

DIASPORIC LITERATURE

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One of those days

Feb 23, 2011 07:53PM

Iakovos Garivaldis

A day of silence,
Without your breath
A moment of unjustified peace
Without your warmth;
Placid, as a picture of reflective shining white
One that focuses
At the sparkle in your eyes...

What a splendid picture
One becoming so aberrant and fragile;
As it rushes me
Past your vibrant jovial tresses
While eliciting reactions
And amazing attractions
Emanating from a thought
That it is you;

You're my weakness
Like that smile which restraints
Every one of my dawns
As it copiously meets
Both the edges of your cheeks;

Yet its drawn
As abundant
And so naturally,
Unsurprisingly by you...

Iakovos Garivaldis

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Aristotle's Ethics towards his view of humanity

Jan 23, 2011 07:44PM

- A colloquial philosophical exploration

Sophocles Kitharidis

Before writing this philosophical exploration, my third year political philosophy Professor asked us (his students) a question which to me, at first, seemed to be one of the easiest questions one can ever be asked: *What is happiness?* Naturally, some students were throwing answers and theories such as 'happiness is the absence of worries', or 'the absence of pain and hardship'. When pressed, we may even be tempted to say that happiness is really when one has a 'loving relationship, flourishing children, or even to go as far as to say when one has great measures of wealth'. True this may be to the logical yet simple mind, however when we stop to think of what notion lies behind these very simple, justifiable and obvious theories, we may come to the conclusion that the answer to what is happiness is certainly more deep. I state this as it would be fair to say that a person can be happy without some or even all of the above, and it may therefore seem that happiness is more of a subjective matter. If logic prevails, we see in everyday life that some people find happiness in some things, while others in other things. I therefore ask you: *if what I am saying is correct, can one provide a general characterisation of happiness?*

According to Aristotle, the answer to the above would definitely be a yes, as he would use the word *Eudaimonia* to summarise the characterisation of the term happiness. To note, *Eudaimonia* is a Greek word 'combining *eu* meaning "good" with *daimon* meaning "spirit"'. (Dr Matthew Sharpe, 2010) For Aristotle, happiness consisted in a form of contentment that came from having lived a fulfilling life, and a fulfilling life was one that was filled with the sorts of activities that fulfilled the potentials and goals of human nature. Aristotle distinguishes *eudaimonia* from other kinds of perfection of action by exploring the part of the soul which that action exercises. So, good exercises of the desiring part of the soul (desiring the right objects and to the right degree) are virtuous and important constitutive parts of *eudaimonia*, but even finer are good exercises of the rational part of the soul. Aristotle contended that there is a goal that one may seek by virtue of their human nature, and then argues that the fulfilment of that goal represents their happiness. According to my Professor, to live ethically is to develop and use those virtues that help us to fulfil our goal and so to achieve the happiness that it is our nature to seek. We therefore can see that Aristotle's understanding and notion of happiness is argued and explained on ethical, naturalistic and teleological grounds.

Note: All interpretations of both primary and secondary sources used in this article are of the authors, and authors alone. The author apologises if interpretations have been theoretically

misunderstood.

Theoretical Exploration:

Arguably, in Aristotle's ethical writings, reality is the world in which one finds himself, as Aristotle's aim as a moral philosopher was to discover what makes a good life for a man. This notion of Aristotle's ethics leads to the theory that a good life will be the life in which a man, as far as possible, does those things which a man is peculiarly fitted to do, and in such a life there will be pleasure and satisfaction.[1] However, certain theorists and philosophers, contend that the subject-matter of moral judgment may be extremely difficult to identify. This includes judgments as to what ought to be done here and now, principles of conduct and specifications of those qualities of human mind and character that are intrinsically admirable such as 'the virtues'.[2] Further, it is common to contrast ethical systems founded in the study of human nature and virtue such as that of Aristotle, with those founded in the reasoned analysis of moral principles, such as that of Kant.[3] It is also common to distinguish those systems which argue that the value of every act is ultimately to be found in its consequences for human welfare, such as consequentialism, from those which therefore attempt to derive a system of morality from the study of duty, such as deontology. In stating this, Scruton contends that in the political sphere, only the consequentialist attitude is appropriate, since in this sphere the end must be allowed to justify the means.[4] However, deontologists oppose such a view as intrinsically immoral and argue that if there are any moral values at all, then there will be circumstances when they simply cannot be overridden by any reasoning from consequences. It is Aristotle's understanding of ethics and his interpretation of humanity that allows for such debates to be present in the academic and philosophical realm.

Critically, in order to understand Aristotle's interpretation of ethics, one must ask 'what is the best life for a man?'. Aristotle sought to elucidate the question by identifying two central concepts. Firstly, one must sought to analyse what is 'good', and secondly the theoretical dissimilarity between what is wanted for its own sake and what is wanted for the sake of something else. [5] According to philosopher and classicist John Ackrill, Aristotle's interpretation of 'good' is clear by stating that goodness is not a single simple property, and makes only tentative suggestions as to how various sense or uses of 'good' are inter-related. Ackrill further contends that Aristotle repeatedly insisted on the necessary connection between the concepts *good* and *aiming at*, that being the good of a thing, activity, or agent is that at which it or he aims, the desired end.[6] However, Aristotle takes it to be a conceptual truth that men want to live a good life and indeed the best possible life, or that men want eudaimonia; 'this being the word anyone uses for the life he thinks best, most worthwhile, most desirable'.[7] Ackrill goes on to argue that this question may be more important than the question of 'what sort of life is morally best', and that it may or may not prove to be the case that the most 'satisfying and desirable life for a man is always and necessarily the most morally good'.[8]

