

ΙΑ' ΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΟΝΙΚΗ ΣΥΝΑΝΤΗΣΗ
ΤΟΥ ΤΟΜΕΑ ΜΕΣΑΙΩΝΙΚΩΝ ΚΑΙ ΝΕΩΝ ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΩΝ ΣΠΟΥΔΩΝ
ΤΟΥ ΤΜΗΜΑΤΟΣ ΦΙΛΟΛΟΓΙΑΣ
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Ο Ψυχάρης και η εποχή του

Ζητήματα γλώσσας,
λογοτεχνίας και πολιτισμού

Επιμέλεια Γ. Φαρίνου-Μαλαματάρη

ΙΝΣΤΙΤΟΥΤΟ ΝΕΟΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΩΝ ΣΠΟΥΔΩΝ
[ΙΔΡΥΜΑ ΜΑΝΟΛΗ ΤΡΙΑΝΤΑΦΥΛΛΙΔΗ]

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ISBN 960-231-118-5

Στοιχειοθετήθηκε και τυπώθηκε
από την Πελαγία Ζήτη και Σία
στη Θεσσαλονίκη

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Tracing the Alphabet in Psycharis's *Journey*

The issues of multilingualism and translation have a privileged place in Greek intellectual discourse. In fact if America has a race question and Italy has a Southern question, the topic that has generated an analogous volume of pages and heated debate in Greece is the language question. Ever since the Greek nation was created, intellectuals, school teachers, priests, and politicians have fought over which form of the Greek language should be used for written purposes, demotic, the language «of the people», or katharevousa, a purist language that reintroduced elements of Ancient Greek. In the 1880s this debate, known as the Γλωσσικό Ζήτημα (the Language Question), reached new heights with a book that would become the manifesto of demoticists and help make the literary explosion of the twentieth century in demotic possible: Yannis Psycharis's *My Journey (Το Ταξίδι μου)* (1888).¹ At the same time that this debate was raging in Greece, the first big wave of Greek immigrants left Greece for the United States, arriving at Ellis Island with their own language question. The challenge of learning a new alphabet and language gave rise to numerous immigrant handbooks (from dictionaries to cookbooks) as well as

A slightly different version of this paper was given at the Balkans Conference, Greek Ministry of Culture, Thessaloniki, June 4-6, 2004. My longer, more in-depth reading of Psycharis's *My Journey* is forthcoming in a collection entitled *Diaspora and Cultural Memory* (eds Kamboureli - Klironomou - Nickas). I am grateful to Peter Mackridge and Georgia Farinou for their helpful comments.

¹ For useful overviews of the Language Question see P. Mackridge, «Καθαρεύουσα (c. 1800-1974): An Obituary for an Official Language», in M. Sarafis - M. Eve (eds) *Background to Contemporary Greece*, London, Merlin, 1990 - and the section he introduces in M. Z. Kopidakis, *Ιστορία της Ελληνικής Γλώσσας*, Αθήνα, Ε.Α.Ι.Α. [Greek Literary and Historical Archive], 32000. Also see A. P. Christides, *Ιστορία της Ελληνικής Γλώσσας: Από τις αρχές έως την ύστερη Αρχαιότητα*, Θεσσαλονίκη, Κέντρο Ελληνικής Γλώσσας [Center for the Greek Language], 2001.

literary texts that registered the drama of multilingualism in a new guise. Working with the uneven social terrain that marks the cosmopolitan diaspora Greek and the peasant immigrant, my larger research project traces the important role of language politics in imagining geographical displacement in Greek and Greek-American literature from this watershed moment to the present. Focusing on texts that address the journey from one culture to another as an exercise in translation, I show how reading literature of the Greek diaspora published in Greece and in America together complicates any strict categorization of literature by nation, and underscores the difficult, and yet artistically and theoretically productive, dimension of living between two or more languages. The project is in a sense a genealogy of the perception of Greece's different alphabet summed up in the expression «It's all Greek to me!» and the way issues of translation and transliteration pervade literature about and by Greeks over the past two centuries.² Psycharis's description of his journey from Paris to Constantinople to Chios to Athens with its translations, transliterations, and wild spelling is a good place to begin.

Psycharis, a novelist, a linguist, a professor of Greek language and literature, and the son-in-law of Ernest Renan, left a large legacy of novels, scholarly essays, and personal lore in French and Greek. I will focus on his book *My Journey*, with some reference to his lecture «The Kiss» («Το Φιλί») (1893), because it offers a window onto how Psycharis's experience as a writer of the Diaspora affects his views on language. Psycharis's *My Journey*, half literary travelogue, half diatribe, is most often read for its contribution to the αγώνα (struggle) or ιδέα (idea), to make demotic *the* national language of Greece, and by doing so give Greece her rightful place in Modern Europe. This is how Psycharis himself understood his project. In the preface to his grammar he explains that though he had always wanted to write a linguistic study *about* the demotic Greek language, he had first to spend many years attending to the

