

## IDEOLOGY AND POLITICS IN NARRATIVE: THREE NOVELS ABOUT AND FOR CHILDREN

In the present paper we shall deal with three novels, at least two of which are aimed at children as their intended addressees: Penelope Delta's *Τρελαντώνης* (1932), Elias Venezis' *Αιολική Γῆ* (1953) and Alki Zei's *Τὸ καπλάνι τῆς βιτρίνας* (1963). In them, the main characters, Andonis [Benakis], Petros and Melissa, respectively, are also children of almost the same age, i.e. about eight years old<sup>1</sup>. The narration is mostly in the first person in *Αιολική Γῆ* and in *Τὸ καπλάνι τῆς βιτρίνας*, and in the third person in *Τρελαντώνης*. Unlike *Αιολική Γῆ*, however, in *Τὸ καπλάνι* [...] we do not have an adult narrator, through whose memory the child's experience is filtered later. Also, whereas in *Αιολική Γῆ* we notice an alternation of fixed internal focalisation (events presented from the child's perspective) with zero focalisation (since young Petros is absent from some of the situations presented to us), in *Τὸ καπλάνι* Melissa is the only transmitter of the story to the reader throughout the narrative. As for *Τρελαντώνης*' narrative, although one might be tempted to see it focused on Andonis, it would perhaps be more accurate to speak of an extra-diegetic narrator who is partial to Andonis and plays with distances from other characters.

These three novels have many features in common<sup>2</sup>. What I have

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1. Andonis is eight years old (*Τρελαντώνης*, p. 92), and so is Melissa (*Τὸ καπλάνι*, p. 100). Petros is six years old but his sister, Artemis, one of the leading characters of the novel, is eight (*Αιολική Γῆ*, p. 28).

2. We could compare, for example, the characters who are depicted as embodiments of family life, or the symbolic threatening entities within that life (the king's dog in *Τρελαντώνης*, pp. 16, 116ff.; the *καπλάνι*, i.e. an embalmed sort of animal in *Τὸ καπλάνι τῆς βιτρίνας*, pp. 14, 62, 151; and the young bear in *Αιολική Γῆ*, pp. 193, 240). Interestingly, both the dog and the *καπλάνι* have eyes of different colours each.

chosen to examine in this study is how Greek and international politics of the authors' times intrude into narrative and by what kind of narrative means political ideology is conveyed.— For though we are talking about novels for children —or, perhaps, exactly for this reason — politics is conveyed, albeit implicitly and indirectly, within the framework of the pedagogical nature of these novels.

Chronologically, the story is situated: (a) in *Τρελαντώνης*, in Piraeus, in the 8th decade of the 19th century (to my mind); (b) in *Αιολική Γῆ*, on the west coast of Asia Minor opposite to Lesbos, in 1914<sup>3</sup>; and (c) in *Τὸ καπλάνι τῆς βιτρίνας*, on an island in the Ikarian Sea, a little before and a little after the Metaxas dictatorship.

It is clear that all three narrators are politically progressive and, each in his/her own way, fond of their country. They dislike monarchy, priestcraft in the Church, political and nationalistic fanaticism, foreign rule, war, dictatorship and Fascism. On the one hand, they express themselves as if they did not like politics in general. On the other hand, they are not willing to dispense with «old values» such as family upbringing and discipline, democratic tolerance, peace, and their sense of Greekness.

If we attempted a general appreciation of the way in which ideology and politics are interwoven with narrative in these novels, we would qualify the author's method in *Τὸ καπλάνι* [...] <sup>4</sup> as explicit, in *Αιολική Γῆ* as symbolic - allusive, and in *Τρελαντώνης* as implicit and pedagogically cunning. In order to justify these terms, we shall examine the social stratification of the main characters' environment, as this can be perceived through the narrative, and the traces of their class adherence. Afterwards, we shall study the particular ways in which ideology or/and politics creep into narrative, i.e. the narrative means and the characters who are bearers of politics in the story. Finally, we shall try to demarcate the narrators' notion of Greekness and the patriotic sensibility they aim to foster in the minds of the authors' intended young readers; herein lies the instructive effect of narrative in these novels, which is manifest particularly in Penelope Delta's work.

3. *Αιολική Γῆ*, p. 229.

4. It is worth noting that this interesting and successful novel (translated into more than ten languages and reprinted more than forty times) has been unanimously ignored in all the important histories of or introductions to modern Greek literature.

It is true that the application of such concepts as social structure, class consciousness, ideology, and even politics, to novels and fictional characters, which are, in the ultimate analysis, nothing but printed words on a piece of paper, could be challenged. Nonetheless, since some of the prominent (post-)Marxist critics of our times<sup>5</sup> contend that «literature is vitally engaged with the living situations of men and women: it is concrete rather than abstract, displays life in all its rich variousness», and that «the story of modern literary theory, paradoxically, is the narrative of a flight from such realities [...] , from real history», in this paper I shall borrow for a while their lenses through which I shall examine these three novels I chose to present, without trying to flee from historical reality. At any rate, history has always weighed heavily upon the literature of countries such as Greece.

#### (I) SOCIAL STRATIFICATION AND CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE MAIN CHARACTERS

All of the main characters in these novels belong to well-to-do families of the upper middle stratum of their society.

