

Deterritorializing Narrative Strategies of New Literatures in English: Andriana Ierodiconou's *The Women's Coffee Shop*

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*As one of the New Literatures in English, Cypriot Anglophone literature has only recently come to be the focus of literary researchers and scholars. This article deals with Andriana Ierodiconou's 2012 novel *The Women's Coffee Shop* in the context of the New Literatures in English, starting from the theoretical and philosophical premises of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. While situating the novel within the framework of minor literatures and rhizomatic narratives, its main goal is to define and describe, through close reading, the narrative strategies that reflect and/or strengthen the deterritorializing effect as a key feature of a minor literature. To this effect, the article analyzes the figure of a deterritorialized narrator, characterization that oscillates between deterritorialization and reterritorialization, the narrative method of dreamwork and narrative modes that potentially create new territories, as well as the rhizomatic narrative gap and the open ending. To summarize, the narrative of the novel is exemplary of the position that Cypriot Anglophone literature occupies as one of the (minor) New Literatures in English.*

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New Literatures in English

With large parts of the world permanently affected by the English language, due to reasons either historical and ideological (colonization and imperialism) or contemporary (globalization), literary fiction is written in English in many countries and by numerous authors who do not belong to the English or American literary tradition, which are

generally considered mainstream in the Anglosphere.¹ Defining “non-mainstream” English literature(s) is often complex: relegating it to a national literature, for instance, Maltese, Irish, etc., usually does not suffice because of the language in which it is written; equalizing it with Commonwealth literature is somewhat problematic because of the implications of colonial discourse and cultural appropriation; the concept of diasporic literature overlaps with but does not precisely correspond to it. The most frequently applied terms seem to be “New Literatures in English” and “Anglophone World Literatures,” which “identify an array of writing in English in different locations and under different circumstances, without limiting itself to authorship by Anglophone individuals in the original sense” and refer to “the entire spectrum of texts in English around the globe, past and present” (Dharwadker 48). The origins of some of these “new” literatures in English can be traced back to the nineteenth century, while others seem to have appeared in the last decades of the twentieth. In either case, there is usually a sense of novelty or freshness as well as an immediate effect of defamiliarization about literature in English that does not reflect any English/American experience. There is also the pressing need for approaching, describing, and interpreting new literatures in English from different theoretical and methodological perspectives.

This paper aims to offer contribution to the study of new literatures in English by focusing on Cypriot Anglophone literature, more precisely, the contemporary bilingual (English and Greek) author Andriana Ierodionou (b. 1952). Ierodionou is the author of two novels written originally in English: *Margarita's Husband: A Fable of the Levant* (2007) and *The Women's Coffee Shop* (2012), as well as a translator and a poet (the bilingual collection of her poems spanning the period between 1977 and 2015 with the English title *The Trawler* was published in 2016). This paper relies on a close reading of her second novel *The Women's Coffee Shop*. In Cyprus, divided along many lines, one of them based on religion (Muslim vs. Christian), the protagonist Angelou runs a coffee shop which, in a stark contrast to the traditional and patriarchally reinforced idea of coffee shops as men's realm, serves women only. Readers follow Angelou as she comes to terms with the death by stabbing of her closest friend Avraam Salih, the shadow theater master of mixed Muslim and Christian origin, whom neither the Muslim nor the Christian community agree to bury. At the same time, Angelou struggles with Avraam's domineering estranged

¹ This article presents research conducted within the MIK project (“Migrations, Integrations, Creations in Anglophone Literatures and Cultures”) of Alfa BK University.

grandfather Hadjimbey, a representative of one line of the island's traditional values, and the modern tourism and urbanization tendencies which start to effectively exert influence on the individual lives of ordinary Cypriots three years following the independence of the country. The plot is driven by discovering what happened to Avraam, but this question of death is ultimately left open, overshadowed by numerous preoccupations of life in Ierodiaconou's (imaginary) Cyprus. The analysis this paper offers is framed within the theoretical concept of deterritorialization, as expounded by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in, among other works, their book *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, and further elaborated by other authors such as Claire Colebrook. The aim of the analysis is to identify, explain, and contextualize specific narrative strategies in *The Women's Coffee Shop* whose application is indicative of deterritorialized fiction.

