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From Istanbul to Anatolia: Reconstructing Collective Memory in *Loxandra* and *Farewell Anatolia*



Samet Yerköy¹  

¹ Istanbul Rumeli University, Istanbul, Türkiye

Abstract

This study examines the reconstruction of collective memory in Maria Iordanidou's *Loxandra* (Λωξάνδρα) and Dido Sotiriou's *Farewell Anatolia* (Ματωμένα Χώματα), focusing on their portrayal of Greek communities in Istanbul and Anatolia, respectively. Drawing on Maurice Halbwachs's theory of collective memory and Pierre Nora's concept of *lieux de mémoire* (sites of memory), the analysis explores how these novels function as literary archives of a vanished world. The research addresses the central question of how space and memory are represented to preserve these communities' cultural identity in the wake of displacement and historical rupture. *Farewell Anatolia* delves into the collective memory of rural Anatolia, where the land itself becomes a primary *lieu de mémoire*, embodying both belonging and the trauma of forced migration. In contrast, *Loxandra* captures the intricate social fabric of Istanbul's Greek community through urban spaces, domestic rituals, and culinary traditions, portraying the city as a palimpsest of memory layered with cultural meanings. A comparative analysis reveals that while both novels are steeped in nostalgia and act as vessels for cultural preservation, they highlight distinct spatial contexts: the rural, communal memory of Anatolia versus the urban, cosmopolitan memory of Istanbul. The findings suggest that literature serves as a crucial medium for sustaining collective identity, showing that the negotiation of memory is intrinsically tied to specific geographical and social landscapes, and ultimately contributes to our understanding of the enduring impact of historical upheaval on cultural memory.

Keywords

Modern Greek Literature • Collective Memory • Cultural Identity • *Loxandra* • *Farewell Anatolia*



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 2026. Yerköy, S.

 Corresponding author: Samet Yerköy yerkoyamet@gmail.com



Introduction

The cataclysmic events of the early twentieth century, including wars, forced migrations, and population exchanges, profoundly reshaped the demographic and cultural landscape of Anatolia and the former Ottoman Empire (Şeker, 2013, pp. 3-4). Among the most significant consequences was the dissolution of centuries-old Greek communities, both in the heart of Constantinople (Istanbul) and throughout the Anatolian hinterlands. This rupture created a profound void: in the physical presence of these communities and, equally, in the continuity of their cultural memory. At the same time, it reshaped perceptions of identity and “otherness,” as communities that had once coexisted were redefined through the lens of conflict, displacement, and loss (Demiröz, 2003, pp. 173-174).

In the face of this historical amnesia and erasure, literature has emerged as a powerful medium for preserving and reconstructing this fragmented past. This rupture gave rise to what is known in Greek national memory as “1922,” a central *lieu de mémoire* that encapsulates the trauma of the Asia Minor Catastrophe. As recent scholarship notes, this memory, present in family lore, cuisine, language, and communal practices, carries a dramatic, emotionally charged undertone, functioning as an archetype of national resilience and a core element of contemporary Greek identity (Salvanou, 2024, p. 1). This officially sanctioned memory has often been codified into a narrative of successful integration and national homogeneity, a “story with a happy ending” that underscores the modern Greek state’s resilience (Voutira, 2004, p. 149). It is precisely within this tension that literature, as Lachmann (2004, pp. 172-173) argues, finds its unique critical function as “culture’s memory, not as a simple recording device but as a body of commemorative actions,” recovering suppressed and formerly rejected knowledge. Similarly, Erll (2011a, pp. 144-145, 153) defines literature as a “way of worldmaking” that is inherently a form of “memory-making,” capable of accessing “the forgotten and repressed as well as the unnoticed, unconscious, and unintentional aspects of our dealings with the past. Building on these insights, this paper argues that novels such as Dido Sotiriou’s *Farewell Anatolia* and Maria Iordanidou’s *Loxandra* function as crucial literary archives, actively reconstructing the collective memory of these lost worlds. Through a comparative analysis, the study explores how these two seminal works of Greek literature utilize spatial contexts, specifically the rural villages of Anatolia and the urban neighborhoods of Istanbul, to negotiate themes of identity, belonging, otherness, and trauma in the wake of historical rupture.

To frame this analysis, the study draws on Maurice Halbwachs’s theory of collective memory and Pierre Nora’s concept of *lieux de mémoire* (sites of memory). These theories provide a crucial lens for understanding how memory, once embedded in living communities, can be preserved through cultural artifacts after those communities are dispersed. In this context, and as will be elaborated in the Theoretical Framework section, Sotiriou’s *Farewell Anatolia* and Iordanidou’s *Loxandra* can be regarded as such sites, deliberate textual constructions that serve as reservoirs for a memory that no longer has a natural social framework.