Melissa and Myrto's father in *Τὸ καπλάνι* [...] works at a bank. The family owns two houses (one in the capital of the island where they live and one presumably on another island opposite to the capital<sup>6</sup>) and employs a (female) servant, Stamatina. Their forefathers owned larger estates, which they liquidated later to meet the needs of the family<sup>7</sup>. Melissa and Myrto are generally considered *παιδιά καλῶν οἰκογενειῶν*<sup>8</sup> and their family are apparently in very good terms with the political and religious authorities of the region<sup>9</sup>. Their grandfather

5. See e.g. T. F. Eagleton *Literary Theory*, p. 196ff., from where the following quotations are taken.

6. It is not clear where the country house is situated in *Τὸ καπλάνι*: «Ἡ ἐξοχή, πού πηγαίνομε, εἶναι ἀπέναντι στὴ χώρα (i. e. the capital of the island), στὴν ἄλλη μερὶά τῆς θάλασσας. Τὴ νύχτα, μπορούμε νὰ βλέπουμε, ἀπὸ κεῖ, ὅλα τὰ φῶτα τῆς χώρας [...]. Μισὴ ὥρα μὲ τὴ βάρκα ἀπὸ τὴ χώρα καὶ φτάναμε στὸ Λαμαγάρι (Melissa's words, pp. 27-28). It may well be on the opposite extremity of a bay.

7. «Ἐχομε ὁμως τὸν Πύργο μας στὸ Λαμαγάρι, γιατί, κάποτε, πρὶν πολλὰ χρόνια, ὁ μπαμπὰς τοῦ παποῦ (sic) εἶχε ἀποθῆκες, μὰ τίς πούλησε, γιὰ νὰ σπουδάσει ὁ παπὸς καὶ ν' ἀγοράσει τοὺς Ἀρχαίους τοῦ *Τὸ καπλάνι*, p. 28; author's emphasis).

8. *ibid.* p. 107.

9. See e.g. the regular visits of the prefect and the bishop, one of which is rendered in pp. 17-22 of *Τὸ καπλάνι*.



is regarded as the wisest man in the island<sup>10</sup> and is presumably a Venizelist<sup>11</sup>, but their cousin, a student of chemistry in Athens, is a communist<sup>12</sup>, and this, though tolerated by the family, causes a lot of trouble to their public image<sup>13</sup>. In the country, Melissa and Myrto play with children both from poorer and from richer families:

Δὲ θέλαμε, ὅμως, νὰ φοροῦμε παπούτσια, γιὰ νὰ μοιάζουμε πιότερο μὲ τὰ παιδιὰ ἀπὸ τὰ τ σ α ρ δ ά κ ι α. Πάρα πολὺ τ' ἀγαποῦμε τὰ παιδιὰ κι' ἄς λένε: «Μαρὴ Μυρτώ! Μαρὴ Μέλια!» "Όταν βλέπουμε κανέναν ξένο στὸ δρόμο καὶ μᾶς ρωτᾷει κάτι — ἀπαντοῦμε χωριάτικα, γιὰ νὰ νομίζει πὼς εἴμαστε ἀπὸ τὰ τ σ α ρ δ ά κ ι α. [...] "Αν μᾶς ἔβλεπε κανεὶς, θὰ ξεχώριζε, πὼς ἡ Μυρτὼ κι' ἐγὼ δὲν εἴμαστε ἀπὸ τὰ τ σ α ρ δ ά κ ι α. Τὰ ἄλλα παιδιὰ εἶχανε κι' ὅλας μαυρίσει. [...] Σὲ λίγες, ὅμως, μέρες θάμασταν καὶ μεῖς ἔτσι [...]— Ὁὐ λέγαμε: προῦν', κτάλ', σαπάν', σακάτ'...

(pp. 31-32; author's emphases)

"Ήτανε ἡ Πιπίτσα! [...] Πιπίτσα! Μὰ μπορεῖ νὰ ὑπάρξει πιὸ γελοῖο ὄνομα; Δὲν τὴ χωνεύουμε καθόλου. 'Ο μπαμπᾶς τῆς ἔχει σχεδὸν ὅλες τίς ἀποθῆκες τοῦ κρασιοῦ δικῆς του [...]

(p. 32).

From the juxtaposition of the two above passages it becomes clear that Melissa in her capacity as narrator is partial to children from lower social strata whereas unfavourable terms are used about Pipitsa, who is thus depicted as the spoiled, dislikeable representative of the *nouveaux riches* in the community. The narrator is a perspicacious observer of her own and her sister's differences from other people, and does not fail to stress them adroitly, whether the comparison involves members of higher or — more often — of lower classes:

Μὰ ἡ Σταματίνα ἡ καϋμένη οὔτε τὸ ὄνομά τῆς δὲν ξέρει νὰ γράφει (p. 17);

ὅλα τὰ παιδιὰ ἀπὸ τὰ τ σ α ρ δ ά κ ι α ἔχουνε κάτι λυπητερὲς ἱστορίες, πιὸ λυπητερὲς κι' ἀπὸ τοῦ Δαβὴδ Κόπερφηλδ (sic, p. 44);

10. "Όλοι στὸ νησί τὸν λένε «ὁ σοφός», *ibid.* p. 10.

11. *ibid.* p. 23.

12. *ibid.* p. 99.

13. *ibid.* p. 62.