Deterritorializing principle of New Literatures

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari claim that deterritorialization is the crucial feature of what they call a "minor literature." Their definition of a minor literature corresponds to that of New Literatures in English: it "doesn't come from a minor language; it is rather that which a minority constructs within a major language" (Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka* 16). Their subsequent observation that "minor" does not designate "specific literatures but the revolutionary conditions for every literature within the heart of what is called great (or established) literature" (18) does suggest that a literature in English from a (geographical) *territory* other than England is not automatically minor, but it also allows for its inherent potential for being minor, due precisely to its revolutionary use of language in the process of constructing narratives. According to Claire Colebrook's reading of Deleuze and Guattari, a minor literature does not represent the world or its subjects—instead, it "has the power ... to imagine, create and vary affects that are not already given" (Colebrook 103). It does not use language simply as a means of communication; it uses "a language that becomes sound ... or a language that creates sense" to produce "what is not already recognisable" (103). A minor literature makes language seem foreign,² and it arguably moves even

² An interesting example in *The Women's Coffee Shop* is the expression "Your health," which is used throughout the narrative whenever a character takes a sip of any drink. While it is presumably rooted in the culture and customs of Cyprus, the expression in this form is uncommon in the English language.

beyond defamiliarization as dislocation of “our habitual perception of the real world so as to make it the object of a renewed attentiveness” (Bennett 20) into the process of *creating*—rather than expressing—the world and its subjects. The created world is also inevitably connected with a particular place or space inasmuch as it reconfigures (or deterritorializes) an existing *territory* (geographical or social) and subsequently reconstitutes or reterritorializes it into a new one.

This connection has not gone unnoticed in the case of the Anglophone literature of Cyprus. As Marios Vasiliou writes in his 2011 and 2017 research presenting the work of Andriana Ierodiaconou, Alev Adil, Miranda Hoplaros, and Stephanos Stephanides, the contemporary “cultural front” in Cyprus is dominated by “nationalist official discourses” in both major communities (Greek and Turkish), and the literature written in English “comes into this heated cultural front as a discourse that endeavors to re-imagine community across ethnic lines and against heteronormal sexual boundaries, taking in the process a cosmopolitan orientation” (Vasiliou, “Situating” 48–49). In this process of reimagining/creating a community, Cypriot Anglophone literature occupies a position which is minor both “locally in relation to the dominant literatures in Greek and Turkish, and internationally in relation to global English” (Vasiliou, “Cypriot English Literature” 83). Its deterritorialization is seen in its marginal position in Cyprus, as Anglophone writers “are cut off from the local Greek and Turkish speaking establishments that erect linguistic barriers to them” (84), while it is simultaneously distanced from the global literary production in English, even from the rather voluminous corpus of postcolonial fiction. It constitutes, “from the global perspective ... a very small dot on the map and appear[s] insufficiently victimised to warrant postcolonial attention” (85). In Vasiliou’s view, Cypriot Anglophone literature stands outside all easily definable and delineable categories and is frequently treated as an anomaly, which is precisely what enables it to develop its subversive potentialities—the revolutionary impulse typical of a minor literature (87). As some of the most distinctive features of Cypriot Anglophone literature, Vasiliou stresses its heteroglossic nature, which he traces in Miranda Hoplaros’s 2008 collection of short stories titled *Mrs Bones* and Andriana Ierodiaconou’s *Margarita’s Husband*, and “fragmentation and dislocation both in content and in form” (Vasiliou, “Situating” 53), which he discusses in reference to both *Margarita’s Husband* and *The Women’s Coffee Shop*, particularly as regards the character of Avraam in the latter novel, as we shall explain in due course.

According to Deleuze and Guattari, one way for a minor literature to deterritorialize the major language in which it is written is “to artificially enrich [it] ... to swell it up through all the resources of symbolism, of oneirism, of esoteric sense, of a hidden signifier” (Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka* 19). The other way is the opposite: “dryness and sobriety, a willed poverty” (19), which pushes expression into utter deterritorialization so that representation and signification become impossible. Deterritorialization through enrichment allows for subsequent reterritorialization, a restructuring of the (social) territory after it has been deterritorialized—shattered or ruptured. In addition to deterritorializing effect as the major characteristic of a minor literature, Deleuze and Guattari distinguish two other elements a minor literature contains. It has a collective value: as Deleuze and Guattari put it, “if the writer is in the margins or completely outside his or her fragile community, this situation allows the writer all the more the possibility to express another possible community and to forge the means for another consciousness and another sensibility” (17). The quote evokes the marginal position of Cypriot Anglophone literature on both the local and the international scene, but as the following analysis will show, the collective value also appears as a leitmotif in *The Women's Coffee Shop*. Finally, a minor literature is always political: “the social milieu” in major literatures serves “as a mere environment or a background,” whereas the “cramped space” of a minor literature “forces each individual intrigue to connect immediately to politics” (17). This characteristic is also built into the story of *The Women's Coffee Shop*, where both politicalness and collective value serve to reinforce the deterritorialization effected by the narrative discourse. Relying on a close reading of the selected parts of the novel, the following sections will try to identify deterritorializing tendencies and strategies in the narrative discourse, focusing primarily on the narrator, characterization, and narrative modes. The novel presents a specific deterritorialized narrator, and most of the characters are shaped through the concepts of deterritorialization and reterritorialization. The narration which is largely based on dreamwork, rewriting of old narratives, and narrative gaps, i.e., the lack of closure and the rhizomatic effect of rupture, accentuates the novel's ambiguous relationship with territory—the symbolic territory of the English literature as well as the spatial and social territory of Cyprus with which its story deals.³

