

# An Approach to the Self-image of Greeks and Albanians through Children's Literature

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**Résumé :** Le présent document tend à explorer la représentation de «l'image de l'immigrant» dans les livres de jeunesse qui sont apparus les dernières années en Grèce et en Albanie (dès 1995). L'image de l'immigré constitue un cas spécifique, indépendant dans le schéma général et qui tente d'articuler «l'autre». Les narrations de la littérature de la jeunesse est une manière de représenter la réalité culturelle dans et à travers laquelle les personnes et les groupes sociaux procèdent ainsi que de distribuer et de découvrir l'espace idéologique et culturel de leur époque. La façon dont un symbole majeur et public, comme l'enfant ou l'adolescent «immigrant», est représentée comprend certaines mentalités et idéologies à travers lesquelles des pratiques sociales, conscientes ou inconscientes et des idéologies se reflètent. On dirait que grâce à la représentation de l'«immigrant», nous pouvons également chercher l'image de soi d'un peuple et dans notre cas l'image du peuple grec et du peuple albanais. Il est généralement admis que l'image de soi ne peut exister de manière indépendante mais seulement en opposition avec l'image de «l'autre», de «l'étranger», ou en d'autres termes (dans notre cas) de l'«immigrant». Le matériel de la recherche actuelle et de ses objectifs impose le choix d'une méthodologie bien articulée qui se base sur des outils provenant de deux espaces différents, celle de la théorie de la narration et de la théorie de l'iconologie culturelle. Dans cette étude de cas nous considérons que la théorie de la narration est nécessaire, car il peut éclairer le lien interne des motifs et le point de vue personnel des héros, à travers lequel l'écrivain choisit d'explorer l'image d'un «soi-même» collective qui mène à un «autre collectif».

**Mots-clés :** immigration, représentation de l'immigrant, "autre", iconologie, Littérature

**Abstract:** The present paper will try to explore the representation of the "immigrant's image" in children's books that were circulated in Greece but also in Albania the recent years (from 1995 and after). The image of the immigrant consists a separated, self-articulated and independent case in the general scheme that tries to articulate the "other". The narratives of children's literature consist a way to represent the cultural reality in and through which the persons and the social groups proceed, distribute and discover the ideological and cultural space of their era. The way that a major and public symbol, like the child or the teenage "immigrant", is represented, includes certain mentalities and ideologies -that often are turned into delusions- through which the conscious or unconscious social practices and ideologies are mirrored. Having said that we point that through the representation of the "immigrant" we can also investigate the self-image of a people, in our case the self-image of the Greek and Albanian people. It is generally accepted that the self-image cannot exist independently but only in contradiction with the image of the "other", of the "foreigner", or in other words (in our case) of the "immigrant". The material of the present research and its goals impose the selection of

a well-articulated methodology, which is based upon tools that originate from two different spaces, the theory of the narration and the theory of the cultural iconology. In this case-study we think that the theory of narration is a necessity, since it can light the inner connection of the motives and the personal view of the heroes, through which the writer chooses to locate and explore the image of a “collective self” toward a “collective other”.

**Key words:** immigration, representation of the immigrant, “other”, iconology, Literature

### **Introduction: the “other”**

The “other” is a notion related to issues of identity and being different and a word to which various uses and meanings have been attached over recent years. The images of “stranger”, “other” and “different” are detected and identified in human symbolic representations assuming various forms, which are usually indeed simplified and monolithic and rarely complicated and mixed. They are either accompanied by plus sign judgments (very rarely) or by minus sign and monolithic judgments (most commonly). Their regular presence substantiates a nearly universal need of man which is to form, as part of a minor or major group, an image for the others that is usually simplified, contouring and persistent, fundamentally able to differentiate man from himself (Stenou, 1998).

A privileged area for the detection of the image of the other and the various characterizations is the par excellence form of symbolic representation, namely the area of literary fiction, that is the novel and the short story, mainly because literary language, which is rich in connotations, symbolisms, metaphors and patterns of imagery is offered in a certain manner not only for the representation of the “other’s” image but also for the reproduction of symbols and stereotypes with particular ease as far as national or cultural images are concerned (Ambatzopoulou, 1998: 90-96). Besides, in literary works of fiction the act of narration itself is accomplished through characters and heroes placed usually among bipolar patterns of good-evil, hero - antihero, “our” and “stranger”, all of which allow for the unambiguous distinction and impression of the miscellaneous heroes and the varied literary characters through the multifold procedure of text employment by the reader (Kanatsouli, 2000: 87-95). Furthermore, the authors since they themselves live in a specific environment, imprint, express and reproduce the dominant ideology and collective fantasies as they support their readability through the reader’s expectation horizon. Thus, it is reasonable for every author-creator to incorporate, frame and transform elements of the unconscious mind, collective fantasy and also the visions and ideas of the social classes, especially the dominant ones.