ὅποιο παιδί πληρώνει κανονικά διδάχτρα, δὲν τ' ἀφήνουν ποτὲ στὴν ἴδια τάξη κι' ἄς εἶναι κουμπούρας. "Ὅποιος εἶναι μὲ ἔκπτωση, λιγάκι νὰ μὴν πάει καλὰ — κ ι ν δ υ ν ε ὕ ε ι (p. 112; Alexis explaining to Melissa the system of the private school they attend. Author's emphasis);

φοροῦσε ἓνα παλὸν φόρεμα κι' ἀπὸ πάνω μιὰ ξεθωριασμένη κλαδωτὴ ποδιά (sc. Alexis' mother, p. 117);

ἡ Ἀντιγόνη δὲν εἶναι οὔτε «κανονικά» οὔτε «μὲ ἔκπτωση». Εἶναι «δωρεάν». Ἡ μαμά της δουλεύει παραδουλεύτρα στὸ σπίτι τοῦ κυρίου Καρανάση κι' ἐκεῖνος ἀντὶ νὰ τῆς πληρώνει μεροκάματο, πῆρε τὴν Ἀντιγόνη στὸ σχολεῖο (p. 142);

σὰν τοὺς τσιγγάνους, ποὺ μένουνε στὸ οἰκόπεδο, πίσω ἀπὸ τὸ σπίτι μας (p. 146).

Within the young girls' family, there are different political inclinations: the grandfather, the mother, the communist cousin, and perhaps Stamatina, belong to the progressive camp, and Melissa — the narrator — is influenced by them. The aunt alone belongs to the royalist-philodictatorial camp, and is joined for a while by Myrto, who is influenced by the pro-Metaxas ideology of her schoolmaster. As for the father, his only preoccupation seems to be not to lose his job because of the repercussions of any behaviour which would expose him in the eyes of his superiors. Obviously, it was not easy to find a new post on a small island during the Metaxas dictatorship.

In *Τρελαντώνης* the situation is similar to that depicted in *Τὸ καπλάνι*. A distinguished family of the Greek colony of Alexandria<sup>14</sup> is about to move to Athens, probably foreseeing the violent expulsion of the Greek community from Egypt. The move seems to be prepared step by step and organised wisely by the family: the uncle and the aunt are first sent with the family's children to spend a summer in Piraeus. Other relatives have already settled there. Towards the end of the story (and of the summer) the children's parents arrive to join the rest of the large family (four children), which is rich enough to rent one of the Ziller houses near the one used by the royal family<sup>15</sup>, and to em-

14. Perhaps based on the family of Emmanuel Benakis.

15. During the reign of King George I, see *Τρελαντώνης* p. 217.

ploy an English governess for the children, a cook and a handmaid<sup>16</sup>. However, the children here do not have the wide social experience of Melissa and Myrto in *Τὸ καπλάνι*: Andonis and his siblings live a richer home life, since they are four, and play and talk with children from families of the same rank. The opportunities when they have to measure themselves against "real life" are rare, e.g. when Andonis destroys by mistake the whole of Barba-Yannis Kanatas' merchandise (a load of pitchers):

‘Ο Ἀντώνης σήκωσε τὸ κεφάλι [...] — Εἶναι πολὺ φτωχός, εἶπε, δὲν ἔχει οὔτε παπούτσια (p. 207),

and when he meddles in a fight with stones between «street urchins»: *χαμίνια τοῦ δρόμου*, p. 240.

Country life and farming determine the social structures in *Αἰολικὴ Γῆ*. The narrator belongs to a family of landowners who employ many ploughmen on their farm. The four children (one of whom grows up to become the adult narrator of the story) spend their summers in the farm<sup>17</sup> and the rest of their time in the town. The people live close to nature and are bound up in cultivating the land. In this late survival of feudalism, although nobody is oppressed and the interpersonal relations are straightforward and communication is smooth, yet each landowner holds the uncontested supremacy over his territory and, in return, he protects and maintains everyone in it (e.g. against the danger of alien incursion). Thus, the structure is clear and simple: a few landowners, and a multitude that work for them. In between, there moves a wandering throng of travellers, story-tellers, smugglers, robbers, dealers, hunters or shepherds:

Τὸ ὑποστατικὸ ἦταν σὲ πέρασμα τοῦ μεγάλου δρόμου ποὺ ἔνωνε τὰ παράλια τῆς Αἰολίδας μὲ τὴν Πέργαμο, κι ἀπὸ καὶ μὲ τὰ ἐσωτερικὸ τῆς Ἀνατολῆς. Ἔτσι, σχεδὸν πάντα βρίσκονταν ταξιδιώτες τοῦ μεγάλου δρόμου. Ἦταν Ἑβραῖοι, Ἀρμένηδες, Τοῦρκοι, Χριστιανοί, φτωχοί, ἄρχοντες, παρακατευτάδες, ἄρρωστοι. Φέρναν μαζί τους τὶς μοῖρες τους, τὰ πάθη καὶ τὶς δυστυχίες τους, τὰ νιτερέσα καὶ τὶς τρέλες τους. [...] Ὅταν τὸ βράδυ τοὺς ἐβρίσκε σιμὰ στὰ μέρη μας, ἔρχονταν στὸ ὑποστατικὸ νὰ βοῦνε καταφύγιο γιὰ τὴ νύχτα: τροφὴ καὶ προστασία ἀπὸ τ' ἀγρίμια. (p. 75)

16. *Τρελαντώνης*, pp. 13, 15-16, 20, 42, 101.

17. *Αἰολικὴ Γῆ*, pp. 24, 30.



In this way, the four grandchildren of the old landowner Yannakos Bebelas are in a position to gain a rich experience of the multifarious world surrounding them, apart from their direct contact with nature.

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In all three novels, although the main characters — children — are justified in not being fully aware of their class identity, they constantly observe and express their differences from other people. Thus their class consciousness is gradually shaped along with their self-knowledge and enrichment of experience. Representative passages from the three novels will be quoted next, in corroboration of the above conclusion.