² For my discussion of this topic with regard to the work of the contemporary Greek Diaspora writers and performers Olga Broumas, Kay Cicellis, Iri Spanidou, and Diamanda Galas see «Διασπορά, μετάφραση και η γυναικεία γραφή – Diaspora, Translation, and Women's Writing», *Ελληνίδες συγγραφείς της διασποράς – Women Writers of the Greek Diaspora*, Athens, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1998; «Greek Poetry Elsewhere», *Gamma: Journal of Theory and Criticism*, 8 (2000) and «Avant-garde Translation: A Conversation with Diamanda Galas», *CONNECT: Art, Politics, Theory, Practice*, 1 (2000). For comparative discussions of translation and transliteration as conceptual models in Diaspora literature see respectively B. H. Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 2003, and M. C. Onwueneme, «Limits of Transliteration: Nigerian Writers' Endeavors toward a National Literary Language», *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, 114 (5) (1999).

national cause by writing literature in demotic.³ Psycharis and the majority of critics who have written about his work view *My Journey* as national literature, not Diaspora literature, or, for that matter, a contribution to linguistics or translation theory.⁴ As we will see, however, this canonical text of monolingualism in the name of nation-building actually deals with many different forms of Greek as well as French, German, Italian, and Turkish and can be read as offering a vision of the Greek language as irremediably diasporic and multilingual. A closer look at how words are moved from one language or form of language to another in this text shows that translation, transliteration, etymology, and loan words are not just practical conventions in his writing, but conceptual models for grappling with cultural displacement. Along side the message of transparency and perfect substitution suggested by his oft-quoted aphorism «γλώσσα και πατρίδα είναι το ίδιο» («language and nation are one and the same»), another tale of diasporic and linguistic disorientation unfolds.

Reading Pyscharis in this way opens up the possibility that he is espousing a more radical theory of the sign than is usually associated with him. Although his explicit references in his essays and grammar are to more traditional positivist linguists who focused on phonology and physiology, some of the positions he takes in *My Journey* and «The Kiss» actually seems closer to Saussure's in his posthumously published *Course in General Linguistics* (1916).⁵ Many of the ideas we attribute to Saussure can also be found in Psycharis's discussion of the language question: the arbitrary relationship of the linguistic sign to that which it signifies, the importance of studying language synchronically as well as diachronically, the difference between *langue* and *parole*, or γλώσσα and λαλιά, as Psycharis puts it. I will not discuss the connections between Psycharis's and Saussure's thought in this paper, but I want us to keep them in mind because they can help us see through and beyond the prevalent view of Psycharis's project as nationalist and monolingual.⁶

³ Γ. Ψυχάρης, *Μεγάλη Ρωμαίικη Επιστημονική Γραμματική*, vol. 1, Αθήνα, Ελευθερουδάκης, 1929, p. 1. Dimaras clarifies this position when he says that Psycharis's critique in *My Journey* is more social than linguistic (C. Dimaras, *A History of Modern Greek Literature*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 1972, p. 365).

⁴ See Tziouvas's discussion in D. Tziouvas, *The Nationism of the Demoticists and its Impact on their Literary Theory (1888-1930): An Analysis Based on their Literary Criticism and Essays*, Amsterdam, Hakkert, 1986, and in his article «Heteroglossia and the Defeat of Regionalism in Greece», *Kambos. Cambridge Papers in Modern Greek*, 2 (1994) 95-120.

⁵ For an overview of works in linguistics that Psycharis himself considered important, see the annotated bibliography to his Greek grammar, op. cit. (fn. 4).

⁶ In this connection it is useful to know that Psycharis began teaching at the *École Pratique des Hautes Etudes* in Paris in 1885 where Saussure also taught from 1881-1891 before going to

Born a Greek citizen in Odessa, Psycharis lived in Constantinople as a small child. He spoke French with his father, Greek with his nanny as well as his grandmother, was then schooled in Germany and France, and in his thirties, while writing *My Journey*, was settled in Paris teaching Byzantine and Modern Greek Literature at the university. When he finally decides to visit Greece, he is first and foremost a Frenchman. In fact the whole premise of his trip in 1886 seems to be an imbalance between his Greek and French selves and the need to reclaim his motherland. The book starts with a chapter entitled «Πόθος κρυφός» («Secret desire») in which it is the sea and its ability to bring him back to Greece that turns out to be the secret desire that has been hidden from him:

Έβλεπα την όμορφη θεά που είχα μπροστά μου, από πάνω μου τον ουρανό με τη λαμπρότητα του, στο πλάγι μου κάμπους και πρασινάδα κι άξαφνα πιο κάτω, άμα σήκωνα τα μάτια, απέραντη θάλασσα με τα μαβιά της κύματα, θάλασσα γελαστή, άσπρους αφρούς στολισμένη.

