

Maria Papayanni



Author nominee
for the 2022
Hans Christian
Andersen Award
Greece

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Maria Papayanni



Maria Papayanni was born in 1964.

She studied Greek Language and Literature and worked as a journalist in radio, television, newspapers, and magazines.

Her first book was published in 2001. Ever since, she has devoted herself to writing stories, fairy tales and novels.

She loves magical, traditional tales and narrates them to children when she visits schools. She also loves theatre and has penned librettos and verses for musical theatre. Her books have enjoyed great success with children and have won numerous awards in Greece. After all, she believes that books have wings:

“Children know well that when the sentence *Once upon a time* is uttered the door opens to the place where anything may happen. And children need the world of imagination in order to understand everyday life and its difficulties.”

Since 2018, Maria Papayanni volunteers as a President of the Greek IBBY committee who awards the best children’s books of the year, acknowledging that good

I believe in the power of stories.
 And if someone asks me whether a good book
 can change the world, I laugh.
 No, a book alone is not going to change the world,
 but it will give rise to questions, it will make us
 uncomfortable being in our comfort zone
 and will push us to get out there, to the woods of life,
 to seek the solution that will make our society
 more fair for everyone.

M.P.

books give children wings. She also takes part in reading campaigns, because she believes that young readers need to meet the book that will change their lives.

In her own words

I was born in Larissa, under Mount Olympus, where the 12 gods of antiquity lived. I grew up in a large family where everyone had the gift of telling stories. Not fairy tales, but everyday life stories, which were told over huge tables in the summer; stories would add taste in our life, the way salt and pepper add flavour to our food. I recall tears alternating with laughter. These stories seemed to me like miracles, because they could release great powers. I don't mean to say that everyone in my family was a bit of a liar, but exaggeration was something common. That's how I came to believe that in the quiet, provincial town where I was growing up anything could happen. Growing up, instead of confessing to myself that my family used to exaggerate, I chose to believe that we were 'special' and 'unique'. And I also decided that this was the only way I could tolerate reality and put up with everyday difficulties. By making up stories... With stories, I have always had a season ticket in my pocket which allowed me to freely come and go between everyday life and the land where... anything may happen.



EVENTS – SCHOOL VISITS

A book is always a great excuse to ask ourselves questions, to discuss things, to laugh, to celebrate, to expose ourselves to public view, and, who knows... maybe to see the world in a different light.





PLAYS

I've had the fortune to see my texts being turned to great theatre shows, in bigger and smaller theatres alike: from a 2000-strong full house at the Athens Concert Hall, to children's hospital rooms, performing for 2 or 3 kids only.

Seeking Utopia in Maria Papayanni's Fictional Universe

Elita Fokiali, *PhD, Transmedia storytelling expert*

Some books are meant to be read more than once. You are never finished with them; they return again and again, telling stories that seem as if they were written for you. These books, made of words and images, thoughts and dreams, “birds, boats, journeys, streets, cities, pirates, warriors, and lots of other things, too”^[1], eventually become your inseparable friends. These books usually have no age, no gender, no genre classification. They are vehicles connecting you to the past, not to evoke nostalgia, but in the sense that you have to look back to move forward; to give shape to the dream of a better tomorrow;

to face your fears and put flesh and bone to that dream.

Maria Papayanni's stories belong to the galaxy of narratives that share the idea of a bright world with equal rights for everyone as a common denominator. Sometimes they're funny and sometimes they're sad, always written in a modern language and at the same time with the simplicity and wisdom of fairy tales, telling us that our world is not worthless, and life is worth living.

Papayanni's implied readers are children and young adults. Even though her work establishes a unique and distinct space in the field of children's literature, it attracts older readers as well, standing beyond typologies and moving in-between different genres.

[1] *Thekla's Treasure*



Papayanni writes books that amaze and amuse children of all ages, coming-of-age stories, fairy tales, stories that are neither fairy tales, nor truths, but could have possibly been truths in another era.