From *Τὸ καπλάνι τῆς βιτρίνας*:

Ἐγὼ δὲ θέλω νᾶχαμε μπαμπὰ συγγραφέα, — λέει ἡ Μυρτώ. Γιατί, τότε, μπορεῖ νὰ τρέχαμε καὶ μεῖς στὶς γειτονιές, νὰ ζητᾶμε δανεικὰ παπούτσια. (p. 122)

Ἐ, ἀφοῦ εἶναι ὁ Νίκος κομμουνιστής, θὰ γίνω κι' ἐγώ, ἅμα μεγαλώσω, — μοῦ εἶπε ὁ Νώλης. (p. 99)

Γύρισα καὶ τὴν κύτταξα. Ὅχι, δὲν ἦτανε αὐτὴ ἡ ἀδελφοῦλα μου! Ἦταν ἓνα ξένο κορίτσι, ποὺ τόχα δεῖ στὴ γιορτὴ τοῦ σχολείου, νὰ στέκεται πλάι στὸν κλέφτη τὸν Κόσκορη καὶ νὰ χαιρετᾶει φ α σ ι σ τ ι κ ᾶ. (p. 151, Melissa "disowning" her alienated sister; author's emphasis).

From *Τρελαντώνης*:

Εἶδα στ' ὄνειρό μου πὼς πέθανε ὁ Μπαρμπαγιάννης Κανατάς. Καὶ πέθανε, λέει, ἀπὸ πείνα, γιατί δὲν εἶχε πιὰ δραχμές, ἀφοῦ σπάσαμε ὅλα του τὰ κανάνια. (p. 200, Pouloudia's words)

From *Αἰολικὴ Γῆ*:

Φεύγουν πρῶτα οἱ ἄνθρωποι ποὺ δούλευαν στὸ ὑποστατικό μας, γυναῖκες κι ἄντρες. Φορτωμένοι τὸν μπόγο τοὺς περνοῦν μπροστὰ ἀπ' τὸν παππού, ποὺ στέκεται στὴ μεγάλη πόρτα, ἕνας - ἕνας. Σκύβουν κλαίγοντας, φιλοῦν τὸ χέρι του, κ' ἐκεῖνος τοὺς ἀποχαιρετᾶ καὶ τοὺς εὐλογεῖ. (p. 303)

Bearing always in mind the convention which we set in the last paragraph of the introduction to this paper, one can say that Melissa, the narrator in *Τὸ καπλάνι* [...], seems to be the most conscious of her and her family's status, while Petros of *Αἰολική Γῆ*, and Andonis of *Τρελαντώνης* come in the second and third place respectively. Andonis is kept the least informed about the adults' activities, compared to the main characters of the other two novels:

—Νὰ τῆς τὰ πούλῃσεις; ἔκανε ὁ Ἀντώνης, [...]. Ναί ... αὐτὸ ἐπιτρέπεται... Καὶ ὁ πατέρας πούλῃ μπαμπάκια στὸ γραφεῖο... αὐτὸ εἶναι ἐμπόριο... [...] Ὁ Ἀντώνης δὲν ἦταν καὶ τόσο βέβαιος. Καὶ αὐτὸς ἀπὸ ἐμπόριο δὲν ἤξερε καλὰ. (pp. 182-3)

## (II) IDEOLOGY AND POLITICS IN NARRATIVE: WAYS OF INTRUSION

In this section I shall study how elements of political ideology appear in narrative in these novels, leaving their mark upon the education, family and professional life of the characters, and influencing the children.

In *Τὸ καπλάνι* [...] the lion's share of the perception and expression of underlying or explicit political assumptions is Melissa's, who informs the intended reader using the first person (singular or plural). She is an unusually perspicacious observer, who perceives the adults' professional relationships, the fascist predispositions of some of them even before the establishment of the Metaxas dictatorship, the democratic anti-royalism of others, the brain-washing that her sister Myrto undergoes at school, and the persecutions of the democrats by the dictatorial regime. Not only does her communist cousin, Nikos, sensitise her to the notions of dictatorship, fascism, royalty, democracy, communism, and civil war; she is also allowed to be present at the political discussions of the adults, unlike Andonis (i.e. *Τρελαντώνης*) or Petros (in *Αἰολική Γῆ*)<sup>18</sup>, before whom such discussions are very rare. Melissa is able even to get and faithfully transmit first-hand information about other characters' political beliefs:

—Σταματῖνα, ἐσὺ μὲ ποιὸν εἶσαι; Μὲ τὸ Βενιζέλο ἢ τὸ βασιλῆά;  
—Μὲ τὸν κακὸ μου τὸν καιρὸ εἶμαι, [...]. Ὅποιος καὶ νῶρθει, μονάχα

18. This is also the reason why Petros cannot be the narrator but as an adult.



ἐμένα πού δὲ θὰ ρωτήσῃ. 'Εγώ, ἔτσι κι' ἄλλοιῶς, δούλα κι' ἀγράμματη θῶμαι. (pp. 23-24)

Melissa also witnesses her sister Myrto's alienation due to school propaganda: it is the period of the organisation of Youth Columns (EON) in every Greek school. Schools become barracks and the pupils are taught to ape (pseudo-)military manners. Myrto is skilfully induced to see her participation in her school's Column as an honourable distinction and this leads her to a break with her own sister, to an inner division and estrangement from her own family<sup>19</sup>.

