one and establishes diaspora 'as a space of mediation and tension between multiple poles of identification, which people with different experiences of migration and (re)settlement have in common'[6].

In that sense, a transnational approach in literary studies can be helpful to recognise the importance of diaspora. The acknowledgement of transnationality as 'a mode of connectedness between and across the borders of various states'[7] proposes an alternative and swaps the focus 'from concerns about the dynamics of migration, the origins of immigrants, and the latter's adaption to and integration into their new country towards the continuing ties migrants across borders connecting the societies of both origin and immigration'[8]. Such a perspective also comes tremendously handy in accommodating the dislocation of the nation-based understanding of literature and the multiple challenges that it poses to the reality of writers belonging to different cultural geographical and linguistic backgrounds.

We shall use the above terms to refer to some Modern Greek contemporary authors and the literature they create. I will apply these nevertheless to a geographical and linguistic dimension and to the fact, that irrespectively

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4 G. Kanarakis, 'The Greek diaspora in a globalised world', 293-302.

5 P. Gilroy, 'Diaspora', *Paragraph*, 17/3, 1994, 207-12.

6 A.-M. Fortier Fortier, 'Calling on Giovanni: Interrogation the Nation Through Diasporic Imagination', *International Journal of Canadian Studies. Revue international d'études canadiennes*, 18, 1998, 31-50.

7 T. Faist, M. Fauset and E. Reisenauer. *Transnational Migration*. Cambridge, 2013, 24.

8 *op.cit.* 88

of the country in which migrants live and the language they use on a daily basis, as well as the different trajectories of each of them, they all return to their country of origin as a literary space and to the language spoken in that country as a vehicle to express themselves. This return to their origins takes place, in a kind of literary nostos, resulting in the closing of a vital literary circle, as we shall see below. It highlights the effects and the importance of diaspora and migration for literary studies, as well as the existence of what can be called migrant literature: literary works produced by authors living in a country different from their or their families' home country.

More than a few other terms have been devised to describe the same practice. According to Walkowitz (2007)[9] it makes sense nowadays to speak about 'world literature', due to the effects of globalization. She brings to our attention Leslie Adelson's use of the term 'literature of migration', who agrees with Carine Mardorossian about two facts related to migration and literature. Firstly, according to them, migrant writers do not move between two distinct and coherent worlds, and secondly, they 'do not bring with them or enter into literary systems that are unique and strictly local'[10]. Mardorossian[11] (2002) speaks, in particular, about the change from 'literature of exile' to 'migrant literature' and its consequences for postcolonial literary studies and the difference between the experience of exile and its written representation.

Looking more specifically into contemporary Greek literature produced outside of Greece, we can also mention Karen Van Dyck's' (2010) denomination 'Diaspora literature', with emphasis on the 'translingual aspect of

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9 R. L. Walkowitz. *Immigrant Fictions. Contemporary Literature in an Age of Globalization*. Danvers, 2007.

10 R. L. Walkowitz. *Immigrant Fictions*, 534.

11 C. Mardorossian. 'From Literature of Exile to Migrant Literature', *Modern Language Studies*, 32/2, 2002, 15-33.

transcultural exchange' and defines it as 'a multilingual literature that draws on more than one grammar, syntax and vocabulary to make meaning'[12]. While Alexander Karanikas (1989)[13] uses the concept of 'immigrant novel' to refer to American-Greek writers. I would nonetheless like to use the term 'Modern Greek migrant literature' to refer in general to narratives (novel, autobiography, poetry, etc.) that reflect direct or indirect experiences of Greek diaspora.

## Modern Greek (migrant) Literature

Walkowitz (2007) wonders about English literature and its location. She establishes that it 'depends not only on the places where books are written but also on the places where they are classified and given social purposes'[14]. We intend to make a similar point in terms of Modern Greek literature and therefore establish that its existence is not limited to a single language (Modern Greek) or country (Greece). In our opinion, Modern Greek migrant literature, should include all works written and published a) by both Greek writers and writers of Greek origin, b) either in Modern Greek or other languages, and c) anywhere in the world.

