

THE CHILD IN ADULT LITERATURE: THE CASE OF GREEK POETRY

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ABSTRACT

Children's literature in Greece appears mid-19th century but begins to develop rapidly from the mid-20th century, after the fall of the dictatorship in Greece in treating the child with great tenderness and respect. This paper will observe the child in the poetry of four major Greek poets, one of whom has been awarded the Nobel Prize, because we believe that in order for the study of the image of the child to be complete, it should include the child in the adult world and through the eyes of adults. Modern Greek poets place the child in the wider social and cultural environment of the poetical universe, integrated into the wider intellectual sphere of Greece. This integration, in our opinion, is useful for scholars of modern Greek Adult and Children's Literature in many ways, mainly, because this integration places the child in a natural, social, political and cultural framework, that is forcefully experienced, without the beauty of the child's world that is confined to texts written specifically for children, as realistic as it may be. In studying Greek poetry for adults, we generally discover that Greek poets treat the child with great tenderness and respect, despite the negative treatment of the child in society or by the state, as often depicted. They feel compassion for the child and struggle for it. For this reason, when they depict the child as a victim of certain social and political situations, they sympathize with it and protest against this misery and unfair treatment. In most optimistic cases, the poet portrays the child as the most innocent being in the world and the greatest gift to man.

A Short introduction

Children's Literature in Greece made its first appearance in the middle of the 19th century and began developing in the beginning of the 20th century and specifically after 1974, when it finally reached its culmination with the fall of the second dictatorship in Greece. Those who define the term "Children's Literature" at times, are only restricted to texts written for children and young adults, neglecting significant texts from Adult Literature, which they either refer to child from the adults' viewpoint or they involve it in action. Adult Literature differs from Children's and Young Adult Literature to some extent although

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renowned scholars of Children's Literature often express different opinions (Hunt 1994: 1-11) or simplify its definition (Townsend: 1971: 9). These two versions of literature show points of convergence and divergence already indicated by researchers. One feeds the other so that there is an interaction relationship, since texts written for children can also be adapted to texts for adults and vice versa. Therefore, Pinelopi Delta's novel for children *Paramythi horis onoma* [A No-Name Tale] has been adapted to a theatrical play by Iakovos Kampanellis under the same title; in the same way Homer's poems were adapted to bad quality works.

However, there is a point, which has very little been studied at least in Greek literature concerning the relationship between Adult Literature, Children's and Young Adult Literature. Already in 2001 a proposal was made, in order to fully record the child's and young adult's presence in literature; it is necessary though that the child's presence in Adult Literature be examined.

Only in this way, will there be a complete picture of a long and important period of man's life in literature and at the same time the research area of Children's Literature will be significantly examined. The proposal concerned exclusively the researchers and study of the relevant field and not the reading of these texts by children and young adults.

Why it is necessary for the child to be studied in Adult Literature¹

Our concern here allows us to broaden the boundaries of Children's Literature and closely tie the bonds between Children's/Young Adult's Literature and Adult Literature, including those points in Adult Literature referring to child. It is a fact that the child constitutes an indispensable part of society, which suggests its natural place. Adult Literature places the child in the adult's society from the adults' viewpoint and the viewpoint used to refer to it is that of the adults. On the contrary Children's Literature does not isolate it from the adults' society but looks at it from the children's point of view. Our proposal, therefore, aims to complement the child's picture examining it from the adults' viewpoint or even from a neutral point of view.

¹ References to texts of this sub-unit as well as of the next come from texts of Greek prose, in order to describe here too, the child's presence and the work to produce a full picture of the child in the Greek Adult Literature. Our reference to Alexandros Papadiamantis who lived in the 19th century aims to show that not very much has changed in the way in which the child is presented in the Greek prose for a long period.