As Bedlek (2015, pp. 60-61) emphasizes, Dido Sotiriou’s *Farewell Anatolia* presents a powerful narrative of the Anatolian Greek experience through Manolis Axiotis, a peasant whose life story serves as a synecdoche for his community’s collective fate. The novel explores rural collective memory, where vineyards, fields, and villages are not merely settings but active bearers of memory, embodying generations of labor, tradition, and belonging. As Manolis reflects:

Nearby was the ancient city of Ephesus, which, to tell you the unvarnished truth, really didn’t interest us. Even so, our houses, from door-stops to main staircases, were decorated with ancient fragments. But the best part was that our village was mentioned in Greek books. Oreine Ephesos they called it, and it showed how far back we went. (Sotiriou, 1991, p. 19)

This passage highlights how the village's physical and symbolic landscape embodies memory, linking the community to its ancestral past and establishing the village as a *lieu de mémoire*. As Damar Çakmak (2025, pp. 315-316) notes, the poetic use of myths emerges as a national necessity, enabling comparisons between the glorious past and modern-day Greece and reflecting the struggle to uphold the grandeur of ancestral heritage. In this light, Sotiriou's evocation of the ancient and mythic landscape of Anatolia situates the rural village within a broader cultural strategy of anchoring identity. The trauma of forced migration is depicted as a violent severance from this fundamental source of identity and continuity.

In stark contrast to the rural panorama of *Farewell Anatolia*, Maria Iordanidou's *Loxandra* offers an intimate portrait of the Greek community within the cosmopolitan milieu of late Ottoman and early Republican Istanbul. The novel, narrated by the granddaughter of the eponymous heroine, centers on the formidable figure of Loxandra, a woman whose life and character encapsulate the spirit of her community. As Demiröz (2019, p. 130) observes, Loxandra responds to historical events in her own maternal, Christian Greek way, never employing the dual discourse typical of minority perspectives, a trait that generates much of the novel's situational comedy. This focus on everyday life aligns with Iordanidou's intent to portray "the peaceful coexistence between different ethno-religious groups in Istanbul" as a nostalgic depiction of a world before catastrophe (Papadopoulos, 2021, pp. 476-477). Here, collective memory resides in the city's dense social fabric, neighborhoods like the Phanar, domestic rituals, Orthodox traditions, and culinary practices. As Nikoloupoulou (2007, p. 7) notes, both novels emphasize peaceful coexistence before Turkish nationalism, presenting divisions as class-based rather than ethnic. The city itself becomes a palimpsest, a layered *lieu de mémoire*, where Greek identity is preserved through steadfast adherence to tradition amid a changing political landscape.

This comparative approach raises several central research questions: How do *Farewell Anatolia* and *Loxandra* reconstruct collective memory differently, given their distinct spatial contexts of rural Anatolia and urban Istanbul? In what ways do the land in Anatolia and the city in Istanbul function as primary *lieux de mémoire*, and what specific elements, such as nature, home, food, and rituals, are privileged in this process? How do narrative perspectives, namely, the male voice of collective tragedy in Sotiriou and the female domestic chronicle in Iordanidou, shape the articulation of memory? Furthermore, how do both novels employ nostalgia not merely as a sentimental emotion but as a critical tool for cultural preservation and identity formation within the diaspora?

It is equally important to consider the specific historical conjuncture in which these literary works were produced. Both *Farewell Anatolia* and *Loxandra* emerged at a critical juncture in Greek-Turkish relations. The 1950s and early 1960s were marked by escalating tensions over Cyprus, the devastating anti-Greek pogrom in Istanbul on September 6-7, 1955, and the gradual erosion of the once-thriving Greek community in the city (Alexandris, 1992; Bali, 2012; Güven, 2016). For Iordanidou, writing in Athens amid this atmosphere of nationalist hostility and demographic decline, the act of recalling her childhood in Istanbul was not merely nostalgic; it was a form of cultural salvage, an attempt to preserve, in literary form, a world that was rapidly vanishing under the pressures of contemporary politics. Similarly, Sotiriou's evocation of Anatolian rural life can be read against the backdrop of Cold War polarizations and the ongoing integration of Asia Minor refugees into Greek society, a process that, even two generations after the Catastrophe, remained fraught with tension and social marginalization (Hirschon, 2003). Thus, the "memory work" these novels perform is shaped as much by the anxieties and losses of the 1960s as by the events of the 1920s. Reading them through this dual historical lens reveals that nostalgia in these texts is less a longing for a lost past than a critical response to the nationalist pressures and demographic decline that the Greek community of Istanbul faced in the 1950s and 1960s.

The importance of this study lies in its effort to address a significant gap in the field of literary and cultural scholarship on Greek diaspora literature. While *Farewell Anatolia* and *Loxandra* have each been studied individually, a comparative analysis that emphasizes the central role of spatial context in shaping collective memory has been lacking. By drawing on the frameworks of Maurice Halbwachs and Pierre Nora, alongside more recent contributions from Astrid Erll on transcultural memory and Michael Rothberg on multidirectional memory, this article moves beyond a purely thematic reading. It explores how literature can serve as a surrogate for lost social frameworks of memory while also attending to what these texts selectively forget or silence. In doing so, it reveals how agrarian heartlands and cosmopolitan urban centers generate distinct strategies of remembrance, offering more profound insight into the negotiation of collective identity through space and narrative. Ultimately, both novels function as more than historical accounts; they act as active agents in preserving cultural memory, providing counter-narratives to official histories, and ensuring that the voices and lived experiences of displaced communities continue to resonate in the present.

