

LITERARY AND CULTURAL  
CROSSROADS  
IN THE LATE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

Edited by  
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 **BOYUT**

## Tracing the Life and Work of Karamanli Avraam Papazoglou in the Troubled 1930s

*Anthi Karra*

In 2015, after extensive research in the Ottoman and Turkish archives, Marinos Sariyannis, a Greek historian of early Ottoman Modernity, argued that Hayrullah Efendi's Ottoman chronicle presented on the eve of the Second World War by Avram Papazoglou in the first issue of the review *Makedonika*<sup>1</sup> was actually a fraud. An ingenious fraud written by a literary pen. What a blow for a document meant to be the unique historical source of Thessaloniki's contribution to the Greek National Insurrection of 1821! The name of this forger had also resurfaced a decade earlier in Turkey in an entirely different context, thanks first to the historian Faruk Bilici<sup>2</sup> and then to the linguist Hakan Özkan.<sup>3</sup> Both recognized Avraam Papazoglou as an important cultural mediator between Greeks and Turks during the 1930s, as the man who tried to bridge the gap the war had opened between the two nations. Intrigued by the discrepancy of these two perspectives, I decided to delve a little bit deeper into this intriguing personality. Who in actual fact was Avraam Papazoglou, whose name I first heard more than thirty years ago when I started translating modern Turkish literature?

A first quick glimpse at the existing mainstream literature, propagated mainly by Istanbul Greeks, concerning the literary life of the Greek Community of Istanbul in the interwar period, came across his name mainly in relation to the "Literary Almanac" (*Φιλολογική Πρωτοχρονιά*) he published in the years 1930 to 1933.<sup>4</sup> An additional glance at the already digitalized Greek literary periodicals of the post-war period revealed his name a couple of times in the narratives of his contemporaries. Ironically enough, G. Th. Vafopoulos, the most introverted of all the modern Greek poets of Salonica, gives the most extensive

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<sup>1</sup> Avraam N. Papazoglou, "Η Θεσσαλονίκη κατά τον Μάιο του 1821" [Salonica during the month of May 1821], *Makedonika* 1 (1940): 417-428. Marinos Sariyannis, "Μια πλαστή πηγή για τις σφαγές του 1821 στη Θεσσαλονίκη: Ο 'Χαϊρουλλάχ Εφέντης του Αβραάμ Ν. Παπάζογλου'" [A Forged Source for the 1821 Massacres in Thessaloniki: Avraam N. Papazoglou's 'Hayrullah Efendi'], *Mnimon* 34 (2015): 11-36.

<sup>2</sup> Faruk Bilici, "La littérature grecque contemporaine traduite en turc : un capital de sympathie", *Cahiers Balkaniques* 33 (2004). <https://journals.openedition.org/ceb/3198> (last visit 02.10.2023).

<sup>3</sup> Hakan Özkan, "Étude sur la traduction de la littérature turque vers le grec (1990-2011)", in: *Transeuropéennes*, Paris & Fondation Anna Lindh, Alexandrie 2011, and idem, "1930'ların Türkiye Sanat ve Fikir Hayatını Yunanistan'a Anlatan Adam: Avram Papazoğlu (1910-1941)" <https://www.dragoman.ist/tr/ceviri-tarihi-yazilari-avram-papazoglu/> (last visit 16.10.2023).

<sup>4</sup> Adamantios St. Anestidis, "Τα λογοτεχνικά περιοδικά της Πόλης από το 1923 και ύστερα" [Literary reviews of Istanbul from 1923 onwards], *I kath' imas Anatoli* 1 (1993): 225-23. Soula Bozi, *Ο ελληνισμός της Κωνσταντινούπολης. Κοινότητα Σταυροδρομίου – Πέραν* [The Hellenism of Constantinople, the Community of Pera], Athens, Topos, 2022: 295.



Avraam Papazoglou

testimony about him. Presenting him in his *Autobiography Pages* as an “old friend”, he portrays him as a “romantic, of the likes of Peer Gynt”; an extremely polite and generous young man with very fine manners and a constant smile illuminating his round face. He was a very modest person, yet a ladies’ man, whose declared ambition to translate Greek writers into Turkish and familiarize Turkish readership with them made him particularly attractive to Greek authors at that time. Vafopoulos also spread the rumor that Papazoglou enjoyed the favor of “a *man of letters holding an important position in the Metaxas government*”, and linked his high standard of living in Athens with some “*secret funds from the dictatorship*”.<sup>5</sup> After having mentioned Papazoglou’s sudden mysterious disappearance and reappearance dressed as a soldier in 1940 during the war against fascist Italy, he referred to his final disappearance as an “*ascension alive into Heaven*,” that is, if he had not been killed during the war. Avraam Papazoglou

disappeared, according to his family, at the end of 1941 in the hunger-struck German-occupied Salonica. He was only 31 years old.