The representation of the “other” and “different” in the area of fiction is a complicated process with two main route stages. Initially the image of the “other” is vague and fluid and influenced by the creative potential of every writer and the ensuing atmosphere. However, during the process this image through varied interactive fermentations between reading audience and text is turned into a generalization, is simplified, is consolidated and very often

results in a national or cultural stereotype. In contemporary times, such kind of generalizing procedures form a particularly complex and intricate network of mutual and successive feedbacks which is expressed very distinctly mainly through the all-powerful mass media. Apart from other symbolic forms of expression and representation, literature had and still has a vital participation in the function of this network mainly because it can, in contrast with the mass media which function intensely and in the short run, transfer and imprint the image of "stranger" in the long run and also because the duration of the literary myth or literary character is consolidated more safely and less superficially in the reader's mind (Economou, Agorastou, 1992).

The analysis and study of the literary image, literary type and the stereotyped national or racial characteristics in prose has gone through various stages and periods. Today it is considered the basic target of comparative literature and constitutes the field of convergence and collaboration among many social sciences. It is agreed that it can contribute to the understanding of fundamental social functions and human behaviors and mentalities in times when mono-ethnic and monoculture societies are totally turned into multiethnic and multicultural. The analysis of the image of the "other" in literature allows us to see how the meanings and emotions, which are invested through the literary texts, reflect the ideas, values and attitudes of society and also make us realize that they are shaped not only through the expectations of the subjects of any decreed group but through the social and historical reality as well and the dominant and ensuing ideology of the dominant class which it transports (Frangoudaki, Dragona, 1998).

A special citation should be made to children's literary works, those addressed mainly to children and thus contributing towards a socialization of the child and adolescent which finds itself in its most dynamic phase, a dialectical-historical interdependence and interaction with the variations of reality and transformed in "products of society which at the same time produce society" (Veloudis, 1998).

### **Objective, methodology and research material**

The objective of this work is the detection and recording of literary types of the "Albanian immigrant" which are registered in novels published over recent years in Greece and Albania. The parallel and comparative reading of literary works of fiction written by either Albanian or Greek authors opens the road to see simultaneously the image of the other in two different literary representations. It is implied that the field of comparison is wide and open. The first concern of this work is to see how the character of the Albanian immigrant is imprinted in both the Albanian and Greek novel. Another preoccupation is to see how the Greek author perceives the course and the life of the Albanian in Greek society and how the Albanian author himself perceives his fellow countryman emigrant or even how he processes his own experiences being an immigrant in Greece himself. It is exceptionally useful to find the common elements and the differences in the representations of the various literary characters and types which constitute and make up the image of the Albanian emigrant in the literary works of the two countries. Does the Albanian writer perceive his fellow countryman as a poor, dangerous, ill-natured, aggressive man? Does

he interpret their behavior, justify and verify the stereotyped characteristics which have possibly been attributed to him?

In this work the profiles of the heroes and heroines from different cultural/ethnic and religious settings will be examined and also the ways in which their relationship with individuals and institutions from the reception environment is described. It is extremely interesting to locate the type of techniques employed in the construction of the image of the “other” in two different literary landscapes. It has already been realized in research, which took place in earlier years, that the image of the Albanian immigrant has the stereotyped and archetypal characteristics (Karakitsios, Karasavvidou, 2005).

The literary type of the immigrant and the Albanian in particular comprises the major part of the image of the “other” in the Greek literature of the last decade and nearly presents the greatest interest. In Greece and Albania as well the publishing production is meager. In Albania the search for novels whose topic is the immigration of refugees in Greece for financial reasons resulted in two texts, one written in Greek by an Albanian author who resides permanently in Greece and one play written in Albanian in 2003. We rejected the novel by Northern Epirus descending Telemachos Kotsia (Three generations of Americans) because the greater part of the novel refers to the immigration of a Northern Epirus family in America (Kotsias, 2001: 100-105). In Greece, with the exception of the novel “To hear your name well” by S. Demetriou and the “Not fluent Greek” by Thanasis Himonas, most works of fiction move within the boundaries of the juvenile-adolescent novel. (It seems that juvenile literature compared to its adult counterpart offers greater flexibility and mobility as well as adjustment to the social standards or that it has an extremely powerful relation with the reason and content of Education so that the former processes fictionally what the latter accepts as part of its program, for example, Environmental Education - ecological novels, Special Education - novels whose heroes are physically impaired children, Intercultural Education - novels whose heroes are emigrants (Jenks, 1996).

The following Greek juvenile novels form the basic research material:

1. “Little brown disgusting ball”, V. Iliopoulos, Patakis 2003.
2. “Gasmed the fugitive with the flute”, Katerina Mouriki, Papadopoulou, 2003.
3. “The road to heaven is long”, Maroula Kliafa, Kedros 2003.
4. “One child, two home countries”, Maria Kokkinou, Minoas 2002.
5. “The little diary of frontiers”, Gasmed Kaplani, A. Livani, 2006.
6. “E Bukura Ime”, Skender Demolli, transl., Maria Kamboli.