Further, Aristotle points out in Book I.i of *Eudemian Ethics*, that certain things are sought for the sake of others, and that some arts and activities are naturally subordinate to others.[9] Ackrill argues that the brief discussion provided by Aristotle leaves many distinctions undrawn, such as 'while bridles just as, by

definition, things for use in horse-riding, horse riding itself is not by definition subordinate to the military art',[10] although it is exploited by it.[11] However, according to Ackrill, the most important argument is the one made in the last sentence of the chapter which states 'an activity *A* must be for the sake of *B* not only where *A* produced a product or outcome which subserves *B* but also where *A* is pursued as an activity and not for any outcome.'[12] Ackrill argues that the case which Aristotle was trying to make is a kind were one's terminology of 'means' and 'ends' would not be appropriate, but where nevertheless the notion of one end being subordinate to another is appropriate. [13] Evidently, when Aristotle states that an individual wants various things not only for their own sake but also for the sake of eudaimonia, he means that one must regard them not as means to subsequent felicity but as ingredients in the whole happy life one wants. If there are several such activities, there can still be the good for man, namely the life that contains all these activities. Aristotle may wish in the end to identify the highest form of eudaimonia with one particular activity. Though in working up to his question 'what is the best life for a man?', Aristotle is not assuming any such identification. The notion of eudaimonia or the best life is a comprehensive notion and final. [14] Evidently, this demonstrates Aristotle's view of humanity to his notion of ethics.

Notably, Ackrill contends that Aristotle may be criticised for assuming that there is an answer to the question 'what is the best life for a man?' as opposed to the question 'what is the best life for this man or that man?'.[15] According to Ackrill, this is how Aristotle demonstrates his interpretation of humanity to ethics,[16] as Aristotle does think that the nature of man, the powers and the needs of all men have, determines the character that any satisfying human life must have.[17] However, since Aristotle's account of the nature of man is in general terms, the 'corresponding specification of the best life for man is also general'.[18] Therefore, philosophers such as Ackrill and Hardy argue that while Aristotle's assumption places certain limits on the possible answers to the ethical question of 'how shall I live?', it leaves considerable scope for a discussion which takes account of many individual tastes, capacities and circumstances.[19]

Moreover, in Aristotle's *Eudemian Ethics*, Aristotle seeks to discover what the 'good' is for man by determining his specific function. By doing so, he expands on his view of humanity towards the notion of ethics, through his analysis of human nature and man. Aristotle's argument does not presuppose that men are made to serve a purpose, 'but only that men have certain distinctive powers'.[20] According to Aristotle, excellence is the 'exercise of these will make a man a good man and his life a good life, just as excellence in cutting is what makes a knife a good knife'.[21] Aristotle holds that it is the ability to think that distinguishes men essentially from other animals and 'that the good life is therefore one in which this activity is exercised well'. [22] Ackrill further contends that albeit, this type of argument, which was first formulated by Plato at the end of the *Republic I*, has reverberated down the centuries, there are three particular remarks about Aristotle's use of the terms. Firstly, one may ask if 'man' is a functional word in anything like the way that 'knife' is, criteria for being a good man may be derivable from consideration of man's distinctive powers.[23] Though what should be noted is that Aristotle is not asking 'what it is to be a good man', but rather 'what is the good for man'. It is not

self-evident that the best thing for a man is to be the best possible man, and this is well interpreted by the fact that 'living well' and 'doing well' are equivalent with eudaimonia.

Further, it is clear that at best, the argument from function will give only a 'very general and almost formal characterisation of the criteria for being a good so-and-so'. [24] In the hope of interpreting Aristotle's understanding of the term 'ethics', one therefore must ask, 'what is excellence in the exercise of reason?'. Ackrill asserts that Aristotle divides 'the excellence in question into two main kinds, intellectual virtues and virtues of character'; [25] for the latter depend upon the ability to think. However, flaws lie within this division as Aristotle's list of various virtues and the description which he provides of them, does not flow straight from the formula reached by the 'function agreement', [26] as malice is as distinctive of man as is charity. [27] Furthermore, after concluding that eudaimonia is a life of excellent activity, that being 'activity of soul in accordance with virtue', Aristotle asserted that '...and if there are more than one virtue, in accordance with the best and most complete'. [28] Political philosopher Richard Kraut argues that it is not immediately clear what Aristotle's intentions were by this phrase. [29] However, one would presume that 'full human excellence would require the display of all the distinctive virtues of a man'. [30] In stating this though, Ackrill believes that there is nothing in the function argument to imply that there is an 'order of importance among these, or that, if there is, excellence consist in the display of only the most important'. [31] Albeit, Aristotle does in fact argue for the superiority of theoretic activity over practical, and provides a distinction between the highest forms of happiness from a secondary form. [32] he does provide for a more theoretical interpretation of humanity in ethics. Since he allows that man is capable only to a limited extent of pure theoretical activity, and 'not in so far as he is a man, but in so far as something divine is present in him', Aristotle's recipe for the best life does presumably include a 'large dose of the "secondary eudaimonia" to be found in action'. [33] However, it can rarely be stated that Aristotle resolves the tension between the line of thought that makes man's good something comprehensive, involving the display of all distinctive human virtues, and that which selects one type of activity and one virtue as constituting happiness par excellence. [34]