The three files of his archives donated in 2012 to the Hellenic Literary and Historical Archive (ELIA/MIET) by his two younger sisters, Thaleia Nembari-Papazoglou and Eleni Papazoglou, shortly before their deaths, promise a more solid foundation for a glimpse into his life. They contain a few personal photos and documents, a written account of his early years accompanied by some diary entries (Oct. 1931–Dec. 1932), his correspondence with important figures from the Greek and Turkish literary life of the 1930s, several handwritten notebooks and typewritten papers containing texts and translations, both in Greek and in Turkish, and some sketches made by friends for his publishing activities. They have all served as the bedrock for the following text, having fueled my interrogations and guided my research. A research aimed at tracing the contours and intellectual trajectory of the brief adult life of a quite singular “İstanbullu Rum”, in that troubled period of the second half of the short Greek interwar period (1922-1940), which coincided with the launching of the “Turkification policies” of the early Republican Turkey.<sup>6</sup>

The photos in the ELIA/MIET Archives eloquently depict his life, focusing on the first and only son of a Greek-Orthodox family in Istanbul at that time. His parents’ *comme il faut* bourgeois wedding

<sup>5</sup> G. Vafopoulos, “Σελίδες αυτοβιογραφίας αποσπάσματα 1940-1942” [Autobiography pages and excerpts 1940-1942], *Nea Estia* 1023 (1970): 215-216.

<sup>6</sup> Ayhan Aktar, “Turkification Policies in the Early Republican Era”, in: *Turkish Literature and Cultural Memory, Multiculturalism as a Literary Theme after 1980*, (ed.) Catharina Duft, Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz Verlag, 2009: 29-56.



Aya Kyriaki Church  
of Kontoskali (Kumkapı)

in 1908 in the recently built then Aya Kyriaki Church<sup>7</sup> of Kontoskali (Kumkapı), as well as an earlier photo of his mother’s family, the Yardıkoğlus, gathered around the venerable person of the grandmother, strongly suggest along with their family names and professional activities as wood suppliers (*keresteci*) a *karamanlı* origin.<sup>8</sup>

Being situated inside the old Byzantine walls, the Byzantine Kontoskalion and later Ottoman Kumkapı amassed shortly after the Ottoman conquest, Mehmet II’s forced population transfer (*sürgün*) of skilled Turkish-speaking Muslims and Armenians from the Karaman region who were assigned to work on the reconstruction of the destroyed capital. While being since 1641 the seat of the Armenian Patriarchate, Western travelers noticed among its mixed population the existence of the “Caramanos” and their introverted Anatolian habits.<sup>9</sup> Kumkapı was then one of the most populated quarters of the city.<sup>10</sup> An existence that persisted over the following centuries, steadily revived by additional waves of population transfers first and immigrants later on. This led to their being perceived by the Greek-speaking

<sup>7</sup> The imposing Church of Saint Kyriaki was built in 1895, designed by the architect Periklis Fotiadis, who had previously designed the Halki Theological School.

<sup>8</sup> Kumkapı was a favourite place of settlement for the Kermirlides who emigrated to Istanbul. This area had a mainly Christian population with a large percentage of Armenians. As it was located near the districts of Vlaga and Samatya, where Karamanli Rums has already been living since the 15th century, many Kermirlides, who were also Turkish speakers, went to settle there. Emigration and settlement in Kumkapı is noted in the Ottoman censuses processed by Evangelia Balta (see the study on the Rums of Kermira included in the same volume). It is very likely therefore that Avraam Papazoglou’s family also came from Kermira.

<sup>9</sup> Anastasios Iordanoglou, “Καραμανλήδικες επιγραφές της Ιεράς Μονής Ζωοδόχου Πηγής Βαλουκλή Κωνσταντινουπόλεως” [Karamanlidika inscriptions in the Monastery of the Zoodochos Pege at Balıklı of Constantinople], *Valkanika Symmeikta* 1 (1981): 68.

<sup>10</sup> Pınar Özden, “Sosyo-ekonomik, kültürel ve fiziksel yönleriyle geçmişten günümüze Kumkapı”, *İ.U. Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Dergisi* 6 (1994): 19.

Christians as a distinct identity charged with many negative connotations<sup>11</sup> at a time when westernization and social change were rapidly transforming the urban tissue of the Empire: “Why don’t you go, unrecognized, into the coffeeshops of Kumkapı, melt into the crowd, to observe the way the Anatolians, Armenians, oarsmen and firemen live...” writes Vyzantios Scarlatos in 1869.<sup>12</sup> By the time Avraam Papazoglou’s parents got married, an essential number of Greek schools had already “enlightened”<sup>13</sup> the offspring of the more ambitious members of this community without ever compromising their use of the Turkish language and proper sense of a distinct identity.<sup>14</sup> Having a professional occupation directly related in their vast majority to their place of origin,<sup>15</sup> they rapidly constituted a prosperous urban community whose rich architectural heritage can still be admired in Kumkapı today. Although I have not seen it yet explicitly mentioned by him, Avraam’s family turcophony, his particular interest in the Hellenistic, Byzantine, and Ottoman periods, his attachment to the Greek Patriarchate, to the Turkish language and Anatolia and its people, throughout his short life, as well as his publicly claiming the identity of an intellectual in Turkey and Greece, provide additional proof of this karamanlı origin.<sup>16</sup>

Avraam Papazoglou was born in 1909 or 1910,<sup>17</sup> either in Kumkapı or in the “village of Beşiktaş”, where he spent his Elementary School years. The childhood photos of the children, their gently

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<sup>11</sup> Evangelia Balta points out that a “Light motive in texts of the period referring to the Turkish-speaking Orthodox Christian Cappadocians is that they were uncultured and sunk in deep ignorance”, something of course contradicted by the rich Karamanlidika bibliography. Evangelia Balta, “Gerçi Rum isek de Rumca bilmez Türkçe söyleriz. The adventure of an identity in the triptych: Vatan, Religion and Language”, *Türk Kültürü İncelemeleri Dergisi* 8 (2003): 33, 35-39.