The reading of the literary works was based on tools which come from the field of cultural iconology and social anthropology. The objective of cultural iconology *Imagologie*, branch of Comparative Philology, is the investigation of the “image” of the “other”, the “foreign” country, the people and its civilization, as it is presented in the literary texts and is essentially a system of thought which confronts the literary text as a document, a testimony for the “foreigner” or the “other”. It advances following specific steps and through certain stages investigating the images - usually manufactured - of the “foreigner” and his civilization based on the organization of the text in various levels: in lexical

level, hierarchy of relations, scenario and thematic motifs (Pageux, 1988, Guyard, 1988, Ambatzopoulou, 1998).

The social anthropology contributes to the reading of the literary text concerning the category of its universal - local and mixed images (Wierlaher, 2000) -. Universal are those images which correspond to social invariables uniting people independently of identity and civilization, such as birth, death etc., and local are the ones related to cultural particularities such as the Ramadan or the Greek Easter, or language, memory etc. (Blioumi, 2002). The images are detected basically in the numerous scenes of the literary texts and comprise a vital parameter in the construction of image as far as literary writing is concerned.

### **Routes of reading**

The dominant and signified attitudes of the heroes who come from different cultural/ethnic settings in the novels were investigated and the following social invariables were chosen either because they appear statistically consistent in the most novels or because they sustain the load and web of narration and form the conditions which an immigrant is expected to meet in the reception country. Namely: i) Love, ii) Perception of the new country and memory, iii) Social relations, iv) Employment relations, v) Invasion and reception.

#### **i) Love**

Love among foreigners, when imprinted in literature, is an ever dynamic and charming image since it is the ideal means of familiarization of the "other" and simultaneously the par excellence process of acceptance and identification with the other. When indeed the love affair between immigrant and Greek fails to be fulfilled what is implied seems to be something of a forbiddance dictated by the cultural, ethnic divergence and economic inequity. A love affair among individuals of different nationality, class, culture, color and race contains something essentially forbidden and also something provocative, and attractive, probably because it touches upon the boundaries of the impossible and the unfulfilled. It is not coincidental that T.V. soap operas have sustained increasing viewing on this kind of relations not only among foreigners or outlanders but also among individuals from different class and culture. However, it is the imprinting of the love affair and the best case concerns the printing of collective and other stereotypes related with the image of stranger who invades social reality.

In almost all of the literary works of this research there cannot be detected any sign of flirting or love affair despite the heroes entering at some point in their lives the adolescent, after-adolescent or even marriage period. There is no love affair registered among fellow countrymen even less among those of different nationalities. The latter is rather considered as something forbidden and is suggestively withheld. The complaint of the Albanian female student-adolescent in the novel (*The road to heaven is long*) is very typical, a girl who is dreaming of parties and flirting among the young all of which is considered forbidden desires making her feel jealous of the Greek counterpart heroine. In the novel *Gasmed, the fugitive with his flute* we notice an adolescent who is turning into a man in the small society of the Athenian region, experiencing the

process of ethnic isolationism without the least allusion to his love quest. In the novel *Little brown disgusting ball* despite Clara's, the heroine's, passage to adulthood in the narrative time of the novel there is not even a sign of the least possible love affair in spite of the fact that her Greek coach is fit for this role.

The unique exception occurs in the novel (*One child two home countries*), where there is a typical scene that leaves a taste of parity and acceptance of the other. The flirting takes place between the Greek Eleni and the young Albanian Ferit, her fellow-student, who has hidden his true origin and is considered to be Greek by the whole student community. In the novel, Ferit and his family have changed their language, religion and name and have been fully assimilated by the Greek community. Nobody can any longer recognize behind the family... an Albanian family is hiding. The particular family reveals the stereotypic function of an Albanian family in the Greek space. However, the suspicious reader may accept this development as the success of the assimilating function of Greek society and that finally the love affair concerns two fellow countrymen than two foreigners. Furthermore, the fact that it advances confirms the full assimilation of Ferit in the Greek society of the county of Halkida and not the equal acceptance of the Albanian immigrant.