The survey of the child's presence in children's and young adults' texts does not provide all chances for its depiction, although in the last years the child or the young adult is depicted even in cases of social pathogeny. Studying the child, therefore, in texts of Adult Literature complements this survey and sheds more light on its position. For the researcher of Children's Literature, this broadening of the research field opens new horizons so that the child is depicted spherically, more realistically, faithfully and more convincingly. The writer of children's texts takes into account the child-reader and tries to improve, as much as possible, situations and to broaden impressions within the framework of a realistic consideration of life. He ensures the vocabulary is not difficult nor is the style complicated. Hence, in Children's Literature the writer or the narrator, therefore, the reader too, looks at things from the child's viewpoint with simplicity and tenderness. Consequently, Alki Zei's fiction *O megalos peripatos tu Petru* (Petros' war) is treated by the writer with love and tenderness as it should be in the case of an agonist of his age. On the contrary, the writer/poet in Adult Literature is not interested in depicting the world he/she describes as beautiful even if he deals with such themes. The writer confronts situations as a literary writer addressing adults recording social acts devoid of any sentimentalism with all acting people and with all roles assigned to his/her literary characters, major or minor. To him/her the child is nothing more than a mere member in the society implicated in the story. Characteristic examples of this case are references to the child's participation in the Greek Resistance (1940-1944) and in the Greek Civil War (1944-1949) seen in Tasos Leivaditis' poetry as we will ascertain later, which reveal equal treatment of the child and adult heroes or the depiction of the child as a victim of the wars (on a worldwide scale) as well as the description of human brutality in the lyrics or poems by Nikiforos Vrettakos or Yiannis Ritsos.

The relation between the two great branches of literature and the points of their convergence and divergence has already been pinpointed by the scholars of Children's Literature. Our proposal focuses exclusively on stressing the necessity to survey the area by Adult Literature, which we would inscribe: "The Child in the Adult Literature". Besides, this term varies. The writer's scope of children's or young adults' texts reveals an interest in the child, which in Adult Literature is looked at as a supplementary part of society. The viewpoint from which both writers and poets look at the child in Adult Literature is three-faced, whereas in Children's Literature it can be first-faced, despite the difficulties in understanding it.

In Adult Literature there is an intense feeling for its realistic depiction, while in texts addressed to children, even if the society experienced by the child is negative and unfamiliar, as we may see in the novel *Sto tsimentenio dasos* (In the Cemented Forest) by Petrovits-Andrutsopulu, there is a tendency for idealization, since these texts should correspond with certain pedagogical perceptions. This happens where the child appears as an equal member of society and participates in all social and political acts, as happens in Alki Zei's works (*Petros' War etc*). Even if Children's Literature attempts to depict society, it cannot view it realistically. However naughty the children are and adults punish them for this, narration does not tell the real story, something, which is greatly feasible in Adult Literature. Here, as in Children's Literature, one will come across the naughty and bad-mannered child, the quiet and kind one, the disciplined and undisciplined, the studious, indifferent or lazy, the spoilt and finally the physically and psychologically abused child. The depiction of the last in the verses of a poem or in the pages of a text for adults shows more convincingly the true picture of society and of the child.

Points of convergence and divergence

Research has proven that Children's Literature aims mainly to develop the child's imagination and secondarily his ability to criticize. For this reason, stories too, however realistic they are, they aim at this. On the contrary, Adult Literature does not show any interest in it, when it includes children or young adults in its stories presenting them as heroes. The child is presented in a natural literary activity, as a member, however inferior, in the adults' society. Children's Literature gives priority to the child and to the young adult who constitute the centre of action even when the protagonist is an adult (with few exceptions, as Robinson Crusoe). Adult Literature on the other hand, manipulates the child or the young adult as a simple and inferior member of society, who ought to be disciplined and obedient. It describes adults' society in which it places the child and observes the child or the young adult in society, in which there are children, young adults and adults (reverse relation) (Papantonakis 2000: 24-6).

The child or the young adult very rarely appear abused, in contrast to Adult Literature, wherein the cases of abused children are frequent. This abuse is the result of various reasons, (political beliefs and conflicts, the rejection of the child by adults etc). Negligence of the child is similar to abuse. In

Children's Literature we seldom come across neglected children or young adults. Even if their parents are divorced, they still care about their children so avoid causing psychic traumas to young readers. In Adult Literature very often at least one of the parents shows indifference for their child or considers it to be a burden in the new life he/she has chosen to lead.

In the *Kalogria* (Nun) by Vasilios Rotas (1955: 72-82) the unmarried heroin abandons her child to save herself from the social exclusion that her act imposed. Papadiamantis' novels (1851-1911) are full of children who smile, play carelessly or are naughty and suffer. Papadiamantis himself is an older hurt child. His childhood was marked by fear, superstitions, and the distorted perception of his time regarding disciplined and obedient children towards their elders. He has suffered successive traumatic experiences, which gathered guilt, fears, child fears, unanswered questions. He describes a deprived life, full of ignorance, which creates fear. The father's domination is present. In Sciathos' society, a small Greek island in the North Aegean Sea, the child is especially loved without the potential for self-justification or other development, beyond that of the bossy father's will.