Theoretical Framework and Methodology: Memory, Space, and Textual Analysis

This study's exploration of memory in *Farewell Anatolia* and *Loxandra* is framed by an integrated theoretical approach that connects the sociology of memory with the analysis of literary form and spatiality. It positions itself at the intersection of literary studies, memory studies, and spatial theory, arguing that a full understanding of these novels as archives of displacement requires synthesizing these perspectives (Radstone, 2011, pp. 109-110; Tally Jr., 2020, pp. 1-2). Building on the foundational insights introduced earlier, this section elaborates on the core theories of Maurice Halbwachs and Pierre Nora and incorporates contemporary perspectives from cultural memory studies to articulate a precise methodological lens for textual analysis. Furthermore, it draws upon theories of space and place to critically examine how the rural and urban settings in the novels are not mere backdrops but active, mnemonic agents. By weaving these strands together, the framework moves beyond a purely thematic reading towards a more nuanced understanding of how literary form itself, through narrative voice, symbolism, and the evocation of sensory detail, becomes the primary medium for reconstructing and sustaining collective memory in the diaspora.

The foundational concept of collective memory, as developed by Halbwachs, posits that memory is not an individual, psychological faculty but a social construct, formed and sustained within specific group frameworks such as the family, religious community, or social class (Halbwachs, 1980; Assmann, 2006, pp. 211-215). For Halbwachs, these groups provide the shared language, rituals, and temporal landmarks that give the past its shape and meaning (Russell, 2006, p. 796-797; Dessingué, 2015, p. 91-96). Consequently, when a community is physically dismantled, as occurred with the Greek populations of Anatolia and Istanbul, its memory system is at risk of dissolution, risking historical and cultural amnesia. Literary texts like *Farewell Anatolia* and *Loxandra* intervene precisely at this point of rupture. They function as surrogate "social frameworks" (Halbwachs, 1980, p. 175), reconstructing the lost milieus necessary for memory to survive. In *Farewell Anatolia*, the narrative voice of Manolis Axiotis consciously crafts a collective "we," transforming individual experience into a communal testimony of life on the land and the trauma of expulsion. In the urban context of *Loxandra*, the novel recreates the neighborhood's (*mahalle*) social framework. A passage from the novel illustrates this self-contained, mnemonic urban ecology, showing how the text rebuilds the Halbwachsian social framework and makes the neighborhood a vessel for memory in the absence of the physical community:

Tatavla was the only district in Istanbul with a one-hundred percent Greek population. No Turk, even if begged, would want to set foot here. Old customs and traditions were preserved here. A piece of wood shaped like a bow was still used as a bell, and the church official struck it with a hammer at the street corners to call the faithful to service. Interestingly, the bell was not rung at funerals. (Iordanidou, 2004, p. 22)

To understand the spatial and symbolic dimension of this literary memory work, the analysis turns to Nora's theory of *lieux de mémoire* (sites of memory). Nora (1992, pp. 14, 18, 380) argues that in the modern era, we have ceased to live in environments of spontaneous, living memory, known as *milieux de mémoire*, and instead consciously create archives, museums, and monuments, or *lieux de mémoire*, to anchor memory because it no longer has a natural social habitat. These sites can be physical, such as a monument or a battlefield; symbolic, such as a commemoration or a flag; or functional, such as a textbook or a will (Nora, 1989, pp. 11-12; Nosova, 2021, pp. 217-218). For the displaced communities in question, their original *milieux de mémoire*, the Anatolian village and the Istanbul neighborhood, were lost. The novels thus become paramount *lieux de mémoire* themselves. More specifically, they are narrative spaces populated with potent internal *lieux de mémoire*: the ancestral land, the village fountain, and the burning city of Smyrna in *Farewell Anatolia*; and the familial home, the dining table, and culinary recipes in *Loxandra*. Nora's theory allows us to analyze why the land in Sotiriou's work is not merely a setting but a sacred, lost site of belonging, and why the home in Iordanidou's narrative functions as a fortress of identity. It provides the vocabulary to explain how these authors select and sanctify specific spatial and cultural elements to serve as symbolic bastions against oblivion. This focus aligns with Henri Lefebvre's foundational argument that social space is not a passive "container" but a dynamic, produced entity, "shot through with" networks of meaning and memory (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 87). The desolate return to the village in *Farewell Anatolia* underscores this shift from lived milieu to memorialized site:

The doors of the village houses creaked on their hinges, blown back and forth with the breeze. It was as though a plague had wiped out the living. All was empty, deserted. Every house, every lane, every tree and shrub, and every stone of this earth was a living part of our hearts and our memories. (Sotiriou, 1991, pp. 289-290)

The theoretical framework is further refined by contemporary cultural memory studies, which specify literature's unique mnemonic agency. Erll (2011a, pp. 144-145) defines literature as a "symbolic form" and a specific "way of worldmaking" that is intrinsically a form of "memory-making." Literature's power, the author argues, lies in its ability to give form to "the forgotten and repressed as well as the unnoticed, unconscious, and unintentional aspects of our dealings with the past" (Erll, 2011a, p. 153). This perspective complements Nora by highlighting literature's active role in shaping not just housing but also memory. Similarly, Lachmann (2004, p. 172) describes literature as "culture's memory," not a passive archive but "a body of commemorative actions" that can recover suppressed knowledge and reincorporate marginalized traditions. This theoretical synergy positions *Farewell Anatolia* and *Loxandra* not merely as containers of memory but as active, commemorative performances that reconstruct and renegotiate the past.