Therefore, when speaking about Modern Greek literature and the effects of migration on literature, *nostos* and *xenitia* are two Greek terms

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12 K. Van Dyck. "*'Beginning with O, the O-mega'. Translingual Literature and its Lessons for Translation*". Columbia University, 2010.

13 A. Karanikas. 'Varieties of Interface in the Greek Immigrant Novel', *Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora*, 16.1-4, 1989, 37-45.

14 R. Walkowitz. 'The Location of Literature: The Transnational Book and the Migrant Writer'. In R. Walkowitz (ed.) *Immigrant Fictions. Contemporary Literature in an Age of Globalization*. Wisconsin, 2007, 527.

of particular interest. The Dictionary of Standard Modern Greek offers the following definition of *xenitia* (ξενιτιά, longing): 'ο τόπος στον οποίο ξενιτεύεται κάποιος· τα ξένα.' [the place in where someone emigrate/is a foreigner: abroad]. Nevertheless, I prefer Sutton's (2003) description of xenitia as: 'a condition of estrangement, absence, death, of loss of social relatedness, or loss of an ethic of care seen to characterize relations at home. It provokes a longing for home that is seen as a physical and spiritual pain'[15]. This feeling or condition is indeed commonly found, in an explicit or implicit way, in many Greek migrant writers' works, together with another quite frequent idea, which is the concept of *nostos* (νόστος, the return to the homeland), defined in the Dictionary of Standard Modern Greek as: '(συναισθ.) για να δηλώσουμε την επιστροφή στην πατρίδα ύστερα από μακροχρόνια απουσία και με αναφορά στην επιστροφή του Οδυσσέα στην Ιθάκη.' [(feeling) to express the return to the home place after many years of absences and related to Ulysses' return to Ithaca].

*Nostos* and *xenitia* turn out to be vital for Greek migrant or diaspora writers, together with the idea of 'home', which Leontis (1999) presents both as 'an elusive category in modernity' and 'a theoretical conundrum'[16]. In many cases, exile or just the fact of being far from home, becomes the trigger either for their writing, or for a particular way of writing —a kind of literary euphoria, a reason for creation that, in many occasions, constitutes its own object, since the authors will use their works to speak about and to reflect on exile. In this sense, Greece, the 'patrida' (homeland), constitutes the beginning and the end, the cause and the aim, of the literary mission in a circular scheme that could be represented as follows:

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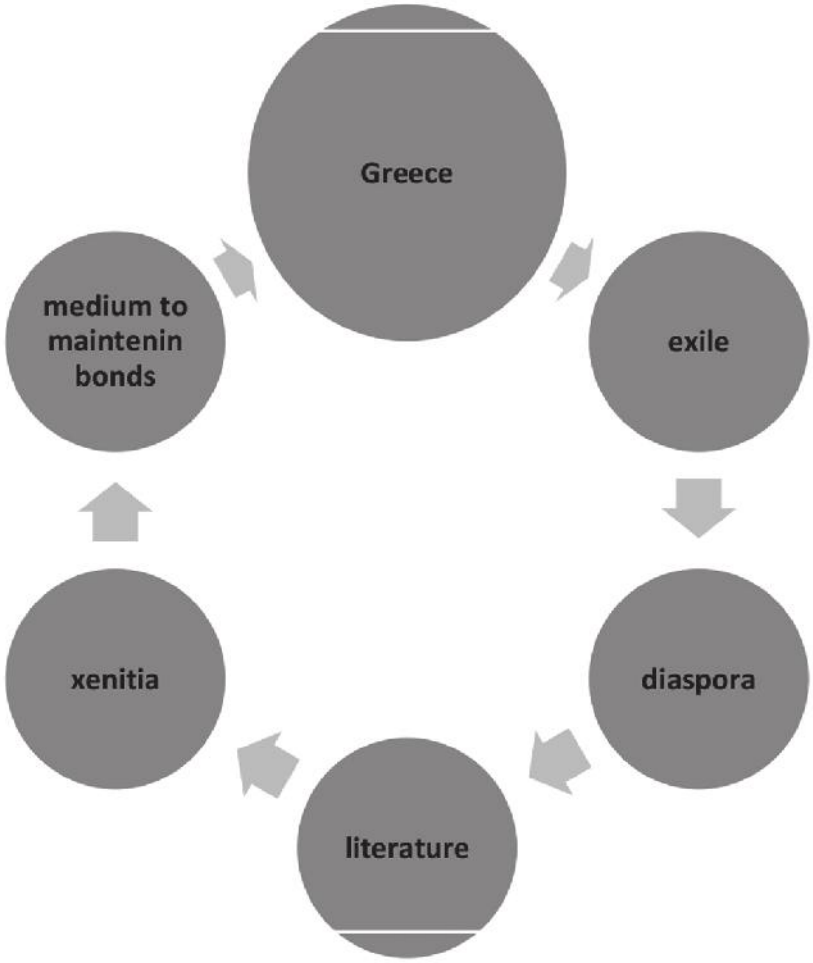
15 D. Sutton, 'Listen to that Scent! Travelling Tastes and Smells among Greek Immigrants', *Detours: The Online Magazine of the Illinois Humanities Council,* 5/1.