<sup>12</sup> Vyzantios Scarlatos, *H Κωνσταντινούπολις* [Constantinople] vol. 3, Athens: 1869. See “Προλεγόμενα” [Introduction]: 12 (page ιβ’).

<sup>13</sup> At the end of the 19th century the parish of Kontoskali possessed a seven-grade Civil School for Boys (Αστική Σχολή), a seven-grade School for Girls (Παρθεναγωγείο) and a three-grade Preschool (Νηπιαγωγείο). Antonis Pavlidis, “Ο ελληνισμός της Κωνσταντινούπολης (1800-1922) Εκπαίδευση και πολιτική” [The Hellenism of Constantinople (1800-1922). Education and Politics], Athens, Smyrniotakis, 2009: 96. See also Balta, “Gerçi Rum isek de Rumca bilmez”, 33-34.

<sup>14</sup> The parish of Aya Kyriaki (Saint Kyriaki), contrary to the parish of Panagia Elpida, seems to have kept a strong Karamanlı identity till 1954. Kostas M. Stamatopoulos, *H τελευταία αναλαμπή* [The last glimmer], Athens, Domos, 1996: 32, 49.

<sup>15</sup> The wood suppliers (*keresteciler*) were mainly from Kayseri. See Foti Benlisoy, “Marangoz, Doğramacı ve Dülgerlerin ‘Aghios Panteleimon Cemiyeti’”, in: *Beynelmilel İşçiler İttihadi, Mütareke İstanbul’unda Rum Ağırlıklı Bir İşçi Örgütü ve TKP ile İlişkileri*, (eds) Akbulut Erden and Tuncay Mete, İletişim, İstanbul 2009: 201. For the *karamanlı* community of Kumkapı see also Alexis Alexandris: *The Greek Minority of Istanbul and Greek-Turkish Relations, 1918-1974*, Athens, Center for Asia Minor Studies, 1983: 152.

<sup>16</sup> An origin also advocated by Nikos Mihailidis, *Ta ελληνoturκικά και οι Κωνσταντινουπολίτες εθελοντές στον Β΄ Παγκόσμιο Πόλεμο 1939-1944* [Greek-Turkish affairs and the Constantinopolitan volunteers in the Second World War 1939-1940], vol. I, Athens, Vivliopoleio tis Estias, 2021: 644-647.

<sup>17</sup> In the Zographeion school-records of 1927, that is the year of his graduation, the year 1909 appears accompanied by a question mark. In the ELIA/MIET Archives only 1910 appears.



smiling mother, and serious-looking father suggest the Greek national consciousness<sup>18</sup> and the family's middle-class status. The notebook of his *Η φιλολογική μου ζωή* [Literary Life] starts with memories from his late childhood years in Beşiktaş when he was eleven years old and had already acquired, as he says, “a self-consciousness”. A consciousness that apparently coincides with the euphoric atmosphere that had embraced even the most reluctant Greek Orthodox Christians of Istanbul after the Patriarchate made in March 1919 its irredentist turn. Even the prestigious Greek Literary Society of Constantinople (Ελληνικός Φιλολογικός Σύλλογος Κωνσταντινουπόλεως) put an end to its long-standing non-political character and addressed a memorandum to the Peace Conference in favor of the incorporation of Istanbul into an enlarged Greece.<sup>19</sup>

Avraam took an early interest in writing and reading. An interest directed not to his school lessons but to the poems and stories in his schoolbooks. This interest took a literary turn when his desire to be helpful to an Asylum, run by Mrs. Anna Kesisoglou in Beşiktaş, where erring street children were gathered before being transferred to the Greek orphanages, offered him the chance to meet young people of his age that shared the same interests with him. Mrs Kesisoglou's daughter, the future poetess Thaleia Kesisoglou, in particular. They soon formed a circle of friends meeting once a week, flirted with the idea of publishing their own magazine and performing *Athanasios Diakos*,<sup>20</sup> a play of national interest to attract the public! Avraam was to play Ali Paşa's part, as he had the advantage of having a pure Turkish accent! The group finally disbanded without fulfilling its desires, as did the irredentist dreams of their parents. The Papazoglou family moved to Feriköy so the three children could complete their primary education in the most prestigious Greek schools: the Zographeion Lyceum for Boys and the Zappeion School for Girls.

While more hours of Turkish language and courses in History and Geography in Turkish were added after 1924 in all minority schools, Avraam was encouraged by his teachers to subscribe to the Athenian



Avraam Papazoglou and his father

<sup>18</sup> There is one photo of Avraam dressed as a sailor of the battleship Averof, and of his older sister Thaleia dressed as “Bouboulina”, a heroine of the Greek War of Independence.

<sup>19</sup> Alexandris: 56-62. For the manifest political implications of many of the activities of the Greek Literary Society of Constantinople, see Haris Exerzoglou, *Εθνική Ταυτότητα στην Κωνσταντινούπολη τον 19ο αιώνα. Ο Ελληνικός Φιλολογικός Σύλλογος Κωνσταντινουπόλεως 1861-1912* [National Identity in Constantinople in the 19th Century. The Greek Literary Association of Constantinople 1861-1912], Athens, Nefeli, 1996: 95-99.