In every piece of her work, the author moves in-between the real and the imaginary, the past and the present, the local and the global, the urban and the rural, the individual and the collective, the *self* and the *other*. With remarkable narrative mastery, the author transforms fairy tales, preserves ancient myths by reconstructing them, engages in conversation with Sappho and Dickinson, Borges and Neruda, Elytis and Ritsos, Rimbaud and Éluard, Homer and Kornaros, Woolf and Plath. She builds imaginary storyworlds that contain

“everything that exists and happens”^[2] and have consistency, reliability and wholeness. And despite the fact that all her worlds have distinct characteristics, they end up conversing and interacting both with each other as well as with a wider literary corpus, a narrative gestalt^[3] where the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

[2] Klastrup & Tosca (2004) *Transmedial worlds: Rethinking cyberworld design*. Proceedings of the International Conference on Cyberworlds (pp. 409–416). Los Alamitos, CA: IEEE Computer Society. Retrieved from http://www.itu.dk/people/klastrup/klastruptosca_transworlds.pdf

[3] Wagner, R. (2004) *The Art Work Of The Future*, Kessinger Publishing, Montana, Tofts, D. (2005). *Tsk tsksk& beyond: anticipating distributed aesthetics*, *The Fibreculture Journal*, 7.

The author chooses to tell the micro-stories of her heroes on the canvas of a 'big' story (macro-novel). Multiple narratives complement one another, like pieces of a puzzle, and they illuminate a path leading to the exit of the labyrinth, to the final outcome and to the resolution of the story.

If the purpose of literature for children and young adults is, among others, to give meaning to their world by shedding light on it from many different angles, then the author's ability to inspire the mental representation of imaginary worlds is invaluable. In the land of childhood where nothing is given and everything is possible and under development, suggesting alternative perspectives and interpretations of reality, while leaving space for the reader's individual values, is of paramount importance.

Far from providing an escapist paradise where children are free from the anxieties and troubles of the adult world, all the books that will be discussed here engage with the complexities, uncertainties and contradictions of everyday life. At the same time, regardless of whether they tell stories of happiness or sorrow, whether they provide a "happily ever after" ending or not, they

touch readers' hearts by offering them that kind of aesthetic pleasure that only good literature holds.

Meant to be read more than once, Maria's stories give us some sense of a rare, genuine joy for which we are grateful in return.

Building a Fictional Universe

Maria Papayanni's storyworlds stand as autonomous entities while simultaneously being linked together as archipelagic narratives^[4] that constitute a larger story. An ongoing dialogue exists between the author's fictional universe and its kaleidoscopic elements. Synergies and interdependencies appear between the author's different stories; every now and then, boundaries are blurred and

[4] Greenaway, J. (2019) David Mitchell's *Post-Secular World: Buddhism, Belief and the Urgency of Compassion* by Rose Harris-Birtill, C21 Literature: Journal of 21st-Century Writings 8(1)

[5] 'Secondary world' is a term used by Tolkien to refer to a consistent, fictional world or setting, created by a man. It is also called 'subcreation' in contrast to the Reality, called Primary world. Flieger, V. (1999) *Fantasy and Reality: J.R.R. Tolkien's World and the Fairy-Story Essay, Mythlore: A Journal of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and Mythopoeic Literature*: Vol. 22 : No. 3 , Article 2. Available at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/mythlore/vol22/iss3/2>

stories meet with each other in a common place.

In the narrative continuum of the writer's secondary worlds^[5], magical realism acts as a common denominator that guides readers into accepting the osmosis between real and imaginary. The inexplicable inclusion of magical elements into an otherwise realistic narrative does not feel unfamiliar to fictional heroes, nor to readers, as long as the author accepts them as part of reality. Thus, Papayanni uses elements of legends, myths, and fairy tales to shed light on questions concerning human rights, environmental ethics, cultural heritage, immigration, acceptance of diversity. Furthermore, magical realism adds to her work a degree of openness that intrigues the reader to continue exploring the fictional world after finishing the story.

Heroes

Papayanni's fictional characters live among us and represent the uniqueness and complexity of human nature—either as individuals or as group members—through multiple attitudes, perceptions, beliefs and desires. Regardless of whether or not they live at the same time and place, or belong to the same generation and society, each one

perceives reality differently. Each one's reality is a matter of perspective and interpretation constructed through interpersonal relationships and interactions. Self is built through—or in contrast to—the Other. Love, passion, fear, *upside-down wishes*, a granddaughter's hug... they can all alter reality as if by magic.

Among this masterfully woven web, no character is one-dimensional. Some try to heal their wounds, some hide secrets and nightmares of traumatic events of their past, others appear to be cruel but eventually reveal their tender side. No stereotypical roles exist. Papa-Grigoris, a priest who has dedicated his life to God loves all people, while papa-Manolis covers his misdoing by victimizing Violet. Some neighbors are friendly and supportive, like Katerina who makes delicious pies and orange cakes, whilst others are bad, gossipy and crabby, just like Frosso. Similarly, some teachers are authoritarian, arrogant and inadvertently forbid fun and creativity from school. On the contrary, there are model teachers, just like Rosa's who believes that there is a pair of shoes with wings for everyone.