16 A. Leontis. 'Primordial Home, Elusive Home', *Thesis Eleven* 59, 1999, 1-16.

**Figure 1**




In this way, Greek writers abroad will make use of literature in order to put into words their *xenitia*, to materialise it, and to try and create a remedy for it, in a literary attempt of a *nostos*: a journey back home, even if just in a literary one, given that for some of them, their works might constitute the only chance to connect with or go back to Greece in a given moment. As we shall see soon, the literary recurrence of the ethnic component and, very

frequently also, the autobiographical elements, are characteristic of what could be called Modern Greek migrant literature.

This therapeutic ability of writing about oneself constitutes a form of 'scriptotherapy' and is based on the premise coined by Bernard Pingaud in Eapkind (1992: 85): 'L'écriture est la cure'[17]. The Modern Greek writers treated in this paper use their work as a way to keep alive the links with their origins, their culture, their country, and even their mother tongue, which they, voluntarily or involuntarily, left behind. They traditionally convey Greece in their narrative and their works. Some of their writings constitute outstanding examples of the modern Greek diaspora and are, in some way or another, the reflection of *xenitia*, or in other words, the nostalgia, pain or discomfort that exile and migration (or even just physical distance) often cause them. This fact entails the importance of writing to get over these feelings and to keep alive the connection with their country of origin and with their mother tongue, when such is the case. One could even argue that this is the main point of this literature: to act, in fact, as an externalisation of the author's (conscious or unconscious) *xenitia* and the literary manifestation of his or her personal *nostos*.

Taking all the above into account, the following authors are brilliant examples of Modern Greek migrant literature, which show that as different as they can be —as well as their works—, under a transnational approach, display far from negligible similarities, that take us to the concepts of 'changing same' or 'sameness and difference'.

One of the most representative novels of this kind of work, according to Karanikas (1983)[18], is Roxane Cotsakis' (also known as Mrs John Fitz-Patrick) *The Wing and the Thorn*, written in 1952. Cotsakis, born in Atlanta

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17 P. J. Eakin. *Touching the World. Reference in Autobiography*. New Jersey, 1992, 85.

18 A. Karanikas. 'Greek American Literature'. In *Ethnic Perspectives in American Literature*. New York, 1983, 65-89.

in 1917 of a Greek father and a French mother, worked in New York as an advertising executive, where she died in 1994. In her only novel, she tells the story of John Pantellis, a young boy who leaves Greece to go to America to make money and his subsequent return to his home country. In the book, Cotsakis manages to catch 'the color, the flavour and the problems of life in the closely-knit ''Greek Towns'' which exist in the heart of many American communities'[19]. In Karanikas' (1983) words, 'Cotsakis represents with distinction the women writers of Greek descent, even though her only publication has been the novel *The Wing and the Thorn* (1952)' and adds 'No other single piece of fiction contains so complete a record of Greek customs'[20].