In *Αἰολική Γῆ* the adult narrator reconstructs — through his memories as a child or his later information — the beginnings of the first world war, the first persecutions of Greeks by the Turks in Asia Minor, and adumbrates the collapse of the Μεγάλη Ἰδέα.

Another means for rendering the above situations is the symbolic use of images from nature as foretokens of the imminent Disaster (see e.g. the fight against jackals, pp. 50-52; wolves looking for the way to the sea, p. 41; Petros' killing of the weasel — an image with many functions on the symbolic level —, p. 140; his fall from the eagle's nest, p. 195; the hunter's death, p. 238).

The other important landowner of the region, Vilaras (p. 160 ff.), who is also an educated man, plays a useful role in the story, since it is he who informs the others of the developments in Europe a little before the outbreak of the war, and explains to them the importance of each event and the interaction between them<sup>20</sup>. Vilaras' British daughter-in-law is occasionally assigned a similar role<sup>21</sup>.

But the most skilful insertion of political ideology into narrative, in comparison to the two other novels, is to be observed in *Τρελαντώνης*. Here, perhaps because the narrator is extradiegetic, as was indicated

19. This tension, which is also one of the significant threads of the whole plot, is finally resolved in a rather awkward way on the part of the author: [...] εἶπε ὁ παπούς σοβαρά. [...] Κι' ἂν γίνῃ ὑποχρεωτικὸ νὰ γίνετε (sic) φαλαγγίτισσες καὶ δὲν μποροῦμε νὰ κάνουμε ἄλλοιῶς, θὰ πᾶτε μὰ, στὴν ψυχὴ σας μέσα, δὲ θάσαστε φαλαγγίτισσες. (*Τὸ καπλάνι*, p. 166). But Myrto's problem was exactly that she could not bear the split of acting in one way and feeling in another!

Notice also the 'political' discussions between the two sisters, e.g. in pp. 22-23, where Melissa supports Venizelos and Myrto proves a fervent — though premature — royalist.

20. *Αἰολική Γῆ*, pp. 272-3.

21. *ibid.* p. 292.

earlier, the author can distribute subtle shades of political ideology to the words of more than one or two characters. The subtleness may be linked to the author's pedagogical aims. Indicatively we note: the sexist opposition 'boys vs. girls' (Andonis vs. Pouloudia); a slight antiroyalism (narrator, Andonis, Pouloudia); anticlericalism (Andonis); anti-Semitism (Alexandra, Pouloudia, Andonis) as well as teaching against it (uncle Zorzi); the ideology of expansion of the Greek state over Crete, the Ionian islands, the Dodecanese, and Cyprus (Alexandros, Andonis—if we situate the story some years before the Cretan Revolution of 1897); fear of Turkish ferocity (Andonis), etc. Particularly the issue of anti-Semitism should perhaps be related not to the story time (1870s) but to the narrative time (1930s). In addition, we come across mentions of words such as *δικτάτορας*, *μοναρχία*, *επανάσταση*<sup>22</sup>, which are used by the narrator figuratively in his description of the children's relationships with one another.

### (III) GREEKNESS AND PATRIOTIC SENSIBILITY

At least two of the novels we are studying, i.e. *Τὸ καπλάνι τῆς βιτρίνας* and *Τρελαντώνης*, are addressed primarily to children, but all of them can be read as pleasurably by adults. *Τρελαντώνης* in particular is animated by a Hellenocentric spirit peculiar to the ideology of «Greater Hellenism» of the first decades of the century, which stressed the existence of Greeks around and outside the official Greek state (Egypt, Asia Minor, Constantinople, etc.) and was often abused by the politicians as a basis for various irredentist and expansionist obsessions. In this novel, however, we find only healthy forms of this Hellenocentric ideology as a private organising principle of family life, and not as a slogan in the mouths of politicians.

It is exactly in this sense that one could read *Τὸ καπλάνι* [...], namely as a denunciation (through mockery and other more direct means) of the bankruptcy of Greek politics when it appropriates Hellenocentric ideals; these are then reduced to an arid nationalism and, further, even to Fascism. *Τὸ καπλάνι* [...] can be seen as a novel which negates state ideology. The author, writing probably in the late 1950s, does not seem interested in proposing explicitly just another operative ideology. She is content with exposing the excesses and the ridic-

22. *Τρελαντώνης*, pp. 37-38.

ulousness of fascist regimes. At this point I would like to quote two passages from *Tò κατάνι* [...], which, though lengthy, are characteristic of the ironic method and style of this novel.

— Σ κ ο ὦ ρ α τὰ πράγματα, — ἔλεγε ὁ μπαμπάς.

— Δὲν πιστεύω νὰ πᾶνε γιὰ δικτατορία; — ξαναρώταγε ὁ παπούς (sic).

— Πολὺ σ κ ο ὦ ρ α, σᾶς λέω, — ἀπαντοῦσε ὁ μπαμπάς.

[...] "Ὅταν ρωτήσαμε τὸν παπὸν τί θὰ πεῖ « σ κ ο ὦ ρ α τὰ πράγματα » μᾶς εἶπε πὼς θὰ πεῖ: ὅτι ἡ δημοκρατία πέθανε. "Ὅχι ἐκείνη τοῦ χρυσοῦ αἰῶνα τοῦ Περικλῆ, ἀλλὰ ἡ σημερινή. "Ὑστερα, μᾶς εἶπε ἓνα ἀρχαῖο ρητό, μὰ τόσο ἀρχαῖο, ποὺ δὲν καταλάβαμε τίποτα.