<sup>20</sup> “Athanasios the Deacon”, a famous hero of the Greek War of Independence.



Anestis Yardikoglou's family.

Avraam Papazoglous' mother is standing to the left

were published in this journal;<sup>22</sup> his admiration for Grigorios Xenopoulos boosted his interest in theater and playwriting, while demoticism instilled a more assertive tone into his ambitions and made him receptive later to Atatürk's linguistic reforms, which he perceived as a victory of the Turkish demotic language.

In 1925, he created, together with his classmates, the "Zographeion Association" within YMCA to study the literary and artistic movements of their time.<sup>23</sup> They formed an amateurish theatrical group and staged a French play since they couldn't get permission for another language. They chose a play with only male parts, as they wanted to be seen themselves! Avraam continued to be active in this amateurish theatrical group even after he had finished Zographeion. Having been elected its President, he gave many lectures and participated in public discussions on various topics outside the narrow boundaries of his Greek-Orthodox community. In his notebook, he mentions one topic in particular, the father-son relationship, which he debated first in French "*with the Director of Zographeion and the philosopher and poet Abdullah Cevdet*",<sup>24</sup> then in Greek in their tavern meetings, and finally in Turkish in the "Stamboul section" of the YMCA.

youth journal *Diaplasis ton Paidon* (The Education of Children). Designed to inspire and bring into contact talented Greek youth across borders, this journal was going to become, thanks to its chief-editor, the prolific and celebrated playwright and novelist Grigorios Xenopoulos, the seedbed of many Greek poets and writers.

Avraam Papazoglou recognized his particular debt to him for having introduced him to demoticism, an issue highly polarizing Greeks for almost half a century that was becoming increasingly politicized in the public debate.<sup>21</sup> Avraam's first awkward literary and translation attempts

<sup>21</sup> Peter Mackridge, *Language and National Identity in Greece, 1766–1976*, Oxford, Oxford University Press 2009: 288-302 and Christina Delistathi, "SEKE, the KKE and the language question", *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 37/2 (2013): 278-292.

<sup>22</sup> I draw this information from his "*Literary Life*" (p. 17), having not yet checked the relevant references in this journal.

<sup>23</sup> New minority non-political associations were strictly discouraged at that time. Alexandris: 132.

<sup>24</sup> Abdullah Cevdet (1869-1932) was a Kurdish intellectual and physician, one of the founders of the *Committee of Union and Progress*. He was a radical free thinker, translator and poet, linked to the Symbolist movement in France.

In 1927, in his graduation year, he launched the idea of reviving the tradition of the “Zographeion Annual of Graduate Students” (*Λεύκωμα Ζωγραφείου*), a tradition worn-out fifteen years earlier during the turbulent years of the First World War. There were only eight graduates that year, and they can all be seen, with Avraam in the middle, in a photo on the last page, the first being reserved for Gazi Mustafa Kemal Paşa, “*the popular President of the Turkish Republic*”. The Annual comprises texts written by the students and their professors, as well as contributions from some well-known literary names of the Rum community: Menos Anagnostopoulos (also known as Kostis Baras), Antonis Yalouris, Antonis Halas, Vassilis Kassapakis and Yannis Halkousis. Avraam also added his childhood friend, the poetess Thaleia Kesisoglou, and grasped the opportunity to write about Grigorios Xenopoulos, whom he praised for his literary talent and language “*accessible to all*”. He also squeezed between the texts brief literary fragments signed with his *nom de plume* “Marva”.<sup>25</sup>

This was his first acquaintance with the practical challenges of editing and publishing and marked his entrance into the literary circles of Istanbul. Antonis Yalouris, whom he would later refer to as his “Master” and “guide”, introduced him to them and encouraged his proximity with the Patriarchate, the natural recipient of the Byzantine cultural tradition. As for Yannis Halkousis, the founder of the short-lived Constantinopolitan literary review *O Logos* (1919-1922), he invited him to attend his Friday “literary salon”, a weekly gathering of writers, artists, critics, and other intellectuals of their cosmopolitan city.

Avram vacillated between Greek University and trade but finally succumbed to his father’s desire and followed one year of basic commercial studies in the French Lycée Saint-Michel. It was a year during which he got in touch with French literary movements and acquired, as he later confessed, a “certain style” in writing, even in French! It was a year of formation. He became a reader of Henri Barbusse’s *Monde* and of the reviews *La Courte Paille* and *Nouvelles Littéraires*, both fervent advocates then of proletarian literature.<sup>26</sup> He started attending Mme Rambouillet’s literary salon and writing racy short stories for the weekly satirical newspaper *O Kopanos*.<sup>27</sup> The newspaper editor had to cautiously make some changes so these stories fell within legal bounds! Avraam later considered them a waste of time.

Although explicitly absent in his notebook, political events cut constantly across his *Literary Life* shedding light on his choices. When the students of the Law School launched on January 1928 the “*Citizen Speak Turkish!*” campaign, the linguistic preamble of the Turkification policies, the Greek-Turkish negotiations staggered, and the threat of expulsion of Constantinopolitan Greeks was being used as a lever by the Turkish authorities.<sup>28</sup> Three months later, on April 10th, Turkey was declared a secular

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<sup>25</sup> Was this inverted form of the Turkish pronunciation of his name (Avram) a family nickname originated from his own baby-talk, or was it chosen later by himself? The fact remains that he signed with it a poem in his sister’s scrapbook, present in the archives, and that he was called *Marva* by his closest school-friends.