This is the type of literature referred to in this article —works that might be written outside of Greece and in a language initially different to Greek, but that can clearly be related to the Greek ethos and/or the Greek language. These works, in my opinion, contribute towards the creation or maintenance of the bonds with the homeland and establish these authors in their role of 'in-betweeners' (two countries, two languages, two cultures) giving form to a real periphery, a vital extension of Modern Greek literature structure.

Due to space restrictions and the difficulty of the task, it would not be possible to speak here about all writers of the Greek diaspora. Therefore, in order to open the dialogue in this sense, we shall mention seven of them, whose characteristics match this group. They are Irini Spanidou and Stratis Haviaras in the United States; Panos Karnezis in Britain; Theodor Kallifatides in Sweden; Vassilis Alexakis in France; Dadi Sideri in Germany; and

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19 W. Spearman. 'A Greek in America', *The Sunday Star-News*, 30 March 1952. Accessed July 2023. <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1454&dat=19520330&id=d29gAAAAIBAJ&sjid=LXINAAAAIBAJ&pg=4148,4638373>.

20 A. Karanikas. 'Greek American Literature'. In R. J. Di Pietro and E. Ifkovic (eds.) *Ethnic Perspectives in American Literature*. New York, 1983, 65-89.

Mitsos Alexandropoulos in Russia. Some of their most relevant (for the purpose of this article) works and their plots shall be commented, in order to illustrate the idea of how they resort to their own cultural and biological experiences and/or heritage to feed the diasporic component of their characteristic migrant literature.

Lecturer of Creative Writing at the University of New York, Irini Spanidou has written three novels: *God's Snake* (1986), *Fear* (1998), and *Before* (2007). Her two first ones have the same main character, Anna Karystinou, who in *God's Snake*, is a courageous and inventive young girl, growing up in the arid landscape and resentful environment of late 1950s post-war Greece, with her parents —a tyrannical army officer and inflexible wife. In *Fear*, the plot is set in 1959, with a thirteen-year old Anna as a perpetual newcomer, moving from place to place with her family, in the middle of a difficult transition into womanhood. Spanidou says in Pearlman & Henderson (1990) about *God's Snake* that 'to some extent, … is autobiographical ... About one third is true and the rest is made up … I wanted to write about myself'[21].

In terms of the language used by the author, Karen Van Dyck (2010) refers to Spanidou's particular use of English in *God's Snake* in the following way: '[it] was about Greece and almost completely thought out in Greek, and then ''translated'', sometimes quite literally, by the author into English. We feel the otherworldliness particularly in her surreal-sounding literal translations of Greek proverbs and her Greek-English puns … her second *Fear* was definitively written in English and had no more weird language games. It was about Greece, but not in Greek. Finally, her most recent novel *Before* was about America and conveyed in a flat American tone, though slight traces of Greek emerge at crucial moments. … Greek

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21 M. Pearlman and K. U. Henderson. *Inter/view: Talks with America's Writing Women*. Kentucky, 1990, 185.

breaks into the English as a kind of nostalgic re-embedding of a former practice'[22]. This use of the language can be understood as a kind of linguistic contamination, where the grammar structures, particularly the syntax, even the vocabulary used, present alterations and additions that lead to a hybrid language.

As far as the perception of her own reality, Spanidou speaks significantly about the fact of being in between two cultural realities in an interview with Mitgang (1986)[23] where she describes herself in an interesting way in terms of perceiving one's professional identity, with these words: 'Strictly speaking, I'm not an American writer or a Greek writer —but that doesn't make me a Greek-American writer. … I was born in Thessaly and lived in Greece for the first 18 years of my life before coming here to study, and I've been an American citizen for the last eight years. It took me a while to realize that I shouldn't consider myself a 'Greek-American' writer'.

The next author, Stratis Haviaras, equally belongs to the category of Greek writers making use of the English language. Haviaras was born in Greece in 1935 and travelled to the USA when he was very young, invited by Kimon Frias, who introduced him to the literary scene there. He returned to Greece in 1961 until 1967, where he went back to the USA and settled in, although he was politically involved in the fight for the restauration of the democracy in Greece during the dictatorship years. He received his MFA Degree in Creative Writing from Goddard College, is the Founding Editor of the *Harvard Poetry Review* and worked for 30 years as director of two small libraries in the Harvard College Library organization.