*In the end he stopped, took a deep breath and ended up saying...  
That's me, a little Albanian who's turned into a little Greek.  
She looked at him and asked:  
Why are you telling me all this?  
Because I love you ... p.7.*

Things are somewhat different in the Albanian literary works. In the pioneering novel *Little diary of frontiers*, by G. Kaplani, the writer articulates his writing in the coexistence and convergence of essay writing and literary narration of personal and collective experiences. Through his pages he manages to record intensely in three scenes his own Albanian immigrant look on the social invariable of individuals, that is love. *Loneliness... loneliness... In this city the one who suffers from terrible loneliness, so much that he is even jealous of stray dogs. He is young, aroused by beautiful things and especially by beautiful girls... At nights, when he goes to bed he caresses his body... On Saturday late at night he will go to the sex cinema. He will come out disgusted with loneliness becoming harsher... p. 93.*

In the play (*My fair one*), love is imprinted in numerous scenes as the basic form of abuse, either as white slavery trade or as display, page 42. Another interesting aspect is also the interpretative look of the author on the issue of love relations among foreigners, which is voiced by Jemal and reflects at least the primitive assumption of the Greek reality. At the same time he explains how difficult love affairs between Albanians and Greeks are. *Jemal stopped in front of the window of a café and looked at the people inside. "I have never seen such beautiful girls" he said innocently... p. 102.*

As the novel unfolds there is also imprinted a 1960s fabricated argument embellished with Balkan phallocentrism, which refers to the lover-immigrant



coming from Mediterranean countries... *But Jemal found the chance to keep on chatting, saying that rich wives are dying for negroes and immigrants, since there are essentially no men in these countries. To be more exact, men either sleep with one another or leave their wives alone or they don't have the time...* p. 104.

Marriage as the institutional consolidation of the love affair between Greek and Albanian immigrants is not imprinted in any novel. When it takes place, it is not marriage, not even a match but a hypocritical transaction, as for example in the play (*E bukura lme*) where the protagonist Anna is forced to "marry" in order to obtain the green card, p. 21.

In conclusion, the image of love which should be a scene of universality, is suppressed by the Greek authors with the unique exception being the novel (*One child two home countries*). On the contrary, in Albanian texts love is certified as a scene of locality that enhances otherness and inequality between the Albanian immigrant and the Greek citizen. To summarize, it seems that love is imprinted in the majority as a scene of locality in both Greek and Albanian texts. However, in the details there emerges a typical superficial approach and suppression of love affairs on the Greek authors' side and a characteristic emphasis on the Albanian authors' side concerning the description of sexual problems that Albanian immigrants both men and women encounter. Cases of sexual abuse and white slavery of girls from Albania are not the object of elaboration only by Albanian writers. In fact in the play (*My fair one*) one of the women protagonists is Anna, the young immigrant, who is driven to prostitution after a twofold blackmail by her employer and her Albanian love companion.

## ii) Perception of the new home country and Memory

The "Perception of the new home country" in Greek novels is imprinted as a scene of locality, which in the course of unfolding the story is transformed into a scene of universality, since both the means of adjustment of the Albanian and the conquest of the Greek language signify in advance a clear and absolute accession in Greek society, namely the full assimilation. Religion takes on a vital role in the assimilation process, since in most cases the Albanian immigrants convert to Christianity and christen both themselves and their under age children as well. It is not only the rejection of the past, namely distant Albania, but also the immigrant's effort to discover and construct a new embrace country. It should also be stressed that despite most of the hero-immigrants being of Greek origin (with the exception of the novel *One child two home countries*, the rest of the immigrants are of Greek origin, either directly, as in the case of a Greek grandmother who comes from Samarina and accidentally was blocked in Albania in 1944, or indirectly as in the case of some ancestor, yet with no other explanations), and normally the new home country should provide the big embrace for the immigrants. However, this does not seem to differentiate quite much either the average Greek or the attitude of the Greek state towards the Albanian economic refugee.

Of extreme interest is the observation that in the Greek novels the memory scenes of home country are rare and the references related to the one left

behind by the immigrants nearly disappear. In a few cases a reference is made to Albania, the home country, the representations of the past. What prevails is a deafening silence about Albania, mother and home country of these immigrants. In this case, too, the novel *One child two home countries* is an exception. It seems that the memory of home country loses weight in the mind of Albanian immigrant heroes and the home country comes to mind as a memory of the ancestors who either await a remittance or the accomplishment of some visit and help. It could also be interpreted as lack of temper to analyze the issue. Thus, Gasmed (*Gasmed, the fugitive and his flute*) remembers his home country Albania, only because he is expected by a black-dressed mother and a grandmother, Maria has nearly repressed it (*The road to heaven is long*), Clara has almost forgotten it (*Little brown disgusting ball*) since her parents already live in Greece, whereas Ferit (*One child two home countries*) does not feel homesick about anything in Albania.

In all four Greek novels a similar tendency of silencing is prevalent. The immigrant seems to get rid of his past, to build a brand new self from the start, similar to the Greek average and in the end to be happy. The oblivion of the home country for the Albanian immigrant comes as a compulsory imposition through the “voluntary” choice of assimilation as a personal strategy of adjustment to the new home, which, in the end, fully accepts the Albanian immigrant (Ziras, 2001: 92-99). In addition, in all four Greek novels the hero immigrants initially manage to survive and later to be incorporated. That is to say, there is a typical happy ending of the stories, which favors the beautifying of the reality of Greek society and slowly fabricates the myth of the friendly, “open” Greek society towards the other and different.