More recent developments in memory studies offer additional conceptual tools that enrich this analysis. Astrid Erll's subsequent work on "transcultural memory" moves beyond nationally bound frameworks to emphasize how memory travels across cultural and temporal borders (Erll, 2011a, pp. 6, 65-66, 143). As Erll argues, memory is not contained within ethnic or national containers but emerges from continuous intercultural interaction (Erll, 2011b, p. 8). This perspective is particularly relevant for *Farewell Anatolia* and *Loxandra*, which, while narrating Greek collective memory, are deeply embedded in the multi-ethnic,

multi-religious fabric of the Ottoman world. The memories they reconstruct are not purely “Greek”; they are constituted through encounters, exchanges, and cohabitation with Turks, Armenians, Jews, and others. Similarly, Michael Rothberg’s (2009, pp. 2-3) concept of “multidirectional memory” challenges the zero-sum game model in which memories of different groups compete for recognition. Rothberg (2009, pp. 3-6) argues that memory is inherently dialogic; the remembrance of one group’s trauma can actually open pathways for articulating another’s, rather than blocking them. Reading these novels through a multidirectional lens allows us to ask: Does the Greek trauma of expulsion necessarily silence the memories of other groups who suffered during the same period (Turks, Armenians), or can these texts be read as part of a broader, shared history of imperial collapse and displacement? While a full multidirectional analysis lies beyond the scope of this paper, Rothberg’s framework sensitizes us to the ethical implications of memory construction, namely, that the act of remembering one’s past often involves implicit choices about which other pasts are foregrounded or obscured. In this context, it is worth recalling that Turkish national historiography has constructed the Greeks as a “classic ‘enemy’ and ‘other’” (Demirözü, 2005, pp. 156-157). This dynamic of mutual othering constitutes the historical and ideological ground from which both novels emerge and provides a critical backdrop for understanding their representations of the “Other.”

Guided by this integrated framework, this study employs close reading and comparative analysis. The primary method involves a meticulous examination of the literary texture of both novels, focusing on narrative structure, point of view, symbolism, imagery, and the function of key motifs such as land, food, home, and ritual. Close reading is essential for moving from abstract theoretical concepts to their concrete textual manifestations. It demonstrates, for instance, how a detailed recipe in *Loxandra* or the personification of the Anatolian soil in *Farewell Anatolia* transforms ordinary objects into powerful *lieux de mémoire*, thereby empirically grounding the theoretical claims. Furthermore, the comparative approach is a core analytical component. By systematically juxtaposing the rural, traumatic memory of *Farewell Anatolia* with the urban, nostalgic memory of *Loxandra*, this study highlights contrasts in narrative tone, the scale of mnemonic sites (expansive land vs. intimate home), and strategies of remembrance. This comparison ultimately illuminates the diverse ways a shared historical catastrophe is processed in literature, enriching our understanding of the complex relationship between space, memory, and identity in the Greek literary imagination.

Farewell Anatolia; The Land as *Lieux de Mémoire*

In Sotiriou’s *Farewell Anatolia*, the interplay between autobiographical and historical fiction is intimately linked to memory, reflecting a reconstructed Greek identity that balances modernity with tradition and Europeanness with Greekness (Tziovas, 2011, pp. 310-311). The novel stands as a seminal literary testament to the collective trauma of the Anatolian Greeks, transforming a narrative of individual suffering into a powerful elegy for an entire civilization (Kefalidou, 2023, pp. 49-50). Its centrality is underscored by its historical role in Greek culture. As Liakos (2008, p. 86) notes, following a national debate on history textbooks, authorities distributed Sotiriou’s novel in schools to compensate for an “emotional deficit,” officially recognizing *Farewell Anatolia* as “the literary expression of the 1922 ‘*lieu de mémoire*.’”

The novel, narrated by Manolis Axiotis, actively reconstructs the collective memory of a people deeply rooted in the land. Sotiriou explores how collective identity is forged through attachment to the land and how violent severance from it constitutes an existential and cultural rupture. As Manolis returns to his village, he observes:

We assured ourselves that the village was uninhabited and slipped into the streets. We crept along the walls like thieves. The moon gave enough light to make out everything. The doors of the houses creaked as the wind opened and closed them. You would have thought a plague had struck and wiped out the living. Everything was deserted, empty. On the doorsteps and in the streets lay scattered clothes, broken furniture, and glassware. Here and there, a dog howled mournfully. Even the cats mewed anxiously, dryly and persistently, adding to the desolation. Every house, every lane, every tree and shrub, and every stone of this earth was kneaded with our heart and our memory. (Sotiriou, 1962, p. 331)

This vivid depiction underscores how the destruction of place signifies the disintegration of communal memory. Yet the passage also reveals the exclusivity of that memory: the village is mourned as theirs, “our heart, our memory,” while the absence of others, including the Turkish neighbors who once inhabited nearby villages, goes unremarked. The “plague” that has emptied the houses is, in the novel’s narrative logic, the war; but whose loss is being counted here, and whose remains unacknowledged?

The narrative is steeped in profound nostalgia that serves a crucial memorial function: preserving the intricate tapestry of rural life, communal rituals, and cultural values irrevocably lost in the “Catastrophe” (Η Καταστροφή). As historical analysis shows, this term was consciously cultivated in public discourse to transform the events of 1922 into a unifying national narrative of loss and martyrdom, a process in which literary works like Sotiriou’s played a constitutive role (Gedgaudaitė, 2021, p. 5). In this sense, the novel becomes a primary *lieu de mémoire*, a sacred site where the memory of Anatolia is kept alive for the diaspora, but a memory that, in its very structure, remains silent about the parallel losses suffered by those on the other side of the new national border.