Papadiamantis portrays the child as a natural existence in the society of his time. He describes the child functioning normally in it without rebelling against the commands of their elders, without having its own opinion and without losing its childish innocence. The writer observes all its activities. He records its psychic manifestations and understands its problems. Sometimes the children remember the happy moments they had experienced and compare them with the misery they are currently experiencing. Other times, Papadiamantis expresses the heartache for an infant lost. He shows, in this way, his sensitivity towards small children and what they go through. In *To miroloi tis fokias* [The Seal's Lament], a novel in which a seal laments the drowning of a nine-year old girl Papadiamantis analyses the tragic death of a small girl and has a seal lament loudly for a human being. In other novels Papadiamantis cauterizes society's attitude towards the unprotected child, the victim of a father whose attitude towards a certain child-carer, who violates his duty resulting in the drowning of the child. The culmination of Papadiamantis' protest against social inequality is present in *The Fonissa* [The Woman Killer], a woman who drowns or chokes little girls so as not to experience the woes deriving from their gender and not become men's servants. He records the huge social problem of inequality of the two sexes and describes excellently the psychology of the heroin who

transforms into fate itself and cuts the thread of the life of little girls so as not to suffer later on in their life.

If accepted that Children's and Young Adult Literature reflects a symbolic trip to maturity, this "trip" has a different character when depicted from an adult's point of view, which writes for adults and involves children in it, too. Frequently, this trip emerges from memories and flashbacks to childhood and young adulthood with nostalgia, as we read in the novel *I exafanis* [The Disappearance] by Psarafi, while in adult Literature turbulences in the child's and adolescent's soul are recorded as writers focalize mainly on it and not on the child's behavior (Papantonakis 2006: 186-9). *The Ego* of the first-person narrator in Stergiopoulos' novels is the *Ego* of his childhood which reveals, after a long time and in full of innocence and wonder, all that happens in his family environment. Here the egoistic-authoritative tendencies of divorced parents expel the child from its home with incredible cruelty. The writer depicts in a very realistic way the contrast between *childish innocence* vs. *adult passions*. Focalization on the child's soul reveals manipulation of the child and the authoritative relationship between adults and child. What retains the child in Stergiopoulos' novels is innocence manifested in its adult life with retrospective dissonant narration of what has been imprinted in its conscience. There are no evident clashes nor is there an attempt made on the child's side to escape all dead-ends surrounding it. It's here that the difference lies. In Adult Literature the child as if bound to Plato's Cave never emerges into the light of knowledge-redemption. The child's innocence remains trapped not into a family home full of passions or into a neutral society but into the unfamiliarity of its own soul. This "trip" in the prescribed texts differs radically from other counterpart trips in Children's and Young Adult Literature, where the child itself or helped by adults struggles to confront difficult situations to escape from dead ends. In Stergiopoulos' novels referred to above, the authoritative relationships between adults and children allow us to ascertain that the difference between Adult Literature and Children's/Young Adult Literature is detected in a relationship asymmetrical between the writer and literary characters and readers and not in the genre.

More generally, writers depict child and adolescent as natural appearances in the society of their time, who discipline and function smoothly in it without rebelling at the commands of the adults and without losing their innocence. Seldom do they express an opinion and when they do, and then it regards adolescents who are not under the direct family supervision. In such

texts we do not deal with a child and its world, as in Children's and Young Adult Literature but with an adult society and the child/adolescent. The writers write for adults and for this reason they do treat the child as a child. More generally, Adult Literature reveals a "patriarchal" writing which controls narration with authorial hegemony and does not allow young characters to be drawn spherically. The child/young adult either as a third-person, overt or covert narrator, already an adult again either as a narrative-content-subject of action or passion functions under the strict directions of a writer-narrator who potentially conceals a lived *Ego*. In contrast to the young adult literature, the child/young adult rarely executes a full *base programme* of action. It usually constitutes part of this programme or of a secondary *narrative programme d'usage*. It is placed in the adult society and is an integral part of it, seen with an adult's eyes, usually of a third-person narrator.