Aristotle's theory on moral virtues provides for a critical analysis on his interpretation of the term 'ethics', and the importance of humanity to the term. Specifically, Aristotle insists that the virtuous man does what he does gladly, 'with pleasure'. [35] However the pursuit of his own pleasure or satisfaction is not his motive, but rather, he does what he does 'for its own sake', or as Aristotle repeatedly stated, because it is *kalon*. [36] One must therefore ask, what then is the relation between this motive and man's pursuit of eudaimonia? From a utilitarian perspective, what makes an act or type of act right is that it promotes happiness. For Aristotle, the doing of right acts for their own sake constitutes a form of happiness. One therefore asks, what then is the ultimate criterion of right action? How may disputes as to what is *kalon* be developed? Ackrill contends that if the 'good for man is, or includes, acting in a virtuous way, one cannot explain why a certain way of acting is virtuous by saying that it promotes the good for man'. [37] Conversely, one may argue that Aristotle systematically aligns himself with conventional values and takes them for granted, and when it

comes to difficult cases, Aristotle withdraws to the comment that 'decisions in individual cases require a judgment or insight analogous to eye-sight'. [38] Ackrill argues that Aristotle still recognises that he is under an obligation to provide account of the manner in which the man of practical wisdom determines virtues and right action, however his answer remains obscure. [39] This being said though, Aristotle's interpretation of humanity and how an individual should act, provides the theoretical and philosophical reasoning needed to link both dimensions of humanity and ethics.

When providing an analysis of Aristotle's interpretation of ethics, one can come to the conclusion that he conceived a field distinct from the theoretical sciences, though its methodology correlating with its subject matter, and in the process, respecting the fact that in this field many generalisations hold only for the most part. [40] Aristotelian philosophers have drawn to the fact that Aristotle's notion of ethics was aimed to improving one's life, and therefore its principal concern was with nature of human well-being and evidently humanity. Concluding, granted that every individual aims to lead a good, satisfying and successful life, Aristotle's interpretation of ethics is the question of what we really mean when we say this, and what counts as good in connection with an individual's life on earth? It is the answers which Aristotle provides which leads to his outline and understanding of ethics, and the importance of humanity towards his notion of ethics.

Sophocles Kitharidis

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Footnotes

- [1] J Ackrill, *Aristotle's Ethics*, 1st edn, Humanities Press, New York, 1973, p. 15.

[2] R Scruton, *Dictionary of Political Thought*, 3rd edn, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2007, p. 223

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid., p. 224.

[5] Ackrill, op. cit., p. 18.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid.

[14] W Hardy, *Aristotle's Ethical Theory*, 1st edn, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1968, p. 76.

[15] Ackrill, loc. cit.

[16] Ibid.

[17] J Monan, *Moral Knowledge and its Methodology in Aristotle*, 1st edn, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1968, p. 24.

[18] Ackrill, op. cit., p. 19.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid., p. 20.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Ibid., p. 21.

[26] Ibid.

[27] R Kraut, *Aristotle: Political Philosophy*, 1st edn, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2002, p. 13.

[28] EE (I6)

[29] Kraut, op. cit., p. 127.

[30] Ackrill, op. cit., p. 21.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid., p. 176; *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book X, 7–8.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibid., p.23.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Ibid., p. 24.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Ibid.

[40] A Kenny, *The Aristotelian Ethics*, 1st edn, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1978, p. 32.

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Dr George Kanarakis

Dec 30, 2010 12:03PM

GEORGE KANARAKIS, OAM

B.A. (Athens), M.A. (Indiana), Ph.D. (Athens), Hon.D.Litt. (Charles Sturt)

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Dr George Kanarakis is an Adjunct Professor at Charles Sturt University, Australia. Previously he taught at the University of Athens (1966–1976) at the Department of English where he also served for several years as its Head, as well as at the University's Foreign Language School, at La Verne University, Deree-Pierce College, Bridgewater State College, USA, and elsewhere. He also taught at the Australian College for Seniors (1982–1996) and at the School for Talented Children (1985–1989) under Mitchellsearch Ltd. Since 2007 he has lectured at the Charles Darwin University summer program on the island of Kalymnos, Greece.

Professor Kanarakis studied philology (Greek and English) at the University of Athens under a scholarship from the State Scholarship Foundation and later TEFL with the British Council in London (1964). In 1967–1968, under a Fulbright Scholarship, he completed post-graduate studies in English language and American literature at the Institute of International Education of Michigan State University (1967) and applied linguistics at Indiana University, USA (M.A. 1968). In 1974 he was awarded his Ph.D. (Honours) in linguistics from the School of Philology, University of Athens.

In addition to the above-mentioned scholarships, he has received grants from Indiana University, Charles Sturt University, the Australian Research Council, the Australia Council (Literature Board), the Commonwealth Schools Commission and other organisations.

His research interests focus mainly on the fields of the literature, historiography and the press of the Greeks of the diaspora, especially in Australia and New Zealand, as well as on the Greek and English languages and linguistics.

In these areas he has published a number of books, monographs

and many articles in Greece, Cyprus, Australia, USA, Canada, Germany, Poland, Portugal and Chile, in Greek and in English, as well as in Spanish and Polish translation. Furthermore, he has mentored and supervised many post-graduate, including doctoral, students conducting research in his areas of expertise.

Considered pioneering are his works *The Literary Presence of the Greeks in Australia* (1985, as well as in English translation, *Greek Voices in Australia: A Tradition of Prose, Poetry and Drama*, 1987, repr. 1991), *The Greek Press in the Antipodes: Australia and New Zealand* (2000, in Greek), *Aspects of the Literature of the Greeks in Australia and New Zealand* (2003, in Greek) and *Interlanguage Influences upon English and the Contribution of the Greek Language* (2005 in Greek, 2nd ed. 2008 revised and enlarged). The first three have been awarded prizes.

Professor Kanarakis is a member of a number of Greek, Australian and other international scholarly and cultural associations; he has participated in many international conferences and has served as an advisory member of university, government and other committees of Greece, the USA and Australia on matters of education and research. He has also served as a member of the editorial boards of scholarly journals (*Views on Language and Language Teaching*, Athens, 1977–82, *Études Helléniques/Hellenic Studies*, Montréal, 1994–), as well as of publishing companies (Owl Publishing, Melbourne, 1998–, Grigoris Publications (Series: Hellenism of the Diaspora), Athens, 2000–).