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22 K. Van Dyck. "*'Beginning with O, the O-mega'. Translingual Literature and its Lessons for Translation*". Columbia University, 2010.

23 H. Mitgang. 'Irini Spanidou, novelist with roots in 2 cultures', *New York Times* 18 September 1986. <http://www.nytimes.com/1986/09/18/books/irini-spanidou-novelist-with-roots-in-2-cultures.html>

He is back to Greece since 2008 where he has been collaborating with the European Centre for the Translation of Literature, the National Centre of the Book in Athens, the Greek Authors Society and the Greek publishing house Patakis. He is the author of seven books of poetry (four in Greek, three in English), and six novels (four in Greek and two in English). He self-translated the novel *When the Trees Sing* (1979), Όταν τραγουδούσαν τα δέντρα (1980), dedicated to life in a German-occupied Greece. As for *The Heroic Age*, set also in Greece in the late 1940's, the author speaks about a country devastated first by Nazi occupation and later on by civil war. The story is narrated by twelve-year-old Panagis who explains how a gang of children leave their village to try to reach Albania. It seems that through his literary work, Haviaras finds his way to recreate part of his journey in the new language, as a tribute to his country and to its people.

Moving now to a different geographical space, but same linguistic combination, author Panos Karnezis was born in Patras in 1967 and moved to England in 1992. In his 30s, he changed his work as mechanical engineer and dedicated himself to literature, after being awarded an MA in Creative Writing by the University of East Anglia. When asked about the reason that made him start writing, his answer was: 'For me, writing was as much an outlet for my nostalgia as it was for my creative urge'[24].

Karnezis' works have all been written first in English and then re-written/self-translated into Greek. He is the author of a collection of short stories: *Little Infamies* (published in England in 2002 and Greece in 2003, Μικρές *α*τιμίες), which are connected narratives set in a nameless Greek village, sometime in the 1950s, in which Karnezis presents a colourful, witty and ironic picture of the surprising lives of its inhabitants. As for his novels, in *The Maze* (2004) / Ο Λαβύρινθος (2004) the author describes the final days of the Greco-Turkish War of 1919-1922, starting with the

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24 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/newtalent/writing/advice_panos1.shtml>

depiction of a distraught Greek army brigade in the Anatolian desert, looking for its way home through to the Mediterranean coast, and its arrival at a little strange town in the middle of the desert. Karnezis' second novel, *The Birthday Party* (2007) / Το πάρτι γενεθλίων (2007), presents an investigation of the life and extreme race for wealth and social success of Marco Timoleon, a shipping tycoon, as he is preparing to celebrate his daughter's 25th birthday. Lastly, in *The Convent* (2010) / Το μοναστήρι (2010), Karnezis tells the story of a baby found on the front steps of Our Lady of Mercy, a 16th-century nunnery in northern Spain, and of stern Sister María Inés, internally tormented by the guilt of an abortion she had in her youth. Asked about this fact in an interview by Lamprini (2010)[25], Karnezi states: 'with this novel I return to Greek topics. The inspiration for *The Convent* was found on a trip to Spain, with the fantasy of a suitcase left at a convent steps. I always start with one image or two and three main characters. After that, I leave the characters do what they want to do and the topic evolves at the same time with the narration.'

Karnezis defends the idea that his topics, his ethos, and his language are not completely English. According to him, he speaks about Greek matters, but in a way someone, who does not know details from the history and the cultural situation of Greece can understand. He adds 'I do not see it as a negotiation, but as a challenge. I like this ecumenical literature, stories that anybody could place in any country in the world, in any time, and still keep their meaning'. Regarding the linguistic issue, in the same interview, the author is asked about his relation with the English language and culture, and his sense of belonging to one or the other reality: 'I write in English, but this is a language spoken by lots of people: English, Americans, South Africans, and many others. They do not all belong to the same culture.'