The child in Greek Adult poetry

It will be of special interest to investigate how the child or young adult is depicted in the poetry for adults. A preliminary discovery is that Greek poets, despite society's or at times the States' negative attitude to child, as they describe it, face the child with greater tenderness and respect. They feel sorry and struggle for the child and for this reason they depict it as a victim of certain social and political situations, sympathize with it and protest against this misery and unfair attitude. In most optimistic cases, the poet portrays the child as the most innocent being in the world and the greatest gift that man has.

All the modern Greek poets place the child in the wider social and cultural environment of the poetical universe integrated in the wider intellectual sphere of Greece. This integration, in our opinion, is multi-useful for the scholars of modern Greek Adult and Children's Literature mainly, because this integration places child in the natural, social, political and cultural framework, who forcefully experiences, without the beauty of a child's world enclosed in a text written specifically for children, however hard it tries to adapt to the prevailing conditions. Besides, in these texts, an effort is made for the child to experience childhood within the same chronotope, also experienced by adults.

Very frequently these worries and actions on the part of adults are directed to the child who becomes their recipient, and accepts the same stimulations as they do, which are received in different ways. This is due to the particular sensitivity featuring this age as well as the inadequate development or

the absence of experiences and to the lack of experience that does not allow complicated and detracting mental processes.

Four great Greek poets have been selected in whose works there is a child among them a Nobel Prize winner in whose works there is a child and they are: Tassos Livaditis, Nikiforos Vrettakos, Yiannis Ritsos and Odysseas Elytis (Nobel Prize winner).

The entire poetry by Livaditis indicates childishness and it is more detectable during his poetic maturity, when the poet recalls the anti-humanistic conditions he experienced, realizes that values gradually lurch and commercialization and money-making make their appearance. For this reason he begs:

"the children, Lord, must remain genuine", he said and somewhere far away, the children sighed in their sleep, that they had to grow up. The next morning we found a candle outside his door, a child's drawing and an axe. (Livadis, 1987: 26).

In this extract we become witnesses of a child-killing implied, not described. If in Livaditis' poems referring to the Greek Civil War (1944-1949) children became victims of a political ideology, during his maturity they become victims of irrationality, deeply rooted in the continually changing Greek society. The child-killer of the extract functions as a contemporary Medea who kills children so that they do not lose the purity and beauty of their age, since contemporary man is immoral and harsh and ignores the way to find his lost humanity.

Human suffering, deprivation and misery are often attempted to be soothed with words suggesting an exhilarating mood. Very frequently the hard struggle for living and the children's struggle to survive belie the feelings of strong will and euphoria inflicted by the hope for a better life. The deprivation conditions are evident. Children are deprived of not only the basic materialistic things but also of the basic sentimental support. These conditions of deprivation and misery reveal an anti-humanistic socio-political system favoring the presence of two social classes, that of the financially powerful-rulers and of the miserable bourgeoisie of the mass-ruled. The human misery leads to the emergence and maintenance of social pathogenic phenomena. Therefore, to face

living necessities, young children turn to prostitution. The conditions created favor not only prostitution at a tender age constituting an expression of alienation which began to prevail in the 1950s in Greece, but also the degeneration of moral values, hence the beginning of a cultural degradation.

The child incessantly faces deprivation situations and for this reason and in its effort to survive it is pushed into activities inappropriate for childhood, which the child does not enjoy except in its fantasy. This misery and social pathogenic phenomena alienate the child from the childhood joys, carelessness and games resulting in premature ageing:

*My uncle was beating cinnamon in the back garden making small cakes,
Eaten by ageing children. (Livadis, 1987: 284)*

Society's attitude towards the child in particular, when it is at a disadvantage by nature, therefore in need for more affection, love and interest to bolster its psychology and not be marginalized, raises some questions and is nonetheless the most appropriate. Society appears with corrupted values, without prospects for children, which rejects its young members who have natural defects or humiliates and socially brands them. These children being defective members in society are consecrated in the poet's conscience and are confronted as healthy members:

*I was about to leave, but in the side street I saw the dumb child
Who had leaned against the wall crying, and now on the wall there was a small lighted chapel... (Livadis, v. II, 1987: 60)*

Their only supporter are their dreams leading them, whether they are childish dreams or social visions, in which the child was introduced, despite the fact that often the child was excluded from the adults' discussions. Dreams and visions suggest that children prepare themselves for society, with taking on certain roles on a fantasy level and the development of a personal identity, with adults their by-standers, who usually plan the children's future. Hence, we have an intervention here in moulding an identity and its re-adaptation to the social and political situations each time, since society is reproduced, instilling principles, ideas and values to its developing members:

Frequently, I remember, when I was a child that the adults spoke about my future. This usually took place at the table. But I usually paid no attention to them, listening to a bird out on the tree Perhaps for this reason, my future came so late, and The birds were countless and the trees. (Livadis, v. III, 1988: 22).