Fathers have a prominent presence in Papayanni's novels, in which we encounter many different types of

fatherhood. Eva's dad would never accept that daisies can grow under his bed. On the other hand Rosa's father, a fisherman who secretly writes poetry, is convinced that miracles do happen in everyday life and has huge reserves of tenderness, not only for his daughter but for every creature that crosses his path. In "The Golden Oars", Adrachtas never hugs his daughter, not because he doesn't love her, but because he is afraid that his sadness is contagious and he might infect her, too. "Run away" he tells her, "run away to escape". And finally, there's a unique dad who is a mountain, a lion and the wind, who nibbles food from pots, and who urges his daughters to always chase happiness in life, same as he used to do. "You are the captain," he tells Hero, "sail through life."

The reader can describe Papayanni's characters with many different words: special, crazy, strange, charming... Thekla is friends with an oak tree and carries stories in her cart, Mandalena dresses like a rainbow, Violetta talks to flowers. The point is how one perceives it. Our eyes are mirrors; others stand still in front of miracles and others pass them by. The author trusts the gaze of her child readers and makes them the heroes and narrators of their own stories. That is because she believes children are

always looking for the way out of the labyrinth, to get over the smaller and greater dead ends of everyday life. Through difficult paths and painful conflicts either within themselves or with others, through friendship, love, or the healing effect of nature, heroes grow up and develop self-awareness. They embrace each other within a story and face the world head on.

Mythos

At the heart of every narrative there is always a Myth referring to "the central knowledge one needs to have in order to interact with or interpret events in the world successfully"^[6]. Mythos in Papayanni's work is universal, multi-faceted; it manifests as a modern creation comprised of a mimesis^[7] of the real world, an imitation—or as an emphasis on the "already known and said" (oral traditions, legends and fairy tales).

Mythical archetypes and old folktales, such as the dervish dreaming of shoes with wings or the oak branches becoming golden oars every full moon,

[6] Klastrop & Tosca (2003)

[7] The term 'mimesis' is derived from the Greek «μίμησις», meaning to imitate.

come to life and have a drastic effect on the heroes' emotional, social and moral development.

The ancient symbol of the Tree plays a vital role that goes all the way back to ancient times. As in origin myths and contemporary fantasy novels, trees in Papayanni's work are symbols of human fears and desires, define the landscape and have their own stories, often interlinked with those of heroes. Inherent connection with—and dependence on—trees highlight our deep interconnectedness with all creatures on the one home, this one Earth, that we share. Furthermore, trees follow patterns of human behavior: *“At night, outside, when all animals and creatures are sleeping, only the trees stay up to watch people live their dreams”*^[8].

Like a tree with deep roots and many branches, Papayanni's long story (macro-novel) sends its roots deeply into the past, and spreads its branches over the modern world.

Ethos

Notable stories bear a meaning, evoking situations we lived through at some

stage. After all, great literature is not about offering solutions; it's about seeking what unites people to common experiences, common emotions.

In Papayanni's work, ethical values such as solidarity, fellowship, love, friendship, respect for otherness, justice, courage, struggling for freedom and collective dreaming are juxtaposed to the negative qualities of authoritarianism, prejudice, autarchy, intimidation, intolerance. Papayanni's ethics gives weight to the relation between all creatures in the universe: humans, trees, animals and birds.

“Shoes with Wings” touches the fundamental issue of language extinction. Language is a carrier of cultural capital, a reservoir of knowledge, experience, memories and dreams. After all, multiculturalism for Papayanni is considered as essential as biodiversity.

— *Do you know what I think? said Gambito. Language is not only words; it's the history of a people. That which people remember, but also that which they dream. Do you understand?*

— *Kind of, muttered Rosa, who was trying with all her might to understand, but didn't quite grasp what he was saying.*

[8] *The Golden Oars*

— *When a language is lost, everything that has been said in that language is also lost, Nell replied.*

— *Like what? Go on.*

— *Fairy tales, songs, legends, old prophecies and oaths.*

— *Language, my dear Rosalia, lives within people's souls.*

Topos

Whether real or imaginary, symbolic or allegorical, *Topos* provides a specific historical and geographical setting with a defining set of natural and cultural characteristics. *Topos* in Papayanni's work is the place where all people, all languages and all eras can be together.