³ Although research on deterritorializing narrative strategies in minor literatures seems scarce, some significant efforts to this effect have been made and the following

Deterritorialized narrator

The Women's Coffee Shop opens with rather traditional heterodiegetic narration, which at the very beginning introduces the two major characters, Avraam Salih and Angelou Pieri, immediately stressing their uncommonness. In addition to Avraam Salih's name, which reveals that he is an outsider in both dominant communities, his condition is also uncommon: "[D]ead. And not only dead, but unburied" (Ierodiamonou 5). The Christian priest refuses to bury Avraam because he was never baptized; the hodja refuses it because he was never circumscribed and never attended the mosque. Angelou, a peddler, is described as a manly woman: "[She was] strongly built about the throat, shoulders and arms ... [t]he hands ... of a worker ... the tanned skin rough. She wore a man's khaki trousers ... her feet, on the large side, were shod in the leather sandals favored by the farmers and fishermen of the region" (5–6). She drives a van, which makes her the first woman her village has ever seen behind the wheel, and she keeps a coffee shop, the business ran and visited exclusively by men. It is Angelou who buries Avraam, near the shore, on a plot of land she inherited from her father, and as she buries him, she laments his death—and life—by singing instead of praying. The first chapter ends with this uncommon burial, but the second opens with a shift in narration towards homodiegetic ("It feels strange to be at the center of a story"; 23) and even chapters continue to be narrated by the dead man. In his first address Avraam delivers an account of his origin and birth, in which all the actors seem equally out of place. His mother Constantia was disowned by her father Hadjimbey, the wealthiest man in the village, and was never married to Avraam's father Mehmet. Avraam's maternal grandmother Lefki was, following her daughter's elopement, transferred by Hadjimbey to a windowless barn where, reduced to the status of an animal, over the course of the sixteen remaining years of her life she gradually lost her mind. Avraam was born in a small house on the outskirts of the village, "worth ... close to nothing" (42). Living as "the sole resident Moslem" in a Christian village (114) and earning his living as a shadow theater master—as he phrases it, "I never put myself on stage" (23)—he literally spent his career in the shadows. Even as he lies dead in unconsecrated ground, among the roots of olive trees, "*outside* the prescribed

strategies identified: defiance of signification, neutralization of sense, asyntactical language, phantasmagorical and absurd tales, quizzical jokes, silly songs, and asubjective free indirect narration (Salami and Rahmani).

confines of a cemetery wall” (23; emphasis added), he is surrounded by similar outcasts: a miscarried five-month child and a woman murdered by her husband, whose death was never reported.

In his life as well as death, Avraam occupies a marginal position, socially as the offspring of a mixed marriage, and spatially as he is linked with the outskirts of the village/backstage shadows/unconsecrated ground near the sea. His house is brutally vandalized following his death, which shows the extent to which Avraam is considered an outcast. His position, however, becomes utterly deterritorialized as soon as the authorities reveal that his grave is empty: “Angelou sensed there was something wrong the second the police jeep had rattled to a halt in the silent olive grove. ... [T]he deserted landscape shimmered in the midday heat like a mirage. That was it—the place was deserted; there was no one there, dead or alive” (Ierodiconou 61). In his analysis of Ierodiconou’s other novel, *Margarita’s Husband*, Vasiliou focuses on a chapter titled “Gethsemane’s Story,” in which voice is given to the refugee girl, an important but silent character (Vasiliou, “Situating” 55). In this chapter, she delivers her story in broken English—just like Avraam, she becomes an unexpected homodiegetic narrator. Both Gethsemane and Avraam are displaced and hence in a way deterritorialized. However, Avraam develops the concept of a “deterritorialized narrator” to the extreme. He is not merely a marginalized or socially ostracized individual. Once his buried body is displaced, he narrates his story from a void in space, and it is only from this void that he appears as a homodiegetic narrator. In a spirit-like form, he is present in the story from which he is at the same time entirely absent. Avraam’s narratorial knowledge is not limited to past events. In chapter eight, he reveals himself as enduring presence in the village life, as regardless of the fact that he has disappeared from his grave, he knows about Angelou’s subsequent clash with a theologian and a journalist over the church’s repudiation of Avraam and the media interest in making his death political, i.e., their effort to present his death as the murder of a Moslem man in a Christian community.⁴ While Avraam does not discuss contemporary politics, he does subtly declare his political position. Describing one of the shadow theater performances he gave,

⁴ In chapter ten, Avraam appears as an eavesdropping narrator. The ending of the previous chapter relates an argument between Angelou and Ermioni, in which the latter expresses her belief that Avraam never knew she was Angelou’s lover. Chapter ten begins with his words: “Ermioni was wrong: I knew that Angelou and she were lovers” (Ierodiconou 148). The phrasing indicates that Avraam has been listening to or, just like the readers, reading the narrative of the previous chapter.

which dealt with the exploits of Alexander the Great and the significant help he received from the traditional (Turkish) shadow play character Karagöz, he states: “Moral (noticed by not a single person save the puppet-master): there’s always some insignificant little man doing his anonymous heroic best behind the achievements of the great. Anyhow, the audience enjoyed it; and if they chose to identify with Alexander rather than Karagöz, with the master rather than the slave, who was I to set them straight?” (Ierodionou 95).