This preparation for adult life often passes through an introduction to love, with the roles undertaken in children's games:

*Sometimes I go to the old house of my parents (...)
There, I find my little Annetta, we play together the couple
Behind the couch, the next day, however,
Her mother comes and complains to my mother
"he should do all these filthy things to your dog, Leon"
she shouts, we offer her a fruit preserve, she calms down a bit,
besides, she is poor but in the end she understands.*

(Livadis, v. III, 1988: 225).

Through the game the children acquire their first love experiences, as they gradually prepare themselves to integrate into society. This acquisition sometimes does not prove painless, as the value system and the code of the adults' good behavior do not allow similar games. For this reason they react, at first, to the acquisition and to the confirmation of the children's love identity. This adults' reaction, mainly for the girl, is due to the more general beliefs on woman, living in a close community, in which the negative social criticism and fear prevail that there will be no future rehabilitation of the girl. Therefore, game and social taboos intervene around the children's attempt to initiate to it. Once, the conflict of the adults about the children's love games involves facts of class discrimination, as one can deduce from the above extract. The class differences evidently show the concern of the female side regarding the future fate of their younger poor daughter. The financial power of the male integrates it in a more advantageous position. The "sweet" the girl's mother is offered, is an indication of the *savoir vivre* aims to sweeten the pain. It is also an indication of realizing that this particular behavior on the part of the children constitutes part of their game. Yet, it can be considered as an attempt of bribery, since money bribery is a characteristic of the post Greek civil war class-structured society.

In Livaditis' poetry we came across the children's refusal to grow up which is due to the fact that the children have realized that growing up will deprive them of their purity (Livadis, v. III, 1988: 240). The children became sick, when standing in front of the mirror, *as they did not want to grow up*. Adolescence means acquisition of power, integrating it, however, making him active in the adults' society. Refusal to adolescence means rejection of the adults' world. Innocence and purity of childhood turns against the degeneration of the morally and socially mature age.

The child/young adult refuses to accept the anti humanistic characteristics of the adults' social and moral code:

*[...] the dark mirror made the children become sick
often, as they did not want to grow up.* (Livadis, v. II, 1987: 21).

In his poem collection *Anakalypsis* [Discover], Livaditis depicts a child, little Leonardo, who refuses to come of age. This refusal indicates the strong desire to remain pure. The hero prefers childhood, where carelessness, innocence, authenticity, spontaneity prevail in contrast to the mature age, where hypocrisy, exploitation, moral decay and alienating conditions dominate:

*When, in the end, the others realized what was happening,
attempts were made to convince him, great family meetings
and meetings of doctors, even the city's authorities intervened,
but little Leonardo, with faith to our ancestor's traditions,
refused to grow up, giving to our city a phenomenon
which was made the centre of attention.* (Livadis, v. II, 1987: 251.)

The chase of Elytis

On the other hand, Odysseus Elytis, a Nobel Prize winner, presents child in his poems with a larger optimism (generally his poetry is full of sun, sea and love). The child is considered to be a bearer of moral values and for that reason the poet gives him/her the part of the guardian of these values in *Mikros Naftilos* [Little Seaman], a longer poetic composition, in which the Greek vision co-exists with the universal one. Here, the child, traveling in the Greek seas, has a mission to disembark to that place, where there will be no injustice and to bring a message full of hope to humanity. However, every time that the child-traveler

is about to disembark s/he sees the injustice and for that he wanders eternally in the Greek seas.

In this same frame we see the connection of the sun's "childhood" with the water drop, which in Elytis' poetry is a representation of the sea, with its moral dimensions. Childhood is strongly connected to purity, innocence and nature, as the latter is also connected to love in a young age and which shows sights of femininity, while the sun represents masculinity.