Papayanni creates imaginary words in settings that seem real and could exist. All stories have a birthplace; sometimes they unfold in an urban environment: city streets and neighborhoods, colorful houses with jungle-like gardens and cottages with big backyards; other times they are located on villages hidden among mountainous rocks, or in meadows with rosemary, lavender, oregano and chamomiles.

Topos is often characterized by vagueness and fluidity; it evokes vivid memory and carries secrets and shadows, dreams and emotions. *Topos*

is Kofinas, a Cretan village high up on the rocks overlooking the sea which is far off in the distance. The isolation and inaccessibility of the area allow for the revelatory baring of the soul, not only of the Greek but the human soul. *Topos* is a village carved into the sides of a rock, in a wild scenery where the roar of the wind tears apart winter nights. *Topos* is a mountain called 'Mast' because, in old times, water used to cover the surface of the land and only the top of the mountain was left above the waterline. *Topos* is a family home set on an isolated farm in a village that can hardly be found on the map. At this very place that is the home of the Tree King miracles do happen.

Topos is inseparable from people who act over time. In Papayanni's settings, yesterday comes to life when no one expects it.

And when the traveler returned to her homeland, she will be able to boast that once she traveled to the land of Odysseus and met good people who did not at all resemble the cunning Odysseus, the same way after all, that the land itself did not resemble how it once had

[9] *The Golden Oars*

been, undersea. For the locals, though, the foreigner would gradually become a part of them, since they had shared the same unexplained secrets and riddles about that very ancient seaway that was anything but a way, as it had devoured anyone who wanted to cross it.^[9]

In Papayanni's work the sea stands out as a symbol; it is the counterpoint of the mountain, the village, the exclusion and the introversion. The roots of the olive tree and of the oak sprawl deep into the earth and reach the sea just like the heroes' lives expand to reach out to the world. Simos dreams of himself and Odin being inside the olive tree.

They were going down and down and its roots were never ending. Moonlight filtered down through the tree's crevices and all he could see were shadows—he thought they were bats but they were butterflies with a thousand colors. “How did the butterflies get inside the tree?” Simos wondered. They kept going down until they heard a lapping sound. “The sea,” Odine turned and whispered.^[10]

[10] *The Lonesome Tree*

In the Land of the Deep, heroes dive to reach sea depth, only to realize that the most important in life is to find the courage and fight for what's right.

— *What will that other world be like? Babel shook her hand, laughing; and if he did say something, Rosa did not catch it. So, as a result, she imagined that that other world would be like a smile. A smile that would unite the myriad different worlds, the tiny, red fireflies that flickered on the map, and the myriad different people that walk the earth.^[11]*

In the great map that Maria Papayanni creates with her work, heroes are always seeking a Utopia that lies just beyond the horizon. Even when they don't reach it, they dream of it and walk consistently towards it.

Concluding remarks

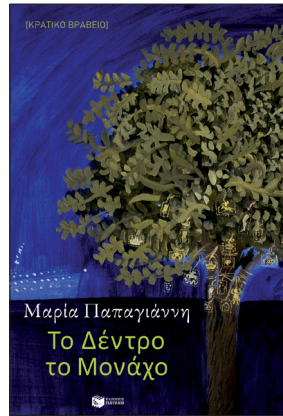
You may meet Maria Papayanni inside her novels. She rests her ear on the ground and hears the sound of the ants and the sigh of the Tree. She cares for the world and all its creatures-children,

[11] *Shoes with Wings*

animals, birds, trees—she loves ships, the sea and music. *You may say she is dreamer and an imaginer, a seeker and a finder, and even though she's not blind to harsh reality, her joy and her devotion to telling universal stories are contagious.*

“Let’s dare write a story to hold all of us” was Papayanni’s dream, which later became a project she shared with many children during the lockdown in March 2020.

The author goes beyond the frames and barriers that are common in the field of contemporary children’s literature and clearly marks a postmodern turn. Her fictional universe gives rise to a repertoire of self-consistent stories and characters, while offering potential for further exploration. You are never finished with her stories once and for all; they return again and again for a second, third and even more readings, to initiate the reader to the life of poetry and to the poetry of life.





Reviews & interviews

**Are the characters of your novels
α product of your imagination
or are they inspired by experiences
you have lived?**

I don't write autobiographical texts, nor do I write confessions about my past. In α sense, though, I am the child of my own stories. I draw inspiration from α creative well, which might not originate directly from my personal experience but instead from small stories and details that I came across, heard or read. I can't recognize my characters' source clearly. All my heroes are imaginary, but if I were to investigate their origins further, each of them would remind me of something familiar. Memories, like dreams, hide inside them α kind of poetry, which means that I might remember an occasion very differently to how it happened. It is the passing time that is the creative force.