<sup>26</sup> Michel Ragon, *Histoire de la littérature prolétarienne de langue française*, Hachette 1974.

<sup>27</sup> A review published in Istanbul from March 1927 to 1928. Feridun Fazıl Tülbentçi, *Cumhuriyetten sonra çıkan Gazete ve Mecmular*, Ankara, Başvekalet Matbuat U. Müd., 1941: 68.

<sup>28</sup> Two major issues, unresolved by the 1923 Lausanne Treaty, the question of the *établissements* and the property question, jeopardized then the future of the Greek Orthodox Community of Istanbul. See Alexandris: 124-135.





Elena Halkousi

state. Islam was no longer Turkey's official religion when Venizelos returned actively to politics and started campaigning in favor of a peaceful Greek-Turkish co-existence.

It was then that Avraam decided before the school year was over to pass the University of Salonica entry exam and was accepted in its “*political* section”.<sup>29</sup> He attended only two lectures and returned back home. Nothing is mentioned about the reasons that caused him to return and start working in his father's business. And yet, his short stay in a Salonica inundated by an impoverished population of Asia Minor refugees<sup>30</sup> coincided with the critical elections of 1928. As for the four people he mentions as having had

“*a particular relationship with*”, together with the many artists and writers he met, they all reveal the ideological background in which he evolved. Starting from his fellow Istanbul Greeks, the actress Elena Halkousi and the doctor Anastasios Misirloglou, both connected to Venizelism and his own literary and artistic interests. It should also be added that Anastasios Misirloglou was closely related to the Patriarchate and among the influential Constantinopolitan Greeks who championed then in Greece the interests of the Greek minority of Istanbul.<sup>31</sup> He would soon be elected to the Greek Parliament and become part of Venizelos' government. Being a poet himself, he may well have introduced Avraam to Nikos Sfondonis, the young journalist and publisher of the *Makedonikon Imerologion* [Macedonian Almanac], who had eloquently greeted a few months earlier, on December 1927, the acclaimed poet Kostis Palamas at a reception given in his honor in the Mediterranean Hotel by the literary circles of Salonica.<sup>32</sup> Sfondonis was Avraam's coeval and had been accepted that year, just like him, in the Department of Philosophy of the University. As for Kostas Drakopoulos, he was the son of the famous “*Makedonomachos*”.<sup>33</sup> Nikitas Drakopoulos, and the publisher in Drama of the noteworthy literary review *Neoi Rythmoi* [New Tempos]. A review which had presented on the first page of its very first issue a translated text taken from one of Sami Paşazade Sezai's novel as it was “*characterized by a humanitarian view*”.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>29</sup> “*Πολιτικό*” is the term by which he mentions himself the Department of Philosophy.

<sup>30</sup> Mark Mazower paints quite eloquently this troubled period outlining the complex cultural and class conflicts that were giving new political forms to older passions in the Greek society, with nationalism and antisemitism acquiring a new visibility. Mark Mazower, *Salonica City of Ghosts, Christians, Muslims and Jews 1430-1950*, London, Harper Collins Publishers, 2004.

<sup>31</sup> Alexandris: 178.

<sup>32</sup> Both Misirloglou and Sfondonis figure in the photo taken on this occasion. <https://archive.saloni.ca/333>

<sup>33</sup> Name given to the Greek fighters for the liberation of Macedonia at the beginning of the 20th century.

<sup>34</sup> “*Μεταφράζομε το παρακάτω, γιατί είναι χαρακτηριστικό ένας Τούρκος να παρουσιάζη μίαν αντίληψη έτσι ανθρωπιστική*”. Sami Paşazade Sezai, “*Γυναικία απορριγμένη*” [Rejected woman], *Νέοι Ρυθμοί* 1 (15 March

Avraam must have felt hopeful on his return to Istanbul. He had already become a regular collaborator of a new youth review<sup>35</sup> and was soon asked to collaborate in Kostas Drakopoulos' review. His correspondence reveals that he had already been offered a paid collaboration by Xenopoulos in order to promote the subscriptions in Istanbul of the review *Nea Estia*.<sup>36</sup> He started following all the literary reviews published by Greeks both within Greece and abroad.<sup>37</sup> Having particularly appreciated a French play presenting a liberated form of woman in the review *La Petite Illustration*,<sup>38</sup> he translated it into Greek but preferred not to give it to his YMCA association, judging it a little bit audacious for his community. They preferred to stage that year a more conventional one: Xenopoulos' *Stella Violanti*. The play would be finally staged in his translation a year later, on April 27, 1930. One month after Turkish women had voted for the first time in the local elections. It enjoyed great success and many flattering reviews in the local Greek press.

On September 1929, while walking with a friend by the Bosphorus, he suddenly had the idea of a "*Literary Almanac*" [Φιλολογική Πρωτοχρονιά]. In the announcements he published to this end, he stated that what had motivated him was "*the general slackening of their literary activities and the hope to incite maybe a more significant and fruitful collaboration among new writers*".<sup>39</sup> The four volumes that appeared from 1930 to 1933 comprise contributions from a large number of older and young poets, writers, artists, and other intellectuals.<sup>40</sup> Although most of them originated from Istanbul, his

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1926): 1-2. The translator was Giorgos Filanthidis, the younger brother of the well-known linguist and fervent demoticist Menos Filintas, with whom Avraam Papazoglou later enjoyed a warm correspondence and included him in his "*Literary Almanac*".