The child's accession within his natural environment and his close relationship with it is spread out in a poem of the collection *Helios o Protos* [Sun The First], where the child is referred in a mystical way as the existence with the

*... scratched knee
 Saved head, unsaved dream
 Pinafore with crossed anchors
 Arm of the pine-tree tongue of the fish
 Little brother of the cloud!...!
 Crazy charm stubborn chin
 Ethereal trousers
 Chest of the rock lily of the water
 Little rascal of the white cloud! (Elytis 1974: 23)*

The elements which define childhood are seen in the child's activities as well as in more permanent characteristics of childhood itself. The basic characteristics of a child are shown without any link and without the use of a verb. With this disjoint writing the child's features become more noticeable, while with the absence of a verb speech becomes more dense and formal.

The child in Vrettakos' poetry

In the poems by Nikiforos Vrettakos the overabundant presence of the child is a basic part of his work, which is characterized by his love for the man and all the creatures of the earth. According to the poet, the thing that coordinates human relationships in our times is also responsible for the wars, the injustice and the exploitation that occurs in human society. For that reason, he promotes love, which he reduces to law. The poet protects himself from evil with love and with that he also protects the man, he softens or he abolishes, as

much as he can, human pain, he fights alienation, restores harmony between society and nature.

Vrettakos' poetry gains world-wide dimensions when he worries and feels for the Vietnamese child who lost a leg or when he talks to the children of the world through Charlie Chaplin. Studying therefore the presence of children in Vrettakos' poems we ascertain that the sources of his inspiration, with the child as a topic, concentrate mainly on three points: his life experiences or whatever he hears about from the international press or whatever information he gets from international current affairs [in the poem "To pedi apo to Mi-Lai" (The child from Mi-Lai) "*The Small Children at School Were Also Shot*" (newspapers and liable magazines, like The Times)]. Moreover, his communication with the children is stable and he is worried when he realizes that he does not succeed in communicating the message of love.

He dreams of an imaginary community where the poets lead the children to enter the global laws of love. The poet takes up the part of the torchbearer based on love. In that way he communicates humanism and builds healthier relationships, in a society, which is tormented by hatred, the repression of the weak, exploitation, injustice and a continuous war. He undertakes therefore, the initiation to lead spiritually a battle against evil and to create, by teaching children love, a world pure and beautiful like the soul of a child, as we read in *Paramythenia Politia* [Fairy City]:

*And I dreamt of a city. A peaceful city
 And simple, just as a galaxy on earth. There [...] I was dreaming
 Writing beautiful pages for the children's alphabet book.*
 (Vrettakos, v. I, 1990: 135).

Vrettakos identifies children with angels and that shows their pure nature, the child's divine origin and that the child is the carrier of all the angelic and divine virtues. He believes that a child has a more advantaged position than the adults have, who have corroded by the disastrous effect of civilization.

The poems referring exclusively to children are not many, in comparison to his voluminous work. They are though very important, because they complete his poetic philosophy. Apart from that, the fact that the child is the central subject of a whole poem proves that an important fraction of the poet's love addresses to the children as well, because he dreams of a better world. He thinks of them as an inseparable part of his poetry. These poems speak of the human

pain, the adults-children relationships or the working children. They record children's ability to fight or they picture them as victims of war. Finally, a unit gives out the universal character of Vrettakos' poetry, while in some others, some loose connection between the child and Jesus is shown, a connection which we also see in the poems by Yannis Ritsos.

In the unit *Diethnis Pedoupoli Pestalotsi* [International Child city Pestalotsi] (Vrettakos, v. II, 1991: 279-287) -circulated in a publication in two languages in Zurich in 1970 titled *Afta ta pedia tu planiti mas* [These children of our planet] - the poet records his experiences with the children of the international city of children in the village Trogan in the highlands of the Swiss Alps, where he sends himself to exile for a few months after the dictatorship in Greece (1967-1974). From this place, he calls the Powerful of the Earth to show a true interest in these children, by presenting two different worlds which are characterized by a binary contradiction of *alienation* vs. *non alienation*. The unwritten laws of love (which refer to *Antigone* by Sophocles) and the code of the poet's values are diametrical opposite to the value system of the powerful of the Earth, which cannot change. Even though in this unit a mediate repression of the children cannot be detected, the Powerfuls' lack of concern about the children is a form of repression.