The most potent *lieux de mémoire* in the novel is the land of Anatolia itself. Sotiriou portrays the land not as a passive setting, but as an active, almost sentient participant in the community’s life. The trauma of war and expulsion are depicted as violent amputations from this organic whole. This complex relationship with the land and neighboring communities is captured early in the narrative:

There were no Turks in our village, even though Turkish was the language we spoke. The love for our homeland burned like a faint, eternal flame in our hearts. The Turks from the surrounding villages, Kireçli, Havuzlu, and Balacık, honored and admired us; they said our intelligence was sharp and we were hardworking. And we, it is true, never gave them reason to change their minds. We stood by good words and by baksheesh. Not a day passed without Turkish villagers coming down to our market. They brought wood, charcoal, poultry, kaymak, eggs, cheeses, and all the blessings of the East. They sold them in the market and then bought whatever they needed from our shops. (Sotiriou, 1962, pp. 24-25)

This passage reveals the layered nature of collective memory. It highlights a Halbwachsian social framework defined by ethnic lines, yet acknowledges a shared economic landscape built on mutual respect. The land functions as the silent stage upon which distinct identities and a shared community were built. Yet the passage also reveals the limits of this representation: Turkish characters appear only as admiring neighbors, as vendors, as a backdrop to Greek industry and intelligence. Their inner worlds, their attachments to the land they also cultivated, remain absent. The memory preserved is thus a Greek memory, selective in what it includes and what it leaves unspoken.

This nuanced acknowledgment of coexistence, however, also invites critical scrutiny regarding what the narrative leaves unexplored. Turkish characters in *Farewell Anatolia* remain largely on the periphery.

They are mentioned as neighbors who “respected and admired us,” as soldiers in the advancing army, or as anonymous figures in the chaos of war. Their inner worlds, attachments to the land they cultivated, and sufferings during the decade-long wars between 1912 and 1922 remain absent from the narrative. The story, focalized almost exclusively through Manolis, constructs a collective Greek “we” against which Turks are defined, even when the definition is positive. As Bedlek (2015, p. 78) observes, Sotiriou’s novel, while empathetic, ultimately participates in the construction of a national Greek narrative of victimhood. In this narrative, Turks function primarily as agents of catastrophe rather than fellow sufferers in the collapse of an imperial world.

What, then, does the novel “forget” or “silence”? It does not dwell on the Turkish peasant’s parallel experience of loss: the death of sons in the same battles, the displacement caused by the Greek advance into Anatolia, or the trauma of witnessing one’s village burn. This is not to demand that Sotiriou write a different novel, but to recognize, as Rothberg (2009), that memory is inherently selective. The very power of *Farewell Anatolia* as a *lieu de mémoire* for Greek readers derives partly from its focus on Greek suffering. Yet acknowledging this selectivity is crucial for a critical understanding of how collective memory operates. The land, so vividly memorialized as a Greek *lieu de mémoire*, was also and continues to be a Turkish homeland, a complexity the novel registers only indirectly through the very absence of Turkish voices.

The collective memory of this agrarian society is further articulated through its communal rituals and the rhythm of daily life. Sotiriou meticulously documents the social frameworks that, according to Halbwachs, enable memory to flourish. The novel is replete with scenes of village festivals, weddings, shared labor during the harvest, and religious celebrations. These rituals are not mere background details; they are the very mechanisms that bind the community together and create a shared past. A wedding, for instance, is portrayed not as a private affair but as a communal project, a collective performance of identity and solidarity that etches itself into the group’s memory. This is vividly illustrated in the preparations for a village wedding:

He wanted the whole village to enjoy his wedding, and to remember it for years to come. He roasted lambs, stuffed turkeys with chestnuts, pine nuts, and black currants. Five women fried livers, pastourmas, meatballs, and fish. Not to mention the baking dishes full of kuyu kebab pies, galaktoboureko, baklava, bourekia, and katiemeria. (Sotiriou, 1962, p. 98)

This description serves as a powerful *lieu de mémoire* for the sensory and social richness of Anatolian life. The sheer scale of the feast, involving multiple women and a vast array of traditional foods, underscores collective effort and shared prosperity. The explicit desire for the event to be remembered “for years to come” highlights the conscious creation of shared memory. Such scenes solidify the novel’s function as an archive of social practices. Yet the abundance depicted, the roasted lambs, the honey-drenched sweets, is a distinctly Greek abundance, described without reference to the Turkish neighbors who, earlier in the narrative, shared the market and the land. The memory preserved here is one of self-sufficiency, a community remembering itself in isolation.

As the narrative progresses toward the Catastrophe, the tone shifts from nostalgic remembrance to the brutal shattering of this memory world. The idyllic landscapes of the opening chapters are systematically destroyed by fire, violence, and the relentless march of war. The burning of Smyrna (İzmir) serves as the apocalyptic climax of this destruction, a symbolic cremation of the cosmopolitan Anatolian world. Furthermore, Sotiriou introduces the island of Samos as a crucial geographical and mnemonic threshold. For the characters, Samos represents both a fleeting foothold for the desperate hope of return and a stark *lieu de mémoire* of their expulsion. From this island, they gaze back at the receding Anatolian coast, a sight that

etches the moment of final separation into their collective consciousness. The novel highlights how the two opposing shores of the Aegean, the Anatolian mainland and the island of Samos, become forever connected in this traumatic memory. This geographical pairing mirrors the real-world phenomenon in which refugees named their new settlements after their lost homelands, forever inscribing the map of their memories onto the geography of their exile. This traumatic event becomes a different kind of collective memory, a memory of loss, violence, and betrayal that is seared into the consciousness of the survivors. Sotiriou does not shy away from depicting administrative chaos and human despair, ensuring that this painful memory is preserved as a testament to the past. This is starkly captured in the scene of their embarkation:

We found ourselves huddled with our bundles in the bow of a ship, dressed in rags, paralysed from exhaustion, without knowing which way the storm would blow us... No one knew its destination. Eyes searched the horizon. (Sotiriou, 1962, pp. 336-337)

This quote powerfully illustrates the moment of existential rupture. The imagery of being “huddled,” “paralysed,” and adrift without a destination encapsulates the complete dismantling of the social frameworks that once provided order and identity. The collective memory is no longer rooted in a specific place but is forced into a mobile, uncertain, and diasporic existence, carried only in the minds and fragmented stories of the refugees as they gaze into an unknown future.

Farewell Anatolia is a work of literary reconstruction steeped in nostalgia that serves a crucial ethical and cultural purpose. This nostalgia is not an escape from reality but a deliberate act of resistance to historical erasure. By meticulously detailing the lost world of Anatolia, its sights, sounds, smells, and social bonds, Sotiriou resists the oblivion that follows trauma. The novel ensures that the memory of this community does not perish with its last survivors. It transforms the abstract statistics of population exchange into a visceral, human story of attachment and love for a homeland. *Farewell Anatolia* transcends its historical context to become a universal lament for all displaced peoples, a permanent *lieu de mémoire* in the canon of world literature that bears witness to the enduring link between people, their land, and the memories that outlive physical separation.

The Neighborhood as a Living Archive: Urban Memory and Female Custodians in *Loxandra*

Maria Iordanidou's *Loxandra* constructs a vibrant monument to the collective memory of the Greek community of Istanbul, shifting the focus from the rural trauma of Anatolia to the intricate social world of the city. The novel, framed as a granddaughter's recollection, establishes the urban landscape, from the intimate domestic sphere to the bustling neighborhood of Tatavla (Kurtuluş), as a primary *lieu de mémoire*. Iordanidou demonstrates that for this cosmopolitan community, identity was forged not in vast fields but in the shared spaces of homes, streets, and churches and transmitted through the rhythms of daily life. This depiction aligns with Calotychos's (2013, p. 127) observation that Greek authors from Asia Minor often portrayed a complex coexistence with Turks, marked by both prejudice and everyday *bonhomie*. Through a rich tapestry of female-led rituals, culinary traditions, and neighborhood gossip, *Loxandra* portrays the city itself as a living archive, actively preserving the social codes and cultural values of a world fading under the influence of modernity and political change. The novel also reflects the gendered expectations of the period, in which women were idealized as virtuous figures, present and active primarily in the domestic sphere, cultivating morality and education within the household, while men were associated with visibility, strength, and economic authority (Çete, 2024, p. 333).

The most potent *lieux de mémoire* in the novel are the interconnected spaces of the home and the mahalle (neighborhood). The house in Tatavla is a sanctuary and a fortress of identity. Yet this domestic world is intrinsically linked to the neighborhood's public sphere, which functions as a miniature Halbwachsian social framework. Iordanidou illustrates that the collective memory of the Istanbul Greeks was embedded in a specific, reproducible socio-urban fabric, a cosmos of ethnic trades and sounds that defined their daily existence. This deeply ingrained mental map of the city, in which identity was tied to a predictable, familiar urban order, is a cornerstone of their collective memory. This is powerfully demonstrated when the characters move within the city yet find their world intact, as the same ethno-religious tapestry of vendors recreates the memory of their old neighborhood:

Everything is the same as in Bakırköy, but nothing resembles it. Here, too, the egg-seller is a Tatar, the fishmonger is an Armenian, and their baker is an Epirot. "Salep, salep!" shouts the salep-seller here, too, and their liver-seller is a Ghég. And the wandering helva-seller hawks his keten helva with the same minor key. But here you wake up with a headache, and when you open the window, you no longer say "Thank God." And when dusk falls, you cry. How sad dusk is in the city! (Iordanidou, 2004, p. 125)

This passage reveals that the "neighborhood" is less a specific location and more a portable, remembered structure, a cognitive and cultural blueprint. Collective memory encompasses not only a place but also a specific social and economic ecology. Yet the original Greek text adds a melancholic dimension: despite the portability of ethnic trades, something essential has been lost. The ability to wake up and thank God, the peace at dusk, these existential comforts do not travel as easily as the external structures of memory.

This ecology is maintained through conscious choice, reinforcing the community's identity by perpetuating traditional roles. The novel further underscores the unwritten code that assigned specific trades to specific ethnic groups:

Just as the milkmen of Istanbul were Slavs, the fishermen were Armenians, and the bakers were Epirots, so too were the woodcutters Kurds. And so Loxandra had called the Kurds to chop her wood. Early in the morning, in the middle of the street in front of her house, they unloaded thirty loads of tree trunks, and the Kurds arrived, those giant, cherubic men with axes and headscarves tied around their fezzes, their gleaming balthacks well-sharpened. The Kurds were connoisseurs of their balthacks. (Iordanidou, 2004, pp. 139-140)

This detailed description is striking: the Kurds are granted a rare moment of visual presence, with their physical stature, headscarves, and prized axes. Yet even here, they remain figures of service, their identity tethered to the wood they chop. They are admired for their skill but given no inner life, no voice beyond the task.

