

CHAPTER FIVE: Years of Change (1928-1936)

Migration, and the social and cultural universe that develops in its process, produce and are produced by migrants – people with a certain understanding of themselves, of the conditions of their existence, and of their desires, strategies, plans, and fantasies of moving across borders and reestablishing themselves at a different place. The ways in which migrants become subjects of their individual, family, national, or community histories is a field that we need to study... (Laliotou 2004: 9)

I

This chapter reveals certain aspects of Alekos Doukas' contribution to Greek-Australian literature that till now have been unknown. It offers insights at a manuscript level into early literary attempts at creating an immigrant literature in the Greek language beyond the shorter newspaper genres and points to certain literary influences and discourses that help understand the prewar conditions for a minority literature which remained in those years a largely failed attempt. It allows some shafts of light to penetrate the discursive mists of this literary 'pre-history' (Castan 1983: 13). Importantly, it provides a new understanding of Doukas' postwar writing through the juxtaposition of its historical context and antecedents.

The period 1928-1936 represents the beginning of a transition in Greek diasporic life in Australia and I set out in this chapter to show certain aspects of this through Doukas' life. Owing to his authorship of two novels in the postwar years that offer a historically analytic picture of the prewar and early postwar Greek community, Doukas is often referred to in Greek-Australian studies. He appears regularly in political and social histories as a representative figure of a radical left tradition, whereas in literary analyses he is seen predominantly as a flawed writer whose social vision and literary enterprise nonetheless exercise a strong fascination. In this chapter I focus on both his literary writing and political

thinking through a narrative which draws on his letters, published prose and unpublished manuscripts. These two spheres are not treated in strict separation as they are fused in the letters and literary prose. Far from confirming Doukas as a unitary socialist subject, the narrative reveals an intellectual of liberal, republican and imperial beliefs that are strongly influenced by an underlying Orientalism - in short a more complex figure emerges. This more diverse picture is enabled by approaching the subject through a transnational discursive framework that allows for the influence of preceding discursive history, homeland-diaspora relationships and inter-diasporic interactions in the field of intellectual life, as well as the immediate context of Australia.

Many writers tend to assume that the Great Depression, in a simple cause-effect relationship, radicalised a section of the Greek community in the 1930s. The radicalisation process however is not explored in any depth. One reason is that little attention is given to the role of Greek-language literature arriving from overseas, primarily the U.S.A. Stelios Kourbetis (1992: 21-22, 1990: 56-59, 158) in his study of the Greek left in Australia argues that ethnicity was a factor as important as class in the radicalisation of Greek migrants. But what does Greek ethnicity mean in the prewar period? This question requires further study that would include the language of the press, early Greek socialist writing, Greek-American radical publications and the extent of liberal and conservative monarchist discourse in the Greek communities. In the absence of such studies there is the danger that broad assumptions about the past are based on a thin layer of historical knowledge.

The theorising of minority literature has been paralleled by an emerging interest in Greek-Australian historiography. As with literature, the issue relates to the study of narratives of a minority as 'a self-interpreting history-making community' (Nicolacopoulos 2005a: 264).

Although Michael Tsounis (1971) has been generally recognised as the pioneering figure in Greek-Australian historiography one could also argue that Kentavros (1916) *Life in Australia* provides the first rudimentary historical narrative of Greek-Australian life. As with the debates over literature, a minority group looks to the past for narratives that reveal a distinctive consciousness and subjectivity (Castan 1988: 9). The interwar period provides intriguing flashes of such narratives but these are short and fleeting compared to later novelistic or historiographic narratives.¹ It is possible that Doukas' postwar novels provide such a narrative for this earlier period and this may explain their appeal and power to be read as authentic chronicles of the time.

In this chapter I use archival sources and oral history to produce a narrative which I offer as an ongoing attempt to answer the question posed by Nicolacopoulos et al (2005a: 264): 'What would it mean for us to write the history of the Greek-Australian communities as *Australian* history?' At every point my text demands an interpretative act to turn it into a meaningful story. It involves the construction of a narrative set in the here-and-now of historical time.

¹ See selections in Kanarakis (1987).

II

On the Move

Alekos left Sydney by train on the 18 August 1928 bound for Baradine in the northwest region of NSW. The railway line wound through a sea of wheat-fields, a dry country of plains and hills, edged by eucalypts and native pines. His new employment was as a cook in a café owned by a Mr Diacopoulos. From the front verandah, the town's new Memorial Hall was in clear view, the inscription above its neo-classical façade, 'Fidelis Ad Urnam' (Faithful till Death), a sombre reminder of the town's death toll in the Great War. The two new double-storey hotels in the main street spoke of prosperity. The café, with its wood-panelled booths, was a busy place; the orders for 'steak and eggs' constantly relayed to the kitchen.

Alekos' plans for a poultry farm remained firm, although now the family in Greece wanted him to help his brother Doukas migrate. Family duty was once again in conflict with his individual dreams. Alekos insisted that his friend Yiannis from Sydney be included in their future plans. Both were unhappy with their lot as café workers and had agreed to pool their money to buy a farm.² Alekos began to organise his brother's application and passage with Mr Diacopoulos' support.³ His letters home are optimistic: 'The country has a future for those who are prudent, hard-working and daring.'⁴ He advises his brother about the demands of migrant life, which, while tough, offered opportunities. His positive account is qualified

² Letter to family 3.9.1928. Stratis Doukas Archive, Aristotle University, Thessaloniki.

³ 'Application for Admission of Relatives or Friends to Australia' to Home and Territories Department, Canberra, signed 'Alex C. Doucas,' 29 October 1928. Alekos' brother's occupation is listed as 'commercial accountant' and his intended occupation in Australia 'poultry.' National Archives of Australia. Digital copy, barcode 8165897.

⁴ Letter to family. 9.9.1928. Op. cit.

however with a warning: 'To be successful here I advise him to forget who he is.'⁵ Although this implies that for Alekos migration involved a radical change in identity, in his next letter he adds a corrective suggesting a more complex attitude: 'Let me make it clear, because at bottom it would be a crime to reject our self. Rejecting our self, we reject the truth.'⁶ This simple statement is at odds with an assimilationist creed that in other letters Alekos supported enthusiastically. The issue of assimilationism clearly posed a stubborn contradiction for him. Alekos also makes a plea to his older brother not to embitter him with their old discord. And immediately following, a typically romantic threat to his family that if pushed emotionally he will literally disappear into the South Seas, like those colonial white adventurers who once gone 'native' never return.⁷ The South Seas as a site of romantic escape reappears in his letters, as well as his fictional writing.⁸

In the midst of preparations for Doukas' migration, Alekos confided to Stratis his deep reservations about the idea. Now he lists the negatives: the vile behaviour of his compatriots, the impossibility of working for the 'English,' terrible unemployment, long hours of demeaning work, the need to keep shifting residence, Doukas' age (thirty-four), his lack of English, his sensitive and timid character, his dependence on a younger brother who he has always regarded as 'utopian and foolish.'⁹ Despite this, four days later he wrote to Doukas with detailed directions and encouragement; to Stratis he wrote that being ill at the time of his last letter he had fallen into a pessimistic state.¹⁰ Alekos' mood swings and ambivalence are ever present in the letters. They are the continuation of older tensions and the desire to attain emotional distance and independence from his family to which he felt simultaneously close

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Letter to family 13.9.1928. Op. cit.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ See discussion of 'Under the Southern Cross' in this chapter.

⁹ Letter 17.9.1928. Op. cit.

¹⁰ Letter to Doukas 21.9.1928 and letter 5.10.1928. Op. cit.

and responsible. His estimation of employment and business prospects for migrants similarly vacillated between rosy and bleak. Despite the setbacks, Alekos remained mostly optimistic in the first few years.

In one of Alekos' first letters home from Baradine he describes two dreams:

On my first night at Baradine I dreamed that I met King George of England and the queen, and they were both kissing me on the mouth while I fervently kissed their hands. And I am such a republican in my waking life. It's the third time I've seen them. The first time was in Bendigo, then I saw them sitting by a window of a garden kiosk calling me to join them and their family circle, and with kindness they were trying to overcome my timidity for the honour they were bestowing on a commoner, indeed a foreigner.... I regularly dream about Father. A while ago I saw Father and Mother together. He was kissing me on the mouth, like a lover, and while I was embracing Mother to kiss her... she was transformed into bunch of yellow flowers from the national tree of Australia. You work them out.¹¹

The dreams are notable for their expression of a desire for acceptance and intimacy. They express, on a subconscious level, a number of contradictions and tensions related to Alekos experience as a recent migrant. In both dreams there are homoerotic undertones and parental figures that stand for or merge into the idea of nation and family. Sexual and political ambiguity abound. The playful comment to 'work them out' suggests the degree of popularisation of Freud's psychoanalytic interpretation of dreams.¹²

¹¹ Letter to family 13.9.1928. Op. cit.

¹² See Joy Damousi (2005).

Just as all the preparations for Doukas' migration were complete, immigration restrictions were once again applied to Southern Europeans.¹³ Alekos advised Doukas not to proceed to Port Said. His views in regard to the law are conservative: 'By respecting the Law we respect ourselves. Anyway it's high time we give up transgressions and proceed on life's road with honesty. Australian laws are liberal but strict as well.'¹⁴ This turn of events may have been somewhat of a relief for Alekos who was at least free for the moment of the complication of his brother's presence in Australia.

In Baradine, Alekos began to write short lyrical prose poems expressing highly personal subjects; they were a continuation of the genre he had favoured in Greece.¹⁵ He later described them to Stratis as his 'nostalgias.'¹⁶ The first, 'To My Mother,' is indeed a series of nostalgic memories from childhood to the day he farewelled his mother in Salonika.¹⁷ The casual prose is framed within the poetic conceit of the writer entreating his mother to embrace him and help him regain his childhood innocence. A similar piece addressed to his dead father is dominated by rather stilted Christian sentiments concerning his father's immortality and goodness.¹⁸

Alekos' thinking is revealed in a larger way in the prose piece 'Ida-Katoomba' which urges the personified forms of two mountains from the 'old' and 'new' worlds to join in an erotic embrace.¹⁹ The text involves a Plutarchian comparison between different worlds: Ida, the mountain overlooking the Asia Minor coast; Katoomba overlooking the Pacific Ocean: Ida,

¹³ In 1928 the Bruce-Page government halved the 1,200 quotas set annually for Albanians, Greeks, and Yugoslavs (Charles A. Price (1963: 91).

¹⁴ Letter to Doukas. 15.10.1928. Op. cit.

¹⁵ See discussion in Chapter Three.

¹⁶ Letter 1.12.1929. Op. cit.

¹⁷ Text-letter 7.10.1928. Op. cit.

¹⁸ 'To the Sacred Spirit of My Father' Letter 27.10.1928. Op. cit.

¹⁹ Letter 7.10.1928. Op. cit. For translated text see Appendix III.

the mythological figure of the ancient world and witness to countless tragic events; Katoomba, with its remaining 'black children,' witness to the coming of a new race. In sympathy with colonial settlement and the mission of white civilisation, Alekos exhorts Katoomba to embrace this new race and hope for an illustrious Troy and a 'Homer to sing hymns to her beauty.'²⁰ Extending the Plutarchian bent for paired figures, the piece introduces Cook (explorer of the South) and Amundsen²¹ (explorer of the North Pole), and in a wildly imaginative Christian abstraction, joins the poles with a line that intersects the line between Ida and Katoomba to form 'a cross on the Globe.' This cross, the result of global journeys of European explorers and the grafting of the West's classical mythology on the new world, is contextually the white man's Christian burden: 'It will be the eternal Cross that man will bear on his Calvary, made of the eternal beams of heroism and love.'²² On an individual level the piece can be read as an attempt to resolve the demands of two conflicting sensibilities, 'the conflicts of love' as Con Castan (1986:41) has described 'the pull by two homelands' which he ascribes to settler literature. The line that reveals this personal connection reads: 'The humble spirit of an outcast draws you, O beautiful mountains, to embrace in love.' The 'outcast,' Alekos Doukas, longs for some symbolic rapprochement between his divided subjectivities, his Greek past and migrant present.

The prose poems 'Droplet' and 'The Fireplace' help to further sketch Alekos' thinking in this period. Like earlier pieces with the same titles published in the newspaper *Efimerida ton Valkanion*, they are hymns to the divine symbolic qualities of fire and water.²³ 'Droplet,' while it connects droplets with oceans (the minute and the vast), is also a celebration of the

²⁰ Ibid. This compares to W. C. Wentworth's verse in his 1823 ode 'Australasia' (lines 59-86) invoking 'Celestial poesy' to waken the land from its slumber (Goodwin 1990: 313).

²¹ Ronald Amundsen (1872-1928), Norwegian explorer who in 1903-06 navigated the Northwest Passage.

²² Op. cit.

²³ Both texts are in the letter 20.10.1928. Op cit. Even though they share the same titles as earlier published pieces, they are different texts. My references here are to the later texts.

dual nature of water as life-giving and life-destroying. It reflects influences of Hinduism, as well as the continuing theme of war and fratricide. The line 'Purple droplet that ran from the broken temple of the victim of fratricide, droplet of a purifying bath' harks back to the story of Cain and the need to cleanse the crime of blood.²⁴ 'Fireplace' is written in praise of the haven provided by the humble fireplace. On a symbolic level, fire is seen in classical terms as Ergane's gift to humankind, the 'sacred flame' that allowed it to take its first evolutionary steps.²⁵

'Fireplace' was very likely influenced by Alekos' re-reading of Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound* with English translations and commentaries.²⁶ The figure of Prometheus had preoccupied him after the war when he read Giorgios Kalosgouros' (1921a) translation and introduction to the play.²⁷ Prometheus, like Athena and biblical Adam, is seen as a mythical figure symbolising man's evolutionary development from pre-discursive existence to consciousness and the arts.²⁸ Drawing on Hegel's *Aesthetics*, Kalosgouros regards Prometheus as a figure who sets man on a path of union with God (Kalosgouros 1921a: 49-51). This nineteenth-century interpretation of the myth by which the gap between necessity and freedom (given that even the Olympian gods must submit to necessity) is overcome through a Christian conception of a God of Providence and Love in which Necessity becomes invisible (Kalosgouros 1921a:16). These Hegelian ideas see Christianity as a higher unity between the divine and the human. Romantic art is preoccupied with redemption and the

²⁴ Alekos' prose poem 'Cain and Abel' is discussed in Chapter Three.

²⁵ Ergane: another name for Athena, protector of work in general and in particular the arts, science, invention, weaving and handicrafts (Dimitrakos 1955).

²⁶ In the letter 18.10.1928, op. cit., he enthuses about an 1832 edition of the play. He also mentions reading about Aeschylus in Bendigo.

²⁷ Giorgios Kalosgouros (1849-1902): A romantic scholar from Kerkyra (Corfu) who translated classical Greek and Italian works, including Greece's national poet Dionysios Solomos' Italian poems.

²⁸ The key section in Aeschylus play is Prometheus' lines to the Chorus (lines 436 to 506, Wecklein's 1885 edition) in G. Thomson (1932) *Aeschylus The Prometheus Bound* pp. 80-87 and Rex Warner (1947) *The Prometheus Bound of Aeschylus* pp. 29-31.

break with classical forms in order to give expression to 'the subjective infinity of man' (Paolucci 2001: 51). Through these interconnecting texts we see Alekos operating within the neo-romantic and neo-Christian intellectual movements of his time.²⁹ A year later he returned to the theme of Prometheus and Christianity when he read Reginald S. Copleston's (1897) *Aeschylus*. In an extract from the book which he translates for Stratis, Alekos focuses on Copleston's (1987: 37-38) comparison between Aeschylus' tragedy and the Old Testament which sees in the figure of Job a spiritually higher resolution to Prometheus' suffering.³⁰ Alekos too follows the method of 'Comparative Mythology' which, as an 'empirical science,' has helped understand the 'religious ideas of the Greeks' (Kalosgouros 1921a: 9-10). Following this analysis, Alekos compares Prometheus and Christ, the first 'the creation of mythology's imagination' and the second 'the child of suffering humanity.'³¹ He is repeatedly drawn to a 'syncretical' technique that owes as much to the romantic philosophical principle of 'Comparative Mythology' as to the Plutarchian use of comparative pairs.³²

'Apollo's Lake'

In late October 1928, Alekos wrote 'Apollo's Lake,' a longer prose piece that is addressed to 'Hope-bearing youth' with a dedication and preliminary section 'Dedicated to the Young People of New Turkey.'³³ This piece can be seen as the culmination of a number of preoccupations in his life since the Greek-Turkish War: farewell to his homeland,

²⁹ See discussion in Chapter Three.

³⁰ Letter 8.10.1929. Op. cit.

³¹ Letter 8.10.1929. Op. cit.

³² For a discussion of Plutarch's use of 'synkrisis' see Russell (1995: 76-94) and Larmour (1992).

³³ Letter 24.10.1928. Op. cit. Undated 3-page publication registered in the National Library of Greece in 1930. For full text see Appendix IV.

reconciliation with the enemy,³⁴ celebration of the ordinary toiler, rejection of nationalism and the upper classes, exhortation of hope and encouragement to despairing youth, belief in the curative power of nature and stoic political conservatism. The contradictory nature of the text is illustrated in the following extract:

Respect the existing laws of the state, and even if they are mistaken and criminal, labour for tomorrow. Minds infinitely superior to ours have respected them and with equanimity drank the hemlock to the last drop.

Travel to the land of your Nation's enemies. Try to enter their spirit and thought. Avoid the upper classes as the root of all evil.

Wear the humble and honourable workers' overalls, and uncomplaining lose yourself in the masses. You will love them, you will feel them, you will become friends. Then return to your birthplace. And if you hear a glib orator reviling your people's enemy, gather your friends and show them whatever good you know about the enemies of your nation. These acts will be a thousand times more conducive to peace than the whole pack of immoral treaties of parliaments and Privy Councils. But if your Country is in danger don't revolt. Fulfil your duties like a man; and if you are killed, future generations will place you in the ranks of martyrs to human stupidity. If you survive, spend all your strength in the abolition of mutual killing.³⁵

Evident is the persistent belief in the political example of Socrates that in essence is an acquiescent attitude to injustices and the laws that uphold them. In tension with this conservative position is Alekos' apparent rejection of the bourgeois establishment and nationalist jingoism. Yet the text simultaneously subscribes to the call of duty in time of war, despite the fact that war is declared 'human stupidity.' Clearly, there are deep contradictions here that, given a push in one direction or another, might cause the interlocking edifice of

³⁴ The piece was written at a time when the Greek and Turkish governments were negotiating unresolved issues of refugee compensation arising from the Lausanne Agreement of 1923 and which generated considerable political heat in Greece among refugee communities. See Anastasiadou (1982) for a full account of this process.

³⁵ 'Apollo's Lake,' p. 2-3. Op. cit.

beliefs to collapse or rearrange itself. Alekos appears to be anti-nationalist, anti-war, anti-establishment but also apolitical and opposed to revolution or oppositional politics.

‘Apollo’s Lake’ belongs to a genre favoured by Stratis Doukas, the poetic philosophical homily expressing views about art and life through aphoristic statements. It was to have been published in 1928 along with Stratis’ ‘Letters to My Young Friend’ and ‘To Myself’ (S. Doukas 1975a).³⁶ The latter work, written in May 1928, is a manifesto of Stratis’ aesthetic philosophy in praise of work over contemplation, love and wisdom over passion and intellect, youth over age, the present over the past, nature as the great teacher, and art, inherently moral and inextricable from life, as a response to the contradictions of the world. Although there are many similarities between the texts of the brothers, Alekos gives greater emphasis to lived experience, manual work, romantic immersion in nature, the precarious nature of youth, stoicism, acquiescence to the state, friendship and celibacy.

‘Apollo’s Lake’ can be seen as a key text as it not only sums up much that characterised Alekos’ thinking in the period 1922-1928, but also introduces a new note of reconciliation, a sense of recovery from the traumas of the war. Its dedication suggests a distancing that allowed the author to envisage a new start for himself and the youth of Turkey. The title too, although nominally referring to a gorge of Mount Olympus in Turkey, is also the classical name of the harbour between Moschonisia and Aivali (Karaïskaki 1973: 63, Drakos 1895a: 12). This suggests that the text also functioned as a reconciliatory response to the loss of homeland, the image of the calm waters of Apollo’s Lake providing a focus for a recuperative stirring. Despite the text’s conservative rejection of political action, it is in fact a political statement of sorts addressed to Alekos’ generation and urging an active response to life and

³⁶ See publication details in Selected Bibliography: Alekos Doukas.

an optimistic belief in the future. It is written from a vantage point where suffering and pain have been transmuted into realisations and strengths.

Alekos wrote another text at this time, 'Fleeting Meditations,' which is even closer in style to Stratis' 'To Myself.'³⁷ It reiterates Alekos' spiritualist views: the unknowability and ineffability of divine laws and harmony, anti-positivism, acceptance and respect for age-old 'moral laws' and 'folk wisdom,' and an ascetic rejection of the material trappings of 'progress.' The text argues for the practice of vegetarianism as the natural state of humanity and a way of controlling greed and exploitation:

How can our mind be quiet, calm and balanced when it knows it has to pay for the squandering of our material selves with endless hours of hard toil? Greed, philosophies, a mania for the accumulation of reserve wealth through the deprivation of our brother's daily bread, derive from the superfluous needs we create for ourselves.³⁸

Although not overtly political, the text indirectly considers the problems of economic exploitation and everyday material survival. The spiritual solution suggested is of course an individual and private one. Nevertheless, there is a rudimentary attempt to engage intellectually with the problem of the relationship between the private and public spheres of social life.

³⁷ Unpublished manuscript in letter 24.10.1928. Op. cit.

³⁸ Ibid.

Mildura

By May 1929 Alekos had moved to Mildura, in north-west Victoria, where he entered a partnership with four other Greeks to contract a 120-acre vineyard producing dried fruit.³⁹ The vineyard, owned by the Old Mildura Company, offered them fifty percent of profits. Alekos' earlier plans for a poultry farm had changed, his friend Yiannis had fallen ill and the plan for Doukas' migration had cooled.⁴⁰ Tensions between Alekos and the family resurfaced when family differences and financial demands on him elicited an angry letter home.⁴¹ Alekos blasts them for poor financial management, most of the blame falling on Dimitros and his failed business dealings. One of the main concerns of the family was to see Eleni married off comfortably. Alekos suggests she would be better off marrying an '*entimos viopalestis*' (an honourable working man) like the migrants he had met.⁴² He warns them again that if they keep upsetting him he'll move eastward to the South Seas. He finishes the letter with an emotional outburst: 'What do you all want from a "war cripple" anyway?' He complains to Stratis that his brothers regard him as a 'bank' and that Doukas' migration is not realistic. He is now negative about every aspect of it, referring explicitly to problems of racial discrimination: 'He is dark, a terrible handicap in finding work, because he'd be recognised as a foreigner.'⁴³ He promises to put aside money for Eleni's dowry but insists that she keep clear of 'dowry hunters.'⁴⁴ Alekos' letters to his family exhort them to face their changed economic circumstances with realism: 'We are all victims of our times.... It is not easy to earn money today. Every penny represents, not drops of sweat, but blood.'⁴⁵ Though the

³⁹ Letter to family 22.4.1928 & 12.6.1929. Op. cit.