He has given many lectures in Greek and in English in Australia, New Zealand, Greece, Cyprus, and the USA on subjects of theoretical, applied and contrastive linguistics, Greek language and literature, teaching Greek as a foreign language, the literature of the Greek diaspora, as well as on the press and literature of the Greeks in Australia and New Zealand. He has been interviewed extensively in the press, on radio and television in Australia and Greece as well as in the USA, Canada and Germany, on a variety of scholarly and cultural subjects. His work relating to the change of the Olympic Medals received wide international media attention. Furthermore, he was the producer and presenter of two radio programs (the Greek-language “Greek Community Program” (1976–1980) and the English-language “The Greek Vision” (1979–1980) on Greek literature, history and civilisation) on 2MCE-FM, Mitchell College of Advanced Education.

Professor Kanarakis’ community activities have included, among others, numerous lectures and seminars for a wide range of cultural events in Central Western New South Wales, Sydney, Newcastle, Canberra, Melbourne, Adelaide, Darwin, as well as to schools, literary and community organisations, the CWA, University of the Third Age in Bathurst, as well as to student and teacher organisations in Australia.

At the international level in 2000, Professor Kanarakis played a significant role in drawing the attention of the Australian and international mass media to the inappropriate depiction of the Roman Colosseum on the Olympic Games medals. This seventy-year-old error was finally accepted by the International Olympic Committee and was corrected for the Athens Olympiad of 2004.

For his contribution to the Greek Letters (especially in Australia) and Greek civilisation, Professor Kanarakis has been honoured

with a number of awards and distinctions, including election in 1994 to membership of the International Academy for the Promulgation of Civilisation, Rome, while in 1999 he was conferred with an Honorary Doctorate of Letters by Charles Sturt University. In 2002 he was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia for service to the community and to education, particularly through the study of Greek arts and culture, and in 2008 the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens honoured him at Delphi for “having upheld the Hellenic values throughout his life and work”.

- George Kanarakis (Biographical notes in Greek)

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Christmas Mass at St. Joseph’s

Dec 8, 2010 05:35AM

“The Journey” — Artist: Michael Morgan

By Gabrielle Morgan

A sense of peace prevailed among the people who seemed to be relaxed and happy after the pre-Christmas rush. They waited expectantly for Mass to begin which was to be celebrated by a visiting priest from Rome.

Annie, our organist, had not arrived. I was told she wasn’t well and we must proceed without her. With a full church congregation, I realised how much we depended on Annie. She travelled miles by car each Sunday, after already attending Mass at her own Church, to play the organ for us. Now it was up to me to choose an Entrance Hymn appropriate for Christmas morning, one which everyone might know by heart. I thought quickly and chose the carol ‘Silent Night’. Without accompaniment, a cappella style, a chorus of voices filled the Church - The Mass became alive.

The Priest began the Liturgy and through the delivery of his homily strengthened our belief in the gift bestowed on us by the birth of Jesus. In a unity of spirit, people from all walks of life filed up to communion to receive the body of Christ in the Eucharist.

At the end of the Mass, without Annie, I searched for inspiration for the recessional hymn. My eyes upon my husband’s image of the baby Jesus led me to announce, “Let us sing - Away in a Manger.”

The congregation responded in full voice, and in that small Church of St. Joseph the true spirit of Christmas was felt. Jesus

was manifest in our hearts.

As I left the Church on that Christmas morning, I thought of the special gifts I had received throughout the year by being part of this small community of worshippers at St. Joseph's.

The gift of Annie, whose strong will in witness of her faith allowed her to dedicate herself to our needs, despite the fact that she no longer drives and must find transport. Her generosity of heart and true affection was indeed an image of the spirit of Christ. It is to Annie I feel a debt. Her example is my strength.

The gift of our Parish Priest, who regardless of ill health, continues to travel to St. Joseph's to bring us the Eucharist in the Mass. In him we encounter our Lord.

The gift of friendship, shared joys, struggles and united prayers in faith, all a comfort to the soul.

Along with everyone who attended Mass that morning, I left in peace, with a full heart and an abundance of blessings before partaking of our Christmas feast

© **Gabrielle Morgan**

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Padre Padrone

Nov 30, 2010 07:16AM

Saverio Marconi played Gavino Ledda in Classic film Padre Padrone

By Gabrielle Morgan

Among the many books on my bookshelves there are some more treasured than others, especially the ones which have been signed by the authors themselves. I often come across newspaper clippings of reviews that I had slipped between the pages and sometimes I find a lovely card still hides in the jacket with the sentiments expressed by the person who gave me the book as a present. Now, years later, I find endless delight in coming across these bits of nostalgia which never cease to move me as memories crowd my mind.

One such book, titled 'Padre Padrone' which when made into a film was winner of the Grand Prix at the Cannes Film Festival in 1977, still holds the cutting from the newspaper about the author Gavino Ledda who had come to Melbourne to find material for another book he was to write about the problems of Italian migrants in Australia.

The article read, "He hopes the book will draw attention to the problems faced by generations of Italians who have been forced by poverty to leave their homeland. 'Many benefited materially from the move, but were stunted in their spiritual growth,' he

said. 'Their years working in factories and sweat shops cost them heavily in human terms.' He compares his research to Homer's 'Odyssey' - travelling the world for the story of his people."