Albanian literary works are differentiated in this respect. A great part of the novel *The little diary of frontiers* is occupied by the continuous collation of then and now, namely what used to happen in the past and what happens now. Through this comparison the author smoothly explains and interprets the massive flight and exodus of the Albanian citizen. Through the innocent and naïve eyes of the immigrant Jamel or the two guides or the child of sex (four lively literary types) the author compares the Greek society and its consuming commodities and curses the communist system and Hodja. The reference to classical anecdotes of the black period of E. Hodja colors the society of Albania and offers the keys to a better reading of the behavior and reaction of the average Albanian immigrant when he crosses the border and makes an effort to adjust to then new standards.

Furthermore, in both Albanian texts, some scenes are met in which the madness and moodiness of the immigrant to his new home country are self-evidently and completely differently imprinted. A very typical example is the extract from the novel (*Little diary of frontiers*) which follows: *The immigrant believes that he deserves a better country than the one he was born in... This conflict will accompany him through his whole life... it will be the source of his guilt... repulse, homesickness, melancholy, madness and if he makes it in the new home country, then he may come to terms with the old home country... p. 167.* And further on: *flight signifies conflict with the home country and the search for a new home resembles a search for a new embrace which is not home*



*country but stepmother. The immigrant believes that he deserves a better country. This conflict will accompany him through his whole life... p.165.*

The same is also detected in the play (*E bukura lme*) where Anna, the young immigrant, is a victim of abuse firstly, of her Albanian companion and secondly, a victim of abuse by the Greek businessman who pushes her into prostitution. *Immigration is the greatest life adventure, which provides you with limitless possibilities of death. Therefore, go back home the soonest possible... p. 44.*

In the end, the look of both the Greek and Albanian writers in the imprinting of the social invariable which is “perception of the new home country and memory”, guides us in different directions. The former avoids the analysis of the Albanian immigrant’s home country and brings forth scenes of universality since this is what is imposed on him by the single-ethnic reading of the Greek social reality. On the contrary, the Albanian writer’s look expresses in various ways the painful progressing of the immigrant to an endless road through his moodiness and regressions. It differentiates between the luck of first generation immigrants and second and roughly represents the differences. For the second generation the birthday country operates as home country «*The first generation is the one which does the washing-up. It is the generation who does not speak fluently, the one who doesn't speak at all, the one who is terrified of the police, of the employer's look... the one that is saving up money and quite plenty of resentfulness...*” p.76. “*Your child is not like you...You used to lick over your wounds like a beaten dog when you were rejected... and felt like a stranger. Your child doesn't feel the same. When it is rejected it doesn't look like a beaten dog but rather like a wounded wild animal. For this child there is only one home country and it will either love it or hate it...*” p.155.

### iii) Social relations

In Greek novels the social invariable of social relations is imprinted as a scene of locality and at other times as one of universality. The scenes of universality which underline a friendly acceptance of the Albanian by the Greek that is at least finally transformed into full and essential acceptance in all four Greek novels, outnumber those of locality. It is also important to stress that hostility towards the Albanian immigrant is rarely expressed through particular individuals and specific characters. Most of the times the enemy and the one negatively disposed of towards the Albanian immigrant, is the impersonal society, the impersonal average citizen whose negative disposition becomes sequential, the outcome of some rumors and peculiar uncontrollable situations. In other words, it is not that any specific characters that bring about this effect but first, a vague hostile atmosphere which interfuses through the aid of the Mass Media function, and second and most important, it is the expression of a status quo notion which is derived by institutions such as the police, other services and customs. Thus, while a hostile attitude towards the Albanian immigrant is intensely imprinted, there is no essential representation of a single “type” of anti-Albanian being the basic medium of negative emotions towards the immigrant. Simply some typical stereotypes referring to the elliptical literary type of the anti-Albanian are stabilized, namely cynicism and irony together with absolute self-interest.

The characters (elliptical or complete) who are the carriers of friendly dispositions towards the Albanian immigrant are definitely greater in number and prevail. The following scenes from the novel (*Gasmed, the fugitive and his flute*) are very characteristic:

*Are you Albanian? Someone asked him at the building site.*

*He nodded... They approached him smilingly...*

*He told them that he was an illegal immigrant. They let him sleep and work at the building site, p. 60.*

In nearly every place that Gasmed is passing through, he meets kind and sympathetic Greeks willing to help him in any way. At first it is Mr. Dimitris, the sympathetic driver who likes him as if he were his own son and transports him from Ioannina to Thessaloniki, where they meet again and Gasmed is helped to go to Athens because...