Άχ! τη θάλασσα, γιατί να τη δω; γιατί να μη μου τη σκεπάσουν οι πλατάνοι, οι ιτιές και τάλλα τα δέντρα που βγάξει το χώμα το γαλλικό; Μόλις την είδα τη θάλασσα, και πήρε η φαντασία μου άλλο δρόμο. Θυμήθηκα την πατρίδα! Και στην πατρίδα θάλασσα θα με πάη. Ότι το συλλογίστηκα, ότι έβαλα τέτοια ιδέα στο νου μου, του κάκου! δεν μπορούσα πια τίποτις άλλο να συλλογιστώ. Ξέχασα τη πρασινάδα, τα λουλούδια, τον ουρανό, και τη φύση που πρώτα δε χόρταινα να τη βλέπω. Κάτι με τραβούσε! Μια λιγούρα μ' έτρωγε την καρδιά και δε μ'άφινε ησυχία. Στη στιγμή έπρεπε να σηκωθώ, να γυρίσω σπίτι, να μετρήσω τους παράδες μου – να βγώ στο ταξίδι.⁷

I saw the beautiful view before me, above me the sky with its brilliance, beside me the hills and green and suddenly further below, if I raised my eyes the endless sea with the purple waves, the laughing sea, decorated in white foam.

Ah! the sea, why did I have to catch sight of her? Why couldn't the plane trees, the willows, and the other trees that grow out of the French earth conceal her? As soon as I

Geneva. Kriaras states that along with Michel Bréal and Arsène Darmsteter, Ferdinand de Saussure was an important teacher for Psycharis (E. Κριαράς, *Ψυχάρης. Ιδέες, αγώνες, ο άνθρωπος*, Αθήνα, Εστία, ²1981, p. 174). He is among the teachers Psycharis includes in his dedication to his *Quelques Travaux de linguistique, de philologie et de littérature helléniques (1884-1928)*, vol. 1, Paris, Société d'édition «Les belles lettres», 1930. Psycharis would have known Saussure's early work on sound change (*Mémoire sur le système primitif des voyelles dans les langues indo-européennes (Essay on the early system of vowels in Indo-European languages)*, Reprografischer Nachdruck der Ausg, Leipzig 1879) when he was writing *My Journey*. Though the majority of texts referred to in his bibliography in his grammar are on the physical production of language (voice, accent, gestures), op. cit. (fn. 4), he does acknowledge quite a few works on phonetics including a book by Charles Bally, a colleague of Saussure's at the University of Geneva who helped compile the influential *Course* after Saussure's death (F. de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. Roy Harris, Lasalle, IL, Open Court, 2002).

⁷ To Ταξίδι μου, Αθήνα, Εστία, 1993 (1888), pp. 40-41.

saw the sea my imagination took me in a new direction. I remembered my homeland! It was to this homeland that the sea could take me. As soon as I had thought of this, as soon as I had this devilish idea in my head, I could think of nothing else. I forgot the green, the flowers, the sky, and all the nature that I couldn't get enough of before. Something was tugging at me! A deep desire ate at my heart and wouldn't leave me alone. The moment had come. I had to rise, return home, count my money and make the journey.⁸

At first this seems like a straight forward *cri de coeur* from an expatriate who longs for his country, but what is interesting to me with regard to my project of reading the movement between cultures through the lens of language is the way Psycharis wishes the French trees could cover over the Greek sea, also that when he discusses checking his money, he uses the Greek word παράδες (*parades*) which is the plural form of a Greek word for money, borrowed from Turkish. The fact that he wants the French to conceal the Greek, but also, it seems, the Greek, the Turkish, suggests that there is no direct route from one place to another even at the level of desire. The question of which culture or language conceals or is buried in another culture or language is complicated, and present in all its complexity from the start of *My Journey*. As we will see, this game of cultural hide and seek is crucial to the development of his argument about the Greek language and the relation of demotic and katharevousa. One of the most poignant moments in the book is when he finds he can't read the Greek newspapers in the reading room in Constantinople because French keeps «popping up» from under the Greek. He expresses what he is experiencing by weaving together the Katharevousa and French idioms for «to take the trouble», first a Greek letter, then a French one. The way one thing takes over another, or peeks out from behind another, is a recurring textual strategy and ultimately offers a theory of language that is much more nuanced than an equation of language and nation.⁹

So what do we find if we «take the trouble» to look at how languages and different language registers encroach on each other in Psycharis's work? Let me mention how etymology and loan words are used to oppose the two forms of the Greek language under debate, katharevousa and demotic, and then turn to how this same opposition is worked out, but cannot be sustained, in terms of contesting languages and alphabets in the section that contains the passage in

⁸ Translations are my own throughout.

⁹ My focus on the «words upon words» in Psycharis's texts is not anachronistic if we consider the general obsession in fin-de-siècle France with hidden signs or the research that Saussure was conducting between 1906-1909 on anagrams in poetry (see J. Starobinski, *Words upon Words: The Anagrams of Ferdinand de Saussure*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1979).