'Padre Padrone,' Ledda's autobiography, tells the vivid tale of his brutally hard life as the child of Sardinian peasants. At the age of five he was wrenched from school by his tyrannical father to tend the family flocks and would often stay out all night in the fields with the sheep. He never learnt to read and write until he was twenty when frustration to escape his hard life and the grip of his masterly father led him to join the army. This presented him with the chance to study, battling the extraordinary pressure of his own illiteracy. But with the determination of the deprived he forced himself to learn and later entered university where he attained a doctorate in linguistics and became a teacher.

His heart wrenching story caused a sensation in Italy and led to reforms among the rural community of Sardinia.

It was my privilege to meet Gavino Ledda at the Italian Institute in Melbourne. I still hold an indelible impression in my mind of that meeting. It seemed to me the life he had led was etched in his face. Poverty, hard work and emotional suffering were ingrained in the yawning crevices of his face and reflected in the depth of expression in his eyes.

Now, when I open my copy of 'Padre Padrone' and read the inscription, "To Gabrielle, with appreciation, Gavino Ledda," I feel proud to have a personal signature of a man who lives in my memory as someone who fought so hard for his ideals and his own identity, a man to be admired for his scholastic achievements against all odds. To have attained the position of university professor after his deprived childhood seems to me to be a lesson in courage and determination of spirit.

'Padre Padrone' is a special gem in my collection of books.

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"Bonjour!" - Good Morning in French

Nov 28, 2010 07:57AM

"Bonjour!" — Artist: Michael Morgan

This fictional story was inspired by Michael Morgan's painting "Bonjour!"

Alain Durand missed his native France. Overcome with nostalgia, he walked along the path in the gardens which were an oasis in the city. Wistfully, he watched the people passing by and cherished the hope that he might chance to hear the intonation

of his own language pass their lips.

It was a crisp day in late autumn. The sun shone brightly, but there was no heat in it. Alain was grateful for his coat which he clasped tightly around himself. He liked to dress well as befits a Frenchman. He wore a bowler hat which offset his deep red coat with its black lapels. An onlooker could quickly perceive he was a man of style and expensive taste.

Alain crossed the well kept lawns to the kiosk. He sat at a table set out on the terrace. It was peaceful there with the sparrows hopping about joyfully eating the crumbs left behind by earlier patrons.

A pretty young waitress took his order and returned with a steaming hot cup of coffee. She placed a magnificent chocolate cake covered in cream before him.

"Thank you," he drooled enthusiastically. "This is just like we have in France."

"I am glad we can make you feel at home. I hope you enjoy it," the girl smiled.

"Indeed, I will."

Marie-Paul would love this, he thought.

A vision of Marie-Paul floated in his mind. He could see her smiling eyes and wide, generous mouth. He almost felt he could touch her, sense her lips on his. Oh, how he missed her. She was always vivacious and alluring in her tight skirts and high heels that suited her slim figure.

At first he had been excited by his post in Australia. The Company had selected him as their representative, not only for his managerial skill, but for his command of the English language. Melbourne, where he lived, was a city of energy. New high rise buildings appeared constantly on the skyline. There was a vibrant interest in the Arts and sport was a serious devotion. But despite this, Alain yearned for his home town of Cholet. He missed the charm of the winding streets with their mysterious, old houses, where shuttered windows had hidden the lives of their occupants for generations, where history overlapped the present. He was proud of the past, the heritage which coursed in his veins and shaped his attitudes.

He thought of the convent on the hill from which the bell rings out over the city heralding the mass exodus of uniformly dressed children released from the day's lessons. The nuns had given their lives to the education of the young there for centuries.

He remembered the smart shop windows displaying vividly colourful fashions and the patisseries with shelves of rich chocolates and cakes. His favourite haunt had been the café- bar opposite the Cathedral.

Here he used to meet Marie-Paul and his old friend, Henri Dupre. Together they had laughed and drunk wine while they discussed the affairs of the world. Rosette was always there with her little white dog who accompanied her at the table. Rosette was a little too comely and her face framed by dyed blonde hair showed evidence of a life well lived.

Alain finished his cake and wiped away some cream left on his mouth. Already he was feeling livelier. The coffee had warmed him. He determined to go home and write to Marie-Paul.

Walking back along the path he passed a man who raised his arm in a wave to him.

"Good Morning," Alain confidently greeted him.

To his surprise the man returned his greeting.

"Bonjour, Monsieur."

Perhaps Australia is not so bad, Alain smiled to himself.

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I Was Not Found in A Suitcase...But I was named....

Nov 28, 2010 05:53AM

By Michael Morgan

I still see the images as though projected on a wall screen or a plasma T.V. set, super clear and detailed, the single gold fish in a bowl leaving an iridescent slick as it moved, the white screens around my bed. I can still smell the coal tar disinfectant permeating the air, the matron all in white, large in stature. I compare her now to a Spanish Galleon in full sail. I remember her name, Sister Pump. I was seven years old, my tonsils had been removed. A fashionable operation at that time.

I was in "Airlie" Private Hospital, Ivanhoe, Melbourne, a few minutes walk from my home.

It is now 64 years later, and as I write I have in my hands a series of recently obtained documents, one of them being my original certificate of birth. It is an old scrunched up photo copy. I see the name of the Sister in attendance at my birth, Sister Pump. I see my birth mother's name(s). She was twenty seven years of age and she lived in another State.

I was named after the hospital.

AIRLIE --- was my name!

So it was to be. I was kept in the hospital under the control of a lawyer who acted on my mother's behalf. And then Mr. And Mrs. Morgan came along. I was the chosen one. Airlie (I gather Airlie was a Scottish place name) became Michael. I then lived a life in a gilded cage.

Paper clipped to the tattered birth data are the documents and affidavits that explain "the social" reasons for my mother having her baby away from her home town. She stated that she had

a child about eight years old and that she would start up a fund for my upkeep until after I was adopted or placed in care.