The second unit that we form using the poems which are scattered in his work and those with the child as the hero, we call it *The child-fighter/victim of war*. Here we include poems like *To pedi apo to Bietnam me to kommeno podi* [The Vietnamese child who lost a leg] (Vrettakos, v. II, 1991: 357) - one of the greatest poems by Vrettakos, with human pain as the topic- or *To pedi apo to Mi-Lai* [The child from Mi-Lai] (Vrettakos, v. II, 1991: 396) - a victim of human monstrosity- which strengthen the universal character of his poetry. These poems present the international feeling and they show the consequences of the criminal hypocrisy of diplomacy worldwide and the suffocating feeling of contemporary life.

In the third unit that we created we include poems, which present the *child as victim of human misery and presenter of human pain*. The poem *Ta dekatessera pedia* [The fourteen children] describes the life and the experiences of his wife, who is a teacher exiled to a distant area of Greece and she treats children with special love and she tries with her imagination to transform the cold and poor place so that the children will feel nice:

*You imagined yourself sewing with your two hands,
You imagined yourself kneading the dough with your two hands
And you dreamed of going into class
With fourteen costumes
With fourteen Christ Loaves of Bread in your arms.*
(Vrettakos, v. I, 1990: 248)

The poet turns to his imagination in order to show his affection to the children and after he realizes that *Grown-ups* do not give the affection that is needed. In the poem *Charlie Chaplin* the children's demands for affection and to satisfy their basic needs are urgent. The poet attempts to change the state of deprivation as well as the differences that separate the people by preparing an imaginary universal dinner as a contemporary Jesus. The poet himself transforms into a torchbearer, to light the passages of the world, for the children to come and undertakes the struggle for a world peace, ecumenical calmness and solidarity of the peoples:

*You must come tonight, too. I am preparing a huge dinner
I laid the table of the earth and I opened the windows /.../
I put my soul in clay pots, in pitchers' /.../
I have invited the children from the U.S.A and the U.S.S.R
I sent Pandit Nehru a train of flowers
To send them back to me decorated. I also sent a message.
To Mao Tse Tung, to give them snow flakes to bring
back with them.
To bring with them as if snow flakes
Two thousand Chinese songs
To count to Picasso: how many thousands
Of pigeons he has drawn in his soul.
To send them to me as they are, to adorn the shoulders
And the hands of my guests? ...
The children have started. They have already drawn
On the earth
The river
Galaxy!..!*

My guests are coming. (Vrettakos, v. II, 1991: 264-5).

With this ecumenical dinner the poet offers communication, satisfaction of the basic needs, entertainment, security, protection, cooperation and solidarity, peace and a lesson to the Powerful so they will not be mindless any more. The poet and the children together through their imagination experience prosperity and fullness, walking away from poverty and apathy, which they see in reality, in chronotope.

Therefore, in the poems by Vrettakos the child is a basic part of his poetic universe, in which the poet himself gives his love, because he believes that the world belongs to the children. Poverty and the poor standards of living have an effect on the child, who is made to play the part of an adult too early in his/her life and to participate actively in all economical processes, even if those concern his survival. Very often, children are forced to fight against hostile wills and they even sacrifice their lives for that cause, while often become victims of human monstrosity. Generally, they deal with the apathy of the Powerful of the Earth, to whom the poet turns to, trying to move their emotions.

The child in Ritsos' poetry

Yannis Ritsos, who has been awarded with Lenin prize and with many other European awards, besides the fact that in a great part of his huge poetic creation he thinks of children as an integral part of society, he writes six more collections of poems for children and adolescents. In these collections, he either celebrates the birth of a child by using as a pretence the birth of his daughter in 1955 (*Proino astro*/Morning Star), or he mourns for a child's death in 1957 (*Anafilito*/Sobbing) or he refers to the children's and the young's life and the playful tricks *Pehnidia tu Nneru ke tu uranu* [Games of the water and the sky], *Oniro kalokerinu mesimeriu* [Dream of summer midday], *Mia pygolambida fotizi ti nicta* [A firefly lights up the night].²