⁴⁰ Letter to family 5.8.1929 & letter 15.9.1929. Op. cit.

⁴¹ Letter to family 5.8.1929. Op. cit.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Letter 15.9.1929. Op. cit.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

youngest, Alekos appears the most willing to discard the attitudes of his upbringing and embrace the demands of his migrant proletarianisation.

This period was significant because Stratis' novella *A Prisoner of War's Story* was published.⁴⁶ Based on oral testimony, it made its mark on Greek literature for its unadorned prose style and humanist anti-war tenor. It was a distinctively Anatolian Greek response to the Catastrophe. Alekos finds the work moving and describes it as a 'diamond to our people.'⁴⁷ The two brothers viewed their writings as a joint venture and this is attested to by the advertisement at the end of the above novella of a forthcoming joint work. In fact, in the previous year, Stratis had contemplated publishing Alekos' letters as a literary narrative and the latter had given him the unrestricted right to do so.⁴⁸ This very likely explains why the first 218 pages of Volume One of Stratis' letter books are largely undated extracts of letters and literary manuscripts strung together as a continuous text.⁴⁹

Alekos' relationship with his partners on the fruit block was fraught with tensions from the start. He had worked briefly in Mildura in April 1928 and had come into contact with a small group of Greeks who were mostly working as contractors on large blocks.⁵⁰ It appears from Alekos' letters that he was the legal go-between in the contractual arrangement with the Old Mildura Company whose manager was in Melbourne. A combination of long hours of back-breaking work, demands by his partners to vary the contractual conditions and a feeling that

⁴⁶ The first edition was published in March 1929. See Introduction by D. Tziouvas in S. Doukas (1999).

⁴⁷ Letter 2.6.1929. Op. cit.

⁴⁸ Letter 5.10.1928. Op. cit.

⁴⁹ Vol. 1, 'My Young Brother's Pain,' op. cit. See discussion of Stratis' reworking of ephemeral writing in Chapter Three.

⁵⁰ Letter to family 22.4.1928 & letter 5.10.1929. Op. cit. According to Mrs Koula Kavouriari (née Tselepis) from Vourla in Asia Minor, who had arrived as a sixteen-year old in Mildura in July 1927 with her brother, there were about ten Greek bachelors and three couples living in Mildura at the time. The majority were from Asia Minor and the rest mainly Aegean islanders (Interview with Petro Alexiou 3.1.1986). See also Gilchrist (1997: 248-252) for an account of how a group of Asia Minor Greeks introduced the superior 'Smyrna cold-dip process' for curing sultana grapes.

he was being taken advantage of led him to resign from the partnership. This was precipitated by a nervous crisis and high fevers at the end of September 1929.⁵¹ The attending doctor recommended a period of rest and Alekos gave up smoking and eating meat. His boss from the previous year, Mr Goodie of Merbein, came and drove him to the block of a neighbour, an Asia Minor compatriot, Balis Xeros.⁵² With constant visits to the Goodie family, Alekos slowly recovered his health and began to write again.

In this period, Alekos confessed to Stratis that he was thoroughly sick of working in café kitchens and ‘wandering from train station to train station like an outcast.’⁵³ In the same letter he confessed to having fallen in love with a young woman in Mildura. Again he communicates his emotional state through dreams in which he hears her mother calling him from a motor car next to the vineyard. In another dream he is on the coast near Sydney and suddenly the ocean waters rise dangerously. He scrambles up a cliff pulling himself up by the ‘roots of a eucalypt tree’ only to find himself at a table set out with food by his ex-partners. He hears the young woman calling him and abandons the table running to find her.⁵⁴ Like his earlier accounts, these dreams are rich with a symbolism of desire for reciprocal love and acceptance, and the anxiety of being adrift without roots or the security of firm ground. The dream was perhaps prescient (he runs but it appears in vain); the romance failed to develop and the young woman married another of his compatriots, although she did maintain contact with Alekos in later years.⁵⁵

⁵¹ Letter 5.10.1929. Op. cit.

⁵² Asia Minor Greeks, the Xeros family remained life-long friends to Alekos.

⁵³ Letter 8.10.1929. Op. cit.

⁵⁴ The dream is included almost verbatim in the manuscript ‘Under the Southern Cross.’

⁵⁵ The incipient romance and later friendship is confirmed in interviews: Eleni Andronicos-Doukas (1983), Charalambos Lolis (1991), Vassilis Stefanou (1983), Angeliki Tsouni-Alexiou (1994).

‘Under the Southern Cross’

During his recuperation in October 1929 Alekos began to write a novella entitled ‘Under the Southern Cross,’ a first-person narrative of an itinerant migrant labourer’s life in the Australian countryside.⁵⁶ It was completed by December of the same year in three locations: Merbein, Bendigo and Shepparton. Alekos had first announced his intention to write the novella in June 1929:

In form it will be similar to Hamsun’s *Under the Autumn Star*⁵⁷, but very different in terms of the country that the great Norwegian saw and for the idiosyncrasy of the writer. It will be a lively picture of the arduous eighteen months of my exile, knocking on door after door, going from farm to farm, looking for work, living the troubled life of a poor immigrant who is battling with life’s hard struggle without complaint, but light-hearted, as the life of the poor always is.⁵⁸

It is revealing that when he confesses to Stratis that he has fallen in love, Alekos immediately thinks of the literary possibilities in Hamsunesque terms: ‘What will become of this situation? God knows. Perhaps a *Women at the Pump*, a *Victoria*.... Or perhaps a loving sister for you all...’⁵⁹ Experience appears to have offered him the possibility either of change and participation, or alternatively, a holding back and the opportunity for literature. As he made the final touches to the manuscript he wrote: ‘I have tried to give it as much simplicity as I could; don’t see anything in it as exaggerated. This is how life is here. I tried to put in a bit of

⁵⁶ Manuscript in Letter book Vol. 1, pp. 260-348, op. cit.

⁵⁷ Original title *Under Høstjærnen* published in 1906. The novella is in Knut Hamsun (1975).

⁵⁸ Letter 2.6.1929. Op. cit.

⁵⁹ Letter 8.10.1929. Op. cit. Titles of novels by Knut Hamsun. *The Women at the Pump* (1920) and *Victoria* (1898).

Daphnis and Chloe.⁶⁰ The common themes in these antecedent works are romance and rural life.

The opening lines of 'Under the Southern Cross' are classic Hamsun in establishing the narrator as a wandering labourer: 'I had worked hard picking grapes and cutting timber in the bush; my pockets jangled with money, enough to get me through to the next harvest.'⁶¹ Fred, the narrator, a Greek immigrant from the eastern Aegean, camps near the farmhouse of a wheat and sheep farmer. Though living a rough outdoor life, Fred is educated and a regular and welcomed visitor to the genteel gatherings at the farmhouse where he falls in love with Miriam the eldest daughter home from her studies at the Conservatorium. The romance develops platonically although Fred's fear of commitment to marriage poses a major obstacle. When Miriam makes it clear she wants him, Fred disappears without a word, returning to a fruit-growing area he had worked in two years earlier. A letter from Miriam forces him to decide on his future. He sails off to lose himself in the remote South Sea Islands. A fortuitous encounter with a Finnish captain makes Fred aware that the love-sick Miriam is close by and he sets off to find her. Years later, now happily married to her, Fred looks over his 'yellowed' manuscript with its account of those tumultuous years.⁶²

The similarities with Hamsun's rural novels are numerous: the wandering educated labourer who enters the intimate space of the landowning family, the romance with a pretty and genteel young woman on the farm, the inevitable urge to keep wandering, the revisiting of rural haunts where the passing of time and old acquaintances are observed through a transient sensibility, moments of ecstasy and peace in nature. The similarities of course do not translate

⁶⁰ Letter 12.12.1929. Op. cit. *Daphnis and Chloe* by the Greek novelist and romancer Longus, who most likely lived in Lesbos in the 2nd century AD, was read by Alekos in Mytilini in 1915-16 (Doukas 1953: 159).

⁶¹ Letter book Vol. 1, pp 346 & 294. Op. cit.

⁶² Ibid., p. 348.

into Hamsun's literary brilliance. The imitative impulse produces flashes reminiscent of Hamsun, but the romance lacks the sophistication and psychological depth of the original author who mined a deep vein of interiority and disturbance through a modern narrative style. Interestingly, in terms of Alekos' experiences and literary sensibility, Hamsun's highly-strung narrator, alluding to a mental collapse, addresses his readers as 'fellow neurasthenics' (Hamsun 1975: 104).

'Under the Southern Cross' is not a realist account of Alekos' experience but an attempt to write a romantic novella in which he deals at a distance, as it were, with his life and ideas. The biographical elements are numerous but invariably the fictionalising creates an idealised and fantasised world. Compared to other migrant literary journalistic narratives of the time, such as Michael Malachias' (1931-1932) 'Recollections of a Migrant,' it is distinctly romantic. Alekos' autobiographical persona, Fred, bears the name that the narrator of 'Phrygia' took from his English friend. He is a peculiar fictional amalgamation of a character, neither Greek nor Australian, and appears to be an attempt resolve the social and cultural barriers between the migrant and the host society. The text can be read as a desire to assimilate, on an imaginative level, into British-Australian culture. Though based partly on the Goodie family in Merbein, the farmer's family more closely resembles Hamsun's landowning families. Fred's return to a fruit-growing area mirrors Alekos' return to Shepparton in late 1929 after an absence of two years. Like Alekos, Fred returns to a Jewish farmer's fruit block but the narrative is more reminiscent of Hamsun's narrator Knut Pederson's return to old haunts in *Under the Autumn Star* than a portrait of a farmer and fruit pickers of Shepparton (Hamsun 1975: 8-9). In short, the autobiographical elements, scattered throughout the text, are simply narrative anchors for another endeavour, the fictional creation of an idealised world derived more through fancy than realism. This concurs partly with

Stratis' observations that it 'lacks rich material and originality' and could be helped by 'lively stories of migrants.'⁶³

'Under the Southern Cross' remained a failed literary attempt to create a Hamsunesque romance-cum-migrant vagabond novel in Australia in the late 1920s. The story was reworked years later into a different type of novel about the life of a Greek migrant in the Depression years (Doukas 1963). It is of interest here for what it reveals about Alekos' preoccupations and thinking at the time. A central theme in the text is that of the irreconcilability of marriage and individual freedom, the narrator seeing the former as a prison and obstacle to the latter: 'Nature pulls you towards marriage; your individuality rebels...'⁶⁴ The narrator's characteristic image of the married person is that of a horse in harness, an image that had stayed with him from his reading in 1923 of Gorky's story 'Creatures That Once Were Men' (Gorky 1915). This theme is related to a persistent belief that he had inherited an inclination to a religious calling from his mother's side.⁶⁵ Referring to this, the narrator says to Miriam's father: 'this was one of the main reasons for my leaving my country for a faraway place; I thought that under another sky things might change.'⁶⁶ Although the novella artificially resolves the issue in favour of marriage, the narrator's arguments consistently lean towards celibacy. The deeper issue in Alekos' life was perhaps not so much marriage versus freedom but his difficulty in achieving intimacy with others, in particular, women.

Another central theme in the text is the narrator's overpowering need to invest the landscape with figures of classical Greek mythology. There is an element of self-consciousness in this as

⁶³ Letter from Stratis 12.3.1930. Bound volume 'Grammata' (Letters), p. 389. Stratis Doukas Archive, Aristotle University, Thessaloniki.

⁶⁴ 'Under the Southern Cross' p. 306. Op. cit.

⁶⁵ Ibid., pp. 306-308.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 308

occurs when the narrator walks in the bush with the farmer and his wife and suddenly sees the mythical figure of Endymion in the shape of the moonlit ghost gum:⁶⁷ ‘You have a wild imagination, my good lady whispered to me. You’ve quickly chased away the Debbil-Debbils from the land of the kangaroos and like Aeneas you’ve crossed the oceans and transported the gods of your Hearth and your race’s sacred Heroes and Nymphs.’⁶⁸ In another example, melancholy and pensive, the narrator swims across a river and begins to write the first lines of Homer’s *Iliad* on the sand in a literal act of inscription of the classical world on the ‘new’ continent. He makes a promise to the ‘blind rhapsodist’ that he will write the whole *Odyssey* on its ocean shores: ‘The waves and floods will soon wipe it clean; but your spirit will remain forever bound by the invocation of one of your descendants.’⁶⁹ The tendency in Alekos to view the landscape through his classical education is particularly strong, and symptomatic of an outlook developed by a national ideology that saw the ancient world underpinning everyday reality and space. In the Australian context, this literary act of classical inscribing takes on multiple significance: firstly, as a repetition of a colonial literary classicising which regarded the continent as a ‘silent anomaly’ and which effaced the reality of colonial appropriation (Michael Ackland 2000: 75); and secondly, and ironically, as a sign of foreignness as seen by a now ‘native’ British Australian society.

The narrator of ‘Under the Southern Cross’ shares Alekos’ neo-romantic and anti-rationalist views on civilisation’s maladies and expounds them in the discussions at the farmhouse.⁷⁰ Human history is viewed as a struggle between emotion and reason, the former associated with beauty and aesthetics, the latter with the state and violence. Epochs in which reason

⁶⁷ Endymion: the handsome young son of Zeus who was kissed by the goddess of the moon, Selene, and fell into eternal sleep (Graves 1955).

⁶⁸ ‘Under the Southern Cross’ p. 310. Op. cit.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 328.

⁷⁰ Ibid., pp. 318-322.

dominated are times of imbalance. State violence is exemplified by the Roman Empire whose legions sacked the flourishing Greek cities. The binary opposition of reason and emotion is related to the biblical notion of Eden where emotion invites one to enter a blissful harmony, a 'Democracy' where all things are, in the Old Testament words, 'very good.' In the contemporary world, reason and violence rule, and industrial societies are gripped by 'positivism,' 'the Machine' and 'progress.'⁷¹ To halt this mad march into disharmony and degeneration, man needs to rebel against reason and restore emotion as the guiding force. Although expressing discontent with the western world, these views avoid a discussion of political solutions. The narrator, like the author, while believing that individual and collective happiness are linked, sees their realisation dependent on a spiritual development or state of 'universal harmony.'⁷² The political problem at the heart of Alekos' discussion is how the individual might act to influence the movement from an unhappy state of individual life to a collective happiness and an ideal world.

The view of the Roman Empire as a marauding force also entails an assumption that ancient Greek, and later British, imperial ambitions were essentially about 'civilising' the world.⁷³ Discursively, the above binary opposition silences the violence at the heart of such projects. Alekos' belief in the benign nature of the British empire continues well into the 1930s.

The dual cultural identity of the narrator in 'Under the Southern Cross' reflects Alekos' two-fold purpose of creating an immigrant and a 'native' British-Australian character in the one fictional persona. Alekos wished to convey to a Greek audience the particularities of Australia's bush workers and he specifically requests Stratis not to change any Australian

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 322.

⁷² Ibid., pp. 318-320.

⁷³ This view appears in the opening pages of J. Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* but with ambivalent and ironic dimensions (Conrad 1976: 494-496).

terms to fit a Greek rural setting.⁷⁴ He had already begun to draw on Australian sources through newspapers or novels. His mention of ‘Debbil-Debbils’ in the text derived from Mrs Aeneas Gunn’s *The Little Black Princess* that he had read with enthusiasm. He planned to translate similar short stories about ‘black fellows’ for Stratis.⁷⁵ The novella also contains lyrics of a convict ballad that further attests to his constant reading of English-language books. Although it is difficult to ascertain the extent of this reading or the exact titles he may have read, his writing does reveal signs of local literary influences that are at times adopted self-consciously.

It is possible to include ‘Under the Southern Cross’ in the Australian literary category of ‘Novels of the Countryside’ and see some similarities in Alekos’ concerns with rural life and utopianism with the *Bulletin* tradition of writers (Green 1961: Vol. 1). At least one critic of Greek-Australian writing, Con Castan (1988: 24), has pointed to a grafting of Doukas’ postwar writing ‘on to the Australian outback tradition of the 1890s, the tradition of Eureka, the *Bulletin*, Lawson and Furphy.’ This of course is to run thirty years ahead in Alekos’ life but nevertheless it is interesting to note the beginnings, already in the late 1920s, of an influence from the nationalist utopian discourse of the time. The question that is not raised by Castan is the possibility of the simultaneous existence within Greek and European intellectual discourses of similar sorts of utopian visions and social issues. From his very first days in Australia, Alekos’ letters are imbued with ‘forward-looking utopian speculations’ strikingly similar to those of an earlier and, at the time still current, Australian radical nationalist movement (Ilkin 1988: 255). I would argue that these similarities were due more to a

⁷⁴ Letter 12.12.1929. Op. cit.

⁷⁵ Letter 8.10.1929. Op. cit.

coincidence of Alekos' exposure to prior intellectual discourses than an immediate conversion to a 'native' tradition.

A careful reading of *Under Foreign Skies* (1963) reveals many elements from 'Under the Southern Cross,' although now the 'narrator' of the latter has separated into two characters described in the third-person by an invisible narrator.⁷⁶ The two characters, Fred, the Irish-Australian radical, and Strátis, the Greek migrant who is politicised by his experiences in the Depression, are part of a multi-ethnic gallery of white Australian and immigrant seasonal workers. Written in the period 1953-1956, *Under Foreign Skies* is one of the first non-English language novels with a vision of a developing multi-ethnic Australian working class. It picks out elements from Alekos' life and the romantic narrative 'Under the Southern Cross' to create a socialist realist immigrant novel. Though both texts are related autobiographically, the earlier manuscript a 'pretext' for *Under Foreign Skies*, neither is a strictly realist account.⁷⁷

In a period of increasing unemployment, Alekos threw himself into an intense activity of writing and study. As he observed to Stratis, his spell of unemployment between October and December 1929 was the only reason he had been able to write 'Under the Southern Cross.'⁷⁸ Alekos derived a certain stimulus and inspiration in the precarious balance in his roving life between intellectual and physical work: 'You can't have any complaints with me. Work, reading, writing, travel. Without travel you can't write.'⁷⁹ His migration and itinerant life had indeed given him the opportunity and stimulus to write and study. Apart from ancient Greek

⁷⁶ The novel is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Six.

⁷⁷ For a discussion of 'pre-texts' see (Genette 1997: 395-402).

⁷⁸ Letter 12.12.1929. Op. cit.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

texts, he began a systematic reading of English poets.⁸⁰ These studies often reconnected him to earlier readings of Greek romantic writers and his reading led him to conclude that the national poet Solomos was just as influenced by contemporary English poets as the Italian School.⁸¹ His reading included books on Australian history and explorers, in particular, books for young readers. In this period he very likely began a study on the life of Captain Cook that was published in Greece in 1938 as a serialised article.⁸² Alekos regularly sent Stratis translations of sections of the books he was reading: poetry, literary studies, scientific articles on vitamins and poultry rearing, as well as an extract from E. M. Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front*.⁸³ In these early years, Alekos developed a life-long interest and practice in literary translation from English to Greek.

In late 1929 Alekos continued to write his 'nostalgia' prose pieces, which as a collection began to take on the title of 'Hecatonnesoi.'⁸⁴ As with 'Under the Southern Cross,' they formed the germ of Part One of *To Struggle, To Youth* and were an attempt to remember and celebrate a lost world. The piece 'Hecatonnesoi' is a nostalgic and painful lyric text about the lost homeland of Moschonisia.⁸⁵ Other texts, like 'Pergamos' (the ancient site of Pergamum) where Alekos had spent time as a soldier, reveal an ongoing preoccupation with an Orientalist and classicist view of Asia Minor. In the text, Pergamos is a focal point between Asia and Europe, a passage between them. Now bereft of its former glory and connection to the expelled Anatolian Greeks, the city's personified reply is striking in its statement of loss: 'I

⁸⁰ These included Scott, Browning, Byron, Kipling, Shelley, Keats, Wordsworth, Milton, Pope, Longfellow and Shakespeare. See letters 1.12.1929, 12.12.1929, 25.3.1931 & 15.9.1931. Op. cit.

⁸¹ See letter 21.12.1931. Op. cit.

⁸² Manuscript in Vol. 1 of letter book, pp. 368-404, op. cit. It is not dated, but its order suggests that it was written in late 1929. Published as 'The Sea Dogs of Albion: James Cook' in *I Apoyevmatini* Thessaloniki in five instalments beginning on 17.6.1938.

⁸³ Letters 8.10.1929, 12.12.1929 & 30.11.1931. Op. cit.

⁸⁴ Letter 23.3.1930. Op. cit.

⁸⁵ Letter-text 24.11.1929, op. cit. Full text in Appendix V.

have been broken by Time...'⁸⁶ More explicitly Orientalist is the piece 'Rodopi,' a lyric and nostalgic celebration of Mount Rodopi situated above the city of Xanthi. While invoking the Greek mythological spirits and gods as a timeless presence, it focuses on the historical figure of Alexander who passed this site and 'trod the desolate roads of "chaste" Asia.'⁸⁷ According to the writer, Alexander's aim was not conquest but something higher, the overcoming of the East-West divide itself: 'His whole life was a struggle to join these two "irreconcilables."'⁸⁸ The text expresses a belief in the mythical 'Aryan homeland,' that mythical Indo-European font of descent, which often accompanied Western European Orientalist discourses in the nineteenth century.⁸⁹ In the text, Alexander heads westward again, leaving the east to be conquered again in the future. We see again the characteristic distinction between the civilising role of ancient Greece and the destructive role of Rome whose conquering legions 'do not go in order to give but to usurp.'⁹⁰ The distinction is between creators and builders (civilisers) and military conquerors and plunderers (destroyers of civilisation). The 'return' of the West to the East refers to the contemporary colonisation of the world. With images and narratives that belong to the ancient world, this Modern Greek orientalism is explicitly linked to the contemporary colonialism of Western Europe.