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25 K. Lamprini. (Λαμπρινή, Κουζέλη), 'Panos Karnezis. I dimokratia einai thima tis eutuxias' [Panos Karnesis. Democracy is the victim of happiness], *To Vima*, 18 April 2010.

This is quite an interesting concept and very right to defend. Literature created under these terms, in a language different from the one in which it was originally thought or emanated from and belonging to a national literature different from the one it might be a reflection of, is not rare and brings to light multiple aspects of language, culture and identity and the way they find their manifestation in writing.

The same applies to another remarkable author, Theodor Kallifatides. Born in Greece in 1938, he went to study in Sweden in 1964 where he stayed, receiving a degree in Philosophy in 1967. He then started working as a lecturer at Stockholm University and became chief editor of the literary magazine *Bonniers* for four years. He wrote his first collection of poetry in Swedish in 1969 and one year later his first novel. Many more followed, until he felt the need to write in Greek, after which he started producing his works in his two languages. Prolific and awarded author, he also writes film scripts, short stories, plays, essays, and editorials, and translates Greek authors into Swedish and vice versa. Many of his titles can be easily identified as possible reflections of the writer's reality: *Minnet i exil* (1969), [The Memory of Exile]; *Utlänningar* (1971), [Foreigners]; *En lång dag i Athen* (1989), [A Long Day in Athens]; *Ett liv bland människor* (1994), [A Life among People]; *Ett nytt land utanför mitt fönster* (2001), [A New Homeland outside My Window]; *Det gångna* är *inte en dröm (2010)* [The Past Is Not a Dream].

Key concepts in Kallifatides' novels are the importance of language and the process of language acquisition, the search for identity and recognition, as well as the feeling of confusion. Other recurring topics are the immigration and the marginalized immigrant and, more precisely, the experience of Greece and of being Greek outside of Greece[26]. Therefore, it is

[26] For more information about this author, there are two very interesting TV interviews in Greek television, in which Kallifatides speaks extensively about his writings and his relation with his

not surprising that in Kallifatides' novels one can find what Kallan (2003) calls 'fictional autodiegetic narrators who sometimes share the same name or biographical data with the writer'; and she adds 'Kallifatides' narrators operate between twin vocabularies and competing cultural codes'[27].

Regarding a different linguistic combination, one cannot forget about Vassilis Alexakis. He was born in Athens in 1943 and moved to France in 1961 to study Journalism. He eventually settled in Paris in 1968, he lived there for almost 50 years, until he decided to move back to Greece, where he died in 2021. Alexakis is another multifaceted and prolific author: he is also a journalist, a cartoonist, and a scriptwriter. In his literary work, Alexakis draws from both Greek and French culture and languages. He published his first book, *Le Sandwich*, written in French, in 1974. He began gradually to feel the need to express himself in his mother tongue, and in 1981, wrote his first book in Greek, *Talgo*. After that, he wrote in the two languages in both directions. Alexakis made use of numerous autobiographical elements in his novels, to refer to his dual belonging to the two countries and two languages and gave full expression to his hybrid literary existence and language. The titles of his books are also quite representative of this: *Paris-Athènes* (1989), [Paris-Athens]; *La langue maternelle* (1995), [The Mother Tongue]; *Les mots étrangers* (2002), [Foreign Words], *Le premier mot* (2010), [The First Word]; or *L'enfant grec* (2012), [The Greek Child].

Last, but not least, we shall mention two more authors, for they are key players in the development of cultural relations between literatures in

two countries and his two languages: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TdoNfuaq_Go> and <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=87YketS_mAc>.

27 M. Kallan. 'Leaving, Losing, Letting Go: some Steps in Bilingual Transformations in the Work of Theodor Kallifatides'. In G. Nagy and A. Stavrakopoulou (eds.) *Modern Greek Literature. Critical Essays*. New York, London, 2003, 138.

Greek and other languages: Dadi Sideri for German, and Mitsos Alexandropoulos for Russian.