*.... Mr. Dimitris was a good-natured and kind-hearted man. After his son's loss he became even better. He considered all children as his...p.72 and as the story unfolds, the ex immigrant from America, Papatzimis, because the young man with the sharp features reminded him of himself 50 years ago in America, p. 135.*

The same is repeated in the novel (*The road to heaven is long*), where Mrs. Ioannou opens up her house to Veronica. In the end of the novels, the whole of society sides up with the Albanian immigrant and there seems to be a complete success in the immigrant's effort for survival and development. Thus, Veronica herself, her brother and the whole family manage to adjust with Veronica becoming the top student in her class and a flag attendant in the school parade, Clara becoming a world champion, Maria finishing school, Ferit becoming a typical middle-class Greek and Gasmed a little hero, who the whole of society is ready to apologize to and thank. Of course the question remains: why should Albanian immigrants perform something impressive to be placed among the Greek society?

On the contrary, in Albanian works things appear to be different. The equivalent scenes imprinting images of universality, that is Greeks who have a friendly disposition towards the Albanian immigrant, namely two-three characters, are scant. For instance, in the novel (*The little diary of frontiers*), some characters are recorded such as the strange gentleman who buys the immigrants a warm cup of tea, the gentle police officer Paul, who condemns his colleagues and states that he will quit and work at the airport, and finally the film director Christos, who nearly kidnaps the protagonist of the novel and helps him escape in Athens.

*Quote: Some Greeks had been standing out of their doors and their look was filled with pity mixed with endless surprise... p. 55. Sometimes grandmothers offered to give us some water... p. 51.*

In all the other images cynical Greeks ranging from hostile to neutral are marching, ready when the chance is given to express pity, fear, indifference and aggressiveness, emotions and reactions that rule out any attempt for social relations.

*At some moment one of the people frequenting the place stood up and got out. He was holding a box of biscuits in his hand, which he started throwing to the crowd as we toss wheat to feed the pigeons or to be more exact as we feed corn to the hens... p. 57.*

In some cases the superficial friendliness of Greeks is easily transformed into rough social exclusion, as it is so colorfully mentioned in the same novel.

*...You changed your name. You were baptized. You learned to speak the language: rare words and commonplace expressions. The former to charm the audience, the latter to show that you are not different. Still, you feel like a stranger, very stranger, excessively stranger, an absolute intruder... p. 111.*

Or the social distance between the Greek and the Albanian is mouthed by the female average Greek, who is sensitive, but still Greek.

*Quote: Becoming related to the Albanians is out of the question... I have two daughters but even if I had a hundred ..... no! no! no!... p. 40 (E bukura lme).*

At some point in the scene, the fear, surprise and wonder of the Greek citizen, who cannot interpret the new element that's coming, is intensely imprinted and his distance with the Albanian immigrant becomes greater.

*Inside the video club there was only the sales girl, a very beautiful brunet girl. When she saw us intruding in this way, dressed almost in rags, dirty black from the hardships, she got scared, stood up and stepped back... She didn't even ask what we wanted, she just kept staring at us as if she expected us to attack her or steal from the shop... (The little diary of frontiers, p.108).*

The Albanian authors are attempting to interpret the Greeks people's emotions and attitudes.

*The rich don't usually have any problem with you. Those who are afraid of you most are the ones who don't read a lot or watch too much T.V ... those who fear degrading themselves to the status of the Albanians... p. 145, (The little diary of frontiers).*

There is a different notion in regard to the representation of the social invariable of "social relations" among the writers, which is connected with their already prefabricated ideas despite their inclination to shed light into the aspects of immigration as objectively as possible. It is not so much the average Greek that frightens the Albanian illegal immigrant as, mainly, the structures of an authoritative state, which assigns the role of Albanian extermination to the police and bureaucracy, without though enabling the Greek to avoid the stereotypic confrontation.

#### iv) Employment relations

In the Greek texts the social invariable of "employment relations" is an image of locality that finally is turned into universality, since in all if them the logic of a favorable and happy ending is existent. It must of course be stressed that the majority of Greeks essentially considers work abuse as a self-explanatory and expected situation. There are only a few cases where some people object to the conditions of exploitation regarding the immigrant. They are usually some special people without any special appeal though, such as Papatzimis, a caricature of the Greek-American - *who knows what foreign lands and exploitation is like* - in *Gasmed, the fugitive and his flute*, Mrs. Olga, a lonely lady who appreciates the humanity shown by the Albanian family of Ferit in *One child two home countries*, and Mrs. Ioannou in the novel *The road to heaven is long*.

Work abuse is partly touched upon or referred to allusively mainly through the context that describes the living conditions of the Albanians, without though describing the behavior of Greek employers as ruthless, when they happen to exploit their immigrant subordinates... *The contractor's group employed many Albanians, since the wages asked were particularly low. At first many Greek craftsmen were indignant at this situation which left them unemployed and fed the imported ones... However, as time went by, they realized that the cost of the construction decreased thus facilitating the purchase of real estate... (Gasmed, the fugitive and his flute).*

Furthermore, the immigrants are employed in job activities without any prestige and financial or social acknowledgement: *"The Greeks don't do these jobs any more under this payment"* page 40, *"Little brown disgusting ball"* and elsewhere, *"It is our fault says father...."* p. 41 (*One child two home counties*).

