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## **Young female characters in the first decade of Greek Midwar Literature:**

### **The passage to Adulthood**

The objective of the present PH.D thesis is the study and analysis of the journey to Adulthood for young women and the creation of a Greek modern identity as portrayed in female literature of the first midwar decade and particularly in the works of M. Voltou, G. Kazantzaki, L. Nakou, M. Polydouri, T. Stavrou, and N. Rozeti. The first decade of the Midwar period was chosen as the temporal field of analysis since during that period, an atmosphere of doubt against the current social system and the traditional dominant values emerged. The growing dualism of Greek society shook the traditional structure of the Greek family and overthrew crystalized social constructions as well as formed stereotypes and beliefs.

Young women were the bearers and witnesses of the occurring changes, since the socioeconomic changes that took place transformed and repositioned their social role, the gender stereotypes as well as the individual and social expectations for women. Several questions are raised concerning the diachronic representation and the current social role of women. The overturn of such stereotypes is put into question in conjunction with the rise of the upper middle class, urbanization and growing feminism. Possible determinants of alternative approaches in the representation of women are analyzed which include inter alia individual characteristics, political beliefs and social class.

During that historical period, the Young Woman, the protagonist of the stories, is maturing both biologically and socially: through Loss and Sacrifice that symbolically represent the tragic ritual of catharsis, the heroines move towards emancipation and adopt new social roles and identities. According to the Psychoanalytic Theory, the journey to Adulthood in the verge of two stages of development is accomplished through Loss which dramatically reforms reality. The constructed modern identity of young women, as presented in the selected works, becomes the focus of the analysis in conjunction with the establishment of Modern society. In view of the moral and sociopolitical crisis in individual and collective consciousness, the painful journey towards Modernity is seen as a challenge yet an inevitable requirement of a New Era.

The introduction of the present research thesis presents the socio-historical and literary frame of the Midwar Era. Basic theoretical concepts are defined and the use of theoretical tools borrowed by Psychoanalytic Criticism (Freud, 1917/ Erikson, 1968) and Cultural Studies (Butler, 1990/ Kristeva, 1992/ Felski, 1989) are explained. In parallel, the frame of Female Autobiographical Voice, Bildungsroman and the dialectic between History and Literature, as two interlaced axes through which we can understand reality, are presented and explained.

The first chapter introduces and analyzes the selected works and exposes the reasons why these particular pieces of literature and their women writers have been chosen. The historical,

literary and archival value of the research enlightens the hermeneutical frames of the works as well as the biographies of the writers. In addition, the influence of various literary movements (social realism, romanticism), genres (novel, novella, short story) and the individual characteristics of each female writer ( social class, heritage, political beliefs) are studied and examined for each story including their influence in the representation of young women and their role in society.

The second chapter follows the linear narrative axis of the Psychoanalytic Theory, which breaks down Adulthood into stages and phases and thus analyzes the reasons which trigger Adulthood across the selected pieces of literature. In particular, parameters of normality such as the male presence as well as the origins of female crisis are presented and related to the adulthood process. Crisis is seen and analyzed as the focal episode of the psychosocial journey with its narrative representation thoroughly examined.

The third chapter analyzes the management of Crisis and Loss. Mourning, sacrifice and defense mechanisms, enabled by the presence of Trauma, are inserted in the microscope of the hermeneutical analysis. The general moral and ethical crisis is sketched against the background of historical changes that were taking place as well as dramatic changes in the ways of understanding and social behavior in Midwar Greece.

The fourth chapter describes the equilibration process, the return to the status quo and the process of adjustment towards the new social reality. Emancipation is seen and presented as the basic yearning and a possible outcome, while the open ending expands the horizon of expectations and promises a new alternative perspective.

The epilogue highlights the emerging conclusions that derive from the above analysis and provides tentative answers to the central questions raised concerning the interaction of personal and social crises as well as of History and Literature.

The research and proposed methodology of the thesis is historic and philological with the use of theoretical tools from Psychoanalytical Theory, Feminist Criticism, Gender Studies and New Historicism. In addition, the present thesis aims to bring to the surface unknown literary texts and women writers of the Midwar Era and to investigate the reciprocal relationship between History and Literature during turbulent times.

#### Literary Texts of Midwar Literature

1. Voltou Maria, *Levantinismoi*, 1921
2. Kazantzaki Galatia, *Ginekes*, 1931
3. Nakou Lilika, *I Xepartheni*, 1932
4. Polidouri Maria, *Romantso kai alla Peza*, 1926
5. Rozeti, Ntora, *I Eromeni tis*, 1929
6. Tatiana, Stavrou, *Ekeinoi Pou Emeinan*, 1933

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