I recently traced my birth mother's movements until I was the age of nine, then all documentation seems to stop. No new marriage certificates, no death certificates, no change of name certificates, it seems to be a void. My birth father, because of his position, refuses to give information and here I continue to muse. There is a lot more to tell, I may do so.

Some question why I bother with this so-called "baggage, it's just a form of psychoneurosis they say." Such sophistry does not bother me. Rightly or wrongly a simple word is the key to my searches. Lies. They seem to dominate life and more and more I seek the truth. I have experienced loss, redemption, and discovered riches beyond my wildest dreams. I will continue the quest.

I have chosen to speak.

Michael Morgan ©

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St. Petersburg – Russia

Nov 26, 2010 05:15AM

By Gabrielle Morgan

I was privileged to enjoy a cruise on the Marco Polo, Orient Line Scandinavian cruise ship, which docked in Sweden, Finland, Russia, Estonia, Denmark and the Norwegian Fiords. The ship is an ideal size for navigating the narrow passage of the Fiords. It carries 826 passengers and has a much more intimate atmosphere than bigger liners that carry thousands. The food is superb, staff obliging and friendly and your every need is catered for. The entertainers are world class. Interesting lectures are given the day before every port of call outlining the history of the country and outstanding points to visit.

It was bleak and raining when I left the Marco Polo to pass through a Russian passport check before boarding the tour bus which was to take me sightseeing around the city of St. Petersburg.

My first view was the enormous docks area where steel and materials had been off loaded and moving equipment hindered the bus passage along the roadway. The ten minutes it took to clear the way enabled our guide to tell us some of the background history of the city we were about to see, none of which prepared me for the initial impact of the grim buildings I saw. Aged, grey stone apartment buildings, square and formidable, with rotting balconies and no sign of nature to soften what the eye observed.

As we moved on into the city I became more impressed by the stately buildings and monuments to past Tsars and Emperors. Peter the Great built St. Petersburg on the Neva River in the eighteenth century. He turned the swampland area of the river estuary into canals and today there are 620 bridge crossings. Some of the bridges have cast iron balustrades and decorative sculptures that look hauntingly beautiful in the mild baltic light. In summer there is no dark, just a wonderful pale white twilight. In winter there are only six hours of light. All the apartment buildings, I learned, had inner courtyards where children played, and when I think about it seemed a sensible idea considering the climate, so cold in winter.

The highlight of my two days in St. Petersburg was a visit to The Winter Palace which now houses the Hermitage Museum Art Gallery, one of the greatest galleries in the world.

I was amazed at the grandeur of the Tsar's Winter Palace. Stopping spellbound on the white entrance hall stairway, I looked up to Romanesque green marble columns supporting gold and white entablature. Imposing marble statuary graced the walls. This was a fitting precursor to the rooms that followed. I was able to walk in the footsteps of Catherine and Peter the Great and imagine the balls and banquets where all the important royalty of the times were entertained. Each room was splendidly decorated and furnished with the finest art and antiques, exquisite in their style and beauty.

The tour guides had great difficulty making themselves heard when they related the history of the art works in the Hermitage. There were so many groups, each leader shouting to be heard. Fortunately our guide was very professional and managed to steer us away from the masses and led us to the most important works by the great masters such as Rembrandt, Michaelangelo and later impressionists Renoir and Monet. It would have been impossible to see every painting as there were over a thousand rooms.

A drive out of town to Peterhof Palace was illuminating. We passed areas which had been specially built for the workers - blocks and blocks of cheaply built flats. Our tour guide informed us she lived in one of these two bedroom flats. Her husband was an engineer, she was very well educated in history and her father was a judge. They drove a second hand car which they had purchased in Finland as she said they were better than the cars to be bought in Russia. I noticed most of the cars on the road were old.

We drove on to the better seaside areas where the wealthy had their holiday homes which were far from ostentatious. Peterhof Palace was in this area. It had been the Tsar's country retreat by the sea. Once again I was in total awe of the magnificence of this palace which has been restored to its original brilliance. It crossed my mind that it was ironic that the opulence enjoyed by the tsars caused a revolution and now the palaces they had created were Russia's entry into the lucrative tourist dollar.

I enjoyed luncheon served in a popular Russian restaurant the size of a banquet hall with a balcony at one end and a stage with a grand piano at the other. While I consumed my meal complete with vodka and wine I was entertained by a Russian musical group. They looked striking in their red and gold traditional costumes. In operatic voice, a comely woman with blonde hair

and a black haired man with a beard sang in rousing tones to the music of the balalaika. The very spirit of Russia resonated in their voices and bearing. I sensed the strength of their pride, their determination and the depth of their heart. In their song I really felt Russia.

I left St. Petersburg with a feeling of deep respect for a people who had suffered so much through wars and revolution and now faced the immense challenge of the future. Theirs was the city of Nijinsky, Tchaikovsky and Rimsky-Korsakov and the poet, Pushkin who was educated, exiled from, and later killed in St. Petersburg. In this city that has known such richness and such tragedy the past is alive and ever present in the tapestry of St. Petersburg, its gold onion domed churches, palatial palaces and its very heart constant like the flow of the Neva river.

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Snail Man

Nov 25, 2010 04:55AM

By Michael Morgan

Common speech, (if you can call speech common) whatever that may mean, often uses the name of a creature or an animal to describe a human quality, and generally as a class they are warm, active, sensitive, and have redeeming features - but not always. How often you have an intuitive gut feeling that some one or something is a bit "off." Such is the case with someone I met in my late teens. One of the few people that I could say disturbed me from the first introduction was Henry Snape Jukes (a pseudonym). I still shudder when I think of him.