It is important to note that, as a shadow theater master, Avraam is a narrator by profession, but it is even more important to stress his view of his role: “I was nothing but a manipulator of shadow-puppets, a half-breed, the lowest of the low” (Ierodionou 74). In other words, Avraam equalizes his social status with his narrator’s status and considers himself in both capacities an unrecognized, concealed “little man.” He therefore subtly indicates his own importance in the narrative, based on his belief that little men are actual heroes, but to retain the status of a hero, he needs to remain unrecognized and concealed. At another point of his narration, he details how he felt when depression set in after his mother’s death: he briefly considered suicide, but “[t]he catch was, I dreaded physical suffering; also, I still sneakily clung to the notion that my life was a story, with beginning, middle and end, and I wanted to know how it would come out” (123). For this reason, he turns to more “non-fatal forms of escape, like reading” and watching shadow theater performances (124). Avraam acknowledges that he must be part of a story while also being nothing and that stories such as his play a crucial role in the major political events and developments—a contradictory position which makes him a deterritorialized narrator while highlighting the importance of his implicit political stance.

De/re/territorializing characterization

As Marios Vasiliou notices, “Avraam Salih’s unburiable corpse can be read metonymically as the elusive, evasive, and shifting corpus of ‘minor literatures’” (Vasiliou, “Situating” 53). Had either community accepted to bury him, his body would have been reterritorialized, i.e., readmitted into one of the dominant groups as well as into “the symbolic order” which minor literatures contest through deterritorialization (53). As it is, his character represents the unrepresentable; it indicates the resistance to being placed within any confines, the perpetual non-belonging, and thus comes to stand—not only metonymically but

also metafictionally—for deterritorialization itself, as the dominant characteristic of a minor literature, including the novel whose story Avraam occupies. In his own words, “[M]y presence [in the shadow theater] was hardly registered at all by the majority of the audience” (Ierodionou 23). Avraam declares to be minoritarian. The Deleuzian minoritarian mode of existence is one that rejects all unification and standardization (Colebrook 104) while opening space for diversity through becoming and creating instead of expressing any already given identity. Through free indirect discourse attributed to Angelou,⁵ the narrative states that “Avraam was a rebel, but he staged his rebellions alone, elaborating them in private and expressing them only through his plays” (Ierodionou 109). Therefore, it is in the process of staging and performing shadow theater plays that Avraam is revealed as minoritarian since through his plays he creates identities (Karagöz, Alexander the Great, Hadjimbey, etc.) and develops stories. It is, in fact, in the choice of their profession, which serves as a major means of characterization, that both Avraam and Angelou (an artist and a woman) reject being defined in accordance with standards.

Angelou can be described in terms of yet another Deleuzian concept, that of “becoming-woman,” which is minoritarian because “there is no standard or norm for woman” (Colebrook 104) and Angelou does not comply with any.⁶ Her profession of a peddler turns her into a nomad (who is still free to cross from the Christian to the Moslem parts of the island despite the incipient “troubles”), and the establishment of the (first ever) women’s coffee shop, while putting her once again in the position of defiance of standards, is also a manifestation of women creating “by making possible a becoming over which they do not have ownership, into which they themselves must enter; this is a becoming-woman affecting all of humankind, men and women both” (Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus* 106). The women’s coffee shop indeed appears as a place over which Angelou has no ownership: all the women can bring food or prepare drinks, they do not pay

⁵ Free indirect discourse is a possible strategy of narrative deterritorialization (see footnote 3; Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus* 106). In this case, Angelou’s thoughts refer to Avraam’s rebellious nature, which is pertinent to a minor literature. Moreover, “[i]t is in free-indirect style that literature discloses language as a ‘collective assemblage’ in which ‘styles produce speaking positions’ (Colebrook 112). Narratives containing free indirect discourse/style reflect the collective value, which also bears relevance to minor literatures.

⁶ Apart from the fact that there is almost nothing feminine about her description, Angelou confesses to Avraam that she does not like men (Ierodionou 98).