"Ἐτσι, ὅταν γέννησε ἡ γάτα μας δύο γατάκια, τὸ ἓνα σκοῦρο, σκοῦρο γκρίζο, καὶ τὸ ἄλλο ἄσπρο, τὰ βγάλουμε μὲ τὴ Μυρτώ: Σκοῦρα καὶ Δημοκρατία. Ὁ παπούς γέλασε πολὺ, ὅταν τοῦ τὸ εἶπαμε, ἡ θεία Δέσποινα, ὅμως, ἀγρίεψε: — "Ἐμεῖς φταῖμε, ποὺ κάνουμε συζητήσεις μπροστὰ στὰ παιδιά! (pp. 36-37; author's emphases)

[...] Μιὰ φορά, [...] τὸ βράδυ, ἐνῶ ὅλοι εἴχαμε καθήσει στὸ τραπέζι, ἐγὼ σηκώθηκα, μιὰ στιγμή, νὰ μαζέψω τὴ Σκοῦρα καὶ τὴ Δημοκρατία, γιατί ἡ Σταματίνα εἶπε πὼς ἄρχιζε νὰ ψιχαλίζει. Τὴ Σκοῦρα τὴ βρήκα ἀμέσως, μὰ ἡ Δημοκρατία — ἄφαντη. Τότε ἄρχισα νὰ ξεφωνίζω: «Δημοκρατίιιιιιι!» "Ὡσπου μᾶκουσε καὶ ἦρθε. Δὲν πρόλαβα νὰ μπῶ στὸ σπίτι καὶ μ' ἄρπαξε ὁ μπαμπὰς ἀπὸ τὸ χέρι. Νόμιζα πὼς θύμωσε γιατί σηκώθηκα ἀπὸ τὸ τραπέζι, μὰ κείνος τᾶβαλε μὲ τὸ γατί.

— "Ἡ θὰ τὸ πετάξετε, — λέει, — ἡ θὰ τοῦ ἀλλάξετε ὄνομα. Δὲν ἔχω ὀρεξη νὰ χάσω τὴ θέση μου στὴν Τράπεζα!

Τὸ γατί τὸ βγάλουμε [i.e. thenceforth] "Ἰα, μὰ αὐτὸ ποὺ ἀκούσαμε παραήτανε πιά παράξενο. Νὰ διώξουν τὸν μπαμπὰ ἀπὸ τὴν Τράπεζα γιὰ ἓνα γατί!

— Ὁ' ἀλλάξεις κι' ἐσὺ ὄνομα στὴν ἀρραβωνιαστικιά σου; — ρωτήσαμε, μὲ τὴ Μυρτώ, τὸ Νίκο. (pp. 54-55)

The above episode, prepared step by step in the course of the first passage, is a masterly example of the way in which irony, intense symbolism and allegory are conveyed in the text. It is a powerful combination of discursive means by which the ancestor-ridden state education is ridiculed, the implications of the abolition of democracy are shown vividly, and the irrationality of the dictatorial regime is mocked.

In contrast, the character of the grandfather in *Tò κατάνι* as the right-minded, wise and substantially educated man, who does not



boast of his knowledge of antiquity, but knows how to draw principles of life upon it, is implicitly raised by the narrator almost to a model figure of a Greek<sup>23</sup>.

In *Αιολική Γῆ*, too, the grandfather is the main character who, without being institutionally educated, has the wisdom and the experience of life:

Μονάχα ὁ παππούς ἔμενε ἀτάραχος καὶ κοίταζε τὴ γῆ, τὰ Κιμιντένια καὶ τὰ σύννεφα. Εἶχε φτάξει στὸ σύνορο τῆς ἀρχοντιᾶς καὶ τῆς γαλήνης ποὺ δίνει νόημα σ' ὅλα τὰ ἐγκόσμια ἀντικρίζοντάς τα μονάχα σὰν περιστατικὰ Μεγάλου Νόμου ποὺ δὲν εἶναι στὴ μοῖρα τοῦ ἀνθρώπου νὰ τὸν μάθει. Ἡ ἀγωνία γιὰ τὴ γῆ, σ' ὅλη τὴ μακριὰ ζωὴ του, ἡ πικρία γιὰ τόσες βροχὲς ποὺ δὲν ἤρθαν, ἡ χαρὰ γιὰ τόσες ἄλλες ποὺ ἤρθαν στὸν καιρὸ τους καὶ γονιμοποίησαν τοὺς σπόρους, κατασίγασαν τώρα στὴν ἡμερὴ θεώρηση τοῦ κόσμου, στὴν ὑποταγή: «Ἄν τὸ θέλει ὁ Γιαραμπῆς [i.e. God], θὰ βρέξει», «Δὲν τὸ θέλει ὁ Γιαραμπῆς, καὶ δὲ θὰ βρέξει. Βλογημένο τ' ὄνομά του!»

“Ὅσο γιὰ τὸν καρπὸ ποὺ χάθηκε — καλὰ! “Ἐδῶσε τόσον πολὺ ἡ γῆ στὰ χρόνια ποὺ πέρασαν! Πάλι θὰ δώσει στὰ χρόνια ποὺ θὰ ῥθουν.  
(p. 73)

Such Herodotean virtues of endurance and conciliation with God and Nature gather a Hesiodic momentum, when one thinks that not only the grandfather is obviously no longer alive in the adult narrator's time, but also that his Asia Minor homeland no longer exists after the extinction of Greater Hellenism in that part of the world. *Αιολική Γῆ* can then be read as the nostalgic epitaph of a lost paradise, where politics did not impinge on everyday life, and man lived bound to the earth, in harmony with nature, and with his inner equilibrium undisturbed:

Ναί, λίγο χῶμα ἀπ' τὴ γῆ τους. Γιὰ νὰ φυτέψουν ἓνα βασιλικό, τῆς λέει, στὸν ξένο τόπο ποὺ πᾶνε. Γιὰ νὰ θυμῶνται.