**Is the modern novelist obliged to
escape from their personal vision and
participate or create α collective one?**

I don't believe an author can live alone, or live solely for their art, with no concern about what is happening beyond their shelter. I love what I do and I couldn't live

without it, but my production is connected to all the people around me, those whom I love and know, and the others, those I do not know but with whom I share the world and daily routine. What's happening outside my personal sphere affects the words and the very story I choose to tell.

When I was younger changing the world was only α matter of time. Now the dream of α different society moves away and lives over there, at the edge of the horizon.

The people I admire the most are those who dare to dream, to share and travel through each other's eyes. Besides, isn't that the aim of literature, to understand someone else, and travel by their side into the darkness?

**Which, do you think, are those
characteristics that make α book
important and lasting through time?**

A timelessly good book speaks through its heroes about all people; it manages to carry through and interpret emotions that form the very core of human existence. As if by magic, words belonging to the author fly above the

Maria Papayanni is a master of combining the key elements of good writing for children: purpose, clarity, unity and coherency.

She knows how to “teach” children values and wraps them up into heart warming stories. Knowing Maria personally is an honour, and I know she believes in all these good things she is writing about.

Michael Neugebauer, *Publisher*

entire world, the mountains and seas that we all share. A good book is the words, the rhythm, the format, the past and the present, the story and the way you will end up telling it. For me, a good book listens closely to our anxieties and shows us the way out of the labyrinth, or at the very least sheds light on our darkness so that we can understand, explain, and move forward.

What would you advise younger writers?

I honestly don't believe I can give advice. I would tell younger writers to write and they will find their way as they do. I would also tell them that nothing comes easy.

“Prose portraits”, collective volume

I have always loved unusual people, whether they're silent or passionate about something. I observe everyday life through my magnifying glass. A minute detail, a gesture, a phrase, or a dream assume the leading role. I like seeing small miracles in the everyday, which is to say, seeing through the eyes of children, because their imagination is limitless. I love fairytales. As you know, fairytales don't tell us that everything is perfect, they don't promise eternal life. They tell us that if only we cross the dark woods, if we dare confront the wolf and the wild beasts, if we pay attention to the advice of an old woman, then we can *live happily ever after*. The magical advice is given only to those who keep their ears and eyes open, who keep their senses alive in the 'mill' of life that grinds up all things. All these are my starting point, but with one precondition. Even when I immerse myself in tradition, I endeavor for my writing to be contemporary.

Interview for “Kathimerini” newspaper

Complete bibliography

Books for children

Novels

Will you Do Me a Favour, Santa?

Illustrated by Elli Griva

Middle grade novel • Age Group: 8-11

128 pages

First edition: 2003

Original title: Άγιε Βασίλη,
θα μου κάνεις μια χάρη;

Patakis Publishers

Isbn: 978-960-16-0880-8

An Adventure for Romeo

Illustrated by Michael Kountouris

Young readers fiction • Age Group: 5-9

64 pages

First edition: 2003

Original title: Μια περιπέτεια
για τον Ρωμαίο

Patakis Publishers

Isbn: 978-960-16-0714-6

Catch Them! AWARDED

(co-written with Philippos Mandilaras)

Middle grade novel • Age Group: 8-11

264 pages

First edition: 2003

Original title: Πιάστε τους!