The Depression

Alekos' awareness of the growing economic crisis was gradual, reflecting his personal situation in the period (November 1927 to October 1929) when his employment, though precarious, was fairly continuous. This accounts perhaps for his largely optimistic outlook,

⁸⁶ Ibid. See full text Appendix VI.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ironically, the same idea underlies Lyng (1935) who claims Aryan origin for the British and Scandinavian races, while considering the Southern Europeans inferior Mediterraneans.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

though by 1928 he is aware that ‘terrible unemployment is afflicting the working class.’⁹¹ Eager to send his promised final pay-out of sixty pounds from Old Mildura to his sister, Alekos found that by early 1930 the crisis had resulted in a devalued currency, restrictions and finally a moratorium on overseas remittances. His own position became more and more difficult following seven months of unemployment from April to September 1930. In a letter to the family in May 1930 his anger is palpable over their seeming obliviousness to the situation. ‘People here are hungry, Gentlemen. In Melbourne there are 80,000 locals unemployed. They roam from door to door like the damned.’⁹² Alekos’ observations attest to the dramatic rise in unemployment between 1930-1932 when figures, very likely conservative, estimate that up to thirty percent of workers were unemployed in some states (Louis 1968: 90, Lowenstein 1978: 14). The Great Depression in Australia has taken on ‘mythical proportions’ in oral memory and most studies are affected by this in one way or another (Spearritt 1981). There has been a tendency to view the Depression through a ‘one-class’ historical analysis, which distorts the diversity of experience across classes, ethnicities and regions (Spearritt 1981). One group often ignored are unemployed Southern European migrants whose experience was not only one of hardship but also social exclusion and scapegoating. Amongst the Greeks there were internal differences between the older chain-migration communities of Kytherans and Ithacans who were mainly owners of established catering businesses and the 1920s immigrants caught in the economic crisis with little chance of saving the required capital for self-employment:

It was even more difficult for Dodecanesians, Aegean Islanders, Cypriots, Evians, Macedonians and Asia Minor Greeks – the main groups in the relatively large migration wave of the 1920s. They were caught here by the Great Depression and had

⁹¹ Letter 17.9.1928. Op. cit.

⁹² Letter 15.5.1930. Op. cit.

to eke out a living as itinerant 'bush workers' like the Castellorizans, or work for the large restaurant or café owners (some of whom employed dozens from early in the century) often in substandard conditions, or as peddlers of food produce or live on the 'aliens' dole.' From the 1933 Census we learn that 33% of Greeks were totally unemployed (6% partially employed); that 79% earned less than the basic wage of some three pounds (40% earning a pound a week or less); and that some 70% were not citizens. From Greek Church records in Adelaide we learn that the average age of Greeks at burial between 1925 and 1940 was 41 years (some twenty years below the Australian national average). (Tsounis 1993: 27)⁹³

Greek migrant workers faced a double bind, working for depressed wages in their own communities and facing exclusion from the wider labour market and community where they were often the target of widespread hostility and attacks. In June 1928 a trade union leader could state as a matter of fact in the Western Australian Parliament that Southern Europeans were of 'inferior mentality' to Australians (Lowenstein 1978: 432). Such attacks were common from sections of the trade union movement, Labour Governments and conservative right-wing organisations. Racist attacks were often inextricably entangled with perceptions of Southern European as scabs and threats to the employment and living standards of white Australian male workers.⁹⁴ This was the case with the bombing of a Greek coffee house in Melbourne in December 1928 and the violence in the 1934 'Kalgoorlie Riots' (Gilchrist 1997, Gerritsen 1969, Docker 1976). If Alekos had remained in Mildura for the harvest of 1931 he would very likely have become aware of a large public meeting in February attended by the Mayor, the Australian Workers Union and Returned Soldiers officials who unanimously

⁹³ See also Lowenstein (1977 & 1978) and, for a British immigrant experience of unemployment in the countryside, Huelin (1972).

⁹⁴ These perceptions were due more to racist notions than reality. In the prewar period Southern Europeans had few opportunities to work in large industrial workplaces. For an account of militant Greek unionists in the U.S. see Georgakas (1992 & 2002).

supported calls for the banning of 'aliens' (Southern Europeans) from work in the area.⁹⁵ In November of the same year members of the Unemployed Workers' Movement were bashed by local returned soldiers in Mildura, another sign of the right-wing reaction to the growing militancy of unemployed and communist organisers.⁹⁶ Aliens and communists were often presented as the enemies of a prosperous and loyal British Australia. The Depression brought with it a political crisis in which sections of the middle class favoured solutions that would bypass conflict in favour of the 'whole society' and the 'national interest,' solutions that were supported by right wing military organisations pledged to uphold law and order and British loyalty (Loveday 1981, Louis 1968: 186). In short, the period was one in which the foundations on which political creeds and everyday practice rested began to move seismically as the certainties of the past were put to the test. Though on the migrant margins of Australian society, Alekos felt these movements in his own life. The impact of the Depression is alluded to in a letter to Stratis:

To be unemployed for seven months and to see your small amount of money dwindling day by day, to have nowhere to lay your head in the wide world, and the letters from home despairing and pessimistic. In this crisis I needed encouragement, initiative and optimism, and these were being taken from me by my family in the harshest way. I needed moral and economic recovery, strong and prudent turns at the helm to steer clear of the dangerous reefs, a clear head. So I took shelter in silence.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ *Sunraysia Daily* Mildura, Victoria. Monday 2.2.1931

⁹⁶ See reports and articles in *Sunraysia Daily* op. cit. throughout 1931 that warn of dangers of the militant unemployed camped in the area. See also articles in *The Workers' Weekly* 4.4.1931, p. 13 and *Red Leader* from August to November 1931.

⁹⁷ Letter 2.11.1931. Op. cit.

Fish shop - Dandenong

After a final season in Mildura in the grape harvest of 1930 and a period of unemployment in Shepparton, Alekos settled in Dandenong, an outlying suburb of Melbourne, where he entered into a partnership in a fish shop with Stamatis Diakogeorgiou. The hours were long, the work of frying fish and chips dirty and unhealthy, but it was a living. In his period of unemployment, Alekos' wartime traumas had often returned in bouts of depression when everything seemed pointless and his rescue after his wounding more a curse than something to be grateful for.⁹⁸ This same year also saw the untimely death of Stratis' friend Nikos Velmos whose revolutionary views had so irritated Alekos after the war. Now in a distant corner of Melbourne, Alekos was thinking a lot about the crisis in the world. He still believed in 'universal human prosperity' but now it seemed that human achievements were in danger of being lost.⁹⁹ 'Nature is more powerful than a thousand and one false things that civilisation has dressed us out in. Christianity, altruism, progress, education, whatever ornaments mankind has, are all unstable.'¹⁰⁰ This passage is followed by a discussion of duty. Alekos' view is one of vigorous individualism. The first duty is to one's self: 'Let's organise our lives so that there is a relative distance between our fellow-man and ourselves so we don't jostle each other on our road.' And if one's fellow man falls, only those who have the strength should help pick him up. Alekos had become convinced that the world was at a crossroads, a turning point:

Horrific poverty everywhere, unimaginable levels of unemployment. The Australian pound fell to eleven and a half shillings. The bank of NSW has closed, leaving behind

⁹⁸ Letter 15. 4. 1930. Op. cit.

⁹⁹ Letter 25.5.1931. Op. cit.

¹⁰⁰ Letter 30.11.1931. Op. cit.

despair. Horror and misery and dark clouds everywhere. The only consolation is that mankind is at a great turning point where other civilisations sank to the bottom. But they were local civilisations. If today the white race loses its domination, the yellow race has assimilated enough of white civilisation to be able, if needs be, to take on leadership. Asia has woken with the sudden push from Russia.¹⁰¹

Leaving aside the racialised language of the period, Alekos appeared to be contemplating the idea of fundamental change coming from socialist Russia and the awakening colonised world. In this respect, the crisis of his liberal conscience seemed poised between the rejection of enlightenment values (reason, positivism, science, progress), involving a retreat into a religious and ancient past, and the willingness to see something new emerge in a radical shake-up. In this dilemma, Alekos seemed willing, perhaps more than he cared to admit, to put aside his yearning for older verities and authorities and to contemplate a more revolutionary view. The twentieth century was 'bankrupt' he wrote: 'We can store up neither sweat nor blood. But this adulterous and sinful age cannot but have its end.'¹⁰² The language is suffused with a Christian aetiology of decline.

By late 1931 Alekos was contemplating a return to Greece where he wanted to work as a literary translator with Stratis as his editor. Initially, he wanted to accumulate more savings before his return, envisaging another two or three years in Australia, but in April 1932 he announced that he had bought himself a ticket on the *S/s Remo* departing on the 23rd of the month.¹⁰³ His feelings were mixed as he prepared to leave: homesickness for his family, weariness with the constant struggle to survive and ambivalent feelings about his compatriots

¹⁰¹ Letter 2.11.1931. Op. cit.

¹⁰² Letter 30.11.1931. Op. cit.

¹⁰³ It appears that Alekos had to borrow 10 pounds for the ticket from his cousin Giorgos Doukas. See letter 3.7.1962. Op. cit.

in the diaspora were pushing him to leave. But now as he prepared to sail he had the feeling that he might regret his departure: 'I'm leaving this beautiful country half-heartedly.'¹⁰⁴

III

Return to Greece

Alekos' return to Greece was not the return he had hoped for. Instead of literary translations he was once again stuck as the accountant and general dogsbody in the family wholesale soap business in Serres, a provincial northern city with a large refugee population.¹⁰⁵ For this he blamed Stratis who had encouraged him to return to the business that Alekos now found to be in a precarious financial state.¹⁰⁶ His letters to Stratis in the period 1932-1935 are mostly taken up with business matters and family conflicts arising from these. Many of the problems were a repeat of the Xanthi period: cash flow, mounting debts, poor business decisions, Dimitros' gambling and their inability to get beyond the level of a small working capital. According to Alekos, his eldest brother Doukas was not averse to dipping into the business funds for his own needs. Once again Alekos stayed on out of a sense of duty to his aged mother who depended on their financial help and an obligation to his brother Dimitros who he felt was vulnerable. He made his own position clear to Stratis.: 'Sooner or later I'll leave again with just my fare, perhaps temporarily or for good.... I've solved the problem of survival with frugality and the ease with which I can find my bearings.'¹⁰⁷ Alekos is critical of

¹⁰⁴ Letter 10.4.1932. Op. cit.

¹⁰⁵ Serres is approximately ninety kilometres northeast of Thessaloniki.

¹⁰⁶ Letter 22.7.1932. Op. cit.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

Stratis whom he reproaches for ‘standing outside of an active life’ and seeing things from afar.¹⁰⁸ His criticism of what he sees as an imbalance between ‘theory’ and ‘action’ helps explain his own decision not to pursue intellectual life professionally. Even his view of business had changed since the earlier years when he had regarded it as a ‘vulgar occupation.’ Now he confides to Stratis: ‘I find that all occupations are as vulgar as they are noble. They all contain the human struggle and upward tendency.’¹⁰⁹ Alekos was ready, as always, to help Stratis in his writing endeavours. He helped him financially with the distribution of his two books, including having him send copies to the Greek Communities in Australia and to seek out contacts in the United States. He believed that in the future Stratis might be able to rely financially on sales to overseas Greeks.¹¹⁰

By June 1934, the business was facing bankruptcy and Alekos was searching for ways to extricate the family from the mounting debts. Dimitros had married a month earlier and Doukas was being considered as a groom in Mytilini, which for both brothers meant receiving a sizeable payment of dowry money. Their sister Eleni had married a former tobacco merchant Yiannis Andronikos (Andronicos) in 1931 and was living, along with her mother, on a small farm near Alexandroupoli. The refugee family bonds were beginning to loosen as the brothers and sister went their separate ways.

Almost everything we know about Alekos’ life in Greece between June 1932 and October 1935 is contained in twelve surviving letters, his later novels providing scant biographical information. The most productive way of understanding his life in this period is to consider in a broader way the refugee experience in Greece in the late 1920s and early 1930s. In this

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Letter 15.6.1934. Op. cit.

¹¹⁰ Letter 23.1.1933. Op. cit.

context, a careful reading of Alekos' letters reveals enough clues to piece together a coherent picture as to the directions of his thinking.

The period 1922 to 1935 was one of a rapid succession of governments, constant constitutional changes and military coups by both Venizelist and Monarchist officers. It saw the creation and abolition of the republic (1924-1935) followed by the restoration of the monarchy. In the years of the republic, a number of important changes occurred which were exacerbated and fuelled by the Great Crash of 1929. One of these was the gradual disillusionment of refugees with Venizelos who since World War One had been adulated by Ottoman Greeks, first as the liberator and later the protector of their refugee interests. The other important development was the growing crisis in Greek liberalism and parliamentary democracy.

After 1922 the majority of refugees were settled on small agricultural plots in Northern Greece or in shanty suburbs in the large cities. Most could not accept their changed circumstances that in effect represented a sudden 'downward social mobility' (Mavrogordatos 1983: 191-193). Many clung to the hope of compensation and return to the homeland. Voting en masse for Venizelist candidates, the refugees were an essential electoral support for Venizelism. They were thus inextricably drawn into the older political schism between monarchists and republicans, placed in the role of the unwanted newcomer who threatened the livelihood of the native-born, a division exploited by both political camps and one which often led to organised violence against refugees (Katsapis 2003a). Scapegoating could work in other directions too. Some refugees became members of fascist organisations in Northern Greece that attacked Jewish and leftwing gatherings, while Venizelism itself was not without anti-Semitic and anti-Communist proclivities (Liakos 1988: 41-42, Mazower 1992: 130).

The refugee vote was instrumental in returning Venizelos to power in 1928. Until this point, most refugees were fiercely loyal to him and deeply suspicious of the Communist Party of Greece (KKE) which had opposed irredentist nationalism up to 1922, and throughout the 1920s had refused in its political program to recognise the refugees as a legitimate social class (Katsapis 2003b: 142-144). In addition, the KKE's membership of the Third International committed it to the goal of an independent Macedonia and Thrace, a position starkly at odds with the de facto settlement of Asia Minor refugees in Northern Greece (Katsapis 2003b, Elefantis 1979: 36-39). During the 1928-1932 period, refugee support for Venizelism was severely tested. The crash of 1929, the dramatic fall in tobacco prices that affected refugee farmers, the passing of the repressive *Idionymon* law in the same year that allowed the state to exile and imprison leftwing opponents, made refugees more responsive to communist ideas (Mazower 1997: 138-139). Refugee disillusionment deepened after the 1930 Greek-Turkish Friendship Accord whereby Venizelos and Atatürk agreed to cancel out refugee compensation between the two countries. Refugees felt betrayed. Their demand for compensation based on real monetary loss had been traded off. More importantly, in a psychological sense, the dream of return was denied them.

This event signalled a shift in refugee political behaviour that continued as a move to the left and growing participation in the communist movement (Katsapis 2003b, Mazower 1992, Veremis 2003). The first signs appeared in a by-election in Thessaloniki in 1931, then in the loss of government by Venizelos in the 1932 September elections. By February 1934, the northern cities of Serres and Kavala elected communist mayors. After 1932, parliamentary democracy in Greece fell into deep crisis with both liberal and monarchist parties resorting to military coups. After the failed Venizelist coup of 1 March 1935 and the subsequent

repression of political opposition by monarchist governments, Venizelist liberalism became more and more an ineffective force. Now the main opposition to the increasingly authoritarian state was the KKE which dropped its policy on an independent Macedonia and Thrace and adopted a popular front strategy that accepted refugees as equal partners.

By the mid-1930s, the KKE's now predominantly refugee leadership had adopted the political demands of the broad refugee community. Fiercely republican in their sympathies, the refugees had become a radicalised section in the left movement. This profoundly transformed Greece's political landscape. Refugee radicalisation represented a disillusionment with parliamentary democracy and the emergence of a new class-consciousness among refugees, both urban and rural (Veremis 2003: 57). According to D. Pentzopoulos (1962), the turn towards a socialist internationalism amongst refugees may have been a way of 'sublimating their alienation by struggling for an envisioned international order in which ethnic minorities would not constitute political problems' (Veremis 2003: 57). Alekos Doukas too had steadfastly held to the idea of an international 'society based on brotherhood' although his was a Christian rather than socialist outlook. Pentzopoulos' interpretation sees refugee radicalisation as a reaction to a crisis in which the fear of constituting a vulnerable ethnic minority becomes a spur to seeking a revolutionary solution and long-term security. Based as it is on the deeper psychological needs of a traumatised population, the interpretation offers a certain insight into political behaviour and thinking (Veremis 2003: 58).

In the Greek intellectual world of the early 1930s the ideological opposition between idealism and materialism (liberalism and Marxism) became particularly acute. For liberals such as Giorgos Theotokas this was a time of crisis in which his earlier confident and polemic attacks

on both conservative nationalists and Marxists were now more difficult to sustain as the Greek state turned to more authoritarian means. In 1932, he wrote of the crisis:

The nations, partially destroyed, with wounds still open from the War, blindly abandoned themselves to the mania of production, machines, money, pleasure. But the party couldn't last for long and one morning we felt the very foundations of our civilisation shaking. Then our high spirits were suddenly gone and fear overcame us once again. (Theotokas 1966: 173)

Like many liberal intellectuals, Theotokas had abandoned the discredited Great Idea for a new 'spiritual nationalism,' a Greek version of European humanism (Kayialis 2003: 337). His 'politics of the middle way' eventually began to split between the conservative right and Marxist left camps (Tziovas 1989: 126). Theotokas is of particular interest because, while rejecting communist ideology on liberal humanist grounds, he also fell out with the conservatives whose inward-looking views of 'Greekness' turned more and more to geographical determinist and nationalist constructs of culture (Tziovas 1989: 63-64). By 1935 he was publicly opposed to fascism and military rule (Doulis 1975: 53).

The intellectual debates in Greece occurred in a climate of growing authoritarianism and repressive measures against the perceived threat of communism. Liberal intellectuals tended to acquiesce, if not to the means, then at least the aims of the authoritarian state (Mazower 1991: 299-300). In the crisis of the 1930s, the bourgeois establishment, the sponsors of Venizelist liberalism, were ambivalent about democracy (Mazower 1991: 303). The authoritarian response to economic crisis and class unrest was the rejection of both liberalism and communism through a type of Greek fascist ideology that claimed racial and ideological superiority in an 'exclusive relationship with classical antiquity' (Veremis 2003: 59-60).

Although there was no popular fascist movement in Greece, the Metaxas dictatorship (1936-1941) did borrow elements from European fascism in an attempt to convince the Greek people of the authority and claims of the 'new state' and 'third Greek civilisation' (Chatzei Joseph 2002: 114-122, Noutsos 1986). These elements included the tried methods of a police state, and dissenting intellectuals were among those who felt the hard edge of authoritarian power.

Stratis Doukas was amongst those writers in the 1930s who were open to modernist, internationalist and democratic ideas and art. He regularly wrote for democratic newspapers and literary magazines in the period and, though not a communist, was active in defence of democratic rights. He was a founding member of the Society of Greek Authors, a union that from its establishment in 1934 agitated for the interests and rights of writers, some of whom were exiled as political prisoners on remote islands (Sambatha-Pagoulatou 1987). It was a period in which intellectuals were more and more forced to choose between the camps of the 'bourgeois idealists' and the 'socialist intellectuals' (Kayialis 2003: 315).

Given the close relationship between Alekos and Stratis, it is safe to conclude that, if not an active participant in intellectual life, Alekos was a keen observer and sympathetic to the democratic camp. Reporting to Stratis in December 1932 that he had only sold two of the latter's books in Serres, Alekos' explanation for this provides an interesting insight into his views on cultural life: 'Our age is the age of petrol, the "Youth", if not playing soccer, are discussing sociology and historical materialism.'¹¹¹ These brief, somewhat dismissive comments place him close to the spirit of Theotokas who also regarded the age of the machine

¹¹¹ Letter 7.12.1932. *Op. cit.* Alekos' references reveal a view of sport as a form of anti-intellectualism. In the interwar period refugees were conspicuous in their establishment of soccer teams, and mass sporting events offered the means for new forms of social control (Chatzei Joseph 2002: 101-102, Liakos 1988).

as a materialist obstacle to a spiritually higher civilisation. Commenting on Theotokas' 1932 essay *Forward to the Social Problem*, T. Doulis (1975: 35) writes:

The social problem to which he addressed himself...was the catastrophic effect of the worldwide economic crisis of 1929, which forced the bourgeois class for the first time to doubt the values it had always accepted. The Renaissance ideal, 'the equilibrium of the needs of the mind, the heart and the body' that grew out of the medieval orientation to God, was now losing ground to the materialism that had been introduced by machine civilisation. Greece, made backward by the long Turkish occupation, was now placed in the intolerable position of being forced between a Europe in decline and an expanding Russia.

Alekos had contemplated a similar dilemma in Australia but had been more prepared to welcome an 'expanding Russia' and an awakened Asia than a 'Europe in decline.' But like Theotokas, he too remained hostile to 'sociology' (socialism) and 'historical materialism.' The two share other similarities: both were Asia Minor Greeks, though Theotokas was five years younger and had been spared the experience of war; both had strong family religious traditions; both were anti-nationalist; both were drawn to 'supranationalism'; both were democratic in their politics (Doulis 1975: 36 n22).

Within the larger context I have sketched, it is fair to assume that Alekos did not remain unaffected by the radicalisation of refugees. In earlier years he had exhibited a typical refugee suspicion of communists and their ideology, although as we have seen he was philosophically sympathetic to their principles. The broad refugee turn to the KKE would very likely have made him less negative in this respect. Stratis' literary and cultural activism in this period, as well as his oppositional politics, were also direct influences on him.

Alekos had begun to contemplate a return to Australia from his very first month in Greece in 1932. In 1935, a Greek friend from Mildura, visiting him in Thessaloniki had assured him that the economic situation in Australia had improved. They planned to sail back together. Despite his brothers' efforts to convince him to stay, Alekos felt that Greece was pushing him away. In a letter to Stratis just before he left he wrote with bitterness about his experiences and the situation of his young cousin in Mytilini: 'Young Doukas fell ill. The sorry state of a young man who gave his everything to this country made me rebel. The treatment from almost everyone made me ask myself, is this Greece? Are these the family relations? Is this how one is repaid?'¹¹² The passage expresses the complaint of the neglected veteran. In the same letter he complains of being misunderstood and badly treated by his brothers Dimitros and Doukas. Although he felt optimistic about leaving there is a melancholy note in this letter. He justifies his departure in a slightly macabre and sombre way: 'Anyway, Stratis, what have I to lose? There are more smiling faces down there. And two spadefuls of earth to cover ungainly human ambitions.'¹¹³ This grimly ironic reference to the prosaicness of death and the vanity of ambition simultaneously expresses a sadness and a certain cheerful stoicism.

¹¹² Letter 31.7.1935. Op. cit.

¹¹³ Ibid.