On the other side that is in the Albanian works the character of the compassionate Greek is from non existent to rare. Exploitation and mockery are more than enough. The Greek businessman not only rewards the Albanian employee in the least but does not give him what he has promised, which pushes the immigrant to the limits. Some typical extracts of work abuse of immigrants by a Greek businessman follow just below, taken from the play (*E bukura Ime*).

*Nikos: (Albanian employee in the illegal business of Panos, officially a pizza place, but essentially a centre of white slavery trafficking and trading or movable brothel according to the sarcastic remark made by the owner Panos) ... You are doing just fine, boss... filling your pocket with money! While I.... I've been working for one year and eight months and haven't been paid a penny! When will you pay me?*

*Panos: I've told you a hundred times Nikolaki: I'll give all of it to you... It is you I work for, such an asshole of myself... Where is my profit? Even the little that I make I have to give it to the state! You just don't know what it means to deal with the kalasnikof called IRS (Internal Revenue Service)!*

*Nikos: But I do know how to deal with the other one, the real one....* p. 24.

*Nikos (Albanian employee): I'm leaving but I don't see any money*

*Panos: Damn it! You'll get it but all of it together...* p. 30.

And finally

*Nikos (Albanian immigrant): Hey boss! How are we going to close this account? How are we going to clear things up? Using our good will or our own machine, the kalasnikof?*

*Panos: He wants money on top of everything else! Who provides food and water for you? I do!!! And you want money too? You are aware of the fact that you are sleeping in my place!*

*Nikos: Yes, but I work all day, sleep in the storeroom and keep watch of your shop...* page 31

And further on...

*Nikos: I want my money...*

*Panos; Why? Have you signed a contract with any lawyer?*

*Nikos: No, but don't forget that I have this Albanian machine to close matters: The one with thirty-two bullets which goes dandandan...*

*Panos: Come on now! I was just joking! What are you Albanians made of? How easily you get upset! You turn your mind straight to guns! Well, how much quieter the Indians, the Pakistanis are! Anyway, come, take the small change I have in my pocket... you'll get the rest all together... p. 34 (My fair one)...*

## v) Invasion and reception

It is a common secret that in past times, in previous centuries the transitions of the Albanians to the Greek region it was simply a frequent tactic. The collective fable of the personnel transition from North is still maintained in an unfinished way. The naming of the *Albanian route*, which we find in many regions of the north-western Greece, confirms such types of movements as other place-names also do eg *Vlach route*, which declare something proportional... The transitions of the Albanians, that is to say the entrance way of the "other", of the Albanian immigrant in the Greek territory constitute first of all a typical part in the heroes reports. But any other similarities ends right here because in Greek novels "illegal" immigrant transitions adventures in the Greek territory constitute a brief, almost summarized report. In the novel "*Little brown disgusting ball*" the hero begins his long journey with "*a very few things in a bag and reaches Ioannina walking through secret paths ... Even if he had walked for three or more days and nights being constantly threatened under arrest or ever worse putting his life in danger from greek or albanians shoots*" (14). In the novel "*One child, two home countries*" this movement is almost prettified due to the existence of a relative, who waits and act almost as an reception institution. In this situation we have to count in the legal way the transition takes place: "*Precisely in one week, he, his little sister Valmira, and their parents would be up and about for the train to Greece, waiting behind the railway station with their big and only one suitcase*" (23).

The comparison and the juxtaposition of the above extracts with the reality which depicts immigrants entrance conditions, arise a lot of queries and questionings about gullible partialities and deliberate carelessness concerning the Greek writers who counterfeits the reality. Only in the "*Gasmed the fugitive with the flute*" novel the difficulties and the substance of such an attempt of coming to Greece after all these adventures are being depicted with the necessary seriousness. On the other hand the passage of the borders constitutes a fundamental episode for the Albanian writer, Gasment Kaplani and it is being vividly represented in his novel "*The little diary of frontiers*". The story of this exceptional literary work starts and ends with its basic motif - the entrance of the borders, and the endless walking, but also with the perpetual miserable living conditions in the centre for refugees: "*Suddenly he makes a simple calculation: thirty four times in seven years he has walked from Albania to Greece...and to these he has to add also the days in the detention room, every time he is expelled. Unbelievable, he whispers, in seven year I have roughly lived two years literally in the borders*" (45).

## Instead of conclusion

The literary representation of the image of the Albanian immigrant and the recording of the episodes and situations (difficulties, experiences) of their insignificant heroes differ in the two types of books. Thus, the scenes of universality which are abundant in the Greek works either disappear or are transformed into scenes of locality in the Albanian works. The Greek writers attempt to record the transition to an incipient multicultural Greek society. This

is attempted with a great deal of cautiousness, self-criticism and concealment of the painful scenes which might annoy the Greek reader. Perhaps a novel in which the hero is the Albanian and the anti-hero the Greek cannot easily be a “success” in publishing and commercial terms. In the end, however, what remains is a rather superficial approach of the Albanian that is not convincing either in terms of a “happy end” or of the affected stereotypes of the good Greek “who knows of foreign lands”.