The first one, also known as Dadi Sideri-Speck, was born in Thessaloniki and moved to Munich in 1969. She translated many Greek authors into German (among them Charis Vlavianos, Kiki Dimoula and Angelaki-Rooke), as well as German literature (Ingeborg Bachmann, Barbara Köhler and Said) into Greek. She was awarded the Translation Prize of the City of Munich in 1995. She is the author of the bilingual poetry collection of translations *Hinterdem Schlafhöreichmichbesser* / *Πίσω απ' τους ύπνους με ακούω πιο καθαρά* (2001). Her vital role in the connection of the two literary universes, Greek and German, in terms of poetic production is essential and should be considered one of the many values that these bilingual/bicultural writers bring to their literary work. They stand as bridges between languages, cultures and even other authors, adding a special 'flavour' and significance to the literature they produce, making them remarkable although complex authors, and worthy not only to be read (and translated), but to be studied as well.

The same could be said for the writer Mitsos Alexandropoulos, born in Amaliada in 1924, a political refugee in Romania and the Soviet Union during the post-war period, and part of the resistance movement during the German occupation of Greece. He was a member of the Literary Circle, the publishing instrument of the Communist Party of Greece, responsible for the scrutinization of authors' manuscripts and the proposal of corrections and alterations. Alexandropoulos made his first steps into the literary scene with texts in Greek and Russian and became well known in Greece while living abroad, together with other Greek authors (Takis Adamos, Kostas Mpesis, Elli Alexiou, and Apostolos Spilios, among others). Alexandropoulos studied in Moscow, focusing his interest on hagiography, folkways and Russian literature. He went back to Athens in 1975, where he died in 2008, after having been awarded numerous literary prizes. His undoubted relevance in the link between the two cultural and literary universes, Greek

and Russian, is as crucial as it is with the rest of the authors mentioned in this paper.

The mentioned authors are representatives of this fundamental part of worldwide, universal or ecumenical current literature, that we can call migrant literature. A literature that deserves much more attention than what has been traditionally granted to it and to which recognition, hopefully, this paper will contribute.

In terms of the practice of self-translation (the act of translating their own work into a different language from the one they used first), they resort to it to make peace, if needed, in any contentious linguistic situation. Either they initially write in Greek, or they start in the other language and subsequently go back to Greek —writing in the two languages serves to soothe the confusion that their position of in-betweeners might cause them. Some of the authors depicted here might have only written one work in two languages, some have written more than half of their works in two languages. Self-translation or bilingual writing assisted them in coming to terms with their (new or not so new) reality, and to a certain extent, calm their remorse and guilt, as some of them might have been haunted by feelings of betrayal towards their country of origin, their language and, in general, their lives left behind. As Seidel (1986) says, the aim of writing for a diaspora or exile author is 'to transform the figure of rupture back into a figure of connection'[28].

At this point, one could wonder, if these authors are Greek authors, not even Greek authors anymore, or, maybe, just not completely Greek anymore. The same goes with the literary genre they write: do they write fiction, or do they write autobiographies? And in terms of their writing roles, when they write in more than one language: are they authors or are

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[28] M. Seidel. *Exile and the Narrative Imagination*. New Haven, London, 1986, x-xi.

they translators of their own works? More often than not, the answer is not straightforward. We cannot really say that they are one thing or the other. Most of the time, they will be either both, or none of them, according to a postmodernist sense of belonging. If a hyphen is 'a sign used to join words together to make a compound' and to '*hyphenate*' means 'active in more than one sphere or occupation', these authors most likely present a 'hyphenated occupation', or even 'a hyphenated identity'. Maybe the better space to place them would be in their 'hyphen', the middle space they have specially created (either intentionally or unintentionally) for themselves[29]. Speaking about Greek poetry, Van Dyck (2000) also proposes the term 'hyphenated literature', which in our opinion is a good term for the authors covered in this article.

## Conclusion

The topic of Greek migrant writers and the literature they produced is being treated from many points of view. Katsan (2009)[30] speaks about post-civil war intellectuals (that lived in) exile; Tziovas (2009)[31] reflects on diaspora Greek travel writers between 1880 and 1930; Apostolidou

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29 An image used to specifically refer to self-translators by E. Bandín Fuentes, 'The role of self-translation in the decolonization process of African countries', *Estudios Humanísticos: Filología*, 26, 2004, 35-53.