IV

Second Voyage South

On 9 October 1935 Alekos sailed from Port Said on the *Orion* bound for Melbourne. As for his first voyage eight years earlier, his letters read like a travel journal. Their mood is buoyant, although on the first morning in the Suez Canal, as he drank tea, he was assailed by the wartime memory of another morning in August 1921 on the heights around Polath when he had drunk wild mountain herb tea with his comrades.¹¹⁴ By day's end half of them had died in the ensuing battle. The memory sits strangely in these letters, a reminder of how traumatic experience can silently wait in ambush.

Alekos' voyage coincided with the deepening parliamentary crisis in Greece. On 10 October the republic was abolished by military decree and by the time the *Orion* docked into Melbourne on 4 November the monarchy had been restored with a 'patently farcical plebiscite' (Clogg 1992: 113). The consolidation of power by monarchist politicians and military officers had already begun earlier in the year, establishing a new political divide with liberal democrats and communists on the one side and fascists, monarchists and conservative liberals on the other.

Alekos' voyage through the Suez also coincided with Mussolini's invasion of Abyssinia, an important event in the rising tide of fascist militarism.¹¹⁵ On his arrival in Alexandria on the *Ionia* he had seen British warships on military exercises, and in Port Said had witnessed

¹¹⁴ Letter 10.10.1935. Op. cit.

¹¹⁵ For an account of Italy's invasion of Abyssinia see del Boca (2002).

tensions between British officers and Italian volunteers on their way to the front. His sympathies were clearly with the British and his views on Mussolini's Italy are similar to those he had expressed about the Roman Empire in earlier prose pieces. On the invasion of Abyssinia he writes that the 'the wild hordes of New Rome,' driven by 'the two barbarian children of Olympus, the state and violence.... rush forward in a frenzy to destroy a people whose roots predate the foundations of barbaric Rome.'¹¹⁶ Alekos' analysis of fascism is based on two tenets: a belief in the liberal and benign nature of British power as the modern heir to classical Greece, and an identification of fascism with ancient Rome. It is a form of liberalism and neo-classical idealism. With its Plutarchian pairs, the following passage points to a belief in a classically-inspired humanism upheld by the British empire, and a Social Darwinian vision of European leadership:

Present day fascist Italy is its [Rome's] true daughter. A curse on its inhuman and crazed footsteps. 'Rule the waves Britannia.' Noble-minded nation of Shakespeare, Byron, Keats, Nelson, Cook and Hudson, rule the waves. Your replacement in this great mission hasn't yet appeared. You, the inheritor of the bright road of Athens, advance and drag mankind, willingly or not, towards the peaks of refinement and progress. Themistocles-Nelson, Pytheas-Cook, Aeschylus-Shakespeare. You both gave mankind whatever worthwhile he has. You who opened up the potential of our planet and said 'Go forward and rightly take your place in world affairs.' After the barbarian force of Rome swept through the distant corners of Great Greece, it destroyed the Metropolis, but was then enslaved culturally to its conquered enemy. Will the same tragic story will be repeated in our days?¹¹⁷

Alekos' views on the colonised world are similarly based on an analysis that explains the contemporary in terms of the ancient world, not as a new phenomenon but as one bound to

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

repeat a deeper pattern from the past. In times past, African tribes had migrated northwards as invaders, only to be now conquered in a modern day '*revanche*' of the North. Worth noting is Alekos' increasing sympathy to the idea of liberation struggles of colonised subjects, though it is expressed in paternalistic colonialist imagery. 'Wild children of the African jungle, fight for Your freedom. You are more gentle than us. Your barbarity is surpassed by ours. Your justice will be "justice for ever and ever". Forge ahead in your own way, with your own strength.'¹¹⁸

Alekos' letters describe the port of Aden which, apart from the man-made systems of water storage ascribed by tradition to Solomon, was also the site where Cain was said to have been buried. The image of Cain, constantly recurring in Alekos' life as a subtext of wartime trauma, is associated with biblical punishment. Tradition, he writes, has it that 'this is why the land that accepted the body of the fratricide is totally barren.'¹¹⁹ In the same letter he recounts a ship steward's story of cannibalism perpetrated on shipwrecked Europeans by African natives of Cape Guardafui. His apparent belief in the face-value truth of the account suggests that colonialist discourses of cannibalism in the period exercised a considerable hold on the European-educated mind.¹²⁰

As the *Orion* sailed into the Indian Ocean the narrative turns to the social life of the ship, fancy dress balls, dances, discussion amongst the passengers, news from the outside. The English and Greek passengers are saddened by the fall of Axum in Abyssinia. In the dance room the Greek and British flags are placed together, the Italian flag in the corner. The English passengers are impressed by the marriage of the Greek princess Marina to the Duke

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Letter 14.10.1935. Op. cit.

¹²⁰ For a discussion of the discourse of cannibalism and its relation to colonialism see Hulme (1998).

of Kent, while Alekos declares his republican beliefs to them: 'I'm a republican and can't forget that her family destroyed my country.'¹²¹ He is referring to the fact that Asia Minor Greeks blamed King Constantine for the 'Catastrophe' in 1922. The letter ends on a stubborn note, indicating the depth of his anti-monarchism: 'They laugh [at this] but I get my own back on them.'¹²² In the Greek political context of the 1930s, anti-monarchism was increasingly at odds with the 'nationally-minded' establishment.¹²³

In the narrative of the voyage, the *Orion*, whose name bears the mythological association with the handsome young hunter and the brightest of constellations, can be seen as a sort of symbolic surrogate of Alekos' life, or at least, his imagined life:

It is midnight. On the open sea to the south a light seems to be following us. It's a ship also heading for Ceylon. The wind is howling, the sea is tempestuous, the sky pitch black. Occasionally a star peeps through a window in the sky. Yet everything is so calm about us. The *Orion* is a strong lad, it strikes out on its promising course. It has a life full of action before it.¹²⁴

Alekos was about to return to the 'promised land' of the South, the country he had chosen as the arena for his life, far from family and social strictures of the past. In many ways he was resuming the journey he had dreamed about when he was recovering in Mytilini immediately after the war. Then he had looked at a ship leaving the harbour with tears in his eyes and had

¹²¹ Letter 16.10.1935. Op. cit.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ 'National-minded' is the translation of the Greek '*ethnikofronas*' which, with its monarchist and anti-communist connotations, became more and more in the interwar period the conformist outlook expected by the authoritarian military state.

¹²⁴ Letter 17.10.1935. Op. cit.

thought, 'if only I was on board, unnoticed, a stranger, heading into the great world of the good Lord.'¹²⁵ That 'great world' had changed considerably since then.

Australia's Greeks in the mid-1930s

Australia, like Greece, in the mid-1930s was marked by heightened internal divisions and uncertainties. The spectre of economic depression lingered, the conservatives held fast to empire and king, the divided Labor Party was reorganising, there were rumblings of war in the distance, and a radical movement against war and fascism was mounting a strong opposition to the establishment (Clark 1987). The Greek diaspora communities that Alekos had passed through in earlier years and whose existence he had largely ignored, had become more cohesive and established. Since 1924, the Greek Orthodox Communities had resisted the attempt by the Ecumenical Patriarchate through its bishop to bring them under its control and now their businessmen leaders had settled into a compromise with the new bishop (Tsounis 1971). The Depression had fuelled the underlying anti-Southern European hostility in the general population and Greek shopkeepers were visible racial targets on which people could vent their frustrations. The 'anti-dago riots' on the Kalgoorlie gold fields in January 1934 had alarmed and angered many Greeks (Tsounis 1971: 206-207, Gilchrist 1997: 354-358). The response of the community leaders was to urge their compatriots to be the paradigm of the good shopkeeper, to cultivate a good citizen image through donations to charities and to make clear their loyalty to Australia and the British empire (Tsounis 1971: 208-211). The Greek newspapers took every opportunity to point out Greece's traditional ties to Britain. But this image of the law-abiding and subordinate immigrant was endangered by the emergence of a new phenomenon, an organised Greek left that sought to become a political force in the

¹²⁵ Letter 10.4.1923. Op. cit.

community and acted as a partner within the broader radical movement in Australia. This phenomenon had implications for the Greek communities.

The history of the early Greek socialists in Australia relies more on anecdote and oral memory than documented records. Amongst a handful of early Greek radicals, Nikolaos Xenodohos stands out as the first organised socialist. He arrived in Australia in 1910 at nineteen years of age and in 1916 was a member of the Victorian Socialist Party. He was very likely amongst those socialists who helped found the Communist Party of Australia (CPA) in 1920 (Kourbetis 1992: 21-22, 1990: 54). In the 1920s, small groups of Greek communists were active in Melbourne and Sydney, some possibly in Greek CPA branches, primarily engaged in small group discussions and distributing Greek-language literature in the coffee houses (Macintyre 1998: 127).¹²⁶ Oral accounts suggest that most of the literature came from radical Greek immigrant organisations in the United States and included the communist newspaper *Embros* (Forward) 1923-1938, unionist and revolutionary pamphlets and books (Kourbetis 1992: 26, Georgakas 2002).¹²⁷

Some time in the early 1930s, Greek communists began to make their presence felt in a more organised way in the communities. According to a number of writers, Greek communists only began to organise in their own communities after 1930, following the CPA's call to enter 'mass organisations' (Kourbetis 1992: 66 n14, Nicolacopoulos 2004a: 134-136). In Melbourne, there was a period of informal gatherings amongst a group of mainly young café

¹²⁶ Macintyre's reference to Greek branches is based on an interview of a Greek veteran communist with Stelios Kourbetis in 1988.

¹²⁷ Yiannis Mavrokefalos (John Black), an activist from the late 1920s, cites the problems of censorship in Greece and absence of this in the U.S. as one of the reasons that they relied on material from there. (Interview with Petro Alexiou, 6.11.1986). The Greek immigrant involvement in unionism and socialist and communist activity (including the militant Industrial Workers of the World) in the U.S. dated from the very early years of the 20th century (Georgakas 2002).

workers and small shopkeepers who met together on Sundays for picnics and enlisted hotel and café workers with the Liquor Trades Union. Two members of this group were Yiannis Mavrokefalos and Vassilis Stefanou, the young man who had sailed with Alekos Doukas in 1927. Mavrokefalos remembers the group being active from around 1930-31, leading up to the establishment of the Greek Workers Educational and Mutual Aid Association 'Democritus' in June 1935.¹²⁸ The naming of the organisation (in English the 'Democritus League') after the Greek philosopher who invented the theory of atomism, was based on the fact that he was a materialist philosopher and a Greek.¹²⁹

Contrary to a strict Marxist economist analysis, the radicalisation of Greek immigrants in this period was as much a product of their ethnicity as class position (Kourbetis 1990: 56-59, 158). This explains to some extent the fact that in the 1930s the Greek communists were moderate in their approach to working within their community. They took an active interest in the Greek community language classes and organised talks on health and general politics (Kourbetis 1992: 33). Although they avoided the more confrontational tactics of the CPA, the Greek communists did not resile from confronting certain community institutions such as the churches and supporters of the Metaxas dictatorship after August 1936, which included the consuls and various conservative community leaders. In the eyes of the establishment, the Democritus members were the *bêtes noires* of the community, although they did enjoy some influence amongst their compatriots. They were also under the surveillance of Australian

¹²⁸ There is some debate about its actual beginnings. Kourbetis (1992: 26-28) accepts that the idea for the association was being discussed informally from 1933. My own interviews with at least two of its founders concur with this.

¹²⁹ There were two names for the club in contention, 'Spartacus,' supported by a large group of Ithacans, and 'Democritus,' proposed by an anarchist Greek called Panagiotis Georgoulis nicknamed 'Papoutsas' (Large Shoes). The choice of 'Democritus' appears to have been the moderate outcome as it was in line with the Greek left's preference for the names of Greek philosophers or gods for its workers' clubs (e.g. Plato, Atlas). Kourbetis (1992: 33). Also interview with Yiannis Mavrokefalos, op. cit.

security organisations that from at least since 1916 had begun to keep files on Greek migrants (Gilchrist 1997: 16-19).

For many radical Greeks, the Australian communists were the only group in a generally hostile society who offered a degree of recognition and acceptance of their ethnicity.¹³⁰ Recognition and acceptance were important elements in the participation of Greek communists in political and economic struggles of the time. Whether consciously or not, they were operating from a new model of political participation and belonging in Australia that took account of their subjectivity in an economic and cultural sense. This was a direct challenge to the traditional Diaspora model of the migrant as a guest or 'perpetual foreigner' whose transgression of the borders of ethnicity and transnational loyalty was a type of cultural apostasy. The Greek radicals of the 1930s had broken through this barrier and were advocating an internationalist vision of a new society in which ethnicity and class solidarity were non-antagonistic.

¹³⁰ I say 'to a degree' because the discourse of racism penetrated the CPA as well, although there was an attempt to criticise the use of racist language in the Party (Macintyre 1998: 267). Mavrokefalos is one of the few who does not gloss over the subject of racism, pointing to the absence of Greeks in Party positions and the lack of activism on behalf of the 'foreign' unemployed. Interview, *op. cit.*

V

‘The Duty and Right of the Young’

Alekos disembarked at Melbourne on 4 November 1935 and his first letter home to Stratis paints a picture of glad homecoming.¹³¹ There were offers of financial help from old friends and his former partner in the fish shop put him up in his home. By early December he was working in a restaurant kitchen in Dandenong: ‘I’m very happy to be back in Australia, Stratis. There are moments when I almost believe I’m in total bliss. Perhaps it’s the contrast with the hell of Serres.’¹³² He had in mind to translate two short stories by Dickens for *To Trito Mati* (The Third Eye), a modernist journal of literature and visual arts whose editorship Stratis had taken up. Alekos writes with great affection about the farming couple from Merbein, Mr and Mrs Goodie, who visited him in Dandenong. Following the pattern of his first period in Australia he narrates his experiences, in this case an excursion to Cannons Creek on the bay of Western Port, in a literary and geographic travel style.¹³³

In the second and last of the surviving letters to Stratis in this period, Alekos writes from Bendigo.¹³⁴ It is dated 11.4.1936 and we learn that he had worked in the grape harvest in Mildura during February and March of that year. His finances are not ‘rosy, but tolerable enough.’ In Bendigo he had returned to work in a fish shop owned by his old friend Spiros Polydorou. He reports that he’s in good company and working in ‘humane’ conditions. The optimistic note at the end is characteristic of Alekos’ feelings about the new country:

¹³¹ Letter 4.12.1935. Op. cit.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ There is a break in the archival letters of nine years, the next letter to Stratis being on 5.9.1945.

‘Library, art gallery, gardens. This is why I love Bendigo, and for its good people. I kiss you sweetly, Al.’

If the narrative generated by these letters were to end here Alekos Doukas’ story may have remained anonymous, another life amongst many lived in relative privacy within the discursive invisibility of prewar Greek immigrant life. But in November 1936 Alekos came into contact with his compatriots in the Democritus League - through what means, acquaintance or friend, cultural club or coffee house, chance or sought after - we may never know. That it happened we know from his later activities and writings, but also through a surviving letter to the League. The invitation to contribute as a writer to the newly launched monthly bulletin *Democritus Review* was initiated formally with a letter from the League’s secretary K. Kandiliotis.¹³⁵ Alekos’ reply, enclosing a number of poetry translations and a brief article entitled ‘Democracy and Monarchy,’ is significant because in the space of a few lines it signals a shift from his earlier anti-political thinking and notions of stoic obedience to the state. It can be seen as a unique discursive moment on a ‘micropolitical’ scale in which Alekos Doukas enters a new space of migrant subjectivity in which he articulates a political voice (Laliotou 2004: 12-13). This public voice now argues that moral duty lies in political involvement and debate. The letter reads in full:

Bendigo 29.10.1936

Dear Members of the ‘Democritus’ Association,

I received your letter in time. I enclose some impromptu translations of a number of poets. You can publish any of them but strictly retain the spelling and vernacular language.

I also enclose something brief regarding ‘Democracy and Monarchy.’ I know that

¹³⁵ The letter is documented in the Democritus Archive as a ‘Letter to A. Doukas C/o 33 Pall Mall, Bendigo.’ It is undated but was very likely sent in October or early November 1936.

many will find it a 'stumbling block.' But the duty and the right of the young is to be in the vanguard.

Besides, a famous countryman of ours, almost twenty-four centuries ago, thundered out the immortal: 'To refrain from political life is to be unfree.'¹³⁶ Its echo, clear, solemn and modest reaches us Modern Greeks from the depths of time as an exhortation, a complaint, a reproach.

The young must always be vigilant and labour for a better, more honest and just 'Universal Society of Tomorrow.'

Yours faithfully and affectionately, Alekos Doukas.¹³⁷

The duty of youth is no longer to the state, right or wrong, but to be in the front line of political and intellectual life. The reference to classical wisdom, which previously served, as with Socrates, as a model for duty and obedience, has now become a call to political involvement. It too has the moral weight of the past as 'an exhortation, a complaint and a reproach.' The 'Universal Society of Tomorrow' no longer passively awaits the spiritual condition of 'universal harmony' but requires 'labour' and 'vigilance.' In a sense, Alekos has taken up Stratis' earlier literary exhortation for action over contemplation.¹³⁸ But the letter represents more than this; it is a conscious shift of intellectual argument from the private to the public sphere, an act of political participation.

¹³⁶ The reference is to Aristotle, similar to the famous phrase 'man is by nature a political animal' from *Politics* (Book I), as Doukas makes clear in an article 'Democracy' *Greek-Australian Review* January 1952, p. 8. The phrase, in Greek, 'ανελεύθερον το μη πολιτεύεσθαι,' while not belonging to an ancient text in this form, appears to circulate as an ancient saying. My translation is in the context of its use here and not its original context in which the idea of freedom was related to the 'natural' entitlements of the 'free' citizen as opposed to women and slaves. Its resignification in the context of Doukas' use is a clear example of de Certeau's (1984: xxi-xxii) argument about everyday life being a process of active cultural production.

¹³⁷ Letter in Democritus League Archives. Greek text in Appendix VIII.

¹³⁸ See earlier discussion of 'To Myself.' For example, one of the aphorisms in the book is very similar to Marx's maxim about not only understanding but also changing the world. 'The question was never what the world is or what it should be, but what stand each of us takes in regards to it' (S. Doukas 1975a: 50).

Alekos' article 'Democracy and Monarchy' appeared in two-parts in the November and December issues of *Democritus Review*.¹³⁹ It reveals him as a fervent liberal republican for whom 'indestructible and eternal Democracy' is 'the Modest Daughter of human Wisdom, Freedom and Progress.'¹⁴⁰ In general terms, the article equates monarchy and fascism, arguing that the former was always based on a prior naked seizure of power. It is clear that it is also an indirect indictment of the recent Metaxas' dictatorship. Classical idealism and modern liberalism are equated with references to Pericles' famous funeral oration praising those who had fallen for Athenian democracy and Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg speech evoking the liberal principles of the new nation. In both speeches there are strong images of the sacrifice of soldiers, which reflects the persistent undercurrent of the smouldering memory of war in Alekos' thinking. In Pericles' oration the ideas of democracy and empire are inextricably fused, as they also tend to be in Alekos' letters and manuscripts, at least up to this period. Although the article appears in the left-wing publication of the *Democritus Review* it is more an expression of Alekos' own deeply-held belief in liberal democracy and elements of his religious universalism than the current communist view on democracy. Its publication needs to be seen in context of the intellectual Popular Front against fascism. The following extract expresses Alekos' liberal beliefs of the time:

Democracy is movement, Monarchy a stasis.

Democracy is a search, a movement forward, even though it knows that every movement forward will bring it to a closed gate bearing the sign 'No further.' It stops for a moment in awe, but then storms the gate again, emerging always victorious.

The spirit of Democracy is the reflection of the unsatisfied spirit of mankind. With honesty it says... I have not been issued with a criterion for truth. - I am struggling to

¹³⁹ *Democritus Review* Monthly Educational Organ of the Greek Workers Educational and Mutual Aid Association 'Democritus' Melbourne, 1936 Nos. 1 & 2, Volume 1. Full text of No. 2 is provided in Appendix IX.

¹⁴⁰ *Democritus Review* December 1936, Vol. I, No. 2, p. 3.

find it. - I do not wait for this criterion to fall from above. - This world belongs to me; I am a part of this beautiful and great world.- Forward then, friends and fellow men. – Towards an ideal republic of equality and freedom.- ¹⁴¹

The article contains elements of Alekos' earlier thinking, for example, his religious identification with a God-created world and the inevitable march of machine civilisation which makes mythological creatures and beasts of burden superfluous: 'Man extracts the inanimate metals from the bowels of the earth and infusing them with his creative breath will in a few years liberate his oxen and horses. Go in peace to the Pampas and the Steppes, we no longer need you.'¹⁴² Just as he wrote about the clearing of forests in 1925 when he also saw the banishment of the nymphs and satyrs to the stars as an inevitable consequence of technological progress, he now wonders how man himself will fare with this incessant march of machine power. He ends with a somewhat dense elliptical metaphor that offers the hope of resistance and liberation: 'So will not man liberate his own children from the pernicious plans of darkness and regression?'¹⁴³ Though 'man' is the creator of his destructive technology he is also the potential liberator of himself. The phrase 'darkness and regression' clearly refers in 1936 to the fascist threat to democracy and freedom. The article's final sentences echo earlier ideas on the figure of Prometheus and his symbolic role in a broad-arching analysis of human history.

If we can pinpoint a time in Alekos' life when he began an active engagement with politics it would be late 1936. That he turned to a common front with the Greek communists of Democritus is undoubtedly tied up with events in Greece in the period (1932-1936) during

¹⁴¹ Ibid. I have retained the somewhat inconsistent use of dashes in the original that were obviously used for added emphasis.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

and after his return there. The shift of the refugee communities in Greece to the left and the crisis of Greek liberalism were certainly important elements. A key event in this period was the military dictatorship of Ioannis Metaxas declared on 4 August 1936. Events in Spain also reverberated strongly in Greece where a 'parallel' struggle occurred between liberal and left democrats and monarchist fascists (Sfikas 1999, 1996). The Spanish Civil War coincided with the Metaxas regime that used the events in Spain as an added ideological justification for its seizure of power (Sfikas 1999: 242).

Alekos' return to Australia in 1935 represented a decision on his part to settle permanently and this was reflected in his intellectual activity that, in contrast to the earlier period, was now directed towards a migrant audience in the communities. Perhaps through this circuitous route in his life he had finally found that 'honest and simple circle of people' that he had so longed for in his youth.¹⁴⁴ Then he had thought that if he was no longer bound by 'prejudices and social lies,' his 'mental recovery [would] come of its own...'¹⁴⁵ His life in the interwar years was certainly a prolonged struggle to put the daemons of war and exile behind him and find deeper meaning in his life.