In the two Albanian works (*The little diary of frontiers, My fair one*) the perspective and the view of reality change. Now the look becomes more penetrating, the angles are not blunt, the ugliness is not concealed. Narration changes and its techniques are innovated. Through the texts another kind of writing, more authentic, and a look that insists upon the realistic representation and interpretation of reality spring up. Memory and experience are brought out and narration moves within the boundaries imposed by the logic of autobiographical speech, namely first-person narration, and an internal perspective combined with the imprinting of harsh descriptions that aim at the recording of realistic and authentic scenes and a clear presentation of the techniques of plausibility, place-names, names, phrases and Albanian jokes (Barthes, 1982).

However, beyond the differences, there are also basic common elements which possibly augur news, quests or at least the starting point for one people understanding and accepting another. First of all, in all the literary works the dream for success is imprinted particularly in the same denotational way and words: *my wish and oath is to succeed, the dream of all immigrants is to return home successful*. A second common element is the means used by the immigrant to enter the country. All immigrants enter the country by crossing the border illegally, except for Ferit and his family, who come by train. Of course the similarities end here, since, in the Greek novels, the movement of the illegal immigrant is referred to in brief. To be more specific, the course of the Albanian immigrant is described in two to three lines: .... *So he set off with only a few things in a handbag and arrived at Ioannina, taking secret paths... Even though he had walked for three maybe more days and nights, facing danger of being arrested or even shot by Greek and Albanian ...* p.14.

Yet this reference is not at all related with the descriptions and narrations of the novel “The little diary of frontiers” in whose beginning and end the basic issue is the crossing of the border, the endless hiking and also the endless days and nights of miserable living in refugee centers, scenes that are completely absent in the Greek novels.

*... And all of a sudden he makes a simple calculation: thirty-four times within seven years going from Albania to Greece on foot... plus the days spent in prison every time he is deported. Unbelievable, he says to himself, within seven years I have actually spent two years in the borders, p. 45...*

A third common element is the use of nearly the same adjectives in the description of the Albanian immigrant’s external characteristics.

In particular... *A very thin and small man due to starvation, of about thirty-five years of age but wrinkled as a fifty-year old. Beside him a woman of the same height and wrinkles on the face... The man and boy are similarly dressed. Cotton trousers and narrowly-buttoned jacket over a neutral shirt. The mother*



and little girl are dressed in a neutral and faded dress... p. 27 "One child two home countries".

.... He was ashamed of his old and buttoned jacket, and of his thousand times washed, fresh-ironed trousers... He was also embarrassed of his blonde hair... p. 31, "One child two home countries".

The same adjectives are selected by the Albanian writers as well, and draw a more or less similar picture.

... The bleak colors of our clothes, the poorly nourished faces looking fierce also because of the cold, the hunger and the weariness, that empty look which resembles an orphan's or the man's who has sensed failure and complete defeat... p.172 (*The little diary of frontiers*).

It seems that the Greek authors assume the new reality and elaborate on it according to their own logic. They easily and effortlessly attribute generalized judgments of stereotypic character to the immigrant as far as his spiritual and intellectual world is concerned. This specific literary production, or if you wish, the symbolic articulation of objective reality which is experienced by all on the basis of subjective idiosyncratic traits and previous knowledge, pervaded, as expected, all the participants of the Greek reality independent of race or gender. The Albanian may in reality be a person who is evolved, transformed and developed; however, in literary works he has had the time to acquire fixed and repeated features that is an already stereotypic image. When other types of characteristics appear, for example the Albanian immigrant who speaks three languages or the Albanian immigrant who owns a very expensive cell phone, then the Greek's universal response is cynicism and irony. The dominant ethnic group does not have the disposition and flexibility to perceive the personal differences among the individuals of a racial or cultural or ethnic group, despite the fact that this kind of narrations have the potential of clearly distinguishing the contradictions not only concerning the immigrant's function but the attitude of the society that hosts him and recognizes in itself democratic and multicultural features.

Finally, we realize that in those novels, independently of the writer's origin, where the writing selects the third person narration and by and large the classical realism, the result is a typical stereotypic representation of the other. However, the part in the text where multi-prismatic narration, internal monologue and applications of innovative narrative and fictional techniques meet, there the writer's look overthrows the conventional and stereotypic and illuminates the social reality with new ideas. (Genette, 1973). Thus, the novels *The little diary of frontiers*, *One child two home countries*, and *The road to heaven is long*, not only possess the quality of being more complete compared to the rest, but also undermine the already prefabricated image of the Albanian immigrant, as well as the stereotypically hospitable and humane image of the average Greek.

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