<sup>35</sup> *H Εφημεριδούλα μας* [Our little newspaper] was a short-lived (1928-1929) but successful youth magazine published by Rita Myrat. It was the first to contain comic-like stories and had the declared goal to unite Greek children "wherever they were scattered in the world" ("*Είμαι ο σύνδεσμος όλων των Ελληνόπουλων, σ' όποια της γης γωνιά κι αν είναι σκορπισμένα*"). (no. 1, p. 26). Its director Andreas Printezis provoked its early shutdown by trying to usurp its name, [https://www.greekcomics.gr/forums/uploads/monthly\\_05\\_2010/post-4271-1273060561,3.jpg](https://www.greekcomics.gr/forums/uploads/monthly_05_2010/post-4271-1273060561,3.jpg) (last visit 16.10.2023).

<sup>36</sup> Letter by Xenopoulos dated June 3rd, 1927.

<sup>37</sup> He mentions in particular Xenopoulos' *Nea Estia*, Kostis Bastias' *Ellinika Grammata*, Yannis Mourellos' *Neoellinika Grammata* and Visanthis' *Synhroni Skepsi*, with the latter being published in Chicago.

<sup>38</sup> Georges Berr & Louis Verneuil's "*Maître Bolbec et son mari*" [The World at Her Feet]. The translation was published in 1930 by Drakopoulos in Drama.

<sup>39</sup> "*Η γενική χαλάρωση της φιλολογικής κίνησης της πόλης μας, μας δίνει το θάρρος να προβούμε στην έκδοση της Φιλολογικής Πρωτοχρονιάς, ελπίζοντας πως θα γίνουμε ίσως αίτιοι μιας πιο σημαντικής και καρποφόρας εργασίας ανάμεσα στους νέους μας συγγραφείς.*" (p. 27 of his *Literary Life*).

<sup>40</sup> Among which: Kostas Baras, Antonis Yalouris, I. Gryparis, Kostas Drakopoulos, Constantine P. Cavafy, Vassilis Kassapakis, Thaleia Kesisoglou, Arhis Kovas, Yannis Mourellos, Kostis Palamas, Eleni Sarantakou, Yannis Halkousis, Thrasos Kastanakis, Apostolos Mammelis, Omiros Bekes, Nikos Sarantakos, Iris Skaravaïou, Alex Steinmetz, Menos Filintas, Yorgos Vakalopoulos, M. Vissanthis, Lila Karakalou, Maya Drosou, M. Malakasis,

correspondence reveals that he soon started receiving collaborations from Greek writers hoping to be included in it. This is proof of his efforts to make it widely known and appreciated.<sup>41</sup>

It should be noted that copies of his “*Literary Almanac*” were sent to the Library of the Patriarchate. The Bishop of Laodicea Dorotheos contributed twice to it with literary texts.<sup>42</sup> All volumes were edited with particular good taste and care and were printed in 500 to 600 copies by the Kefalides Printing House of Galata, a printing company well-established in the Greek community since the late 19th century. He used the name *Literary Almanac* as a trademark to publish two or three “supplements” every year, containing a longer text written by a writer who had already contributed to it.<sup>43</sup>

His *Literary Life* notebook contains newspaper clippings of the reception given to the *Literary Almanac* by his community press, together with newspaper clippings or references concerning all sorts of cultural events taking place in Istanbul (expositions, public lectures, theatrical and musical performances, etc.) accompanied by his comments on them. It also contains comments on his various literary readings, extracts from letters received by people he dealt with in his literary and cultural activities, and detailed information about the life and work of some of them. He stated explicitly his interest in writing short stories about social issues and his first more or less successful attempts.

On October 30, 1930, the Ankara Treaty of Friendship between Greece and Turkey was signed, inaugurating a remarkable intensification of exchanges between the two nations. It was the year Avraam became friends with the famous Turkish director and actor Muhsin Ertuğrul and established close ties with the “*Darülbedayi*” (Theater of the City of Istanbul) team.<sup>44</sup> The year stage actress Kyveli’s prestigious theater troupe came from Athens to perform in Istanbul. These performances attracted a wider public and were commented on in the Turkish newspapers. Avraam grasped the opportunity to enlarge his circle of friends, most of whom were now artists, poets, and writers, and discovered the nightlife of his city. He started publishing theater reviews in the local and the Athenian press while enjoying intense correspondence with his friends. It is worth mentioning that he considered his letters as “*the mirror of the heart and the mind*”, and confessed that he had written 1450 pages of letters in 1931, the copies of which he had carefully kept in 29 notebooks! None of his correspondence has been saved. The third file of his ELIA/MIET Archives comprises only short letters addressed to him by an impressive number of prestigious personalities or famous writers of that time.

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Lambros Porfyra, Elena Halkousi, M. Valsas, Mihalis Hanoussis, Haris Xanthopoulos, Ahmet Haşım, Nazım Hikmet, and of course Avraam Papazoglou.

<sup>41</sup> He received many encouraging letters from well-known writers and favorable comments in reviews like *Alexandrini Tehni* [Art of Alexandria], *Noumas* and *Protoporeia* [Avant-garde].