All the poems that are scattered through his poetic work and that refer to the child, they can be filed into three big categories. In the first one, the child is presented as a *fighter*. Poverty, which we saw in other poets as well, except Elytis, makes the children protest and fight and demand peace. The new social conditions, which are expressed by marketing, strengthen the apathy of society or of the Powerful, the exploitation of the weak and the poor and the deprivation

of materialistic goods, for which the children themselves are fighting. Ensuring their obtaining is strongly related to freedom, social and world peace. There is an ideological message here, which is found in the fact that the child does not have the strength to survive through poverty, because of military occupation and war, and for that reason the child protests to the general reduction in social values, however, without getting an answer, like in Vrettakos. The children feel *fear* and *insecurity* and they lose their confidence and trust in adults, and because of these elements they become decisive and responsible, so they can fight on their own for survival. Quite often, though, children find supporters in this fight, adults who give battles for the children to have bread, books and candies (Ritsos, v. V, 1981: 119), the most essential for childhood. The ideological message in the verses, where adults act, is pointed to the fact that the latter have an obligation, and they fight for that, to bring up their children, offering everything to them, with concern for their children's intellectual development and formation and to inspire all the humanistic ideals. Therefore, adults commit themselves to humanistic roles and they do that with punctuality and full sense of their responsibility.

Ritsos presents children as victims of human cruelty, bigotry and revengeful hatred that come from political and religious revengeful acts or child death-rate. The child therefore lives through inhuman situations. That is why the child initially protests, even ready to begin a fight in arms and even if there will be great loss.

In the unit *The child-victim of social injustice* we place those extracts in which we see the effects of the social environment and the economical conditions on the child. Previously, there was a short reference to the social and political environment, in which the child develops and in which the child reacts and fights against any kind of repression. This also reveals in general the social and economic conditions in which children live all over the world. Furthermore, we come up against hunger, poverty, weakness in reacting to all these, absence of any kind of hope for improvement and finally child misery.

The economic and social conditions that exist are the reason for strong protests by children and adults, and as a result a conflict appears between the desire to satisfy basic needs and learn and the weakness that the poor economical and social conditions impose towards their satisfaction. In all these situations there are the Powerful in economy, these who have luxuries, power

² All these collections are included in the selected poems with the title *Piimata*/Poems (see bibliography).

and materialistic wealth. Finally, in the third category are those verses which describe a course to adolescence like:

*They have grown up very much – they smell fir-tree gum and goat's
odor and dynamite!.../
Our children have become like bread.
They have become like stones, like fire. (Ritsos, v. II, 1975: 41)*

It is of course an internal and mental growth, which comes because of those economical facts and the biological development. This maturity is described through purity, the lack of worries and the games which often cause tiredness to adults. Their diligence and their toughening occur because of their life conditions as well as their rebellious nature and their sexual awakening. So we have all the basic characteristics for a normal accession of the children to the society of adults. However, the inevitable biological development and the child's transformation to an adult always imply the adoption of the values of adults. It also means that they are free from adults' repression. Stubbornness and obstinacy disappear as well as their impatience to become adults. They get rid of various restrictions, which are binding. The long trousers, going to coffee shops and smoking are described as external indications of adulthood. At the same time we distinguish characteristics of internal maturity like laconism, sexual awakening and mental transitions. This coming of age theoretical, real or imaginary is not at all painless. Purity must be abandoned, an interest for setting up professionally starts to show and gradually fear is diminished. Imaginary situations are also diminished and critical thought starts to appear

Conclusions

Returning to the child's comparison, as seen in Greek Children's Literature and in Adult Literature we see that in children's texts there is evidence of brutalities, roughness and hardships are quite evident. However, these phenomena appear with a reduced intensiveness for clearly pedagogical reason, in contrast to Adult Literature, where the child is depicted in its real dimensions, as it has different receptors and readers. The writer or the poet writing for adults since he is not interested in this pedagogical principle, to the extent which concerns the writer of children's texts, since it is not intended for children. He records the least brutality in an attempt to depict the facts as realistic as possible. In this everyday reality, he places the child too, which

experiences the same facts but in a different mood (often with astonishment or disappointment, usually silently and unprotestingly or with a feeble complaint) and intensiveness. At some point, however, the child ceases to be patient or disciplined and becomes active taking part in certain events as for instance in the Resistance and all this with energy and carelessness, something that is obvious mainly in poetry.

Child abuse is obviously not commonly seen. In the old times, brutality was probably more extensive. In our times, however, in which freedom of man and respect to his rights are stressed on the one hand and on the other child's rights have been safeguarded internationally with ecumenical proclamations and conditions it is inadmissible for a child to be tortured and abused. This form of social pathogeny has not passed into Greek Children's Literature. It is recorded without hesitations in texts included in Adult Literature.

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