Greek and French that I just referred to. Throughout *My Journey* Psycharis associates false etymologies with katharevousa, but it is in his lecture «The Kiss» given in Athens a few years later, that he discusses his suspicions most explicitly. He says there is no use looking up the modern word *φιλί* (kiss) in an ancient Greek dictionary, i.e. the ancient Greek verb *φιλείν*, since the verb in ancient times had a different meaning. In fact in Ancient Greek the verb that refers to the touching of the lips is the completely different one *κυνέω*.¹⁰ He criticizes the appeal to etymology as a mode for privileging diachronic visual similarities within the Greek language (*φιλί* in modern Greek with *φιλείν* in Ancient Greek) and thereby «imagining» connections between unrelated experiences. He is more interested here and elsewhere in synchronic historical connections between Greek and other languages. He finds cultural experiences are more similar between Greece and her neighbors than between Greece today and Greece two thousand years ago. In fact in order to get to his point about how the folk song is the place we find the modern kiss and modern demotic Greek, he goes to Italy's most famous demoticist, Dante, and his line in the *Inferno*: «La bocca mi baciò tutto tremante» («Μου φίλησε ολότρεμος το στόμα»).¹¹

Psycharis's distaste of etymology and a writing system based on orthography rather than phonetics is even more forcefully illustrated when he discusses Turkish loan words in *My Journey*. He sees no reason why Greeks should throw away the Greek word *τουφέκι* (rifle) because it borrows from the Turkish word *tüfek* and replace it with the archaic invention *πυροβόλον* with its ties to the ancient Greek roots *πυρ-* and *βολ-*.

Οι ξένες λέξεις κανένα κακό δε μ' έκαμαν· τις έχω μάλιστα ανάγκη για να πω πολλά πράματα που δε μ' έρχεται και δε γίνεται να τα πω αλλιώς· έτσι τις έκαμα δικές μου· τις έβαλα να δουλέβουν την ιδέα μου.¹²

Foreign words don't do me any harm; I actually need them to say things that I can't figure out any other way to say; that's how I make them my own. I make them work for my idea.

He continues:

Το τουφέκι από τη γλώσσα μας να το βγάλουμε, δε γίνεται, γιατί σκοτώνει Τούρκο· πολύ πιο φρόνιμο να βγάλετε τον Τούρκο από τα νησιά κι από τις επαρχίες, γιατί ο Τούρκος μπορεί να σκοτώσει χριστιανούς.¹³

¹⁰ Γ. Ψυχάρης, *Το Φιλί*, ed. by D. Tziouvas, Αθήνα, Πόλις, 1996 (1893), pp. 61-62.

¹¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 100.

¹² *Op. cit.* (fn. 7), p. 181.

¹³ *Op. cit.*

Taking the *toufeki* out of our language won't work because it is what kills the Turk; much more wise would be to take the Turk out of our islands and provinces because the Turk can kill Christians.

Psycharis prefers synchronic phonetic similarities between a Turkish *tüfek* and a Greek *τουφέκι* (*toufeki*) than the diachronic orthographic connection between an ancient Greek *πύρ* (*pyr*) or *βόλ* (*vol*) and a katharevousa *πυροβόλον* (*pyrovolon*). His point is that the Turkish loan word reflects the organic development of the Greek language, whereas the ancient Greek root in a katharevousa word is a forced etymology. His distinction is between his own conception of language that takes its cue from speech and the purists that privileges writing and visual connections. His point is that language and history cannot be mapped onto each other in predictable ways. There is no one-to-one correspondence between a Turk and a Turkish word, a Greek and a Greek word. If the Turkish sound *d* or the Italian *ts* is pronounced in the mouths of Greeks, who is to say whether the Greek has become foreign or the foreign Greek. The language of the nation must be the language that the people speak, no matter where it comes from.¹⁴

Although Psycharis in his references to etymology and loan words seems to set up one on the side of writing and the other on the side of speech, such a clear-cut mode of contrasting literacy and orality cannot be sustained. This becomes particularly clear when we look at Psycharis's own spelling games. Much of *My Journey* is taken up with the issue of writing systems and transliteration, but it is in the section entitled «Cabinet de lecture», where demoticism is presented in terms of the reading experience, that Greece's alphabetic difference is explored most fully. It is important to note that we are «in the library», what Foucault calls «the new imaginative space of the nineteenth century»,¹⁵ and what Kittler elaborates as the network discourse of universal alphabetization.¹⁶ As readers in the twenty-first century it is hard to imagine how central

¹⁴ This question of what is and is not foreign is examined in his grammar at length (op. cit., fn. 4, pp. 118-133, 152-156).

¹⁵ M. Foucault, «Fantasia of the Library», *Language, Counter-memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 1977, p. 90.

¹⁶ F. A. Kittler, *Discourse Networks 1800/1900*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1990 (and his *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1997). In his preface to the latter he writes that «the novelty of technological media inscribed itself into the old paper of books [...] What writers astonished by gramophones, films, and typewriters – the first technological media – committed to paper between 1880 and 1920 amounts, therefore, to a ghostly image of our present as future». My discussion here is also informed by McLuhan's discussion of the shift from print to media culture in his two books (M. McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy; The Making of Typographic Man*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1962, and *Understanding Media: The*

the book, with its physical page and its moveable type, was to the retrieval of knowledge as well as to the definition of what could be known as knowledge at the end of the nineteenth century. The library with its books, its pages and letters were the backdrop, props, and script of intellectual life.¹⁷ Although Psycharis focuses on the production of sound and the demoticism of the oral tradition, his means of delivering his message is profoundly shaped by the conventions of print culture.