His contributions to the *Democritus Review* were, in hindsight, the first step on a longer journey towards political engagement that led him to a more radical activism. Whether he ever fully embraced Communism, or how he fused religious and idealist views with a Marxist outlook, are issues I will explore in the next chapter. There is ample evidence from oral sources that he argued hotly with left-wing acquaintances in the 1930s over the philosophical contradictions of religion and materialism. In his fiction, Doukas refers to his life-long

¹⁴⁴ Letter 16.4.1923. Op. cit.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

struggle with a bourgeois liberal education by using the metaphor of a 'rotten and mouldy building' which his fictional persona cannot bring himself to demolish (Doukas 1953: 338). In regards to Alekos' thinking in this period and later, a fruitful line of enquiry would lie in tracking the point at which his liberalism and radicalised opposition to fascism brought him up against the realities of British imperialism, particularly in the period after October 1944 when Britain carried out armed intervention in Greece.¹⁴⁶

Most writers on the interwar period, reading his two postwar novels as literal autobiography, have presented Alekos Doukas as a founding figure of the Greek-Australian communist movement. This is certainly not accurate and represents a certain mythologising process that is the subject of the next chapter. It is the reading of history backwards based on the fact that by the Second World War Doukas had indeed become a leading figure and spokesperson for the Greek left. His later novels in a sense 'rewrote' the past to reflect a Marxist interpretation of prewar migrant life.

* * *

Alekos' mother, sister Eleni and her husband Yiannis Andronikos migrated to Australia in 1937 and from Dandenong they all moved with Alekos to Moonee Ponds, a Melbourne suburb, where they set up a fish shop together. Alekos' life as an itinerant seasonal and café worker had come to an end. Another chapter in his life had begun; working by day in the fish shop, he worked at night with his pen for another cause that expressed his deeper need to help make 'the whole world a homeland and birthplace' (Doukas 1953: 339). This new political

¹⁴⁶ For a survey of Greek experiences and attitudes to British colonialism as it affected Greece and Australia see Gauntlet (1997).

commitment was a unique blending of his Christian idealism and reaction to the war and his gradual radicalisation through the late 1930s. It would propel him into a 'career' as an activist and writer, the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER SIX: The 'Legend' of Alekos Doukas: A Deconstruction of Migrant Mythology

Greek Australians will always feel lost and not 'real' Australians if there isn't a Greek way of being and feeling Australian, and they will always feel second rate Greeks if there isn't a literature which is of their own making, which expresses an Australian way of being Greek, and which expresses them into a fuller existence: or, to descend from the heights of idealism, does not give artistic expression to the problems inherent in the need to be both Greek and Australian at once. (Castan 1988:6)

I

This chapter departs from the detailed biographical structure of the preceding chapters; rather, it provides a brief narrative of Alekos Doukas' life from the late 1930s to his death in 1962 as a background to a broader discussion of how he has figured in Greek-Australian cultural history. This discussion involves the politics of collective memory and how the latter is mediated through textual and paratextual means (Hamilton 2003, Genette 1997). The historical discourses of 'diaspora' and 'multiculturalism' have framed the understanding of Greek-Australian literary works in particular ways, the act of naming literature being a discursive move that simultaneously constructs objects of study and positions the speaker. I have tried to use terms such as 'migrant,' 'minority' or 'ethnic minority' literature in ways that are context-specific, although the subject is unavoidably fraught with the conflicting theoretical and social constructions that constitute the field.¹ This chapter consists of an examination of a series of historically specific discourses that look back at earlier periods of literary and cultural history.

¹ I have used the term 'ethnic minority writing,' following S. Gunew's (1994: xiii) practice, to avoid the more problematic term 'multicultural,' particularly where I want to avoid the narrower term 'migrant' writing, which however still has its use in certain historical contexts and for those writers who have migrated at an age where their prior language and literary culture are still central to their writing.

Contrary to the view that Alekos Doukas is a relatively unknown and forgotten writer, a body of literature continues to grow around his work (Fifis 1983, Vasilakakos 2009 forthcoming). He may in fact be the most quoted fiction writer in Greek-Australian scholarly references to the interwar years. In this chapter I survey the literature to see how he has been discussed, my primary interest being in what this body of writing tells us about contemporary Greek-Australian discourse around literary, cultural and historiographical issues, rather than its actual representation of the past. The chapter raises the question as to why so many writers have so easily accepted an idealised version of a Greek-Australian radical past. Despite decades of debate about the critical revision of the grand narratives of monumental history, ethnic or minority histories have been largely assumed to be unitary and uncontroversial. For example, in Australia we have not engaged in a serious debate over the competing narratives of a radical and exploited working class versus an upwardly mobile and conservative Greek-Australia as occurred in the U.S. in the late 1980s (Georgakas 1987, 1991). I suspect that underlying the continued interest in Alekos Doukas is a certain ownership of a narrative of a radical and oppositional migrant past. Collective narratives have mythical qualities and vestiges, and my interest here is to document some aspects of a certain myth or legend that has become attached to the life and work of Doukas. The issues that arise in the readings of his fiction are not unconnected to the recent debates around the rise of the genre of fictive history, and the competing status of fictional and historical truth (McKenna 2005, Clendinnen 2006, Papailias 2005).

I am interested in addressing a number of critical issues raised by Ioanna Laliotou (2007) in regard to Greek American studies where she argues for the need for such work to locate its broader intellectual context. This is not dissimilar to the approach that Sneja Gunew (2004) takes in her recent comparative study of 'situated multiculturalisms.' My discussion aims to

convey the connections that Greek-Australian history has both to the Australian and the transnational contexts of Greece and other overseas Greek communities.² Laliotou (2007: 145) poses a further important question that has particular relevance to studies of minority figures or groups: 'Is there a way to honor historical actors, individuals, and communities while at the same time remaining critical of the power relations and structures that determine historical processes?' In my 'demythologising' of certain narratives of the past I am keenly aware of the tension between the need for critical scholarship and a political acknowledgment of past struggles and achievements. However, I believe there is no better way to pay respect to those 'historical actors' than to exercise to the full the critical tools available to us, tempered always by an understanding of the historical forces acting upon such historical agents and the possibilities available to them. The chapter aims to historicise the discourse around the figure of Alekos Doukas and to bring to the fore the problems of periodisation and context which present obstacles to a broader understanding of Greek-Australian cultural history.

This chapter examines a historically specific field of literary and intellectual discourse and not a general, or even representative, account of the cultural history of an 'ethnic' community. Much of the writing referred to was produced in a period in which multiculturalism powerfully framed the debate about the possibilities and limits of 'minority' literature. Today when the policy of 'multiculturalism' in Australia appears at the end of an historical phase in which it constituted a significant cultural and political discourse, there is a need to re-examine its literary and cultural assumptions. The discussion here is in many ways the preliminary groundwork for further study of a field that has only been touched upon.

² See Curthoys (2003: 36) for a discussion of the need for 'transnational cultural histories.'

Finally, many of the texts in this chapter that refer to Alekos Doukas reveal an almost obsessive preoccupation with the concept of the ‘pioneer,’ ‘founder’ and ‘patriarch’ of a minority history. The preoccupation with male founders and patriarchs in the sphere of literary history cannot pass without comment, functioning as it does to exclude the history and reality of migrant women and Indigenous Australians. As with the traditional diaspora ideology that is complicit with white colonial foundational myths, literary history constructs its parallel foundational myths that efface colonial and gendered relations.

II

Alekos Doukas (1936-1962)

For reasons not entirely clear, there are no surviving letters from Alekos to Stratis between April 1936 and September 1945. Wartime conditions in Greece help explain the break in correspondence, at least from 1940 onwards.³ What is absolutely striking is the changed tenor and content of the letters in the postwar period. The shift from the private to public sphere of discourse is comprehensive; Alekos’ life had become totally preoccupied with political activity. The event that undoubtedly galvanised him into radical political action was the Occupation and the Greek resistance. In both his novels the Occupation looms large in the

³ The post WWII letters (numbered from 1 to 125) in the Stratis Doukas Archive begin on 9.5.1945 and end on 7.6.1962. They are original letters written on loose pages, letterheads of the Democritus League and aerograms. The letter (No 1) is most certainly the result of a slip by Alekos when he dated it, as its contents place it in May 1946 not 1945. The earliest letter therefore, (No 2), dated 5.9.1945, refers to confirmation by Stratis’ wife Dimitra that they received twenty pounds sent to them. This means that correspondence had begun earlier but these letters appear not to have survived. There is one surviving telegram from Alekos to Stratis, dated 26.11.1943, which acknowledges receipt of an earlier message from Stratis through the Red Cross. These messages simply confirm that they are ‘in good health.’ Telegram, Australian Red Cross Society Message Service, ‘Family Correspondence B1’, Hellenic Literary and Historical Archive (E.L.I.A.), Athens.

lives of the protagonists; in *To Struggle, To Youth*, provoking the ideological ‘resurrection from the dead’ of the Young Brother, and *Under Foreign Skies*, the participation in anti-fascist struggle by the ethnically diverse group of unemployed workers brought together by the Depression (Doukas 1953: 339). In the second novel there is a scene in which the protagonist Strátis reads a resistance leaflet describing starvation on the streets of Athens to a group of Greek activists (Doukas 1963: 258).⁴ Tears and anger overcome the men. Such was the emotional and political impact of the Occupation, as Alekos experienced it. In one of his first postwar letters, where Alekos informs Stratis of his political activity in the war years, he writes that he joined the ‘Party’ (Communist Party of Australia - CPA) in 1940, and was the secretary of the Greek section of the Australian-Soviet Friendship Society from 1941 to 1943, during which time the Democritus League, along with the CPA, went ‘underground.’⁵

For the years between 1936 and 1940 there is little in the way of evidence to accurately track the changes in Alekos’ thinking. One particular oral testimony from a member of Democritus, Stavros Tsitas, offers a revealing vignette of Alekos’ gradual and hesitant approach towards the grouping of radical Greeks in Australia. The event described very likely occurred some time in late 1938:⁶

I met Doukas at Orpheas.⁷ Refugees and Macedonians⁸ used to gather there.

Democritus was on the run, it had no building and we used Orpheas. One fugitive

⁴ Letter 16.5.1953. Stratis Doukas Archive, Department of Medieval and Modern Greek Studies, Aristotle University, Thessaloniki.

⁵ Letter 25.3.1946. Op. cit. Other sources say he joined the CPA in 1941, for example, Yiannis Mavrokefalos (Tzoumaccas 2003: 62). The CPA was outlawed on June 15 1940 and its legality restored on December 18 1942 (Ross 1982: 80 & 84).

⁶ Stavros Tsitas is listed in a Commonwealth of Australia Security Service Report (19.3.1945) as having arrived in Australia on 1.5.1938. Archive title, ‘Doukas, Alexander Constantine’ Series A6126/25, Item 568. National Archives of Australia.

⁷ The Greek Amateur and Philanthropic Society ‘Orpheus’ was founded in Melbourne 1916.

⁸ ‘Macedonians’ in this context very likely refers to Greeks from Northern Greece and/or Greek citizens with Slav-Macedonian ethnicity.

gives refuge to another. There was a gathering and Doukas travelled from a distance of two hours from where he was living, and in fact he sat by the door. He directed a few questions to the speaker and expressed his view. My opinion was 'this person knows a lot, he must join us,' because he was on the outside. He was like an inexperienced pup. (Tzoumacas 2003: 63)

Alekos' wartime political activism did not end in 1945. In late 1944, devastated by four years of occupation, Greece slid into civil war (1946-1949). Leftwing Greeks in Australia rallied behind relief efforts and were vocal against British military intervention and the rightwing harassment and murder of resistance fighters (Solley 1946, Clogg 1992: 130-134, Svoronos 1981: 143-144). The civil war became the stage on which the US Cold War policy of the containment of communism was played out. From 1947 onwards the US took over the British interventionary role and its massive military aid was instrumental in the defeat of the Greek Democratic Army (Clogg 1992: 137-141). The consequences for Greece were decades of anomalous political life during which time political imprisonment and violation of civil liberties were common occurrences for opponents of successive pro-American governments.⁹ This was the context of Alekos' postwar political activity that, through his key position in the Democritus League, involved the constant publicising of the Greek situation. He was closely associated with the League for Democracy in Greece, founded in England in 1945 but also active in Australia, and which advocated for democratic rights and provided relief for political prisoners and their dependents.¹⁰ Alekos was active in translating material, writing articles and giving talks to Greeks and Australians at large. During the civil war years his correspondence with Stratis is largely taken up with the exchange of information on Greek

⁹ There were 371 political prisoners executed in Greece between October 1947 and March 1952 (*Avgi Athens* 4 January 2004).

¹⁰ See the brief but informative material on the League for Democracy in Greece (Modern Greek Archive), King's College London College Archives. Electronic access: www.aim25.ac.uk/cgi-bin/search2?coll_id=3022&inst_id=6

events and the overseas network of support for the democratic movement in Greece, with an emphasis on imprisoned writers many of whom Stratis had personal contact with.¹¹ Alekos' actions on behalf of imprisoned writers and political opponents in Greece continued up until his death in 1962. He was also active in the Greek community on issues such as the 'No Vote' for the 1951 Australian Referendum outlawing the Communist Party, union campaigns, migrant living and working conditions and the struggle against the British colonial rule in Cyprus. For these activities, Doukas was under constant surveillance by Australia's security services.¹²

Despite his high level of commitment to activism, Alekos' literary output remained his primary focus, and the 1940s and 1950s were his most productive years.¹³ In these decades he translated a large number of short stories by Russian, Chinese and Australian authors. His own short stories and extracts from longer fictional works were published in a variety of Greek periodicals. He wrote two novels and had begun a third that was never completed.¹⁴ Whereas in the prewar years his writing had been interior, romantic and metaphysical, his writing after the war became closely tied to political struggles, his model now being socialist realist fiction. A detailed examination of why this occurred and how it affected his writing requires further study but factors relating to Greece (see Chapter Five) were critical, as was the increasing contact between leftwing Greeks and the broader Australian left movement. Alekos represents an interesting meeting point between early postwar Greek migrant writing

¹¹ Stratis' wife Dimitra was herself exiled between 1947-1950 on Chios, Trikeri and the infamous island of Makronissos (Korfis 1988: 153).

¹² See security files titled 'Doukas, Alexander Constantine' Series A6126/25, Control Symbol 568; Series A435 Control Symbol 1948/4/1536; Series A261, Control Symbol 1946/69 and 'Greek Democritus League' Series A6122 Control Symbols 1219, 1218 1392, 1393, 1394; series A6335, Control Symbol 14. National Archives of Australia. These are only some of the files accessible through digital viewing and a part of the security files that may be available through request.

¹³ For a bibliography of his writing see Kanarakis (1987: 100-101) which is the first and only published (partial) bibliography of his work. See Alekos Doukas: Select Bibliography in this thesis.

¹⁴ 'Tserkez-Fevzli,' an extract of which was published in a number of journals in 1957. See Select Bibliography, op. cit.

and Australian socialist realist writing. Many of the prewar literary and intellectual influences were transformed and reconstituted in Alekos' postwar fiction, so that while there are important changes there are also continuities in his thematic and stylistic preferences. The broad orientation of his postwar writing is in marked contrast to the earlier period, which testifies to a realignment in his social and political thinking and commitment. A careful reading of his postwar fiction however reveals the biographical elements of this earlier life although these are now recast in a narrative consistent with his embracing of socialist ideas.

To Struggle, To Youth (1953) was an important milestone in Alekos' life, incorporating as it did, his life story, the painful separation from his childhood homeland and the expression of a militant socialist vision for the future. The novel was distinctive as one of the first postwar novels on the lost Greek homelands and a precursor of the novels which in the 1960s employed the genres of testimony and historiographical discourse to stage a leftwing critique of the Greek state and foreign powers as the stokers of communal conflict and destruction in the collapsing Ottoman state (Doulis 1977, Nikolopoulou 2002, Alexiou 1988). Although this antipodean novel received little critical attention in Greece, it was read by a significant number of Greek writers and refugees as a moving non-chauvinistic account of an important and still raw historical experience (Alexiou 1988).¹⁵ A number of critics pointed to its literary weaknesses, broadly the unsuccessful integration of the informational and ideological aspects with the fictional demands of the narrative. The novel is also distinctive as the first Greek-language novel published in book form in Australia.¹⁶ It was important in Alekos' life for another reason. It offered him the opportunity to reach out as an author and begin

¹⁵ Alekos kept a systematic record of copies he sent to people. The records, with 1210 entries, include the name, address, date of postage of each consignment, and whether a letter of acknowledgment had been received. They include many well-known writers in Greece and abroad. See two exercise books '*To Struggle To Youth: Its distribution.*' The Hellenic Literary and Historical Archive (ELIA), Athens.

¹⁶ There were earlier serialised narrative stories published in Greek newspapers and a book of short stories, *Pterougismata* (Flutterings) 1932 by Omiros Rigas. See Kanarakis (1987).

corresponding with other Greek writers and readers from around the world.¹⁷ This correspondence became a lifeline in the last decade of his life.¹⁸

Alekos was an important figure in the area of leftwing migrant publishing in both literature and journalism. He wrote numerous articles in the 1940s in the Democritus League's *Bulletin*. He was one of the founders, editors and contributors to the bilingual literary and arts magazine *Greek-Australian Review* (1951-1953) which in June 1953 had its publication permit withdrawn by the Immigration Department, a clear case of the attempted political censorship of leftwing migrant views.¹⁹ The magazine broke new ground by translating into Greek contemporary Australian realist writers as well as international writers like the Turkish poet Nazim Hikmet. It was also significant for introducing Aboriginal issues to its migrant readership. Alekos was also one of the founders of the leftwing newspaper *Neos Kosmos* (1957-) which went on to become the highest-circulating Greek-language paper in the country, although minus its early radical orientation. From 1959 he worked part-time for *Neos Kosmos*, contributing letters to the editor, articles on a range of subjects as well as literary and other translations. His articles are well written, exhibiting encyclopaedic knowledge and interests, as well as being simultaneously erudite and conversational in tone.

From the late 1930s Alekos made his living working in partnerships in fish shops and from 1949 to 1959 ran a 'continental' grocery shop with his sister Eleni in the centre of Melbourne. He never married and after the death of his brother-in-law in 1949 helped his sister raise his only nephew Emil Andronicos. His regular and intimate correspondence with Stratis

¹⁷ His correspondents included General Stefanos Sarafis and his English wife Marion, the writers Christos Manettas (Belgium Congo), Stratis Tsirkas, Gikas Biniaris, Olga Vatidou, Stella Epifaniou-Petraki, Antigoni Galanaki-Vourleki, Yiannis Koniarellis, Stergios Valioulis, Mihalīs Voudouris, Theano Papzoglou-Margaris (USA), as well as readers in Turkey and Eastern-bloc countries.

¹⁸ Letters 19.12.1955, 25.8.1956 and 30.10.1961. Op. cit.

¹⁹ See Nicolacopoulos (2004a: 214, 228, 231-234; 2007: 140-142).

continued throughout the postwar period. Despite his deep commitment to communist ideals and optimism about the future he continued to suffer bouts of depression and despondency till the end.

Through his political activism and writing, Alekos Doukas became the spokesperson for the Greek left in Melbourne and throughout Australia. He was widely respected by people of differing persuasions and in many ways performed the role of the 'public intellectual' in the cultural life of postwar migrant Greeks. It is time then to examine a certain legend that grew around his name after his untimely death in 1962.

II

The Construction of a Legend

I use the terms 'legend' and 'myth' here somewhat interchangeably although they do have different connotations and histories. Following Peter Cochrane's (1992: 239-244) use of the terms in his investigation of the Anzac legend of the medical orderly Simpson and his donkey in WWI, I regard the story of Alekos Doukas, as he has been remembered after his death, as belonging more to legend than strictly myth. Legend as it pertains to historical figures is the account of a life based on certain facts that have acquired 'an accretion of fiction' (Cochrane 1992: 240). Myth here is not used in the everyday sense of falsity, or the fantastical, or stories of superhuman (wo)men or gods, but as an element that is nevertheless inextricably embodied in narrative. My focus is on the 'vestigial' mythical elements in historical narrative that relate to 'origins and transformations' that are clearly at play in the Doukas' 'legend' (Cochrane

1992: 242). My analysis also draws on Ronald Barthes' (1972: 109-115) approach to myth as a 'metalanguage' that functions as a 'second-order semiological system.' Active myths or legends in the modern era are narratives that can act as vehicles for national or collective identities and ideologies. Often a few simple narrative elements, 'medical orderly with his donkey rescues injured soldiers' or 'young Ottoman subjects read Greek books at night in churches,' can be constructed into enduring national legends (Cochrane 1992, Angelou 1997). Central to our discussion is the fact that legends are the result of a process of construction, often through oral but increasingly in the modern era through textual and visual means. In my analysis of the Doukas legend, I am interested in particular in the mythical resonances of the biographical texts that arose after his death and which also subsequently functioned as literary 'paratexts' in 'the complex mediation between book, author, publisher, and reader' (Genette 1997: cover).

As Barthes (1972: 143-150) has suggested, myths can have strong and weak forms. The former clearly serve national and state purposes with extensive apparatuses that construct, maintain and modify them, while weaker myths are more often associated with groups or stories that have little institutional support or nourishment in society. If we compare the Anzac legend entrusted to the well-endowed Australian War Memorial with that of the historical narrative of the migrant writer Alekos Doukas constructed by the Greek migrant left then differences of depth, richness and scale are immediately apparent. Nevertheless the deciphering of the mythical dimensions of such a narrative is important if we are to understand the needs it fulfilled in the past and its relation to the present.

The first news reports of Alekos Doukas' death, along with the biographical blurb on the cover of the posthumously published *Under Foreign Skies*, have constituted his enduring public image. The page-one report of the *Neos Kosmos*' edition of 31 October 1962 begins:

In the early hours of Thursday 25 October Alekos Doukas' heart stopped beating. A little earlier a motor car had fatally injured him near his house while he was returning from a protest against the American intervention in Cuba organised by pro-peace forces outside the American Consulate.