(because, as Angelou explains, women own no money) and can come and go as they wish, regardless of whether Angelou is there. Moreover, this place for Angelou has a collective value. Having become motherless at an early age, she cherishes all moments when she is among a crowd of people, and “the daily gathering of women to drink, exchange news, or quarrel, stood for the family warmth she had lacked since the death of her mother,” offering “intimate, comforting sense of human contact” (Ierodionou 49–50). Angelou became “an orphaned child” at five, and Avraam in his teenage years; both are, however, in their late thirties still characterized as orphaned children, an orphan being “the most deterritorialized and the most deterritorializing figure” (Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka* 79).⁷ One of their first conversations focuses on their mothers. “You remind me of my mother,” Avraam tells her, to which she replies: “I remember your mother. ... You look alike, in a way. ... Better than I remember my own mother, really” (Ierodionou 97). These recollections of parents and childhood are their attempt at reterritorialization, finding one’s place, and so is, consequently, their joint venture of traveling around the island, Angelou selling and Avraam performing. It “takes place in a different space than that of territories, namely, overcoded geometrical space” (Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus* 222). The traveling van is indeed overcoded with the dual sign of a peddler’s van and shadow theater, and it moves across the established strata of the island, i.e., through the territorialization which this fictional world presents. Angelou’s and Avraam’s movements cannot effect any new territorialization—the single existing one concerns the “villain” of the novel, Avraam’s grandfather Hadjimbey.

Hadjimbey is preoccupied solely with territoriality, more literally, the land: “[H]e already had in hand that most profitable commodity of all: land. Cultivated, lying fallow or completely barren—as long as it was near the sea, it scarcely mattered in a small country which was quickly discovering that its future lay in selling its soul to the devil of tourism” (Ierodionou 73). Hadjimbey is “careful to steer well clear” of politics (71), just like the communist mayor and the nationalist sergeant who visit Angelou (“the flotsam and jetsam floating upon the ocean of this complex and unhappy political history”; 57) and also insist that politics should be left out of Avraam’s death. The two and Hadjimbey embody

⁷ Avraam feels “orphaned” when his father leaves for America; he is on the verge of “the tears of a six-year-old on his first day at school” as he experiences the complete separation from his single remaining parent (Ierodionou 154). He also sobs like “a lost child” when he finds out that Angelou, the woman he loves, is in a relationship with Ermioni (149).

the territorialized strata which all the other characters seem to overflow and struggle with. Though developed to the greatest extent in the two protagonists, this deterritorializing, minoritarian aspect is seen in other characters as well. Avraam's mother, Constantia, who is sixteen at the time she elopes with Mehmet Salih, is described almost solely as a child;⁸ for instance, "rubbing her knuckles into her eyes like a child, [she] began suddenly to cry" (39). Such "strict contemporaneity of the adult and the child" is what Deleuze and Guattari term "a childhood block" or "a becoming-child" (Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus* 164), which is a minoritarian practice with a deterritorializing function. In Constantia (as well as Angelou and Avraam), the child coexists with the adult, "in a zone of proximity or a block of becoming, on a line of deterritorialization that carries ... both off—as opposed to the child we once were, whom we remember or phantasize" (294). Angelou is described in a similar manner: her desire to be surrounded by other people, mostly women, reflects her upbringing, during which she lived with a series of aunts after her mother's death. In a way, her childhood remains present in her adult life.

It is possible to consider some of the characters, particularly Avraam and Mehmet Salih, as minor in the sense of belonging to a minority community in the Cypriot world that *The Women's Coffee Shop* charts. As such, they are "objectively definable states, states of language, ethnicity, or sex with their own ghetto territorialities, but they must also be thought of as seeds, crystals of becoming whose value is to trigger uncontrollable movements and deterritorializations of the mean or majority" (Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus* 106). Avraam's movements are constant and become indeed uncontrollable after he dies, embodying—to refer to Vasiliou's observation quoted at the beginning of this section—not just the Moslem community in the 1960s Cyprus, but also the Cypriot Anglophone minor literature. Similarly, Mehmet Salih leaves Cyprus and remains present in the narrative only in his dead son's dreams and memories; his movements are no longer confined by the island and therefore cannot be controlled.

⁸ Hadjimbey initially thinks of Mehmet as a son he does not have, whereby Mehmet is also observed as a childlike figure.

Recreating territories

In his narration, Avraam resorts several times to describing his dreams. In one of them, as he states, “[M]y father hadn’t yet gone to America, and my mother was still alive” (Ierodionou 120). He enriches the narrative with oneirism in making his dreams “objects of narrative report” (Walsh). Likewise, some odd chapters include reports of Angelou’s dreams. On the other hand, Ermioni’s description of Avraam—in which she claims that “[h]e was half asleep on his feet” and was “[a]lways thinking up stories for his precious theatre” (Ierodionou 139–140)—indicates that he was constantly in a dreamlike state or near such a state, which potentially presents “dreaming as itself a kind of narration” (Walsh). In either case, dreams present Avraam with possibilities of rewriting reality and constructing completely different worlds. In the mentioned dream, he conjures up a reality in which he is not an orphan. Being, in Ermioni’s words, always half asleep, he conjures up imaginary worlds to present in his plays. His shadow theater, in addition to serving as a means of characterization of deterritorialized Avraam, is also the ultimate form of creating. In Avraam’s words, it “had to take people out of themselves, transpose them into an alternative world of the imagination which, for as long as the black shapes danced across the screen, felt more real somehow than the real; or it was nothing” (Ierodionou 162–163).