Henry had a passion for Snails. He was deaf, more like a bird than a human, or the molluscs that he omnivorously devoted his time to. If you saw Henry in the day, his darting, jerking movements would draw your attention to him for an instant then you would forget him in about the same time, but a shadow image of him would surface back into your mind at the most importune moments. A presence kept returning like a dream image never to be erased. Henry, if you ever met him at night, seemed to change. Gone was the spasmodic twitch, the dry lips and the visually obvious dry, raspy tongue. The best way to illustrate this change would be to say that Henry "became moist." A strange way to describe a person, I suppose, but the best way to convey the truth. He researched gastropods, drawing spiral shells, flat shells, rounded shells into one of his hundreds of notebooks. This he did every evening and then he would go wandering into the wetlands. He was secretly thrilled that one area was called Helix Park, such apt synchronisation. This haunt gave him order and contentment. A box hedge coiling to the

right. Dextral, that was when talking about shells. Sinistral when going counter clockwise. Such terms made Henry feel important. He knew what they meant, he had his own agenda.

Winter was his time to escape, summer to sleep and spring made him restless when hunger and anxiety ruled. Eating filled a void. Compulsion was the force that drove him and to stop his tremors the only game he played was aiming darts at a target above his pond.

Springtime, ah sweet springtime! Henry gorged himself with half cooked meat, such was his desire. His greatcoat pockets used to be stuffed with snacks that he ate on his nocturnal wanderings. He adored Ravioli thawed by his body warmth, to be sucked, licked and slurped.

I can still see that old mouldy coat covered in lascivious dribblings which would be the right term for what was another part of Henry's nature, only too readily revealed.

Bimbo, that was her real name (a homage to the artist, Paul Klee's cat) used to run in Helix Park, sometimes not sure if she was running to a destination or escaping from one.

Anyway, Henry was walking to his destination when he smelt the atmosphere, a scent of flowers in his nostrils. He shook his head and quivered. He saw the girl and it was like a dream, IT took himself out of himself and then he was left empty, depleted and changed. His eyes ran tears, his palm was sweaty and his stomach ached. He squashed the food in his pockets and covered his hands in glutinous gravy. He lurched towards Bimbo, not the object of desire but a specimen to be investigated. He thought of his favourite univalves. A force outside Henry, despite his epicene nature, excited him. He had to touch something, but like the song "Too Close For Comfort" as a popular songster warbled, he could not be in proximity with another human's flesh. His filthy hands pulled out of his pocket his favourite sporting items, fixed pointed objects of twenty grams weight, a handful of them. He lined them up on the ground like a surgeon setting up instruments, a ritual before procedure. He saw flashes of light and sparks emanate from each one. His scotoma vision was superb. Time for controlled action. A parabolic curve generated by a point hit the target. A rale from Bimbo.

Silence.

The moon came out, a pearl in a pewter bowl to illuminate the scene.

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Mr Eucalyptus

Nov 18, 2010 11:25AM

by **Iakovos Garivaldis**

Towards the end of the final decade of the 20th century, I met a very interesting man in his late 60s in Melbourne who became a dear friend in later years and during my involvement with the **Hellenic Writers' Association of Australia**.

Larry arrived to Australia as S. Papadopoulos

His name was **Lawrence (Larry) Darrell**, or Solon Papadopoulos before he changed it, when he first arrived to Australia. Lawrence was a lonely man all the time I knew him and as the story of my life goes, I did like to talk and associate with men older than me (he was about 20 years my senior) and usually lonely.

The way we met was quite bizarre since he contacted me in 1999 when we were having our first **Book Exhibition** of books by writers of Greek origin in Melbourne in co-operation with the Archives Museum of RMIT University and AHEPA Victoria (a Hellenic cultural organisation).

Lawrence contacted me one day when he read in the paper that we were calling for writers and publishers who wanted to participate in the exhibition with their books asking me characteristically: *"can I please be included in the book exhibition"*. His voice, crackling at the other end of the line sounded so insecure and uncertain that caught my attention. I was delighted to make his acquaintance when he arrived and showed me his wonderful book titled "Who Am I", a poetry and essay collection published in London early in 1999 by Minerva Press.

Who is this Me?

Who is this me,
This enemy
Who spites me
And fights me
And shatters
My serenity?

Who is this me,
This adversary
Who torments me
And dements me
And imprisons me
In tyranny?

Who is this me,
This emissary
Who abuses me
And confuses me
And drives me
To insanity?

Who is this me,
This other entity
Which abhors me
And adores me
And splinters

My sanity?

Who is this me,
This hidden identity
Which excites me
And inspires me
And uplifts me
With its ecstasy?

Who is this me
This personality
With physicality
And spirituality,
This human riddle,
This divine mystery?

Lawrence Darrell - "Who am I?", p. 29

Here you will find another writer, Somerset Maugham writing about Lawrence and his life (I don't know Somerset Maugham at all) touched quite unexpectedly by his life. The book is titled "The Razor's Edge".

Lawrence only wrote literature in English as his command of the Greek language was not poor but nevertheless inadequate for poetry creation as he admitted to me. This is what he wrote about himself in an article which was published in the literary periodical "O Logos" in 2000 titled "**Reminiscences of a migrant**":

...I belong to the first post-war generation of Greek migrants and was born in Alexandria, Egypt, where I attended Greek and French schools, followed by a two-year course in an English commercial school. Both my parents were Greek Cypriots and being a British subject, I served in the British Navy until the end of the war in 1945. It was during these war years that the urge to write first manifested itself and, for some reason which I still cannot fathom, I made a conscious decision to write in English - a language in which I was not as well versed as Greek or French. Little did I know then that my obvious infatuation with this foreign language was to develop into a life-time love affair. The publication of my first book, early this year, was the realization of this ambition and now in the 75th year of my life I find myself writing another book and looking forward to a new literary career.