This pattern extends to other anonymous figures who populate the neighborhood's soundscape. On a rainy afternoon, Loxandra sends Tarnanas to call a passing leblebici: "Run, Tarnanas, run, he's tapping the glass. 'Dur, leblebici, dur!'" (Iordanidou, 2004, p. 135). The leblebici appears only as a voice, a tap on the glass.

Together, these passages demonstrate that the mahalle, as a *lieu de mémoire*, is not just a physical space but a deeply internalized system. It is a mnemonic map of ethnic professions and communal sounds, a self-perpetuating social order that ensured the continuity of collective identity. The preserved memory is that of a functioning, multi-ethnic urban microcosm with the Greek community at its center, yet it is also a memory marked by the limits of its vision: the Others who populate its margins remain figures on the periphery, essential but never fully seen.

The transmission of this urban collective memory is orchestrated predominantly through female characters, who act as the chief archivists and narrators. The eponymous Loxandra embodies this role, yet her perspective offers more than just domestic wisdom; it provides a powerful lens on the community's collective psychology and its tragic historical myopia. The narrative, filtered through the granddaughter's memory, captures a specific, insular worldview that the novel itself frames as a poignant, almost fatal form of nostalgia. This worldview, where the permanence of their world was an unshakable article of faith, is precisely what makes its eventual dissolution so tragic. Loxandra and her community are portrayed not just as curators of tradition but also as inhabitants of a bubble, blind to the geopolitical forces that would soon shatter their lives. This is brilliantly encapsulated in the narrator's reflection:

For in that "beautiful old era," when one would tie dogs with sausages, everyone minded their own home and their own comfort believed that the world as it was, is, and will be. That the Kaiser would always rule, and the Tsar would reign, and that Saint Basil would come from Kayseri and enter the City as if it were his own home, and the Turks would bow before him. And they believed that Constantinople would always smell of Greekness. (Iordanidou, 2004, pp. 181-182)

This passage is crucial for understanding the novel's construction of collective memory. It moves beyond the what of memory, rituals, and food to articulate the how, the underlying, naive belief system that structured that memory. The collective memory being reconstructed here encompasses a lost way of life, innocence, and certainty. The irony is thick and deeply tragic; the very domestic focus ("minding their own home") that allowed their culture to flourish also created a blind spot, leaving them unprepared for catastrophe. This gendered, parochial perspective distinguishes the novel from *Farewell Anatolia*; here, the collective tragedy is filtered through the memory of a female-centric world that was so sure of its own permanence it failed to see its own end coming, making the subsequent loss all the more profound.

Food and culinary culture function as perhaps the most potent and sensory *lieux de mémoire* in the novel. Iordanidou elevates cooking and eating from daily necessities to sacred acts of cultural remembrance. Recipes are heirlooms, guarded secrets that carry the flavor of history and personal memory. The connection to the past through food is not always a solemn ritual; it can be a deeply personal, almost instinctual comfort that transcends even the most sacred of settings. This complex intertwining of memory, taste, and place is vividly captured in a scene where the adult Loxandra seeks solace in a dish that connects her directly to her childhood and her grandmother:

Kyra-Zoitsa sings as she wraps yalantzi dolmas. And Loxandra is little, sitting on a stool beside her grandmother. She spreads out the vine leaves for her. She cleans the mint for her, because yalantzi dolma needs mint. That's how it is. If you don't have your mint and plenty of onions, it's better not to make yalantzi dolma at all.

"Ah!"

Loxandra opens her little basket and takes out a yalantzi dolma. She looks around... A woman is kneeling at a grave nearby and lighting a candle. Two other women, a little further away, are crying; they don't look at her. She quickly pops the dolma into her mouth. A little later, she bends down and stuffs two more dolmas into her mouth, along with a piece of bread and a radish.

"Mm... the dolmas turned out well!"

God rest her soul, that grandmother, who put mint in the yalantzi dolmas! She pops a cracked olive into her mouth and sighs, looking up at the sky. And suddenly she sees her mother. And beside her... (Iordanidou, 2004, p. 51)

This passage is a masterful depiction of culinary memory in action. The detailed, almost sacred knowledge of the recipe, “That’s how it is,” passed down from her grandmother, is immediately followed by Loxandra’s clandestine, comfort-seeking act in a cemetery. The food is a tangible, edible *lieu de mémoire* that instantly transports her from the grief of the present back to the security of her grandmother’s kitchen. Her furtive eating among the mourners is both humorous and profoundly human, illustrating that the need for this sensory connection to one’s past can be as immediate and compelling as hunger itself. The yalantzi dolma (stuffed grape leaves made without meat) is more than a dish; it is a Proustian madeleine, a direct conduit to a lost childhood and a stabilizing force in a moment of dislocation, proving that collective memory is often preserved and activated through the most personal and sensory of experiences.