The shadow theater in *The Women’s Coffee Shop* plays an important role—the one given in Deleuzian philosophy to literature, which, “when it fully extends its power of being literature, is always minoritarian” (Colebrook 104). According to Deleuze and Guattari, Kafka was a great writer “not because he captured the unrepresented spirit of the Czech people, but because he wrote without a standard notion of ‘the people’ ... not as a being with an identity, but as a voice of what is not given, a ‘people to come’” (Colebrook 104). This is appropriately reflected in the philosophy of Odysseas Kamenos, Avraam’s shadow theater instructor and subsequently great friend. Having once during a performance been asked by a Moslem audience member what was entertaining about the killings of the Moslem people which he staged, Odysseas understood that he should no longer do any “patriotic stuff” (Ierodionou 156). Regardless of his refusal to be patriotic and stage art that contributes to the political effort of his (Greek Orthodox) people, he remains deeply political in claiming that through his performances he wants to convey the idea of freedom—he wants everyone “to be free from hatred and killing” (161). He therefore imagines worlds in which

there are no divisions along the lines of nationality or religion, and the power such creations should project is precisely in the construction of a new reality and a new people, unburdened with divisions. It is through interaction with Odysseas that Avraam learns how to resist the major hegemonic narratives and educational practices in his shadow theater art; his apprenticeship is “a second birth into the life [he] was destined to lead” (159). This is particularly obvious in the discussion between Odysseas and Avraam about Shakespeare.

In Deleuzian terms, “Shakespeare can be considered a ‘minor’ author precisely because his works do not offer a unified image of man” (Colebrook 105). Reading Shakespeare today should not be a study of the history of ideas—instead, it should allow for a re-confrontation with “the formation, genesis or creation of ideas” (64). Various theatrical adaptations of Shakespeare have indeed been interpreted as examples of a “minor theater” (Fortier) and the fictional examples in *The Women's Coffee Shop* might fall within the same category. Namely, Odysseas proudly introduces to Avraam his “non-patriotic” play called *The Blackamoor*:

It's a good play. There's a black man, he's a general and he's really brave, so when he falls in love with a noble white lady she falls right back, and they get married, and it's all lovey-dovey for a while; then some spiteful guy comes along and whispers in the Blackamoor's ear that supposedly the lady is cuckolding him, and he goes crazy with jealousy. Then, not to kill her, he kills himself! (Ierodiconou 157)

The well-educated Avraam is excited to recognize *Othello* (although the story of *The Blackamoor* is essentially similar to his parents' love too), but Odysseas does not even know who Shakespeare is and claims that *The Blackamoor* is his original invention. Moreover, when Avraam explains the plot to him, Odysseas is convinced that Shakespeare was wrong: “The way you and this Shakespeare guy tell it, see, jealousy kills the lady and the Blackamoor. But the way I tell it, the Blackamoor kills jealousy; get it?” (158). On learning that Shakespeare wrote many more plays, Odysseas decides to recreate them, giving them new names and new ideas: “Lady Macbeth lost all her influence (‘Who'd want to watch a play about some guy doing what his wife says?’), Romeo and Juliet survived to have children and grandchildren (‘Too sad, killing them off like that’), and Titania remained forever in love with Bottom (‘Funnier!’)” (159).

The novel thus presents Shakespeare's stories as permanently in the process of becoming, and the shadow theater as a form of art that

creates new worlds through recreating Shakespeare. Shakespeare is a major author only when he becomes part of an industry, such as tourism (Colebrook 104). It is precisely the advance of tourism that threatens the peaceful village of Ayia in *The Women's Coffee Shop*, in the same way that the advance of film and television in the 1950s and 1960s threatens (and largely destroys) Avraam's shadow theater. However, the capitalism that is brought to Cyprus along with independence is not the end for it still leaves space, at least for the communities based on collective values such as Angelou's women's coffee shop, to deterritorialize the majoritarian practices by imagining what they have and might yet become—nurses, shop-keepers, even film stars. As is made clear from the start with the image of Avraam's unburiable body, his death only entails a multiplicity of the forms of existence and activity.

Rhizomatic stories

Multiplicity is one of the principles on which rhizomatic forms, as described by Deleuze and Guattari, are based. Multiplicity, "treated as a substantive ... ceases to have any relation to the One as subject or object, natural or spiritual reality, image and world" (Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus* 8). Other principles are connection and heterogeneity, which dictate that "any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be" (7), asignifying ruptures, which lead to the cutting, shattering, or breaking at any given spot of the form, which in turn inevitably starts "up again on one of its old lines, or on new lines" (9), and cartography and decalcomania, meaning that a rhizome is not generative or structural, but, like a map, "detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification ... torn, reversed, adapted to any kind of mounting, reworked by an individual, group, or social formation ... drawn on a wall, conceived of as a work of art, constructed as a political action or as a meditation" (12). Rhizomes, described in this way, are constantly going through the mutually dependent processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization, just as a minor literature does. As the narrative of *The Women's Coffee Shop* draws towards a close, its rhizomatic potentials become more prominent. For example, chapter eleven depicts a protest organized exclusively by women aiming to prevent Hadjimbey's construction of a hotel in their village. The protest is heterogeneous in that it includes absolutely all the women of the village, from the youngest to the oldest. It operates on the principle of multiplicity as the women organize as a single body, which continues