In «Cabinet de lecture» Psycharis takes as his premise the estranging effect of seeing demotic, the spoken language, in print. But instead of denouncing writing altogether, he turns the tables so that it is katharevousa that is made to look ridiculous on the page.¹⁸ The «Cabinet de lecture», we learn, is the reading room his father frequents in Constantinople and to which he and his father have retired to catch up on the news upon Psycharis's arrival. The section describes the experience of a diaspora Greek back in the Greek speaking world and his joy at finally having access to Greek newspapers again. It can be divided into three parts: first a discussion of the term for reading room, then of the newspapers themselves, and finally of a map. In each case illegibility is connected with transliteration. The carrying of a word from one language to another without concern for meaning represents a larger problem of displacement. It signals the linguistic implications of the long journey from France to Greece and back again, the multilingualism of monolingualism, or more specifically, of diglossia.

After getting rid of the French and katharevousa terms for reading room and settling on the demotic, he can finally get on with what one is meant to do

Extensions of Man, Cambridge, MA, MIT University Press, 1994) and Crain's analysis of alphabetization (P. Crain, *The Story of A: The Alphabetization of America from The New England Primer to The Scarlet Letter*, Stanford, CAL, Stanford University Press, 2000).

¹⁷ It is not irrelevant that many of the pictures Kriaras chose to illustrate his portrait of Psycharis have him in his library reading, nor that most of the correspondence between, for example, Psycharis in Paris and Nikolaos Politis in Thessaloniki, was about obtaining, buying, borrowing, and sending particular books (op. cit., fn. 6).

¹⁸ This in fact is the drama of the reception of his own writing. The lecture «The Kiss», for example, was wonderfully received until the next morning when the papers printed the text. His student H. Pernot described it this way: «The greater part of the audience went away under the impression that Mr. Psichari did not speak as *vulgarly* as he wrote and were seriously convinced that the language he used was the one employed by every body in colloquial conversation. This delusion was after all natural. To hear the language spoken did not shock their acoustic nerves, accustomed to it by an every day's use, as it did the optic ones, when the eye saw it in print» (H. Pernot, *The Language Question in Greece. Three essays by J. N. Psibari and one by H. Pernot translated into English from the French by «Chiensis»*, Calcutta, The Baptist Mission Press, 1902, pp. xxii-xxiii).

in a reading room: read. He begins in good faith. The newspapers are worthy of his full attention:

Όπου κι αν πάη κανείς, σ' ό τι μέρος κι αν κατασταλάξη, είναι φρόνιμο και σωστό να βολέβεται με το καθετίς. Καλά κάμνει να ζη σαν που συνηθίζουν και ζουν ύσοι ζούνε στον τόπο που βρίσκειται – να φάη το φαγί τους, να στρώση το κρεβάτι του σαν που το στρώνουν και να ρουχαλιζή με τον ίδιο κρότο. Πρέπει να πίνη το κρασί τους, νάχη τη μάθησή τους (αν μπορεί!), να διαβάζη τις φημερίδες τους¹⁹

Wherever one goes, in whatever place one settles, it is honorable and correct to try and fit in with what already is the status quo. It is good to live like those who have gotten used to the place - one should eat their food, make the bed as they do, even snore with the same snoring sound. One must drink their wine, have their same education (if possible), read their newspapers

But the clincher is the final phrase: to be able to assimilate, the foreigner has not only to be able to read the newspapers in the new culture, but these newspapers «και να του φαίνονται καλογραμμένες» («should seem to him well written»). The more we read on, however, the less sure we are that these newspapers *are* well written. Psycharis's diasporic contribution to the debate over diglossia can be summed up in his relation to these newspapers. Is the difficulty he has reading them due to the fact that he doesn't know the language or that the language they are written in is deeply flawed? Is it that his French is getting in the way of his reading Greek or that this newspaper Greek is too much like French? As he eventually asks exasperatedly: «Μετάφραση βλέπω, ή τόντις τη γλώσσα μου διαβάζω; Φταιώ γώ ή φταιν οι φημερίδες;» («Am I seeing a translation or am I reading my own language? Is it me that is to blame or the newspapers?»).²⁰ The crux of his argument seems to hang on this «or».

At this point in the narrative the reading experience is interrupted:

Τώρα που το γράφω, θυμούμαι πολύ καλά που, άμα άπλωσα το χέρι στο τραπέζι κι άγγιξα το πρώτο φύλλο που ήθελα να πάρω, στην ίδια στιγμή άκουσα να τριζή κατιτίς – σα να γίνονταν κάπου μακριά καμιά ταραχή, κανένας κρότος. [...] Μα δεν πρόσεξα πολύ. Νόμισα που είταν το τσαλάκωμα του χαρτιού και το ξέχασα.²¹

Now that I am writing I remember that as I stretched out my hand and touched the page the same moment I heard something grate as if somewhere very far away there was some confusion, a noise. [...] But I didn't give it much notice. I thought it was the paper rustling and I forgot about it.

¹⁹ Op. cit. (fn. 7), p. 69.