The headline 'Alekos Doukas Dead' appears below a photo of Cuban soldiers guarding the island's shores against an expected attack by the US during the Cuban Missile Crisis, a reminder that his death came at a critical point in the Cold War period. The blurb on the back cover of the novel repeats the newspaper report: 'Doukas was killed in a motor car accident on 24 October 1962 while returning from a Peace rally.' In point of fact he had already returned home in Ascot Vale, where he lived with his sister and nephew, and was on his way to a CPA branch meeting when he was hit. This is confirmed through interviews with family and friends, and the Coroner's Inquest.²⁰ The omission of this, perhaps mundane fact, in both the newspaper report and the novel's biographical text undeniably gives the narrative greater dramatic impact. I would argue that at exactly this prosaic point, a mythical dimension begins to operate; an unconscious construction of a legend is set in motion in which Doukas is violently struck down while fighting for a great cause. In Barthes' terms the reading of the narrative in its mythical dimension represents a transformation of history into 'nature,' the passage from 'semiology to ideology.' Barthes' distinction is useful here but requires the

²⁰ Eleni Andronicos interviews with D. Tzoumacas (20.2.1984) and M. Sophocleous (1983). Charalambos Lolis interview with D. Tzoumacas (no date) and M. Sophocleous (28.2.1991). Yiannis Mavrokefalos (John Black) interview with P. Alexiou (6.11.1986). See also files relating to the accident and the Coroner's Inquest, VPRS 10010/R3, unit 5, Body Card Number 1962/2954 and VPRS 24/P2, Inquest Deposition file number 1963/354, Public Record Office, Victoria.

qualification that the sharp antithesis between the so-called ‘objective’ or denotative and the ‘ideological’ or connotative meaning in language is, in rigorous poststructural terms, unsustainable, as both levels of meaning are discursive constructions (Barthes 1972: 126-144). The mythical reading of the statement ‘killed in a motor car accident.... while returning from a Peace rally’ is discursively supported by other historical narratives such that it acquires the potential to evoke memories of striking workers gunned down in Thessaloniki in 1936²¹, the Resistance leader General Stefanos Sarafis run over by an American airman in Athens in 1957²² or Grigoris Lambrakis²³, the leftwing MP and leader of the Greek Peace Movement, assassinated from a moving vehicle in May 1963, the latter occurring only a month after *Under Foreign Skies* circulated.²⁴ The mythical signification encoded in the statement can be understood as a powerful psychological truth for Greeks for whom state assassination and violence were not uncommon in this period. For many years after Doukas’ death there have always been some who suspected foul play, even though there was never evidence for this.²⁵

The blurb on *Under Foreign Skies* is an extension and update of the biographical note on the back cover of *To Struggle, To Youth*, offering a ‘peritextual’ continuity and link between the two novels.²⁶ Below are the relevant biographical additions:

²¹ See Kornaros (1981).

²² See *Time* report Monday 10 June 1957. Electronic Access: www.time.com/time/printout/0,8816,937455,00.html. In a strange twist of fate, Alekos Doukas, who had begun a correspondence with Sarafis and his wife, was killed in similar circumstances five years later in Melbourne.

²³ Grigoris Lambrakis was brutally assassinated on 22 May 1963 after addressing a rally of the Committee for International Détente and Peace. Lambrakis’ assassination was carried out with a tricycle vehicle and an iron bar and was the subject of the film *Z* by Costas Gavras (1969).

²⁴ See announcement in *Neos Kosmos* 17.4.1963, p. 3. In the week before Doukas’ death a photo of Stefanos Sarafis had appeared in an article and the photo’s caption included the words ‘...killed by a American marine in a car “accident”.’ *Neos Kosmos* 24.10.1962, p. 5.

²⁵ See statements by Charalambos Lolis (Tzoumacas 2003: 63) and Antonis Hatziladas interview with P. Alexiou (20.5.1993).

²⁶ The term ‘peritext’ refers to all those ‘devices and conventions’ that are found within the book but separate to the text proper whereas the ‘epitext’ represents those texts outside the physical space of the book (Genette 1997: 16-36, 344-403).

He migrated to Australia in 1927 and experienced all the ordeals of the bitter life of the pioneer Greek migrants.

Adverse conditions didn't prevent him from studying and simultaneously writing. In this way he acquired a broad education and asserted himself as the Founder of Greek-Australian literature...

*

Doukas was killed in a motor car accident on 24 October 1962 while returning from a Peace rally.

According to his wishes, his Ashes were scattered from Cape Paterson, 80 miles from Melbourne, opposite Tasmania.

Whoever passes through there, let him remember Doukas, the Man who suffered much because he loved Mankind.

This posthumous blurb contains key signifying phrases that generate mythical signification.

The narrative works like a 'turnstile' that alternates between biographical statement and mythical 'metalanguage' (Barthes 1972: 123). Drawing on the older and newer elements of the updated blurb, the concepts of the metalanguage might be formulated as a series of mythical statements: 'refugee who was proletarianised,' 'war veteran and hero who hated war,' 'pioneering migrant of the Depression years,' 'founder of Greek-Australian literature,' 'peace fighter killed in the act of struggle,' 'socialist humanist who suffered for his ideals.'

The last section of the blurb, separated as it is by an asterisk, functions as an obituary that pays homage to the author. The reference to the scattering of his ashes is an example of how the two novels link and how the blurb functions to orientate the reader towards the thematic content of both books. In a curious interplay of 'life' and 'fiction,' Alekos had expressed the wish to be cremated and scattered at sea through the protagonist of his first novel, as a gesture of international solidarity between the Greek, Turkish and Australian people, the sea presumably carrying and mingling the ashes beyond national borders (Doukas 1953: 345). His

request was also an indirect statement of a personal ecumenical spiritualism that rejected the authority of the church. With his sudden death, this 'unorthodox' request, also transmitted orally to his friends, caused a stir in the Melbourne community as the Greek Orthodox Church prohibited cremation. Here the accounts of his friend and comrade Vassilis Stefanou and sister Eleni diverge.²⁷ The former recounts that a compromise was reached and Doukas was given a service in Melbourne's Evangelismos Church and then cremated elsewhere. Eleni remembers a service in an Anglican Church as the Community priest refused to administer the Orthodox rites. The discrepancy in recollection illustrates the heterogenous and subjective nature of the substratum of personal memory from which public mythology draws. The obituary statements on the blurb subtly direct the reader to the themes of peace, solidarity and socialist humanism in both novels. Twenty years after the publication, Stefanou was in no doubt about the political symbolism of Doukas' ashes:

His insistence on cremation and scattering of his ashes signified his belief in the importance of co-operation between people and the need to develop an amalgamation of a culture combining the best traditions of various cultures. (Stefanou 1983: 16)

The blurb of *Under Foreign Skies* works in at least two ways: in the space of a few hundred words it helps construct and nourish a legend, but, of equal importance, it signposts the way the fictional narrative should be read. The biographical blurb is not the only paratextual device mediating the reading of this novel. The book's title, the illustrated front cover with the southern cross on a blue sky, the epigraph quoting the miners' oath at the Eureka Stockade uprising in 1854, the fifteen-page 'Brief Historical Survey' of Australia, the frequent historical and political digressions within the fictional narrative, the footnotes explaining vernacular Australian terms, all function to persuade the reader of the novel's realist aims and

²⁷ Interviews Vassilis Stefanou (12.5.1983) and Eleni Andronicos (1983) with M.A. Sophocleous.

historical veracity. The two novels are also linked through the numerous biographical correspondences between the protagonists of the two fictional narratives. These links are such that the prefaces to *To Struggle, To Youth* can be read as applying to the posthumous novel as well.²⁸ Following a long rhetorical tradition, the author's preface 'To the Reader' is a literary manifesto of sorts, touching on the book's motivation, generic innovation and claim to historical truth. While not mentioning socialist realism as such, the author introduces the work as a form of politically urgent realism. His characterisation of the work as 'unorthodox,' 'not a novel, nor a collection of short stories' but 'speedily-written chronicles' is another way of rejecting genre categorisation and privileging content over form.²⁹ Germane to our discussion is the author's underlying claim to be writing history and not fiction. 'My book attempts to cover parts of contemporary historic era that others have not as yet done.' The 'allographic' preface ('Prologue') by Stefanou complements the author's note by explaining the book's broader political analysis, the process of the protagonist's politicisation and the pioneering cultural significance of the author's work. According to Stefanou, the publication is not only a 'landmark' for 'future Greek-Australian intellectual development' but also 'a guide showing the road forward.' Both prefaces are signed, dated and located in Melbourne suburbs, Australia. In this sense, they inaugurate a specific Greek-Australian leftwing literary publishing intervention in the migrant cultural life of the time.

The paratextual elements work powerfully to influence the reader's understanding of the genre of the two novels, whether they are to be read as memoir and historical narrative or as

²⁸ Vassilis Stefanou did write a short article on *Under Foreign Skies* which functions as a prefatorial text (*Neos Kosmos* 17.4.1963, p. 9). See discussion later in this chapter.

²⁹ A number of writers have read this preface as further evidence that what Doukas wrote was not a novel. I call his two fictional works 'novels' in the broad sense of that term as 'an extended work in prose, either fictitious or partly so, dealing with character, action, thought etc, especially in the form of a story.' *Collins Dictionary of the English Language* Collins 1979.

fiction. Whether they are read as a politically-committed realist fiction, as the author intended, is another matter. How they *have* been read is the subject of the next section.

III

Reading the Past: a critical counter reading

Before the 1980s Doukas' two novels were primarily discussed in short reviews in Greece or in literary works devoted to the growing body of fiction about the Asia Minor Catastrophe (Liatsos 1972). They are treated as literary texts, fictional reconstructions of the past, with strengths and weaknesses. In the Australian context, *Under Foreign Skies* receives passing reference in Tsounis (1971: 527) as literature that likens prewar migrant seasonal workers to earlier Australian bush workers. What is striking however is that from the 1980s onwards there is an almost universal tendency in Greek-Australian literary studies and historiography to read Doukas' fiction as historical testimony. This coincides with the dominance of the discourse of multiculturalism that, as Gunew (1994: xii) has argued, 'frames' such literature as unproblematic oral testimony, interesting to sociology or history but not literature as such.³⁰ Multiculturalism as a cultural policy and practice initiated and enabled a wave of literary and historical studies that sought to narrate an historical role for ethnic minorities within a renovated national narrative.³¹ In Greek-Australian literary studies, Doukas' fiction appears to occupy a special place both as historical and ideological exemplar and as a

³⁰ To this, I would add what Hamilton (2003) has noted, the growing shift to memorial modes of thinking about the past and collective identity.

³¹ This reached a peak in terms of publications, funding and public focus around Australia's Bicentenary Celebrations in 1988.

problem of literary genre. What is apparent in the references to his fiction from the 1980s until today is that both legend and fictional narrative coalesce in such a way that Doukas is seen foremost as an historical witness and his fictional writing as testimony. I will survey these references with concrete examples and attempt to provide an analysis of how they have emerged and the discourses they relate to. For convenience I will focus initially on references to Doukas' fiction as historical record before examining its literary analysis, although the two overlap.

One of the elements of the Doukas legend is that he was, if not the first, at least among the first Greek socialists in Australia and one of the founders of the Democritus League. In short, the legend presents him as a unitary socialist subject who encapsulates the experiences and revolutionary consciousness of a migrant collectivity from at least the 1920s. In a community talk, the veteran Greek journalist and activist Dimitris Kalomoiris (1982: 26) stated that 'In 1924, when the Socialist Party was established in Melbourne, among its members were Nikos Papoutsas from Arkadia, Nikolaos Xenodochos from Arachova, Alekos Doukas from Smyrna and some others.' Discounting for a moment the fact that the Australian Socialist Party was in existence long before 1924 and that Doukas only arrived in 1927, the important point is that Kalomoiris places the latter amongst the first Greek radicals in Australia. Commemorating the twenty-five years of Doukas' death in 1987, the Melbourne magazine *Paroikia* describes Doukas as 'the patriarch of progressive Greek intellectual life' and 'a man with a broad education [who] from the moment he arrived in Australia took an interest in community affairs...' (Unsigned 1987: 7). In the first history of the Greek left in Australia, Stelios Kourbetis (1992: 17, 62 n8) describes Doukas as 'one of the first Greek Marxists in Australia' who played 'an active part in Democritus from the first years of its founding.' As I have demonstrated in Chapter Five, in the years leading up to the formation of the Democritus

League and its formal constitution in June 1935, Doukas was in Greece. Kourbetis' characterisations are interesting because his work is on the whole based on documentary evidence that in the case of Doukas however gives no actual support for his claims. The legend and the fiction appear to invisibly frame his narrative of the past, independently of the sources. As we shall see, Kourbetis, like others, regularly refers to *Under Foreign Skies* as documentary evidence in his historical account. Finally, George Kanarakis, in his important anthology *Greek Voices in Australia*, with its carefully researched biographical notes, inserts the following about Doukas in 1925: 'It was at this time that he also took part in the movement of the tobacco workers of Xanthi against the government lock-out' (Kanarakis 1987: 99). While this is totally at odds with Doukas' reclusive life in Xanthi and his distinctly apolitical outlook in 1925, the protagonist of *To Struggle, To Youth*, as it happens, did take part in such an event, albeit after being shamed out of his deep intellectual introversion (Doukas 1953: 297-302). Kanarakis (1987: 100) has read the fictional narrative as reliable memoir, perhaps not surprisingly as he avoids calling it a novel but uses the term 'pezografima' (prose writing) in Greek and simply 'prose' in English.

Referring to *Under Foreign Skies*, a number of writers use it as a source to describe the conditions and pay of Greek café workers in the 1930s (Tsounis 1989: 12, Kourbetis 1992: 16, Dimitreas 1998: 165).³² More significantly, the same novel is commonly used to describe the ghetto-like nature of the Greek communities in the pre-WWII years.³³ One of the passages regularly quoted relates to the Greeks' alienation and isolation from society:

³² The passage reads: 'The hatred that Strátis felt for that man surfaced every Saturday night when he was paid his weekly wage of 30 shillings. He knew very well that the legal wage was 85 shillings for 48 hours; he worked 75-80 hours a week for 30 shillings' (Doukas 1963: 165).

³³ See the following: Tsounis (1989: 12), Kourbetis (1992: 14), Dimitreas (1998: 186), Nicolacopoulos (2004a: 116-117).

And in this way all the '*omogeneis*' [(ironic) the overseas Greeks] lived enclosed in their shell, estranged from the broad mass of the Australian people, cursing and envying each other, feeling eternally nostalgic for the wretched Greek kingdom and eternally hating the Australian People who tolerated them in their midst. (Doukas 1963: 233-234)

Toula Nicolacopoulos and George Vassilacopoulos (2004a), in their challenging work on the Greek left and its impact on Greek community discourse, frequently turn to this novel as historical evidence. Quoting the above passage, they position Doukas as one who lived through this period and whose narrative therefore possesses the authority of a first-hand witness:

Another sufficiently sensitive testimony of the invisible aspect of the communities is that of Alekos Doukas who was perhaps one of the few who lived on both sides of the community ontology. (Nicolacopoulos 2004a: 117)

Indicative of this tendency is the same authors' inclusion of Doukas in a study of Depression communists as 'dual outsiders' in the 1930s and 1940s (Nicolacopoulos 2002). The study draws on the 'recollections' of six Greek immigrants of the interwar years, with the difference that Doukas' novel is given the same status as the leftwing veteran interviewees. The above passage also appears in Tsounis (1989: 12) who by the 1980s begins to use Doukas' fictional narrative to locate the author as an historical actor in the prewar years:

Significant is the position of the writer and severe social critic, Alekos Doukas, who lived through the prewar period. Amongst other things, Alekos Doukas supported and cultivated the unity of all workers, which characterised the dominant social value of mateship at the time. Doukas never hesitated to castigate the ideology and practice of the closed community.

Here we see a subtle slippage operating in the text between the contemporaneous presence of Doukas as historical actor and his views voiced about the same historical conditions. When did Doukas, as ‘writer and severe social critic,’ ‘support,’ ‘cultivate’ and ‘castigate’? In the 1930s or the 1950s? The difference is blurred, as it is in most references to Doukas as historical source.

The most-quoted passage in the novel is the one in which Doukas uses a three-tiered Marxist class analysis to describe the prewar Greek community:

The Greeks were divided into three categories: The first were the ‘Patricians,’ those who were skinflints from the cradle, made money and posed as ‘high society.’ The economic depression wiped out over half of them and they fell down again to the bottom rung of the social and economic hierarchy with the hope that they would return again to ‘the good old times’

The second category of ‘*omogeneis*’ was those with small businesses, fruit and fish-and-chip shops. Their rent was low, they didn’t pay wages, they worked 80 hours a week, they lived a dog’s life and economised, to save a few shillings to send to their families in Greece, or to climb up one rung on the community economic ladder.

The third group, the largest in number, were the ‘ragged proletariat,’ anarchistic and unorganised, with a bitter and acrid taste in their throat. None of them were industrial workers, nor could they be in those years. (Doukas 1963: 233)

Most writers discuss the passage, not as an articulation of a Marxist discourse of the 1950s, but as expressing an instinctively radical perceptivity on the part of the leftwing migrant writer Doukas in the Depression years.³⁴ The tendency to read, so to speak, this analysis

³⁴ Only Tzoumacas (2003: 41) refers to it as Marxist ideology rather than documentary evidence.

‘back’ into history is perhaps indicative of the influence of Marxist discourse amongst Greeks up to the present day.

The aim here, however, is not simply to stage a dissonant juxtaposition between myth and historical evidence, but to demonstrate how a narrative of the past is read through the power of myth and ideology, as well as the discursive framing of the literary genre of migrant fiction. The detailed discussion of Doukas’ life in earlier chapters should suffice to alert the reader to the discrepancy between the view of the ‘Marxist’ Doukas of the 1920s and early 1930s and the world evoked by his letters of the time. An example that disrupts the simple opposition between the idea of the first-hand witness and the mediation of such a witness is the biographical account of Doukas by the late Vassilis Stefanou (1983). Drawing on his memory as an old friend, and framing the past in a Marxist interpretation, Stefanou unconsciously borrows from Doukas’ fictional work to illustrate his account. For example, in his discussion of Doukas’ time as a seasonal worker in the Victorian countryside during the Depression he writes:

For the first time he became conscious of the class composition of Australian society. He could discern the strong racist tendencies of some of the large and medium block holders of Mildura and the more liberal attitudes of the Australian working class fruit pickers.

For the first time he participated in the attempts by the then militant Australian Workers Union to organise fruit pickers in the area. (Stefanou 1983: 16)

Doukas’ letters at the time, however, reveal a quite different reality. In late 1927 he had written home about Australian workers in the following way: ‘Incredibly parochial and

xenophobic (I mean the workers and the lower classes).³⁵ His perceptions did not alter significantly over the next five years. As for organising fruit pickers, this is simply a fictionalised event in the life of the protagonist Strátis Mourtzos in *Under Foreign Skies* meant to show him as a participant in the class struggle of the time (Doukas 1963: 130-134). Strátis and his unemployed friends take part in an unemployed workers' march that is attacked by a local rightwing group. Five of the men are bashed and thrown into the river Murray. A similar real-life event did in fact occur in Mildura on Sunday 1st November 1931 when members of the Unemployed Workers' Movement were bashed by a mob of 'loyal' citizens incited by local civic leaders and the police.³⁶ Doukas, however, was far away then, working in a fish shop in Dandenong, and according to his letters, quite uninvolved in politics. He either read about it later or, more likely, heard accounts of it from leftwing Greeks living in Mildura at the time.³⁷ The example illustrates the point that even Stefanou who knew Doukas from his earliest years was unable to clearly differentiate in his recollection of the past between fictional creation and biographical fact. If Stefanou's account of Doukas' life is deeply compromised by the latter's fictional retelling, and flawed in its apparent factuality, then the readings of *Under Foreign Skies* that perceive it as reliable testimony and the historical voice of instinctive radical consciousness are also deeply problematic. Of course Stefanou is a special case because there is evidence that he had political input into the novel and this will be discussed in greater detail later.

³⁵ Letter 24.12.1927. Op. cit.

³⁶ *Sunraysia Daily* 28 October & 2 November 1931. *The Workers' Weekly* 6 & 13 November 1931.

³⁷ This can be compared to the interesting case of the historian Manning Clark who, though not present at the events at Kristallnacht in Bonn on 10 November 1938, later recounted the events as a first-person witness (McKenna 2007).

Framing the Novels

It is the literary analyses that come closest to touching on the problem that Doukas' novels appear to present. These centre on issues of genre, literary quality and the historical and sociological value of such 'migrant' literature. Although not always articulated as such, the discussions frequently involve confusion over periods and different theorisations of minority literature. The revived interest in Doukas as a writer is signalled with the 1983 issue of the Melbourne literary magazine *Antipodes* which published four short essays on the subject. Christos Fifis (1983: 2), while noting that Doukas has difficulties with 'economy and control over the material,' argues for his central position in Greek-Australian literature, both as literary and historical document:

In spite of their undoubted shortcomings, Alekos Doukas' books are firstly documents that contain the 'chronicle' of a period. Secondly, they represent a pioneering landmark and starting point in the literature of Australian Hellenism. (Fifis 1983: 3)

Yiannis Vasilakakos (1983: 8), more severe in his criticism, regards *To Struggle, To Youth* as a flawed work whose literary 'architecture' is undermined by the author's refusal to submit to the fictional requirements of the novel. He goes as far as to say that the book is 'not a novel, nor of course a genuine autobiography as it is narrated in the third person, but rather a fictionalised memoir' (Vasilakakos 1983: 7). Curiously, despite his view, Vasilakakos (1983: 9) concludes similarly to Fifis:

Despite its literary weaknesses, Alekos Doukas' book is undoubtedly a most important historical source and irreplaceable witness-testimony about the events of the Asia

Minor Catastrophe and an undoubted valuable contribution and exhortation to the literature of the overseas Australian Greeks.

Disappointed in the novel's literary construction, he opts in the end to designating it as valuable historical testimony.

In the third essay, Mimis Sophocleous (1983) publishes a letter (12.11.1922) from Alekos Doukas to Stratis from the hospital in Athens.³⁸ This is the first time that a fragment of the correspondence enters the public domain. The letter, with some transcription errors, is framed within an analysis where Doukas' fictional narratives become equivalent to historical process. According to Sophocleous (1983: 11), Doukas, like the protagonist in *To Struggle To Youth*, 'followed an intellectual path along with many others, before and after him: from existential to social questioning, from ignorance to conscious action.' The Marxist liberation narrative, unstated, is clear. The fourth essay by Stefanou (1983) is an account of the author as writer and political thinker, a rather general and abstract representation of an intellectual on an inevitable trajectory from bourgeois to Marxist thinking. As we saw earlier, the fictional narratives are invoked in an unconscious underwriting of the biographical account. The problem is not that Stefanou's account doesn't contain important biographical and political insights but that, at its very core, fictional narrative has become biographical and historical confirmation.