to cater for the needs of the village men and children while staging the successful protest. Like a map, it allows for numerous points of entry, which is depicted by the two journalists, Osman and Theo, interviewing the people chosen in accordance with their own preferences and thus offering different points of view. Finally, the rupture is seen in the bulldozer accident which kills Ermioni. Ermioni's death breaks the body of the protest and reshapes it into the funeral procession, but Ermioni curiously seems to go on living as Angelou recognizes the specific color of her eyes in the turquoise of Pulcheria the cat's eyes, and this makes her happy (Ierodionou 179).⁹

Ermioni's death is not the only rupture in the narrative. There are other holes which, in line with Wolfgang Iser's idea of a narrative gap as an element of the story which is unexpressed in the narrative discourse, are left to the reader's interpretation, imagination, and involvement. An example relative to the process of deterritorialization is Angelou's account of her teenage years spent with her father. It is implied in the narrative (in a chapter narrated by Avraam) that she was abused by her father. As Avraam half-narrates Angelou's confession, he stresses that "[s]he never once said the word 'father,' only 'he.' She made it sound as though the word 'father' was impossible to say" (Ierodionou 149). Avraam is unable to relate the story of the abuse in the same way that Angelou is unable to say the word. Their inability reflects deterritorialization. A complete account of this traumatic childhood memory would provide Angelou with reterritorialization, as memory "yells 'Father! Mother!'" whereas the opposite, deterritorializing process of becoming-child "is elsewhere, in the highest intensities that the child constructs with his sisters, his pal, his projects and his toys" (Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka* 79). Avraam indeed comments at this point that he "wished [he] could make her a child again and restore to her a child's proper nightmares, about wolves and being lost in the forest, instead of the others, the unspeakable ones which had been forced on her" (Ierodionou 150). While not literally a child, Angelou exists simultaneously—or alternatively—as an adult woman and a child, as has been pointed out in previous sections. She goes through a series of rhizomatic states in the process of constant de- and reterritorialization: she sells her father's land after his death, but she keeps a plot by the sea to which she returns often, usually in difficult moments. She accepts to film the documentary Avraam was commissioned to make since she

⁹ In Angelou's dream which follows, Ermioni is transformed into Pulcheria and then back again into her human shape (Ierodionou 200).

believes the story about a women's coffee shop could deterritorialize the dominant narratives in the same way that the women's protest managed to stop the construction of a hotel. However, the producer Theo, while delighted with her story, immediately reterritorializes it: by exclaiming "Amazons! Lysistrata!" (146) he gives away his wish to fit Angelou's story in the existing, long-established myths, which ultimately leaves her disappointed in television industry. Finally, when following the dream in which Avraam refers her to his suitcase with shadow theater puppets, she finds his mother's chain of gold, which Avraam left there for her, she reconnects with the past—but the figure whose inheritance she receives is the deterritorialized, exiled Constantia. In line with the rhizomatic principles of connection and heterogeneity, Angelou gives the chain to young Xenia's baby, on the condition that the baby is named Constantia, whereby she reworks Constantia's life into one of a heroine (who did the right thing, as Angelou states) and rewards it with a future through the child that will bear her name.

Avraam also describes his experience of being deterritorialized after another rupture—the news of his father's death in America: "[A] curious feeling came over me, as of my body dissolving from the centre outwards; I felt an urge to go over and look at myself in the wardrobe mirror, which I wouldn't have been surprised to find empty of any reflection. Then, slowly, my flesh seemed to coalesce about my bones again, but in a subtly different configuration" (Ierodionou 183). He does not cry but instead dreams "the same dream almost every night for the next few years: in it, I was standing in a very high place, on a tower or a cliff-top, with the darkness and the wind about me" (183). In the dream, he recreates the death of his father, who fell from the girders of a skyscraper construction site. Avraam believes his father in fact jumped because he was retracing his movements from the West to the East coast—he believes that his father wanted to effect a homecoming through suicide. When in chapter fourteen Avraam narrates his own death, he attempts to effect a similar homecoming. He opens the chapter with a metanarrative comment: "I clearly hear you saying, reader: so, what's going on here?" (203).¹⁰ Since he is utterly deterritorialized, he does not provide readers with any final solutions and instead presents a rhizomatic, decentralized narrative with numerous paths, options, and points of entry, whose greatest enemy, according to Deleuze and Guattari, is fixed signification (Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka* 3). "If I am a spirit," says Avraam, "well, I am not just any spirit,

¹⁰ It is the first comment which reveals that Avraam is "concerned with the act and/or process of narration" (Neumann and Nünning).