²⁰ Op. cit., p. 71.

²¹ Op. cit., p. 70.

This is the first inkling we have that something is not right. Something is interfering with the reading experience. But Psycharis doesn't give it much thought. Instead he harps on his good luck at being born Greek. What is it about being Greek that is so wonderful? He asks indulgently:

και βλέπεις στον αιώνα που ζης τη γλώσσα που μιλούσες, είναι τώρα δυό χιλιάδες χρόνια και παραπάνω, ακόμη να την μιλούν οι δικοί σου, ίδια κι απαράλλαχτα σα στου Σωκράτη τον καιρό. Η μονή διαφορά είναι που τότες στάμπες δεν είταν και που σήμερα τυπώνεται κι όλας. Όμως τόσο δεν άλλαξε! Πάρε ένα βιβλίο να το καταλάβης.²²

that the language you speak in the century you live in is two thousand and more years old as old as Socrates. The only difference is that in Socrates' day there wasn't print or type. But otherwise nothing's changed. Look at a book, you'll see what I mean.

He says all this, asking us to peer over his shoulder, and concluding: «Θα διής το ίδιο τυπικό· ένα ν δε λείπει· παντα βάζουν το ν όπου πρέπει» («You'll find the same conventions – not a “n” is missing. They always put the “n” where it should be»)²³ It is only at this point that we realize that this newspaper is not written in the demotic Greek Psycharis would find most soothing and familiar, but, instead, in katharevousa and that he is making fun of the way katharevousa adds at the end of the word the n of ancient Greek. Perhaps these newspapers are not as well written as we first thought.

But what exactly is wrong, unnatural, or badly written about katharevousa? It seems to have something to do with French language again. Just as Psycharis establishes himself in the reading room with its newspapers we find out that the French of this section's title, that Psycharis has already spent quite a few paragraphs wiping out, is back to haunt us. Picking up the newspaper Psycharis cannot help but hear and see French. At first we are ready to attribute this to the normal difficulties of the diasporic subject trying to remember his mother tongue. The Greek Diaspora wants Greek to be a vital language of commerce and literary accomplishment, and yet none of the Diaspora live and write in Greece – they must learn Greek. And yet this does not seem to be the only reason the French language keeps peeking through the Greek. It also seems to have to do with what have called the multilingualism of diglossia and the fact that katharevousa is syntactically and semantically modelled on French, German and other European languages. «Αμα διάβασα μια λέξη γραμμένη ελληνικά» («If I read a word written in Greek»), he complains:

²² Op. cit.

²³ Op. cit.

νόμιζα στην ίδια στιγμή που τη διάβαζα γαλλικά· ο τύπος ήταν ελληνικός, γαλλικά τα λόγια, το νόημα γαλλικό. Μ' έρχονταν όλα σα φράγκικα. Τι δυσάρεστη δουλειά! Θύμωνα μέσα μου κι ανυπομονούσα· αδύνατο, όπως κι αν τόπιανα, να μη θυμηθώ τα γαλλικά μου· σα φάντασμα, σαν πεισματάρικο δαίμονιο με κυνηγούσαν. Έλεγα· «Μετάφραση βλέπω, η τόντις τη γλώσσα, μου διαβάζω; Φταίω γώ η φταίν οι φημερίδες;» Τρομερό ζήτημα! Δεν τολμούσα, δεν μπορούσα να το λύσω! Όσο προχωρούσα, τόσο μ' έπιανε πλήξη· χωρίς να το θέλω, χωρίς να το κάμω πίτηδες, τα μάτια μου ξεσκέπαζαν από κάτω από τα γραϊκικά γράμματα φράση γαλλική, ξένη γλώσσα! Έμοιαζα σα να είταν τα γαλλικά φωλεμένα μέσα στο χαρτί.²⁴

I thought the same moment that I read it in French. Everything came through in French; the type was Greek, but the words were French, the meaning French. It all came to me in *frangika*. What unpleasant work! I was furious and I grew impatient; It was impossible, even when I understood, not to remember my French; like a ghost, like a stubborn daemon the French hunted me down. I said: «Am I seeing a translation, or am I reading my language? Is it me that is to blame or the newspapers?» The more I continued the more exasperated I became; without wanting it, without doing it on purpose my eyes brought out from under the Greek letters French phrasing, a foreign language! It seemed as if the French was wrapped up inside the paper.

As with the rustling, it is the paper of print culture that is somehow to blame for this disturbance. He then goes on to describe this disconcerting sensation as a process that is like that of tracing. It is worth reading this citation at length in order to understand how his representational model relies on the specific technology of the reading room.