<sup>42</sup> A letter from the Patriarchate in his archives attests to Papazoglou’s presence among the masters of ceremonies during the vespers of Easter Sunday in 1933.

<sup>43</sup> I have found traces, for the time being, only of a one-act play written by M. Varsas and of Antonis Yalouris’ *Σκίτσα από το Βυζάντιο* [Images from Byzantium], both of them published in 1931.

<sup>44</sup> Ertuğrul Muhsin thanked him publicly for having contributed to the making of a Theater library (Review *Darülbedayi* no. 14, 15.02.1931).

Fully aware that he was only at the beginning of his literary activities, Avraam nurtured the ambition for his notebooks to be someday “*a sort of document of our literary life, in particular of Istanbul*”. His last diary entry in his *Literary Life*, on December 31st, 1932, suggests it was only the first of probably a series of diaries. The question remains whether they were lost or destroyed by Avraam himself while still alive or later by his sisters after his sudden, mysterious death. Only a few long letters written by his friends bear witness to his long, sincere correspondence.

In an interview given to K. Palaiologos in 1937, after the family had moved to Salonica, he explicitly stated that he had been living a double spiritual life, both as a Turk and as a Greek intellectual. Still, he believed that he belonged to the Turkish rather than the Greek “intellectual family”.<sup>45</sup> He also stated his profound conviction that Greece and Turkey were two kindred nations and aspired to do all he could to bring them close together again.

What cannot be contested is that he wrote, translated, and published right from the beginning, both in Greek and Turkish. My research has focused on gathering his published texts, translations, books, and other information about his life, placing him in his particular historical and social environment, and establishing the networks of people he evolved with. A further step will be to look closer at his literary and artistic choices and analyze how his discourse and ideological framework evolved.

I have already gathered 164 published texts and have references or manuscripts of at least 60 additional ones. Avraam Papazoglou published regularly in two very influential literary reviews of his time: *Nea Estia* and *Varlık*, and more sporadically in other equally important reviews.<sup>46</sup> I have not yet gone through all of them, neither have I gone through most of the newspapers or reviews of his time mentioned by him in his manuscripts, as some of them are quite difficult to locate. I still need to consult existing personal archives of people he was in contact with and, if possible, Greek and Turkish State archives.

The texts as mentioned above comprise:

1. Literary creations (fragmentary texts, short stories, extracts of unpublished novels, and long historical narrations); book, theater, and art reviews; articles presenting to Greeks the literature, contemporary authors, poets, and theater of Turkey, its newly established educational, cultural and social institutions, Ottoman music legacy and contemporary publishing activity; articles presenting to Turks the development of the Greek language, contemporary Greek authors, poets, painters, sculptors and musicians, as well as ancient Greek texts or writers related to Anatolia.

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<sup>45</sup> The answers to the questions in this interview submitted to him by K. Palaiologos can be found handwritten in his archives (File 2, notebook 12). The interview was intended for the newspaper “*Makedonia*”. I have not yet found the exact date of its publication, neither confronted this manuscript answers to the final published text.

<sup>46</sup> Such as *Neoellinika Grammata*, *Makedonikes Imeres*, *Darülbedayi*, *Ta Paraskinia* and *Mousika Hronika*.

2. Long articles in Greek about some aspects of Anatolian folklore (spirits and ghosts, Nasreddin Hodja tales, etc...) and in Turkish about the music of the Greek Orthodox Church.
3. Journalistic or opinion texts published in the Istanbul newspapers “*Neotera*” [Later News] and “*Patris*” [Fatherland]; in the Salonica newspapers “*Nea Alitheia*” [New Truth] and “*Makedonia*”; and in the Athenian newspaper “*Kathimerini*”.
4. Essays about “The architect Sinan”,<sup>47</sup> “Mehmet the Conqueror according to the Turkish historian Aşık Paşa Zade”,<sup>48</sup> and “The Turkish Classic Poet Ömer Nef’i”.<sup>49</sup>
5. A few articles about women in Turkey.
6. Translations of theatrical plays (from French, Turkish, and Greek), short stories, poems, and extracts of novels, as well as an article written by Hasan-Ali Yücel (Turkish Minister of Education) presenting a short review of Turkish literature.
7. Finally, translations of several Ottoman documents found by Avraam in the Ottoman archives (among which the contested Hayrullah Efendi’s chronicle), several scientific articles written by the Turkish historian Mehmet Fuat Köprülü (1890-1960), as well as some articles about the music of the Balkans written by the musicologist Mahmut Ragıp Kösemihal (later Gazimihal - 1900-1960). All of them are of obvious interest to Greeks or relating to the Istanbul Greeks.