but that of a shadow theatre master; and while I am forbidden to tell you what actually happened, I can deploy my shadow-figurines one last time, in the guise of some of the persons in this story, to show you what might have happened. After that, which ending is the right one will be up to you to decide” (Ierodiconou 203). He offers five different endings, phrased identically except for those parts which describe different possible deaths. In one ending, Ermioni stabs Avraam; in another, Kamenos is the murderer. In the third and fourth option, unidentified men from the village kill him on Hadjimbey's orders or because of his religion; in the last one, he stabs himself after Ermioni tells him that Angelou was pregnant with his child and had an abortion. All endings finish with the same sentence, which reflects Avraam's wish for reterritorialization by dying in his home, the house on the outskirts. Like his father in America, he retraces his steps from the bridge to the house: “Once in my yard, I gave a small sigh, and died” (Ierodiconou 209, 213, 219, 224).¹¹

Literature in process

Analyzing Andriana Ierodiconou's *The Women's Coffee Shop* as an example of a minor literature in English, hailing from Cyprus, which is based on politicalness, collective value, and above all, deterritorializing tendencies, reveals a set of narrative elements that reinforce the idea of deterritorialization as an overall narrative strategy. As a deterritorialized narrator who is at the same time at the center of the story and nowhere, Avraam himself stands for a void, a rupture which makes the narrative rhizomatic—filled with different voices and branching in many directions. The reader is aware of these voices and directions immediately from the titular concept of a women's coffee shop, a collective organized as a rhizome where women (marginalized by virtue of their very birth) of all backgrounds gather and talk. Most of the characters, primarily Avraam and Angelou, are described in terms of their defiance of the established territorial strata and, consequently, their shifting positions in the surrounding spatial and social territory. Their relationship is an attempt at reterritorializing their positions, and while Avraam's death prevents it, it also creates other possibilities. To this effect, the narrative

¹¹ The last ending, in which Avraam becomes aware of having lost a child, is different: “I gave a small sigh, and died” (Ierodiconou 227). The idea of an unwanted child is generative rather than rhizomatic, and therefore it simply breaks the structure without offering any transformative options which a rhizome would provide.

relies on the shadow theater as a minoritarian practice to create new territories, reinventing, among other things, Shakespeare to reflect the ideas of the 1960s Cyprus. The shadow theater as an element of the story has its parallel in dreamwork as an element of the narrative discourse, which is also a minoritarian practice due to its power to affect reality. The voice of a spirit-like eavesdropping narrator, the construction of characters who exist simultaneously as (orphaned) children and adults, the narrative method of dreamwork and the creative use of the theater all contribute to the deterritorializing process which Deleuze and Guattari describe as enriching. On the other hand, the ultimate inconclusiveness in leaving the reader uninformed about “facts,” the gaping void in the story that surrounds Avraam and his death, deterritorializes the narrative by, conditionally speaking, impoverishment. Conditionally, because while the story is devoid of its central element, it ushers the reader into its world, making him or her able to follow the rhizomatic branches and create bridges for the narrative gap. This is a means of involving the reader with the political as much as literary intrigues of the heterogenous Cypriot world. Just as Avraam and Angelou constantly oscillate between being deterritorialized and yearning for a reterritorialization, so is Cypriot Anglophone literature—like other New Literatures in English—in the process of becoming, charting new territories of literary fiction in a map that remains essentially incompletable.

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Deteritorializacija pripovednih strategij novih književnosti v angleščini: *Ženska kavarna* Andriane Ierodionou

Ključne besede: anglofonska ciprska književnost / Ierodionou, Andriana: *The Women's Coffee Shop* / manjšinska literatura / pripovedne strategije / rizom / deteritorializacija

Ciprska anglofonska književnost kot ena izmed novih literatur v angleščini je šele pred kratkim pritegnila pozornost literarnih raziskovalcev in raziskovalk. V tem kontekstu članek obravnava roman Andriane Ierodionou *Ženska kavarna* (*The Women's Coffee Shop*) iz leta 2012, ki se ga loteva na podlagi teoretičnih in filozofskih izhodišč Gillesa Deleuza in Félixu Guattarija ter ga umesti v okvir manjšinskih literatur in rizomatskih pripovedi. Glavni cilj članka je z natančnim branjem opredeliti in opisati pripovedne strategije, ki odsevajo in/ali krepijo deteritorializacijski učinek kot osrednjo značilnost manjšinske literature. V ta namen se analiza osredotoča na lik deteritorializiranega pripovedovalca, karakterizacijo, ki niha med deteritorializacijo in reteritorializacijo, pripovedno metodo sanj in načine pripovedovanja, ki potencialno ustvarjajo nova ozemlja, ter rizomatsko pripovedno vrzel in odprt konec. Kot se pokaže, romaneskna pripoved odraža položaj, ki ga zaseda ciprska anglofonska književnost kot ena od (manjših) novih literatur v angleščini.

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