Θα σ' έτυχε κάποτες να πάρης φιλό χαρτί, να το βάλης απάνω σε καμιά ζουγραφία ή σε κανένα γράμμα, για να σηκώσης του γραμμάτου το γράψιμο ή τα χαρακώματα και την κάθε γραμμή της ζουγραφιάς, απαράλλαχτα όπως είναι. Τεντώνεις το χαρτί, το βαστάς δυνατά με το δάχτυλο για να μη φύγη, πιάνεις μια πένα και γράφεις. Όσο γράφεις, κάθε γραμμή που κάμνει το κοντύλι σου, σκεπάζει την παλιά γραμμή. Φτάνει όμως λίγο να γλυστρήση το χαρτί κι φαίνεται. Και να μη γλυστρήση, πάντα κάτι θα φανή. Ταντίγραφο που παίρνουμε δε θα κρύψη ποτές όλους διόλου τα πρώτα τα ψηφιά ή τη ζουγραφιά· ή πιο φιλό θα βγη το χαρακώμα το δικό μας ή πιο χοντρό. Να προσέξη κανείς, θα τα διή και τα δυό μαζί, το ένα απάνω στόλλο. Έτσι το πάθαινα και γω· κατάντησα να τα βλέπω όλα διπλά. Αν απαντούσα, ας πούμε, τη φράση «ελάμβανε τον κόπον», την ίδια ώρα θυμούμουν και το «*Il prenait la peine*». Απτό το «*Il prenait la peine*» ξετρύπωνε ξαφνικά από κάτω από τα ελληνικά που προσπαθούσα να διαβάσω. Αν είναι τρόπος να σας το παραστήσω με τον τύπο, είταν απάνω κάτω να διάβαζα σαν που σας το γράφω τώρα·

εΙΛΛάΡμRβEαNvAεIτToLvA
xPóEπIσNvE²⁵

²⁴ Op. cit., p. 71.

²⁵ Op. cit., p. 72.

It will have happened at some point that you have taken thin paper and put it on top of some drawing or some letter in order to trace the writing of the letter or the etching and each line of the drawing, unchanged as they are. You spread out the paper, you hold it tightly with your finger so it won't slip, you take a pen and write. As you write, each line your pen makes covers the old line. If the paper slips a little it shows through. Even if the paper doesn't slip, some bit always shows through. The copy we make will never hide everything the original typographical characters or the drawing; the copy will either be too thin or too thick. If one is attentive, one will see the two together, the one on top of the other. This is what was happening to me. I had gotten to the point where I saw everything double. If I came upon the phrase «ελάμβανε τον κόπον» (to take the trouble) at the same time I would remember the «Il prenait la peine». That «Il prenait la peine» grew up suddenly from under the Greek that I was trying to read. If there is a way to represent it in print, it would be something like reading what I am writing now:

εΙΛΙΆΡμRβEαNvAεΙτToLvA
κPόEπIoNvE

This is the place in the text that Psycharis finally gives us the example of contesting alphabets I have already mentioned. Each letter from the Greek alphabet is followed by one from the Roman alphabet as if transliteration was a model for translation. This proving fairly cumbersome he continues by putting the Greek and French translations in columns next to each other:

Στην ίδια γραμμή έβλεπα δυό ψηφιά και πάντοτες τα γαλλικά ξεπερνούσαν τα γραικικά, με τρόπο που φαίνονταν και καλύτερα. Κάμποσες φράσεις διάβασα έτσι, φράγκικα όλο μαζί και γραικικά: σας τις σημειώνω κοντά κοντά τη μια στην άλλη.²⁶

In the same line I kept seeing two typographical characters and always the French outdid the Greek, showing up better. So many phrases in this manner, French all mixed in with the Greek; I note them down one next to the other as close as possible.

In an attempt to better reproduce his experience, after two pages of *en face* columns of Greek on the left and French and then even a mixture of French and German on the right, he puts the French on the left and the Greek on the right (op. cit., fn. 9, pp. 74-75).

Κατάλαβα τότες που έπρεπε να διαβάζω ανάποδα: αντίς πρώτα να τα διαβάζω γραικικά, είταν πολύ πιο σωστό να τα λέω μέσα μου γαλλικά κ' έπειτα να κοιτάζω τα τυπωμένα γράμματα. Και χωρίς να το θέλω, τόντις έτσι τόπαθα. Τώρα τάβλεπα πρώτα πρώτα όλα φράγκικα, σα να είταν τα φράγκικα πρωτότυπα.²⁷

²⁶ Op. cit.

²⁷ Op. cit., p. 74.

Ultimately Psycharis's visual poetics suggest that katharevousa might as well be written in the Roman alphabet of French and German. It is not contiguous with the Greek experience, but somehow an interruption, at odds with it.

At this point in the narrative the narrator falls asleep. The half-dreamy state of reading turns into a dream in which he learns what the irritating sound was that he had heard at the beginning. In the dream he sees before him a map of Europe. The strangeness of the typographic page with its competing alphabets gives way to the strangeness of a map that separates countries by color.²⁹ Instead of letters in columns on the page, there are people dressed in the color of their country, standing on their part of the map, the French on France, the Germans on Germany. The analogy between letters on a page and people on the map is clear in Greek where the word paper and map, χαρτί (harti) and χάρτης (hartis) are cognates. All of the people on the map are looking in the direction of Greece. In fact they are staring at Psycharis sitting at the table as well as at the newspapers that he is reading in the reading room in Constantinople. The issue of the French language haunting the Greek that we saw in the newspaper has become Psycharis's own problem. We understand this because all of Europe's people are bent over in laughter staring at Psycharis. In the same way that the shape of a letter distinguishes it from another, the bent-over shape of these people on the map tells us something. «Θα ρεΐτε τάχατις πως γράφετε ελληνικά;» («You think you write Greek?»), they taunt. «Όχι, βέβαια. Για να το καταλάβετε, εμείς πρέπει να σας το πούμε. Φραγκέψετε! Μιλήστε γλώσσα δική σας, για να σας ακούση ο κόσμος» («Of course not. In order for you to understand, we're the ones who have to tell you. You became Western European! Talk your own language so that people can hear you»).³⁰