[...]

Γῆ, Αἰολικὴ Γῆ, Γῆ τοῦ τόπου μου.

(last page)

23. It is worth stressing the express anticlericalism in this novel. See e.g. *Τὸ καπλάνι*, p. 18ff.: ‘Ὁ δεσπότης καθότανε μαζί με τρεῖς κυρίες καὶ παίζανε χαρτιά. Τὸ χέρι του ἦτανε κρύο [...] (the narrator Melissa's words).

The bond of that 'golden Greek generation' with their land was visible on their serene faces, in their love of God and Nature. For Venezis, endurance is presumably part of the essence of Greekness.

## CONCLUSIONS

So far we have studied the ways in which the authors of these three novels fasten elements of political ideologies to narrative: intra- or extra-diegetic narrators or a combination of both, implicit or explicit insertion, pedagogical effects upon the (young) reader's mind, denunciation of undesired situations, assignment of political comments to one, two or more characters, promotion of model attitudes or figures. We notice striking differences in the degree of directness of the narrative, such as between *Τρελαντώνης*: Μὰ θεῖε, οἱ 'Εβραῖοι ἔχουν θρησκεία; (Pouloudia's words, p. 92) and *Τὸ καπλάνι τῆς βιτρίνας*: 'Ακοῦς ἐκεῖ νὰ θέλετε νὰ θάψετε ἄνθρωπο! 'Ετσι οἱ φασίστες μόνο κάνουν (Nikos' words, p. 65), as well as in the characters' political awareness, like between, again, *Τὸ καπλάνι* and *Αἰολικὴ Γῆ* (— Σεράγεβο, λέει ὁ Βηλαράς. Εἶναι ψηλά, στὰ μέρη τῆς Βοσνίας. 'Ο παππούς εἶναι ἀπλοϊκός, [...] — Γιατί; λέει. 'Αφοῦ γίνεται τόσο ψηλά τὸ κακό, γιατί θά 'ρθεῖ ἴσαμε ἐμᾶς ἐδῶ, στὴν 'Ανατολή; p. 272).

In years of tension between a nation's struggle for cultural (if not political) independence, on the one hand, and imperialism in its various manifestations<sup>24</sup>, on the other, literature does not need to argue its way to political relevance. Many times in the twentieth century, there was certainly a tension of this kind in Greece. That is why it is not arbitrary, in my opinion, to borrow Marxist methods when studying the intrusion of political ideology particularly into the fiction of those years. On the contrary, it may even prove enlightening.

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24. Terry Eagleton, *op. cit.*, p. 215 ff.



## ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Νικόλαος Κ. Πετρόπουλος, «Ίδεολογία και πολιτική στὸν ἀφηγηματικὸ λόγο: τρία παιδικὰ μυθιστορήματα μὲ ἥρωες παιδιὰ».

Τὰ νεοελληνικὰ μυθιστορήματα *Τρελαντώνης* (1932) τῆς Πηνελόπης Δέλτα, *Αἰολικὴ Γῆ* (1943) τοῦ Ἡλία Βενέζη καὶ *Τὸ καπλάνι τῆς βιτρίνας* (1963) τῆς Ἀλκῆς Ζέη, ποὺ γιὰ κύρια πρόσωπα ἔχουν παιδιὰ καὶ διαβάζονται ἀπὸ παιδιὰ — ἢ καὶ ἀπὸ παιδιὰ — εἶναι τὸ ἀντικείμενο τῆς μελέτης. Ὁ σκοπὸς εἶναι νὰ ἐξεταστεῖ σ' αὐτὰ τὰ ἔργα πῶς ἡ ἑλληνικὴ καὶ διεθνὴς πολιτικὴ ὑπὸ τὸ πρῖσμα τοῦ/τῆς συγγραφέα ὑπεισέρχεται στὴν ἀφήγηση καὶ μὲ τί εἰδους ἀφηγηματικὰ μέσα μεταδίδεται στὸν ἀναγνώστη πολιτικὴ ἰδεολογία, καθὼς τὰ κείμενα λειτουργοῦν διαπαιδαγωγικά. Ἡ ἀνάλυση μένει κοντὰ στὴν ἱστορικὴ πραγματικότητα, καὶ τὰ κοινωνικὰ δεδομένα λαμβάνονται σταθερὰ ὑπ' ὄψιν. Σύμφωνα μὲ τὴ μέθοδο ποὺ ἀκολουθεῖται, ἐπισημαίνονται οἱ ἀφηγηματολογικὲς ἰδιουτυπίες τῶν τριῶν ἔργων (ὅπως τὸ εἶδος ἐστίασης τῆς ἀφήγησης καὶ ἡ θέση τοῦ ἀφηγητῆ) καὶ οἱ ὁμοιότητές τους (κυρίως ἡ ὑπαρξὴ διδακτικοῦ καὶ ἰδεολογικοῦ στόχου).