A quite impressive amount of work aimed at bringing together these two nations that so far has found no equivalent in Greece and Turkey. His correspondence informs us of a play written by Faruk Nafiz and translated by him, staged in March 1938 by the Greek Royal (National) Theater. It also informs us of his projects to publish a collection of Turkish short stories in Greece and Greek short stories in Turkey. His manuscripts also bear witness to numerous articles and translations about Greek and Turkish literature written until the end of his life, as well as some essays written to popularize Ottoman history so that the Greek national narrative would strangely echo the Kemalist one!<sup>50</sup> It should be emphasized that Ottoman history appears as a topic in his published texts only after 1935. In 1937 Petros Spandonidis, one of the co-founders of the modernist review “*Makedonikes Imeres*”, denounced him –anonymously– to the police as a “Turkish spy”. Although the accusation was finally dropped, and he was asked not to insist

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<sup>47</sup> His manuscript bears the title “Σινάν, ένας Τουρκορωμιός αρχιτέκτονας” [Sinan, a Turco-Rum architect], a title which of course could not be accepted by the Annual review of the Society of Byzantine Studies in which it was published, having been previously written in “*katharevousa*”! Avraam N. Papazoglou, “Σινάν ο αρχιτέκτων” [Sinan the Architect], *Epetiris Etaireias Vyzantinon Spoudon* 14 (1938): 443-460.

<sup>48</sup> Avraam N. Papazoglou, “Μωάμεθ Β’ ο Πορθητής κατά τον Τούρκον ιστορικών Αşık Paşa Zade” [Mehmed II the Conqueror, according to the Turkish historian Aşık Paşa Zade], *Epetiris Etaireias Vyzantinon Spoudon* 16 (1940): 211-246.

<sup>49</sup> The Greek manuscript mentions that this essay was first published in Turkish, and then translated by Mehmet Fuat Köprülü and published in Ankara in French.

<sup>50</sup> The unpublished manuscript in particular about “*The Collapse of the Ottoman Empire*”, bearing the date 26.10.1940.



on further investigation of this accusation, Papazoglou expressed his fears of both Petros Spandonidis and Petros Orologas, with whom the former was then connected, in a letter he addressed to the editor of the review *Nea Estia*, Petros Haris.<sup>51</sup>

In 1941 Thaleia Papazoglou, the older of his two sisters, married the Greek officer Yorgos Nembaris, acquired Greek nationality and followed her husband to the Middle East. They returned to Athens after the end of the Second World War. The younger one, Eleni Papazoglou, never married. She was distinguished as a piano teacher in the Salonica Conservatory and held Turkish identity documents till at least 1957. They both died, leaving no descendants.

In an intriguing article about “*Turkish youth*” written in 1933, G. N. Makris admires the Turkish youth because, according to him, contrary to the Greek youth of his time, it is not “*governed by tradition, fatalism, and ideological enslavement*”.<sup>52</sup> He highlights its thirst for knowledge, action, and initiative, an ardent desire to assimilate Western culture, disciplined dedication to this goal, and complete disinterest in love affairs and sexuality, the latter being considered as the “*occupation of the non-working*”. He admits, though, as if sketching in light and darkness Avraam Papazoglou’s modernist Generation of the ’30s,<sup>53</sup> that he is referring only to a small educated urban minority of young people, who know that they must find a way to impose themselves in order to remain “*masters in their land*”.<sup>54</sup>



<sup>51</sup> Letter found in Petros Charis Archives (E.L.I.A.). Petros Orologas was a notorious anti-Venizelist journalist, a convinced national socialist and apologist of the Metaxas regime. This issue definitely needs further investigation. Was Avraam Papazoglou mistakenly confused - though on purpose by Spandonidis, who appears in the correspondence to have denounced him under the Jewish name *Saltiel* - with a journalist named Georgios Papazoglou? The latter was according to a text signed by Petros Foteinos, (Orologas’ pen name) and published in “*Makedonikes Imeres*” on January 1938, originated like him from the city of Monastiri (Bitola today). Petros Foteinos, “Το φιλολογικό σαλόνι” [The literary salon], *Makedonikes Imeres* 1 (1938): 5-6. This confusion between the two persists in Kostas Tomanas’s book fifty four years later. Kostas Tomanas, *Οι κάτοικοι της παλιάς Θεσσαλονίκης* [The people of Old Salonica], Thessaloniki, Exantas, 1992: 127.

<sup>52</sup> G. N. Makris, “Η τουρκική νεολαία” [The Turkish Youth], *Nea Estia* 165 (1933): 1166-1168.

<sup>53</sup> The Generation of the 30’s is known as the generation that introduced modernism into Greek art and literature, and aestheticized the ideology of “Greekness” in *Greek Modernism and Beyond. Essays in Honor of Peter Bien*, (ed.) D. Tziouvas, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997.

<sup>54</sup> Nora Seni analyzed the rhetoric used for the education of the Turkish youth in the new Turkish Republic, and highlighted the importance given to the “purified” Turkish language, as the differentiating element among Turkish citizens, in the Turkish nationalist discourse of the 1930s. Nora Seni, “La jeunesse une non-génération: Rhétorique éducative dans la Turquie des années trente, in: *Childhood and Youth in the Muslim World*, (ed.) François Georjeon and Klaus Kreiser, Paris, Maison neuve et Larose, European Science Foundation, 2007: 233-257.

Exploring the interdependence between forgers and scholars, that is, between credulity and criticism, creativity and duplicity in the Western tradition, Anthony Grafton highlighted the central role forgery played in religious, political, and literary history, as well as its contribution to the development of a richer sense of what the past was really like, concluding that “*a culture that tolerates forgery will debase its intellectual currency*”.<sup>55</sup> It took seventy-five years for the Greek historiography to contest the authenticity of Hayrullah Efendi’s version of history.

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<sup>55</sup> Anthony Grafton, *Forgers and Critics. Creativity and Duplicity in Western Scholarship*. Princeton University Press, 2019: 121-122.

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