Ultimately, the nostalgia in *Loxandra* is different from that in *Farewell Anatolia*. It is not the sharp, traumatic nostalgia for a paradise violently lost but a softer, more elegiac nostalgia for a world that gradually faded away. The novel mourns the passing of a specific urban social order and the cosmopolitan spirit of old Constantinople, not as a singular cataclysmic event but as a slow erosion. The microcosms of Tatavla, Bakırköy, and Pera, with their interconnected Greek families, distinctive trades, and intricate social codes, are now remembered as cohesive worlds dissolved by demographic shifts, political pressures, and modern homogenization. Iordanidou’s work is a memorial to this vibrant, multi-ethnic urban micro-civilization. By reconstructing it with such affection and sensory detail, from the specific calls of street vendors in Tatavla to the portable social fabric that characters recreate in new neighborhoods, the novel ensures that the memory of the Istanbul Rum, their resilience, their unique identity, and their deep roots in the city’s daily life are not erased. Instead, it remains a vibrant and essential thread in Istanbul’s complex, layered history.

Conclusion

This comparative analysis demonstrated that Dido Sotiriou’s *Farewell Anatolia* and Maria Iordanidou’s *Loxandra* serve as monumental literary *lieux de mémoire*, actively reconstructing the collective memory of the Greek communities lost in the dissolution of the Ottoman world. By applying the theoretical lenses of Maurice Halbwachs and Pierre Nora, alongside more recent contributions from Astrid Erll on transcultural memory and Michael Rothberg on multidirectional memory, this study has illuminated the distinct strategies of remembrance employed by these two seminal texts. It has moved beyond a simple thematic reading to uncover the mechanics by which cultural memory is forged, preserved, and transmitted through narrative while also attending to what these texts selectively forget or silence.

The journey from the rural heartlands of Anatolia to the urban neighborhoods of Istanbul reveals not a monolithic experience of loss but two profoundly different, yet equally poignant, engagements with a shared historical trauma. While *Farewell Anatolia* foregrounds the land and the rural community as living archives of collective identity and memory, *Loxandra* emphasizes intimate domestic and neighborhood spaces, highlighting women as custodians of urban memory. Together, these novels underscore the multifaceted nature of cultural preservation, demonstrating how literature can serve as both a testament and a sanctuary for displaced communities, ensuring that memory endures even in the absence of its original physical and social context.

Our central research question asked how these novels reconstruct collective memory differently across their distinct spatial contexts. The analysis confirms that space is the fundamental determinant. In *Farewell Anatolia*, collective memory is rooted in the land itself, a vast, fertile, and ultimately wounded *lieu de mémoire*. The vineyards, fields, and villages are not mere settings but active participants in the narrative, embodying a symbiotic relationship between the people and the soil. The trauma of expulsion is therefore experienced as a violent amputation from an organic whole. Yet this memory, as the analysis has shown, is also selective: Turkish neighbors who once shared the land appear only as peripheral figures, their parallel

losses unacknowledged. In stark contrast, *Loxandra* anchors collective memory in the city's intricate social fabric. The primary *lieux de mémoire* are the home, the mahalle (Tatavla, Pera, Bakırköy), and the web of human interactions within them. Memory is preserved not in the soil but in domestic rituals, the sounds of street vendors, and the portable socio-ethnic map of urban professions, a map that, despite its multi-ethnic texture, keeps the Turkish other largely outside its frame.

The investigation into the specific elements privileged by these spatial contexts yielded clear distinctions. *Farewell Anatolia* privileges elements of collective, agrarian life, including the shared labor of the harvest, village festivals, and the elemental connection to nature, all of which constitute the Halbwachsian social frameworks of the rural community. Conversely, *Loxandra* privileges the intimate and the sensory: the taste of yalantzi dolma, the scent of the home, the gossip networks of the neighborhood, and the female-coded knowledge of recipes and traditions. These elements show that for the urban diaspora, memory was embedded in the daily practices and social codes that defined their cosmopolitan identity, a world where, as the novel poignantly recalls, they believed “Constantinople would always smell of Greekness.”

Furthermore, the narrative perspectives profoundly shape the way this memory is articulated. Sotiriou's use of a male narrator, Manolis, creates a voice of collective tragedy, a “we” that speaks for an entire uprooted people. His story is an epic of communal fate. Iordanidou's choice of a female, domestic chronicle, filtered through a granddaughter's memory, positions memory as a matriarchal legacy. Here, memory is not declared but curated, passed down through Loxandra's stories, admonitions, and household management. This gendered distinction highlights that collective memory is not a singular narrative but is structured by the specific social roles and vantage points of its carriers.

Finally, both novels masterfully employ nostalgia not as a mere sentimental indulgence but as a critical tool for cultural preservation and identity formation. In *Farewell Anatolia*, nostalgia is a sharp, painful longing that fuels political and historical testimony, ensuring that the Catastrophe is not forgotten. It is a nostalgia for a paradise violently lost. In *Loxandra*, nostalgia is both elegiac and cultural, serving as a tool for preserving the texture of a way of life that has faded away. It safeguards the social wisdom, humor, and resilience of a community, ensuring its identity endures in the diaspora.

Ultimately, this study contributes to the literature by demonstrating that a people's collective memory is not unitary. Through their powerful, spatially grounded, and gendered narratives, *Farewell Anatolia* and *Loxandra* together create a multifaceted memorial. Yet they also reveal the limits of such memorialization: memory, by its very nature, is selective, and what is left unspoken, the Turkish neighbor, the shared land, the parallel losses, is as constitutive of these texts as what they lovingly preserve. In this way, the novels offer a testament to a lost world alongside an invitation to reflect on the ethical dimensions of remembrance itself.



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Author Details	Samet Yerköy (Ph.D.)
	¹ Istanbul Rumeli University, Istanbul, Türkiye
	 0000-0002-2682-4986  yerkoyamet@gmail.com



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