The reading room, once the scene of utter calm, disturbed only by what the author thought was the slight rustling of a piece of paper, has become one of loud, raucous teasing. We finally learn that the cause of that noise is connected not to the piece of paper, χαρτί (harti), but to the map, χάρτης (hartis), and to all the peoples of Europe lined up on that map who find Greece's supposed preoccupation with an ancient form of a modern language a joke. It is clear that the phonetic system of demotic with its association with the voice, the mother tongue, and the Greek alphabet is meant to win out over the orthographic system of katharevousa with its association with maps, and even the Roman alphabet of the rest of Western Europe. And yet we know full well, since we've rehearsed it more than once in this section, first with the title «Cabinet de lecture»

²⁹ Op. cit., p. 77.

³⁰ Op. cit., p. 78.

and then with the newspapers, that in order to get to demotic, one has to start in French and go through katharevousa. The journey from France to Constantinople to Chios to Athens and from French to katharevousa to demotic is never a one-way street; reading Greek, either Greek, is always a foreign affair. Issues of diaspora and the nation and multilingualism, translation and transliteration are deeply embedded in and indebted to each other and become legible in the context of the reading room in which print culture can perform the shifting movement of peoples as a contest between alphabets.



The question that these passages raise, in particular the typographically experimental ones we looked at, is when do translation and transliteration acknowledge the mangling distortion of moving between cultures and when do they conceal it? At some level Psycharis's manifesto seems to suggest that, while it is alright for the demoticist to keep the Turkish word in Greek and the Turk out of Greece, thus dissociating the signifier from the signified in a proto-Saussurian manner, this is not true when the purist drags Ancient Greek roots or French and German syntax into Modern Greek. Here the signifier and signified are inextricably bound up with each other. The purist's wrapping of one language in another inevitably brings Europe's gaze into Greece, or more spe-

cifically into the reading room in Constantinople. The work that I have underscored that seems to be going on throughout this text to show that all languages are constructs and differential systems is momentarily undone when we find out that katharevousa's pseudo-ancient Greek pseudo-Gallic, pseudo-Germanic structure makes it the laughing stock of Europe. Words are suddenly attached to things in an almost Cratyllic fashion. While Turkish in Greek does not mean the Turk is in Greece, Ancient Greek, French, or German in Greek does seem to mean Europeans in Greece.

Yet it is the piece of paper of print culture that keeps appearing in this section, sometimes crumpled, sometimes wrapping, and other times shredded, and the fact that this piece of paper is really two, the page and the thin piece of tracing paper on top of it, that suggests that a perfect fit between the word and the thing, between language and nation, is always impossible. If we only look at where Psycharis's journey starts and ends we have a fairly simple argument for demotic as the only plausible national language and for language as inextricably linked to its people in some quasi-essentialist way, but if we look at how he gets there, the middle passage, we find other lessons, more radical and destabilizing, more politically-nuanced, in which multilingualism and different alphabets are the necessary ground for imagining a nation in relation to her neighbors to the east and to the west. When geopolitical tensions are viewed through the lens of the Language Question things get blurry and this blurriness is not altogether bad. In fact it can be a powerful way of seeing double. If the medium of print culture at the turn of the century is understood to be as much a part of the message as the message itself, then another story emerges from a close reading of Psycharis's *My Journey*: No matter who you want to keep in or out, the Turk or the European, «Ταντίγραφο που παίρνουμε δε θα κρύψει ποτέ τους όλους διόλου [...] Να προσέξω κανείς, θα τα διή και τα δύο μαζί, το ένα απάνω στάλλο» («The copy we make will never hide everything [...] if one is attentive, one will see the two together, the one on top of the other».³¹

In Psycharis's text an opposition appears between katharevousa as invested in etymology, the diachronic development of the language, orthography, even the Roman alphabet versus demotic which contains loan words, is synchronic in its borrowings, phonetic, and tied to the Greek alphabet. A close reading of the section «Cabinet de lecture», however, reveals that the material practices of print culture undo this opposition by offering a palimpsest theory of reading and writing as tracing. Different languages and different forms of language are written into and onto each other in the library so that Greek cannot exist

³¹ Op. cit., p. 71.

without French, German, Italian, and Turkish and demotic cannot exist without katharevousa. Paying attention to how texts register the effects of multilingualism gives us tools for analyzing why any discussion about the nation is also a discussion about the diaspora and vice versa. It also suggests how every theory of the sign is a theory of translation, and in diaspora literature, sometimes a theory of transliteration.