In the 1980s, Doukas is presented and framed historically as an author through Kanarakis' (1980, 1985, 1987) research which culminated in the first documentation of Greek writing in Australia. Kanarakis (1987: xx) classifies authors according to language and his literary

³⁸ The archival source is a letter book sent to Alekos by Stratis in 1946 and which is a copy of a portion of the original letters (1921-1936). Democritus League Archives.

periodisation is based on the criterion of ‘when each of them started expressing himself or herself in a literary way (orally or in writing) in Australia.’ In this literary scheme Doukas is located in ‘New Developments 1922-1939,’ the second period of a four-part scheme. Of the twelve writers listed in this period, five originated from the Ottoman Empire and Kanarakis argues that these writers and their compatriots infused new intellectual and cultural elements into the communities, as well as producing writing about the Asia Minor experience. While not explicit, Kanarakis (1987: 21) does suggest that much of the writing of this period was not published till later: ‘Four of the twelve who represent this period (Theo Georgeson, Homer Regas, Alex Doukas, Costas Malaxos-Alexander) had their works or selections of their works published in independent book form, although only the two books by Homer Regas were actually published in this period.’ The implications of Kanarakis’ periodisation and theorisations will be pursued further in the final chapter; at this juncture I note that his anthology also provides a three-page biographical text on Doukas, the first, and till now, the most extensive published. The information is overall accurate with the exception, as already noted, of the view of Doukas as a leftwing activist in the 1920s. Consistent with this view, Kanarakis (1987: 99) writes: ‘In 1927, deeply frustrated by the political and social conditions as well as the Establishment in Greece, he made the decision to emigrate to Australia...’ Although partially true, as we have seen from the letters, this view conforms more to the fictional narrative of *To Struggle, To Youth* than to biographical evidence. Also noticeably missing is any discussion of the literary and cultural impact of Doukas’ communist views and activities in the postwar period. Continuing the paratextual effects of the blurb of *Under of Foreign Skies*, Kanarakis (1987: 101) repeats, as do almost all the writers, the statement linking Doukas death and the Peace March.

Another important reference to Doukas' fiction in the 1980s is by Con Castan (1983, 1986b, 1988) whose theoretical approach, as we shall see in the final chapter, is at odds with Kanarakis. However, despite his reservations about Kanarakis' periodisation, he appears to adopt its assumptions when it comes to assessing *Under Foreign Skies* (Castan 1983: 7 n1). Referring to Kanarakis' second period Castan (1983: 7-8) writes: 'To my mind the most significant production of this period is Alekos Doukas's autobiography/novel, *Under Foreign Skies*, although it was not published until 1962 [sic].'³⁹ The inference is that the work was written in the interwar period, in other words, in the historical period in which its narrative time is set. As we have seen, this is how a range of commentators has invariably read this work. To be fair, Castan (1983: 24 n4), in a reflexive reconsideration, footnotes the above sentence with the following qualification: 'I have no knowledge of the history of its composition. Its content belongs to the period before mass migration, but it was not published until after the author's death.' The footnote leaves the issue unresolved.

Castan continues his analysis of the novel by noting its description of the life of itinerant migrants during the Depression years and the protagonist's anti-bourgeois orientation. He then comments on Doukas the author and immigrant of the 1920s: 'Like so many other refugees from Asia Minor, he was radical in his views, and what he sought out and found in Australia was not wealth – which he most certainly did not want – but the native radical tradition' (Castan 1983: 8) As biographical statement this is supposition, suggesting as it does that Doukas arrived in the Depression as a radical and was therefore naturally drawn to the Australian 'radical tradition.' We know that the first part of the sentence is untrue while the second generally holds, although for reasons different to those suggested. Castan is of course

³⁹ The date of 1962 is simply a careless mistake which Castan acknowledges in a reply included in criticisms made by Kanarakis (1984: 81).

simply sketching an era in broad brush strokes and the complexity of individual cases is not under discussion. Even so, his generalisation rests on the assumption that refugees were on the whole radical, and that Doukas himself was a radical in this period.

The pervasive view of Greek refugees as radical in the 1920s, immediately following their exodus from Turkey, has been questioned in recent years by Greek historians as a retrospective stereotype based on refugee radicalisation in the 1930s and the Occupation (Veremis 2003, Mazower 1991, Balta 2003). To what extent Castan has extrapolated from the fictional work to the life in this case is not clear but there does seem to be a degree of assumption about the biographical veracity of the fiction. The next sentence in the article, which turns attention back to the literary work, also contains a certain ambiguity in terms of historical periods and literary movements: 'In *Under Foreign Skies* Greek radicalism blends with the traditions of Eureka, the *Bulletin*, and perhaps socialist realism in the guise of a mobile southern-European migrant' (Castan 1983: 8). The ambiguity consists in the unclear distinction between the older republican nationalist literary tradition in Australia and its incorporation into the socialist realist movement of the postwar period. The qualifying 'perhaps socialist realism' suggests that Castan is not sure to which of the two literary movements Doukas is primarily connected. Had Doukas absorbed the *Bulletin* tradition directly as a migrant in the late 1920s and 1930s or had he come to it through the postwar movement of leftwing realist writing? In an article written three years later, Castan (1986b: 65) has located the novel's generic and political provenance: 'Under the influence of the Communist Socialist Realists of the 1950s Doukas espoused the cult of mateship of itinerant rural workers, and his novel is permeated with a multicultural version of this.'

I have pursued in some detail the process of gradual explication of this confusion around the literary provenance of *Under Foreign Skies* because it appears to operate at a wider level of interpretation and debate in relation to Doukas' literary work. Castan's identification of Doukas' writing with the ideas of multiculturalism is another issue that bears on our discussion and will be explored in the final chapter.

In a later essay, Castan (1988: 23) returns to Doukas' writing as a 'problem' of failed realism that produces 'wooden and unsubtle' prose. He concludes that the problem is one of unresolved choice between wholly different genres - 'realist prose' and 'fiction which had a thesis' - with the result that Doukas often fails to combine them successfully (Castan 1988: 23). As we shall see, this view of mistaken choice of genre is held by a number of writers. Castan repeats his earlier view that *Under Foreign Skies* is an attempt to graft Greek radicalism and 'Australian outback tradition' and concludes that 'the attempt is more interesting than many smaller successes' (Castan 1988: 23). Castan has rightly detected the presence of the radical nationalist literary tradition in Doukas' fiction under the influence of postwar Australian socialist realism, but is his explanation of the shortcomings of *Under Foreign Skies* an adequate account? Is it simply a matter of the unsuccessful combination of genres? Or do we need to discuss the work's success or failure in the specific historical literary discourse and practice in which it was written?

Dimitris Tzoumaccas (1990a, 2003) is one of the few writers to analyse Doukas' fiction within the discourse of socialist realism and to attempt a critical appraisal in terms of its own aesthetic and political aims. He concludes that Doukas' attempt to create a type of migrant proletarian literature failed as an aesthetic project. Tzoumaccas (2003: 43, 47) provides a number of reasons: the mythologising of human relations; the avoidance of the darker sides of

social reality such as endemic racism (including that of the working class); the almost 'metaphysical' view of the evils of capitalism; and the absence of women in the narrative except as hagiographic symbols of 'nature' as opposed to masculine 'culture.' The literary weaknesses identified are similar to those remarked on by Fifis (1983) and Vasilakakos (1983) and include the lack of economy and subordination of extraneous material, as well as the undifferentiated voices of the all-knowing narrator and characters. But despite these weaknesses, Tzoumaccas concludes that Doukas' novels present a challenge in their idealised, indeed utopian, recognition of the racial, ethnic or national 'Other.' It is Doukas' discourse of idealism and socialist ideology, 'the humanist, inter-racial, classless and propaganda elements that it contains,' that Tzoumaccas (2003: 57) celebrates in a somewhat quixotic recognition of it as a reminder of an innocent, but bygone, era of radical migrant ideology:

The books however provide us with an initial stimulus, they provoke a curiosity about our migrant past, they provide a certain measure against which we can compare Australian life then and now. To see his heroes and ours, the paupers of that time and the comfortable of the 1990s. In short, to see the Greek community in Australia diachronically, its journey and development and the dangers that emerge on the one hand, with the growth of the 'ethnic' self, and on the other, its absorption into the consumerist society. They provide us with the opportunity to engage in self-criticism.

This aspect of Tzoumaccas' analysis is symptomatic of a tendency in the study to largely ignore the actual historical context of the writing in favour of an analysis of the texts as a discourse of idealisation. The study does, however, importantly note the Cold War attempts to suppress radical migrant political and literary activity, the political incarceration of socialist realist writers in Greece, as well as the 'power and influence' of social realism in art and literature in Australia in the 1930s and 40s (Tzoumaccas 2003: 6). What it does not do is

address the historical specificities of the periods in question. This perhaps explains the somewhat self-contradictory position Tzoumacas takes, for while analysing the novels as art-propaganda, he still remains wedded to the view of them as biographical testimony. A clear articulation of this view occurs in the last pages of his study, wedged amongst a series of statements that focus on the social and political vision offered in Doukas' discourse.

Whatever the faults of the literary expression of this vision, argues Tzoumacas (2003: 57), it constitutes a challenge: 'It is a migrant expression and as such is testimony.' Crudely or subtly expressed, this idea remains at the heart of such analyses. In a library bulletin about Doukas, Tzoumacas (1990b: 3) introduces the two novels in the following way: 'In reality we are reading the author's biography.' He then proceeds to succinctly condense a number of ideas into a short statement, that as we have seen, involves the same common blurring of periods:

Through his literary work which in reality is a document of an era, we see the revival and spread of the ideology of an entire migrant group (with all the contradictions and exaggerations) which acknowledges Alekos Doukas as the ideological leader.
(Tzoumacas 1990b: 3)

The phrase 'document of an era,' although non-specific, refers contextually to the period of the Depression. Doukas' novels, in particular *Under Foreign Skies*, 'revive' and 'spread' the radical ideology of a migrant group for whom Doukas is an exemplary representative.

Embedded in the statement is the simultaneous, and contradictory, idea that the novels are postwar creations but biographically related to the Depression years through the figure of Doukas. For Tzoumacas (1997: 30), Doukas is a 'pioneer' because he wrote the first 'Greek novel' in Australia during the difficult Cold War period, but he remains a 'socialist romantic.'

In an article about to go to press, Vasilakakos (2009 forthcoming) revisits the subject of Doukas in an attempt to understand the latter's literary shortcomings and, perhaps paradoxically, why that author continues to attract a certain interest in the field of Greek-Australian studies.⁴⁰ Vasilakakos approaches the subject through Alekos' relationship with his brother Stratis, the accomplished writer and critic, drawing on the latter's letters and the limited biographical information published to date.⁴¹ He expresses a degree of frustration over Doukas' apparent indifference to professional literary success and his disregard of his brother's literary craft advice. His analysis proceeds primarily through a biographical and psychological framework but many of his conclusions are the result of a forced reading of limited biographical fragments, and these sometimes out of context (Vasilakakos 2009 forthcoming: 6-7 n31 & 32). His article is of interest however as it signals a point in the ongoing discussion of Doukas in which the need is expressed for the publication of the author's correspondences (Vasilakakos 2009 forthcoming: 1-2). In his view, the contradictions in the evidence and views expressed around this literary figure have reached a critical mass requiring a public interrogation of the archive. Although such an appeal is in line with the writer of this thesis, Vasilakakos' approach is an overly psychologised analysis that fails to consider Doukas' literary aesthetics and practice within the historical context of postwar Australian socialist realist writing. His arguments in the essay culminate in an overly harsh judgement of Doukas the writer: 'He remained an immature, disorientated and disorganised child holding romantic, idealistic and utopian ideas, muddling through oceans of doubt, a child who – at least, as an author – never matured' (Vasilakakos 2009 forthcoming: 7). He concludes that Doukas was unsuccessful because in the final analysis he lacked the skills and passion to become a serious writer: 'nor was he willing to serve [literature]

⁴⁰ The author has kindly provided me with the manuscript of the article. References are to manuscript page numbers.

⁴¹ See S. Doukas (1975b). For other biographical information Vasilakakos refers to Sophocleous (1983), Kanarakis (1987), Alexiou (1997), Tzoumacas (2003).

disinterestedly, in other words as an autonomous art' (Vasilakakos 2009 forthcoming: 11-12). The criteria of such a judgement, however, concern the very issues over which socialist realist literature staked its claims in the 1940s and 1950s, the non-autonomy of art and the artist's political commitment in their work. It is in this context that the successes or failures of Doukas' literary creations need to be initially understood and evaluated.

The arguments in Vasilakakos' (2009 forthcoming) essay 'Alekos Doukas: a disputed "patriarch" of Greek-Australian literature,' belie rather than confirm the title's suggested ambivalence, concluding that Doukas is indeed the 'pioneer' and 'patriarch' of this literature. The reasons provided are three: for all their faults the novels are an 'important historical source and irreplaceable witness-testimony'⁴² and their discourse is important for all the reasons that Tzoumaccas (2003: 57) has written about (Vasilakakos 2009 forthcoming: 13). In the last paragraph of the essay, Vasilakakos (2009 forthcoming: 14) extends his argument significantly:

All the above can be summarised in the finding that A. Doukas was not only a 'pioneer' but in essence the *forerunner* of what was later to be called 'multiculturalism' and 'multicultural society' in the faraway fifth continent.... If 'multiculturalism' can be seen as a *model* for today's 'globalisation,' then it can be understood why A. Doukas' fictional work (with the vision, struggles and apprehensions it expresses) – almost half a century ago – about such a globalised society and humanity, is self-evidently important.

While there is much here that is uncontextualised and potentially contentious, it raises an issue that is often touched upon but never analysed in discussions of Doukas. In fact, Vasilakakos quotes from a talk I delivered in 1997 and in which I said that Doukas 'in his

⁴² Quoting himself from Vasilakakos (1983: 9).

later writings promoted a vision which in many ways was a pioneering and embryonic form of multiculturalism' (Alexiou 1997: 6). Although a qualified and tentative line of thought at the time, it needs to be pursued more systematically. The issue of 'multiculturalism' in Doukas' writings, also touched on in the brief quote by Castan above, needs to be critically examined. In broad terms it requires the investigation of the historical and discursive connections, or disconnections, between the leftwing internationalist cultural politics of the 1940s and 1950s and multiculturalism(s) of the 1970s and onwards.

IV

A Genre Mistake or Mistaken Genre?

As we have seen, Doukas' two novels tend to be read as history, testimony and autobiography, or in some literary critiques, as failed literature that perhaps was meant to be autobiography. This latter view is clearly enunciated by the Greek-American scholar Thomas Doulis (1977: 187) who regards *To Struggle, To Youth* as an 'incorrect choice of genre' resulting from the restriction in Greek letters of autobiography to the public memoirs of military or political figures, and not ordinary folk. Doulis (1977: 188), who regards this work as 'an unconvincing novel' that 'might have been an invaluable autobiography,' clearly reads the narrative as intended memoir. This generic assumption frames his reading. Doulis is genuinely interested in the social and historical 'content' of *To Struggle, To Youth*, but nowhere is there an indication that the work has been read with a clear understanding of its literary aspirations. In this respect, it is interesting to compare what Stefanou (1963: 9) wrote about *Under Foreign Skies* which, with certain qualifications, could apply to the first novel.

The novel, he wrote, avoids describing the author's personal experience in the Depression, aiming instead to present typical characters from different countries who find themselves, not in the 'promised land,' but in a society 'in the process of development' (Stefanou 1963: 9). Stefanou's article clearly links Doukas' novels to the literary discourse that promoted the Australian socialist realist 'historical novel' of the 1950s (Carter 2002: 99-100). Even the first novel, which has a stronger autobiographical basis, subtly transforms private and personal elements into portraits typical of a class and historical period in 'the process of development.' The reading of the novels as failed autobiography, or simply as thinly disguised autobiography, is a misreading of their literary construction and historical context.

In discussions of Greek writers in Australia, there is marked absence of studies of Greek literary influences and movements. It is as though on arrival in Australia the migrating writer enters an intellectual universe in which previous literary culture is wiped clean.⁴³ In this view, the writer is invariably circumscribed to traditional genres and migrant-related themes such as nostalgia, bitterness and alienation. In discussing Greek migrant writers, including the prewar generation, Tzoumakas (2003: ii) writes that 'they were not able to express any significant literary movement.' He cites their low level of education and the hardships of economic survival as factors that restricted literary creation to nostalgic preoccupation with the past.⁴⁴ In contrasting Doukas to his peers, Tzoumakas points to the social and political aspects of his writing, but significantly there is almost no historical context provided, either relating to modes of fiction dominant in Greek literature in the interwar period or in Australian fiction after WWII.

⁴³ This compares with the 'tabula rasa' view of migrants that is critiqued in Pugliese (2007).

⁴⁴ Helen Nickas (1966) also tends to stress that Greek migrants were tied to forms of orality and not 'textual' composition. This assumption of orality is often based on an assumption that rural Greeks were largely illiterate and unsophisticated. However, many of the prewar generation were relatively well educated, as were quite a few postwar migrants who authored literary works.

As we have seen, Doukas' literary attempts in the 1920s were strongly influenced by Greek symbolism and neo-romantic literary movements. His postwar writing in Australia can be productively studied as the merging or transformation of these with Australian literary modes. This process of interaction and adaptation has been little studied, a preoccupation with thematic analysis dominating instead. Kanarakis (1980: 29), for example, tends to characterise his periods in thematic terms, the prewar generation pursuing 'traditional themes' and the writers of the 1940s nationalist patriotic subjects. This approach presents an overly static view of literature and overlooks its evolution through generic innovation and adaptation. In this sense, the reading of Doukas' postwar fiction primarily for thematic and historical content has obscured its literary context and innovative qualities. In the next section I will attempt to briefly sketch this context as a counter-example to the literary frameworks in which Doukas has been read in the last three to four decades.

A corollary of the above tendency to overlook the literary background of incoming writers is the view of migrant literature as existing in isolation from literary currents in Australia. Castan (1986: 65, 1988: 23-24) is one of the few critics to have identified elements of the radical nationalist tradition in *Under Foreign Skies*, although the specific connections between these and socialist realism are left largely unexplored. In Castan's (1988: 23) brief discussions of Doukas' work there is a reluctance to probe the historical context of the writing; the preference being to simply analyse the perceived incompatibility between realism and political thesis. This conforms to a wider literary institutional reluctance to address the communist cultural politics implicit in such texts. As David Carter (1985: 94) points out, there is a 'notable absence from Australian literary history in its habitual forms of any full account of communist cultural doctrines, practices and intellectual associations.' This includes 'a

blurring of “left” and/or “nationalist” categories,’ the taken-for-granted view that politics and art are incompatible and the view of communist-influenced literature as belonging to ‘a “pre-maturity” or “pre-literary” phase.’ These modes of interpretation appear to be at work in Castan’s analysis of Doukas’ fiction.

The Context of the Work

In what way are Alekos Doukas novels ‘socialist realist’ and what was the context of their creation, publication and mediation? This question will be pursued through a brief analysis of the novels, their relationship to socialist realist discourse and other published novels in the early 1950s, their publication circumstances and mediation with the reading public through prefaces and newspaper articles. A further connection with socialist realism of the time are the translations of Australian authors by Doukas and his co-workers in the magazine *Greek-Australian Review* (1951-1953). Doukas’ own interest in socialist realist literature appears to have begun during the war when he translated Russian literature from English (see Alekos Doukas: Select Bibliography). He continued to translate Russian short stories throughout the 1940s, sending manuscripts to Stratis, and his translation of Aleksei Tolstoi’s novella *The Viper* was published in 1953 (Tolstoi 1953).

Although published ten years apart, Doukas’ two novels were actually written in close chronological proximity in the period 1952 to 1956. *To Struggle, To Youth*, published in November 1953, was written in a four-month period between September 1952 and January 1953.⁴⁵ Building on a number of short stories he had written in the previous two years recounting aspects of life in Turkey prior to 1922, Doukas threw himself into the grand

⁴⁵ Letter 16.5.1953. Op. cit.

project of writing a novelistic narrative that encompassed the main events of his life. His description to Stratis in May 1953 conceptualises the work in Marxist terms: 'It portrays a bourgeois family, its disintegration, and the progressive seed that grows again to bring forth a more evolved plant, contemporary man and his problems.'⁴⁶ That the novel took the shape of the 'historical novel,' a distinctly Australian literary application of socialist realism, is due in great part to the influence of novels like Frank Hardy's 1950 *Power Without Glory* and Ralph de Boissiere's 1952 *Crown Jewel*, each in its own way presenting a period of the history of Australia and Trinidad respectively through a realist narrative in which class struggle is a central focus (Carter 2002: 100-102). *To Struggle, To Youth* is closely related to such novels in its 'long historical perspective' and the transitional arc of the protagonist who slowly sheds his bourgeois 'education' to acquire a working-class consciousness (Carter 2002). What is notable about it, and characteristic of its Marxist analysis, is the way it represents the Greek experience of defeat and exodus from Turkey within the framework of a progressive Turkish national liberation struggle whose victory in turn brings with it the repression of the Turkish communist movement.⁴⁷ Through this 'historical' narrative, the novel promotes anti-fascist and working class struggle as an inherent expression of internationalist solidarity and friendship.

To Struggle, To Youth occupies a unique literary location in that, while it undeniably belongs to an Asia Minor Greek literature that developed in Greece after 1922, its literary expression and genre derive from the discursive space of 1950s Australia. The novel addresses multiple audiences: the Greek refugee community, the literary establishment in Greece, the Greeks of Australia, and, potentially, an English-speaking audience in Australia. This is reflected in the

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Doulis (1977: 273) inadvertently alludes to this analysis when he writes that the novel's author could only interpret the past in this way from 'a great psychological distance' and as a 'progressive' in the post Civil War period.

novel's generic mix that draws on the older Greek naturalistic *ethography* for its depiction of folk life in Asia Minor, European anti-war novels arising from WWI for its narration of the Asia Minor Campaign and Australian contemporary realism in its brief portrayal of leftwing postwar Greek migrants. These genres are subordinated, however, within an overall structure and thematic organisation which is the socialist realist 'historical novel.' The narrator makes his political sympathies clear and in this respect the novel has similarities with Judah Waten's 1954 'migrant' novel *The Unbending*, a work that provoked controversy in the literary world over its handling of the relationship between 'rhetoric' and 'representation' (Carter 1989). Like that novel, *To Struggle, To Youth* also has its textual strategies for narrative mediation between 'the competing aesthetic and political discourses' which are carried out with varying degrees of success (Carter 1989: 46).