Like most Greek migrants, I married a Greek girl and both my wife and I have been blessed with two daughters and three grandchildren. During the 52 year span of my life as a migrant I had a variety of jobs and occupations, ranging through public servant, cook, clerk, café owner, barman, grocer, storeman, house salesman, business agent, estate agent, furniture and electrical retailer, land developer and home builder. I made and lost money, and consider myself fortunate to have a loving family and good health. Now in the twilight of my life I am poised for a new beginning and I am just as enthusiastic about the future as I was when I first arrived in Perth with ten pounds in my pocket back in 1948.

I still vividly remember the small ship on which I embarked in Port Said in Egypt, together with 250 women and children who were on their way to rejoin their husbands and fathers who had migrated to Australia before the war. The ship, a small 800 ton converted yacht, named *s/s Komminos*, owned and captained by two Greek brothers, had to detour from Colombo in Sri Lanka, to

Jakarta in Indonesia for refueling in order to complete its journey to Perth. The Indonesians were then fighting their colonial masters, the Dutch, for their independence and we were not allowed ashore because of the war hostilities. But the overwhelming memory of that sea voyage was the passage from Jakarta to Perth down the North-west coast of Australia, renowned for its cyclones and shipwrecks. We were barely out of Jakarta when we ran into mountainous seas which buffeted our small ship and tossed it about like a toy. For all of the seven days it took the ship to reach Fremantle everyone was kept below decks, an order readily complied with because hardly anyone could stand up. I remember lying down in my bunk, seasick, but still able to observe through the porthole daylight turning to darkness as our small ship was engulfed by the huge waves. The women wailed and prayed, the children fretted and cried, and the Greek crew, 50 odd experienced sailors, remained calm performing their duties and soothing the passengers' fears. But the sturdy, small ship must have been well built because it withstood the force of the waves and emerged, time and again, from the dark depths of the ocean into the bright light of day. To compound our problems, the ship's radio was smashed and we lost contact with the authorities in Fremantle who assumed we were in trouble and sent out aircraft to locate us. We survived and finally made it to port, to be greeted by the local media who for days had been speculating about our fate. The next day the newspapers proclaimed: "Smallest migrant steamship ever to sail to Australia" and demanded an enquiry into the seaworthiness and hygiene conditions of the ship.

When eventually I made it to Melbourne, I discovered a city which was still a sleepy colonial outpost of the British Empire in the Pacific. Those were the days when migrants were expected to renounce their ethnic and cultural identities and assimilate into the prevailing Anglo-Saxon culture. Migrants were referred to as "wogs", "dagos" or "reffos" and dared not speak their own language in public for fear of being verbally abused or physically assaulted by some aggressive or inebriated Aussie. In this drive for assimilation, migrants were also compelled, by the sheer pressure of conformity, to anglicise their names to avoid undue attention to their origin. My own name, Solon Papadopoulos, was typical and most Greek names were either abbreviated or changed. The prospect of being called "Pappas" did not appeal to my youthful, romantic nature, so I opted for Lawrence Darrell, the name of the protagonist in the novel "The Razor's Edge", with whom I developed a spiritual rapport. My contemporaries will probably remember the movie of this novel by English author Somerset Maugham, which starred the late American actor, Tyrone Power, in the leading role of Larry Darrell, back in 1946. To this day, I am treated like a traitor by some of my fellow Greeks for abandoning a name which belonged to the illustrious Athenian poet, law maker and statesman, Solon, who lived in the 6th century before Christ.

In this second half of the twentieth century I was privileged to observe our beautiful island continent being transformed into the modern, multicultural and multilingual society it is now and I am immensely proud to have been one of the many Greek migrants who have contributed to its new, social order, which not only preserves and protects individual cultures but through their fusion and interaction enhances and enriches all humanity.

Lawrence Darrell

On 28th November 1999 Lawrence awarded the **Annual Hellenic Distinction for Literature**, by the Hellenic Association of Victoria, founded and headed for twenty years by Mr Dimitris (Takis) Efstratiades. Personally for a about a year I was also part of the Hellenic Association's Committee.

These distinctions were presented by the Hellenic Association and awarded to Victorians of Greek descent who have excelled in various fields of endeavour such as the Arts, Literature, Social Welfare, Business, Sport, Education, the Professions; as well as an Australian of non-Greek origin for services to the Greek community. Lawrence was taken by surprise with this award and as he said "I have not heard of these awards before until I was invited to attend the presentation function, unaware that I had already been selected for this prestigious award. I was taken completely by surprise and deeply moved and honoured by the literary recognition accorded me by my fellow Greeks."

Lawrence died in 2005 a very lonely man in his unit in suburban Chadstone where he was living alone for a number of years. Before he died, and while he was in hospital suffering from stroke, he gave me a copy of his play titled "**Mr Eucalyptus**" which he hoped was going to be accepted by a theatrical troupe to end up on stage. This never eventuated and Lawrence pinned all his hopes on me before he died.

In fact he told me "this is going to be a hit once you approach the right people, please do this for me as a last wish...". And that I did. I approached a community theatrical group (I will avoid mentioning names) and handed over "Mr Eucalyptus" to the person in charge. I never heard from them again.

Nevertheless I feel I have an obligation to Lawrence to publish this wonderful piece of writing. Funding was not going to be easy but it was a promise that created a need inside me to be fulfilled. If I haven't mentioned it earlier, Lawrence was a high quality poet, a thoughtful philosopher and as you will see from the document below a great playwright.

So here it is for my friend Lawrence who passed away yet his work will keep mentioning him for a long time to come.

Download (PDF, 555.22KB)

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