30 G. Katsan. '"Be It Ever so Humble": Nostalgia for Home and the Problem of Return in Post-War Greek Novels'. In D. Tziovas (ed.) *Greek diaspora and migration since 1700: society, politics and culture*. Surrey, 2009, 205-14.

31 D. Tziovas. *Greek diaspora and migration since 1700: society, politics and culture*. Surrey, 2009, 158-173.

(2009)[32] studies the literary and semi-literary work of Greek political exiles published by the Communist Party of Greece and Klironomos (2009)[33] focuses on Greek-American travel writers. This article focuses on multilingual diaspora Modern Greek writers that use their works, deliberately or not, to either appease their remorse or to strengthen their position in an identity quandary. As Apostolidou (2009) states referring to Greek politically exiled authors: 'Exile affects the work of those writers in many different ways even when their themes are completely unrelated to the topic of exile'[34].

Despite the fact that it might be difficult to consider treating all Greek diaspora writers as a cohesive group, a transnational approach forces us to consider the creation of ties between the origin and settlement places and cultures for all of them, as well as a number of common elements, as we saw, namely:

- The importance of the migrant experience in their writing and the fact that they revolve around the explicit or implicit idea of recovery/journey back to old world/language and, consequently, to identity.
- Their role of in-betweeners, since they stand between countries, languages, cultures, societies, identities, and this, as a result, create an undeniable element of hybridity.

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32 V. Apostolidou. 'The Politics of Memory in the Fiction of Greek Political Exiles in Eastern Europe'. In D. Tziovas (ed.) *Greek diaspora and migration since 1700: society, politics and culture.* Surrey, 2009, 215-227.

33 M. Klironomos. 'The Topos of Home in New Greek-American Writing'. In D. Tziovas (ed.) *Greek diaspora and migration since 1700: society, politics and culture*. Surrey, 2009, 239-253.

34 V. Apostolidou. 'The Politics of Memory in the Fiction of Greek Political Exiles in Eastern Europe'. In D. Tziovas (ed.) *Greek diaspora and migration since 1700: society, politics and culture*. Surrey, 2009, 215-228.

- The use of autobiographical elements in their literary works —names, facts, and places corresponding with their own lives.
- The use of more than one language to create the works, be it simultaneously or consecutively, and the influence that the one has over the other.

This migrant literature by writers belonging to different cultural and linguistic universes gives shape to a unique and remarkable literary phenomenon that should be taken into account to a greater extent and which could be useful if applied to the study of other so-called national literatures. Authors sharing dual belonging resort to the use of different strategies to express and alleviate their personal experience, of which self-translation, as a form of what could be called scriptotherapy, is just one of the multiple ways to do so. Works produced by bilingual and bicultural authors reflect in some sense their development into a hybrid identity, and help them to come to terms, if needed, with problematic feelings related to their own existence and experiences, sensation of betrayal or just distancing from their roots and origins. Interestingly, more often than not, their writings help them become part of their new reality by gradually reconciling their two sides, and becoming, at the same time and to a certain extent, the reflection of this process. That is the reason why each work is loaded with a great deal of sociological value.

In terms of Modern Greek literature, the understanding and the study of diaspora and migrant literary production offers, from a multilingual point of view, a new approach that should not be taken lightly from a linguistic, textual, sociological and cultural perspective. Such a methodology shall contribute to a better and wider understanding of authors belonging to more than one geographical and cultural reality —, i.e. authors with a hybrid identity. In terms of literary production, the impact of this situation should make us question established binary assumptions, in terms of authors belonging to countries, genres, or even literary status and writing roles.

Whichever way we think about them, their reality and the value of the literature they produce should be very much taken into account in terms of the importance of migration and translation in literary studies. The way cultures and languages drive their use of other cultures and languages, together with their resultant impact, is a very good proof of the difficulty of setting literary boundaries in this regard. That is if, setting boundaries is at all possible.

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