Doukas began writing his second novel even before *To Struggle, To Youth* went to press and it was mostly completed between 1953 and 1956.⁴⁸ It represents the reworking of an older narrative idea attempted in 'Under the Southern Cross' about an itinerant migrant worker in the Depression. But now it was written in an entirely different genre and structure. The migrant-protagonist is no longer a loner in the Hamsunesque manner but one of a group of international workers who are initiated into an Australian class consciousness by the radical bush worker Fred O'Hara. The work has all the elements of the 'historical novel' – the 'typical' characters, the movement towards class consciousness and the panoramic historical framework. Like de Boissiere's *Crown Jewel* which 'begins with a panoramic parable-style account of Trinidad from Columbus to 1935,' Doukas' novel begins with a 'Brief Historical Survey' from thirteenth-century European exploration to Australian Federation (Carter 2002: 105). This introductory section devotes a third of its space to the issue of Aborigines and,

⁴⁸ Letters 16.5.1953, 24.9.1953 & 17.2.1962. Op. cit.

while sympathetic and 'progressive' for its time, consists of a number of Marxist ideas incorporated into a European colonialist discourse.⁴⁹ Reflecting the pattern of other Australian communist novels which are set in a 'pre-communist' period, *Under Foreign Skies* is set in the pre-mass migration era, providing the author with the opportunity to have his migrant characters absorb something of the radical nationalist bush tradition and to narrate the beginnings of the organised Greek left movement (Carter 2002: 101-102).⁵⁰ It is worth noting that Doukas' socialist realism is an excursion into a general historicised past which largely steers clear of the complications of contemporary life. The adoption of the nationalist bush tradition as the authentic democratic Australian culture in *Under Foreign Skies* goes hand in hand with the narrative's marked masculinist point of view. In the area of gendered social relations, as Tzoumaccas (2003) has noted, Doukas' fiction is traditionalist and conservative.

Doukas does not appear to have taken up a socialist realism in a theoretical way, but rather through a gradual and deepening political activism which exposed him to the influence of leftwing Australian writers during the 1940s and 1950s. Demoticist Greek literature always remained a source of influence, but after WWII he also turned to the militant socialist realist writing of Themis Kornaros. After receiving a copy of the latter's novel *Camp Haidari*, he was keen to translate it into English and later compared his own preference for stating his mind politically in his fiction with that of Kornaros.⁵¹ To trace the process of change in Doukas writing would involve an exploration of a series of transformations in discourses and practices that occurred over the period of the 1930s to the 1940s. In the 1920s he was a keen reader of Maxim Gorky's realist fiction. Significantly, it was Gorky who as an international

⁴⁹ Doukas is often read as someone who has the ability to empathise with the Aboriginal people but the existence of colonialist and paternalist assumptions in his texts is not addressed. His 1950s views are too easily equated with contemporary anti-colonialist positions. This holds for Nicolacopoulos (2004a: 232-233).

⁵⁰ Carter cites as examples Katherine Susannah Pritchard's *Goldfields Trilogy* (1946-50) and Frank Hardy's *Power Without Glory*.

⁵¹ Letter 5.7.1956. Op. cit.

literary figure came to symbolise the transition from the older realism to socialist realism which in the 1930s became the institutional Soviet literary doctrine. In the 1950s, Alekos and Stratis agreed on the conventional left distinction between socialist realism in a capitalist as opposed to a socialist society; in the former it was ‘dynamite’ and the latter a ‘trowel and plumb line.’⁵² Both realist impulses exist in Alekos’ fiction, although it has to be said that his novels favour a certain socialist optimism, reflecting a deep faith in a benign socialism as the inevitable solution to capitalism’s social problems.

Whatever the influences from Greece, it was the discursive space of leftwing politics and publishing that enabled Doukas’ fictional writing in the early 1950s.⁵³ Doukas’ contact with leftwing and progressive intellectuals began during the war. For example, in a pro-Greek resistance meeting in Melbourne organised by the Democritus League on 4 February 1945, he shared the same platform with Nettie Palmer who, along with her husband Vance Palmer, were leading figures in a progressive nationalist literary movement.⁵⁴ The support of Australian communist and democratic writers was significant in the many protests and petitions Doukas was involved in throughout the 1940s and 1950s. Doukas and his Greek co-workers shared with such writers and intellectuals the relentless and obsessive attention of Australia’s security services. For example, a letter from the Director of Posts and Telegraphs to the Commonwealth Investigation Service in December 1953 suggests that Doukas’ book *To Struggle, To Youth* with a ‘brief note by Walt Whitman.... may not be considered loyal.’⁵⁵

⁵² Letter 12.7.1955. Op. cit.

⁵³ This line of research is partly prompted by an observation raised by Tsounis (1987c: 53): ‘Why his [Doukas’] book *Under Foreign Skies* was published in the early 1960s – exactly at the peak of the great schism – and by whom it was published is a question worth answering, it would tell us a lot, particularly about the violent opening of the closed Greek micro-society in the antipodes.’

⁵⁴ Security Service Report, 6 February 1945. Series A6126/25, Item 568. National Archives of Australia.

⁵⁵ Letter 31.12.1953 from Director, Posts and Telegraphs to Director, Commonwealth Investigation Service. Series A6126/25, Item 568. Op. cit.

There is evidence that Doukas and others in the Democritus League, had contacts with the Melbourne Realist Writers Group whose activities and influence were at their height in the literary debates of the early 1950s (McKernan 1989: 25-26). In 1952, communist and 'left-leaning' writers set up the Australasian Book Society with the broad aim of publishing an uneasy 'triad' of 'literary, nationalist and left-wing' books (Carter 2002: 97). In the same period, Doukas, Stefanou and other leftwing Greeks were publishing the bilingual *Greek-Australian Review*, which, though a broad cultural magazine, did give prominent place to socialist realist fiction through translations and short stories by Doukas and other migrant writers. The magazine opened up new cultural spaces for Greek migrants while at the same time adopting the conservative aspects of the communist nationalist line on Australian history and culture.⁵⁶ From July 1952 the magazine devoted a regular section to the translation of Australian literature, beginning with Henry Lawson and continuing with the contemporary socialist realist writers Eric Lambert, John Morrison, William Hatfield, Frank Hardy, J.S. Manifold and others.

The affinity of *To Struggle, To Youth* with the communist realist literary movement in Melbourne is further illustrated by its material production. For example, it shares with *The Tracks We Travel*, an anthology of 'Australian short stories' edited by Stephen Murray-Smith and published by the Australasian Book Society, the same printing press (Coronation), the same format and the same orange cover bearing in each case a drawing by the realist painter Noel Counihan.⁵⁷ The two books rolled off the press in November and December 1953 respectively and belong to the literary 'stable' of Australian socialist realism. Their

⁵⁶ See editorial 'Our Purpose' which is clearly written by Doukas. *Greek-Australian Review* Vol. 1 No. 1 June 1951, pp. 1-2. The views expressed by Doukas about the civilising role of white explorers are not that different to the views he held in the late 1920s.

⁵⁷ In Genette's (1997: 16) terminology the books are situated in close proximity sharing common 'spatial and material' dimensions in the 'zone of the peritext.'

differences lie in language, audience and the fact that Doukas met his own publishing expenses. A further connection lies in the fact that the majority of Australian short-story authors already translated in the *Greek-Australian Review* also appear in *The Tracks We Travel*.

I have already referred to the prefaces in *To Struggle To Youth* which express the basic elements in the communist movement's literary policies of the early 1950s. These also inform Doukas' second novel which however was not published until 1963 by which time socialist realism had begun to lose its centrality in the literary sphere, giving way to new literary forms and cultural debates (McKernan 1989). When *Under Foreign Skies* was finally published it appeared at a time when the Cold War certainties and divisions were beginning to weaken. The Greek left however was a significant force in the cultural and political life of the Melbourne Greek community, which after ten years of mass migration, was vibrant and growing in confidence. Postwar Greek migrants had come out of a situation of occupation, starvation, civil war, and extreme impoverishment and unemployment. They were thirsty for knowledge, art, political debate and democratic participation. The publication of the weekly newspaper *Neos Kosmos* from 1957 aimed to fulfil this need. It was through this newspaper, that Doukas co-founded, that *Under Foreign Skies* was launched posthumously. Stefanou (1963: 9) 'introduced' the novel in an article which essentially extols the virtues of socialist realist writing - typicality, society in the process of development, optimism, participation in struggle. The novel is offered as an 'invaluable' source of information to new migrants about their adopted country, particularly the 'historical struggles' it extensively describes.

Six months later, on the occasion of the one-year memorial of Doukas' death, a longer article by S. Mavrantonis (1963) appeared in *Neos Kosmos* which provided a more literary appraisal

of the work but also a vigorous articulation of the 'stricter' principles of socialist realism.⁵⁸ Mavrantonis (1963: 11) regards Doukas as 'the pioneer intellectual teacher' not simply because he is the first to create a 'complete literary work' but also because, despite his literary shortcomings, he is the first to begin the creation of 'a literary tradition on firm foundations that will be able to embrace the people and become their own.' The article finds faults with the narrative plot and development of the novel but these are forgiven because the author 'juxtaposes social ideas and attitudes and attempts the analysis of events and conditions that can be instructional.' Of interest, in terms of the early 1960s literary climate, is the writer's contrasting of an autonomous modernism with the true calling of the working class writer:

A. Doukas is not a dreamer or mere office scribbler, but a fighter in life, who transfers his experience, struggles, events and memories of a long fight into his books.... As a worker of the pen, he has stood on the platform with those fighters who create to benefit society and not to satisfy themselves or to be 'released' from 'banality' by serving the goddess of Art and sacrificing every expediency at her altar except that of Art. (Mavrantonis 1963: 11,13)

The article is evidence of the continuation in the Greek community of a literary creed and practice that in the broader community was being treated with a growing scepticism by many writers. We need to keep in mind that political conditions in Greece, at least to 1974 when the military junta collapsed, ensured that many literary and cultural debates of earlier decades maintained their ideological momentum. The article is one of the last occasions on which the Greek left declares its hopes for the development of a Greek-Australian cultural movement based on the continuation of work exemplified by Doukas. Referring to the short-story

⁵⁸ Mavrantonis seems to be closer to the group of communist writers who in the 1950s were in favour of the 'strictest interpretation of socialist realism' (Frank Hardy, Eric Lambert, Victor Williams and Ralph de Boissiere) as opposed to those 'who argued for greater freedom for the individual writer' (John Manifold, David Martin, John Morrison and Mona Brand) (McKernan 1989: 30-31).

competition in memory of Doukas, launched in January 1963 and completed in December of the same year, Mavrantonis (1963: 13) writes: 'Let the literary competition in memory of the pioneer be a starting-point and a decisive beginning for the creation of a significant Greek tradition in Australia.' This hope for a leftwing migrant working class cultural movement does not appear to have been realised, at least in the way it was envisaged at the time. Doukas' militant fictional work was largely forgotten until the late 1970s and early 1980s when Australia entered a new phase of cultural and social liberalisation bringing with it the discourse of multiculturalism.⁵⁹ Whether the Greek left's cultural interventions of the 1940s and 1950s left behind a living legacy is another story. What is clear is that the broader Australian cultural climate had changed in the ten years between the publication of Doukas' two books and the Greek left had become more autonomous in its political and cultural life. The publication of *Under Foreign Skies* by the 'Australian Greek Publications Pty. Ltd,' and not the Communist Party press, is one indication of this.

An important question that arises in regard to Doukas' postwar novels is the extent to which they are a traditional form of Greek prose writing or adaptations to Australian conditions. Did they follow a doctrinaire literary model of socialist realism or were they innovative works? Literary analyses in later decades do not as a whole pose these questions, remaining undecided about the novels' status and troubled by their failings as measured against the modernist novelistic genre. Carter (1985: 94) argues that writers in the decades from the 1930s to the 1950s were genuinely attracted to communist ideas about literature, and the dynamics were such that neither the view of the writer as a sterile executor of socialist realist doctrine nor that of the middle-class intellectual 'on the doctrinairely-soft side of the Party'

⁵⁹ In this period Greek mass migration ended and in Greece a period of parliamentary democracy and relative economic prosperity began.

are accurate. Socialist realism theory was a broad set of criteria ('realism with a socialist tendency') that was abstract enough to allow for individual interpretation (Carter 2002: 101):

In practice, however, for the writer confronting the blank sheet of paper.... the issue of how to write a socialist or communist novel was still very much an open question, and it is important to see the debates and 'experiments' socialist realism occasioned as productive of writing and ideas, not merely as ideologically stifling and aesthetically toxic. Socialist realism spoke to needs and aspirations; it articulated a conceptual and historical dimension to the literary.

Seen in this context, Doukas' novels can be seen as 'experimental' and creative attempts to produce a new kind of writing related to refugee and migrant experience. As has been pointed out by Fifis (1983: 3), they have no real successors or predecessors in Greek-Australian literature. Taking into account Alekos' ongoing discussions with his brother Stratis on the progress of these books, the picture that emerges is one of spontaneous bursts of writing and a struggle to find structural unity, rather than the pursuance of a doctrinaire formula.⁶⁰ Socialist realist discourse provided Alekos Doukas with an overarching literary structure, the 'historical novel,' which allowed him to make creative use of his earlier and current writing (history, *ethography*, short stories, political writing, autobiographical material) along with a felt political urgency to use literature as a cultural intervention.

Alekos Doukas and the Party

Doukas' postwar writing raises interesting questions as to his relationship as a writer with the CPA, or at least the Greek branch of it. In the case of his novels, the Party, in a broad sense,

⁶⁰ In letter 16.5.1953, op. cit., Alekos describes how he wrote *To Struggle, To Youth* and how he struggled to find a way to end it.

was both publisher and editor.⁶¹ The person who played the role of communist theorist and advisor in Doukas' writing was his friend Vassilis Stefanou, and it was to him that Doukas passed on the manuscript of *To Struggle, To Youth*.⁶² It was after discussions with Stefanou that Doukas integrated its two separate narratives of the Greek and Turkish protagonists, and also added a third part, so that instead of ending in Smyrna with the defeat of the Greek army, the narrative went forward to the early 1950s and the world of migrants in Australia. The question of how the novel ended was political, at least in Stefanou's thinking. He argued for the Australian section to show how the lives of migrants were part of the new country, in opposition to 'this tendency of the Greek middle class intellectuals to live in the past of Greece...'⁶³ After a period of personal doubt, Doukas added the third section.⁶⁴ Stefanou's key role in the passage from manuscript to book is reflected in his writing of the 'Prologue.' In later years, Stefanou even claimed a certain 'authorship' of Doukas' books, presumably referring to his role as political confidant: '...without being egotistical about it or claiming to be an intellectual, I was responsible for the authorship of those books mainly because Alekos Doukas was much more proficient in the Greek language than I was. We planned those books together.'⁶⁵ This shouldn't be read at face value as a sign of arrogance or hierarchical Party interference in art but as the testimony of a political relationship of mutual respect and co-operation. Of course, indicative of communist thinking is the fact that in his recollections Stefanou should place his theoretical political input on an equal basis to the creative writing of the author. The description of *Under Foreign Skies* by Stefanou (1983: 16) can be decoded as the memory of a certain political blueprint behind the novel's narrative plot:

⁶¹ I say this despite the fact that Doukas paid for the publishing expenses of his first novel. His letters clearly suggest that he saw the publishing of these novels as part of his political work and therefore his comrades had the right to offer criticism and advice.

⁶² Letter 16.5.1953. Op. cit.

⁶³ Vassilis Stefanou interview with P. Alexiou (7.11.1986).

⁶⁴ Letter 16.5.1953. Op. cit.

⁶⁵ Vassilis Stefanou interview with M. Sophocleous (12.5.1983).

In his [Doukas'] discussions and subsequent lectures in Melbourne he always stressed the diversity of the thought of the Australian people and the need for co-operation with all workers and small block owners, irrespective of their country of origin. In his book *Under Foreign Skies* he extends his appeals for co-operation from the two agricultural workers humping their bluey in the Victorian countryside looking for work, to five workers of various national origins who pool their efforts and resources to overcome their plight.

Alekos' letters provide ample evidence that he was a willing partner in the process of group decision-making on matters pertaining to his books. These included retail price, cover design, titles and the overseeing of the printing. There was not always agreement but more often than not the discussions led to a consensus. For example, the group rejected the title of the second book, which for a long time was 'Under the Southern Cross,' and it was decided they should all think of an alternative title. Doukas writes: 'As no-one could think of one, I came up with *Under Foreign Skies* which contains within it the sorrow and bitterness of exile (*xeniteia*), and we all approved it.'⁶⁶ Its printing had been endlessly postponed since 1956 and only began in October 1961. To the end Doukas saw his literary efforts in a party political context and, in one of the last letters before his death, he writes that to speed up the book's progress he had made certain representations 'further up.'⁶⁷ An insight into Doukas' intellectual position in the CPA is provided by the leftwing trade unionist George Zangalis:

Alekos Doukas was a man who was interested in books above all...He embraced the labour movement more out of emotion than any need. He was a sorrowful man. His wounds, the scar was visible, but it didn't affect the rest of his face. He wore a fedora hat, a tie, and glasses. He didn't like his occupation as a grocer. The migration of the

⁶⁶ Letter 3.7.1962. Op. cit.

⁶⁷ Undated letter (most likely July-August 1962). Op. cit.

1950s gave him a new interest. We encouraged him to write. He used to talk about his brother as a model [writer]. We'd go to his house often. He was frugal. In the cell, Doukas was disciplined, formal. He wasn't the leader, but was respected. He respected decisions; he'd never try to overturn them. He'd give manuscripts to friends to read. He accepted advice and in fact accepted certain interventions in the end by Stefanou. (Tzoumacas 2003: 63)

Indicative of the legendary nature of Doukas and the complex political tensions in the various factions in the Greek left that developed after the early 1960s, memories of Doukas as a leftwing intellectual have varied. The 'In Memory' article commemorating the twenty-five years of his death, remembers him as the communist intellectual who was badly treated by Party members who 'tired to impose on him, in the name of the so-called pure line, their own often authoritarian and dogmatic views and ideas' (Unsigned 1987: 7).

Doukas' relationship with communism is a complex matter not easily exhausted in a brief discussion. The legend that has grown around him presents him as the foundational Marxist of the Greek left, whereas anecdotal evidence suggest that he embraced communism reluctantly and that his religious thinking remained an intellectual element even after his 'conversion.' This is wholly consistent with the picture that emerges from his letters in the interwar years. When Doukas did embrace communism, he did so wholeheartedly and with deep conviction, remaining a member of the CPA from 1940 until his death in 1962. Appearing as a witness in a defamation case in 1944 and responding to a question as to whether he was a 'Greek Communist' he replied 'Yes, and I'm proud of it.'⁶⁸ In the security files, he is variously described as a fishmonger who lives as an 'ideal citizen' and as the 'most vicious type of Red

⁶⁸ *Truth* Melbourne Saturday 9 December 1944, p. 13.

with a gift for swaying meetings.⁶⁹ Whatever his position on the theoretical tenets of communism, Doukas held passionate beliefs about the general goals of socialism and world peace. According to Stefanou, Doukas was never really a theoretical Marxist or communist as he never became a thorough-going materialist.⁷⁰ One of Doukas' deepest objections to communism in the interwar years appears to have been the opposition of historical materialism to his religious metaphysical views. Stefanou recalls that, on the voyage to Australia in 1927, Doukas wanted to discuss 'religion' and 'God' and had heated arguments with another Greek who had been an anarchist in Athens.⁷¹ From his writings it appears that after he became a communist Doukas retained his religious insights in a non-antagonistic relationship with Marxism, re-interpreting certain Biblical teachings, along with the pre-Socratic philosophers, as poetic forms of Marxist dialectical thinking. The idea of the struggle of opposites, the new replacing the old, is a constant motif in his writings.⁷² In *Under Foreign Skies*, the movement to revolutionary consciousness in the novel's narrative is expressed in Biblical terms, the unemployed migrant workers' initiation into the discipleship of socialism occurring on their own 'road to Emmaus' (Doukas 1963: 155).⁷³ The novel ends with the suggestive symbolism of the Old Testament, a poetic dialectic of change: 'The sun knows his going down.... and there was Evening and there was Morning, the first day' (Doukas 1963: 264).⁷⁴ In 1946, Alekos asks Stratis to send him his Septuagint Bible explaining that 'I need it for the beauty of its poetry, but more as Parthian arrows for my discussion with good educated Christians.'⁷⁵

⁶⁹ Series A6122, Item No 1219 and Series A61626/25, Item No 568 respectively. National Archives of Australia.

⁷⁰ Vassilis Stefanou interview with M. Sophocleous (12.5.1983).

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² See letter 4.9.1946. Op. cit.

⁷³ The reference is to Luke 24:13.

⁷⁴ The reference is a combination of Psalms 104:19 and Genesis 1:5.

⁷⁵ Letter 18.7.1946. Op. cit.

In a study of Greek communists in Melbourne, Con Allimonos (2004) considers Doukas important enough to attempt an explanation of his intellectual motivations and background. Based on an interview with one Greek fruit blocker in Mildura, Allimonos gives the impression that Doukas, in the postwar years, had serious clashes with other Greek communists over his Christian beliefs. This view, however, confuses the prewar and postwar periods which were in marked contrast in Doukas' life. It also assumes that his religion was exclusively Christian rather than an ecumenical and syncretic philosophical search for common spiritual principles across a number of world religions that his earlier life entailed. Rather than a proponent of 'the co-existence between religion and Marxism [that] often led to clashes,' as Allimonos (2004) argues, Doukas presents a more complex case of the fusing and re-interpretation of religion within a Marxist framework. His writings are in fact characterised by a deep scepticism and hostility to organised religion.⁷⁶ The broader question, only touched on in this study, is to what extent his conversion to communism replaced his earlier religious search for an ideal world of peace and brotherhood?⁷⁷ To what extent did this need for higher truths and authority make him amenable to the authoritarian workings of Stalinist thinking? His premature death perhaps forestalled the ethical dilemmas that came increasingly to the fore in the coming decades in the communist movement.

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This chapter has aimed to demonstrate that the discussion of ethnic minority writing has occurred within institutional discourses that have largely framed such writing outside of the cultural history of the country. Multiculturalism has had the effect of constructing such

⁷⁶ See article 'The Monasteries,' *Neos Kosmos* 25.10.1961, p. 7.

⁷⁷ See Burleigh (2006) for a discussion of how political and religious discourses interrelate.

writing as simply a supplement to the main body of Australian writing rather than a complex engagement within it. I have provided numerous examples of how Greek-Australian literary and historiographic discourse has framed Alekos Doukas' novels as testimony. The salient feature in these discussions is a reluctance to engage with them as literary artefacts constructed in a specific time and place. David Carter's (1997a: 203) comments on Judah Waten's writing are highly pertinent: 'It is important in the context of migrant writing to focus on the *literariness* of Waten's realism, for the alternative is to understand it merely as lack, as the pre-literary speech of the migrant.' This observation provides an analytical insight that seems appropriate to the discussion of how Alekos Doukas has been read and understood. In the absence of both a literary and historical focus he has been assigned the role of a 'pre-literary' and founding witness of a collective past. I have explored the context of his novelistic writing in the 1950s to offer another framing of its generic provenance and literary construction. The chapter reveals that 'migrant' writing is not an activity that occurs in isolation, but in dialogue with diverse audiences and literary contexts. It illustrates the transnational (cross-cultural) dimensions of Greek-Australian life.