Προσδιορίζεται τὸ ἰδιαίτερο ἱστορικὸ καὶ πολιτικὸ τοπίο, ὅπου κινοῦνται τὰ πρόσωπα σὲ καθένα ἀπὸ τὰ τρία μυθιστορήματα καὶ χαρακτηρίζεται ὁ ἀφηγητὴς ὡς φορέας ἰδεολογίας καὶ στὶς τρεῖς περιπτώσεις προοδευτικῆς καὶ πατριωτικῆς: ἀποστρέφεται τὴ μοναρχία καὶ τὴν κληρικοκρατία, τὸν πολιτικὸ καὶ ἐθνικιστικὸ φανατισμό, τὴν ξένη κυριαρχία, τὸν πόλεμο καὶ τὴ δικτατορία, ἀλλὰ καὶ δὲν ἀποχωρίζεται τίς «παλιὲς ἀξίες» του — οἰκογενειακὴ ἀγωγή, ἥθος, δημοκρατικὴ ἀνεκτικότητα, ἀγάπη γιὰ τὴν εἰρήνη, καὶ ἓνα ἰδιαίτερο αἶσθημα ἑλληνικότητας.

Τὰ κύρια πρόσωπα καὶ στὰ τρία μυθιστορήματα εἶναι παιδιὰ εὐκατάστατων οἰκογενειῶν τοῦ ἀνώτερου κοινωνικοῦ κύκλου τῆς μεσαιᾶς τάξης. Ἡ συνειδητὴ τῆς ταξικῆς τους ταυτότητας δὲν ἔχει ἀκόμα διαμορφωθεῖ καὶ ἡ εὐαίσθησία τους διαρκῶς ἐμπλουτίζεται ἀπὸ τίς συναναστροφές καὶ τὰ παιχνίδια τους μὲ παιδιὰ οἰκογενειῶν διαφορετικῆς κοινωνικῆς θέσης. Τὰ γεγονότα τοῦ καιροῦ τους, μὲ τοὺς ἰδεολογικοὺς ἀντικτύπους ποὺ ἔχουν καὶ τίς διχογνωμίες ἀκόμα ποὺ προκαλοῦν στοὺς κόλπους τῆς οἰκογένειας, διαπαιδαγωγοῦν τὰ παιδιὰ σὲ αὐτογνωσία. Ἡ ὥρίμασή τους μπορεῖ νὰ διαβαθμιστεῖ, τόσο ἐσωτερικὰ μέσα στὸ κάθε μυθιστόρημα, ὅσο καὶ συγκριτικὰ μεταξὺ τῶν τριῶν μυθιστορημάτων. Ἔτσι π.χ. τὸ πιδ συνειδητὸ ἀπὸ τὰ (παιδικὰ) πρόσωπα εἶναι τὸ κορίτσι ἀφηγητῆς στὸ *Καπλάνι τῆς βιτρίνας* (Μέλισσα) καὶ ἀκολουθοῦν ὁ ἀφηγητὴς στὴν *Αἰολικὴ Γῆ* (Πέτρος) καὶ ὁ κύριος ἥρωας στὸν *Τρελαντώνη*



(Ἀντώνης), ἢ ὅπωςδήποτε ὁ ἐξωτερικὸς ἀφηγητὴς ποὺ μιλάει (σὲ τρίτο πρόσωπο) γιὰ λογαριασμό του.

Ἡ ἰδεολογία καὶ ἡ πολιτικὴ συνυφαίνονται μὲ τὴν ἀφήγηση κατὰ διαφορετικὸ τρόπο σὲ καθένα ἀπὸ τὰ τρία μυθιστορήματα: στὸ *Καπλάνι τῆς βιτρίνας* ἡ μέθοδος εἶναι ἄμεση καὶ διεισδυτικὴ, καὶ ιδιαίτερα ὀξεία εἶναι ἡ καταγραφή τῆς ἰδεολογικῆς ἐξάρτησης ποὺ ὑπέστη ἡ ἀδερφή τῆς ἀφηγήτριας ἀπὸ τὴν προπαγάνδα τῆς νεολαίας τοῦ δικτάτορα Μεταξᾶ (ΕΟΝ), ἐνῶ στὴν *Αἰολικὴ Γῆ* ὁ τρόπος διαπλοκῆς τῆς πολιτικῆς ἰδεολογίας στὴν ἀφήγηση εἶναι συμβολικὸς-ὑπαινικτικὸς καὶ στὸν *Τρελαντώνη* ἔμμεσος καὶ παιδαγωγικὰ εὐστροφος, μὲ τὶς λεπτεπίλεπτες ἀποχρώσεις πολιτικῆς ἰδεολογίας ποὺ ὁ συγγραφέας ἐγκατασπείρει στὰ λόγια τῶν διαφόρων προσώπων τοῦ ἔργου.

Μὲ παραθέματα καὶ πυκνὲς ἀναφορὲς στὰ κείμενα ἀποσαφηνίζεται ἐπίσης ἡ ἰδέα τῆς ἐλληνικότητας ποὺ προβάλλει ἀπὸ τὰ τρία ἐξεταζόμενα μυθιστορήματα: πνευματώδεις ἐπικρίσεις τοῦ παραλογισμοῦ καὶ τῶν ὑπερβολῶν τοῦ ἐλληνικοῦ μεγαλοῦδεατισμοῦ (*Τὸ καπλάνι τῆς βιτρίνας*), νοσταλγικὴ ἐξαρση τῆς καρτερικότητος καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἀρετῶν ποὺ ἀνέδειξαν καὶ σφράγισαν τὸν οἰκουμενικὸ ἐλληνισμό (*Αἰολικὴ Γῆ*) καί, τέλος, νέα αἰσιδόξη αἰσθησιμὴς μιᾶς ὑγιоῦς ἐλληνικότητος (*Τρελαντώνης*).