Patakis Publishers

Isbn: 978-960-16-0870-9

As If By Magic AWARDED

Middle grade novel • Age Group: 9-13

224 pages

First edition: 2006

Original title: Ως διά μαγείας

Patakis Publishers

Isbn: 978-960-16-2201-9

My Name is Maya

Illustrated by Yorgos Sgouros

Young readers fiction • Age Group: 5-9

56 pages

First edition: 2008

Original title: Με λένε Μάγια

Patakis Publishers

Isbn: 978-960-16-2952-0

Around the World on a Bicycle

Illustrated by Sophia Touliatou

Chapter book • Age Group: 8-10

56 pages

First edition: 2009

Original title: Ο γύρος του κόσμου
με το ποδήλατο

Patakis Publishers

Isbn: 978-960-16-3508-8

The Lonesome Tree AWARDED

Cross-over novel • Age Group: 12+
176 pages

First edition: 2010

Original title: Το Δέντρο το Μονάχο

Patakis Publishers

Isbn: 978-960-16-3599-6

Shoes with Wings AWARDED

Middle grade novel • Age Group: 10-15
288 pages

First edition: 2016

Original title: Παπούτσια με φτερά

Patakis Publishers

Isbn: 978-960-16-6682-2

The Golden Oars

Middle grade novel • Age Group: 9+
176 pages

First edition: 2021

Original title: Χρυσά κουπιά

Patakis Publishers

Isbn: 978-960-16-9210-4

Picture books

Goodnight, Mom

Illustrated by Daniela Stamatadi

Picture book • Age Group: 3-6

24 pages

First edition: 2001

Original title: Καληνύχτα, μαμά!

Patakis Publishers

Isbn: 978-960-16-0229-5

The Dream Thief

Illustrated by Alessandra Toni

Contains the fairytales: Dream Thief,

The Birthmark, The Elixir of
Happiness

Age Group: 7-107 • 64 pages

First edition: 2006,

republished in new format in 2015

Original title: Η κλέφτρα των ονείρων

Patakis Publishers

Isbn: 978-960-16-2207-1 /

978-960-16-6279-4

Isn't It Strange?

Illustrated by Katerina Vagia

Picture book • Age Group: 7-10

48 pages

First edition: 2007

The Athens Concert Hall (Megaron)

Original title: Παράξενο δεν είναι;

Το χρυσοφλιδάκι της γης

Christmas: Time for Miracles

Illustrated by Eleni Tsampra
 Board book with sound • Age Group: 2-6
 34 pages
 First edition: 2008
 Original title: Χριστούγεννα,
 καιρός για θαύματα
 Patakis Publishers
 Isbn: 978-960-16-2934-6

Christmas Topsy-Turvy

Illustrated by Petros Christoulas
 Picture book • Age Group: 6-10
 53 pages
 First edition: 2012
 Original title: Εκείνα τα Χριστούγεννα
 ήρθαν τα κάτω πάνω!
 Patakis Publishers
 Isbn: 978-960-16-4692-3

I Want To Win! / On ne gagne pas tous les jours / Wer gewinnt?

Illustrated by Eve Tharlet
 Picture book • Age Group: 4-7
 32 pages
 First edition: 2013
 First edition published simultaneously in
 English/French/German by Minedition
 ISBN-13: 978-9881595492/978-
 2354131906/978-3865661661

Miltos, Mina, Rosalia, Che, and the... suitcase

Maria Papayanni's story "Che and his Father" is included in this collection of stories that the authors donated to A.P.H.C.A.
 Picture book • Age Group: 5-10
 45 pages
 First edition: 2013
 Original title: Ο Μίλτος, η Μίνα, η Ροζαλία, ο Τσε και... η βαλίτσα
 Association for the Psychosocial Health of Children And Adolescents (A.P.H.C.A.)
 Isbn: 978-960-99713-5-5

The King Who Had Too Much of Everything AWARDED

Illustrated by Effie Lada
 Picture book • Age Group: 4-10
 32 pages
 First edition: 2015, reissued in new format in 2017
 Original title: Είχε απ' όλα και είχε πολλά
 Patakis Publishers
 Isbn: 978-960-16-6503-0 /
 978-960-16-7457-5

The Moonling

Illustrated by Effie Λαδα

Picture book • Age Group: 3-6

32 pages

First edition: 2017

Original title: Τουλάχιστον δύο

Patakis Publishers

Isbn: 978-960-16-7294-6

The Adventures of Nils

Illustrated by Myrto Delivoría

The masterpiece by Selma Lagerlöf
retold for very young children.

This is the first title of the series

“Say it with a story”, in which the
author retells her personal favorite
classic readings.

Picture book • Age Group: 4-7

64 pages

First edition: 2018

Original title: Πες το μ' ένα παραμύθι –

Οι περιπέτειες του Νιλς

Patakis Publishers

Isbn: 978-960-16-7803-0

The Silver Skates

Illustrated by Myrto Delivoría

The masterpiece by Mary Mapes Dodge
retold for very young children

is the second title of the series

“Say it with a story”.

Picture book • Age Group: 4-7

64 pages

First edition: 2019

Original title: Πες το μ' ένα παραμύθι –
Τα ασημένια πατίνια

Patakis Publishers

Isbn: 978-960-16-8373-7

Tell, Tell a Story

Illustrated by Iris Samartzí

Picture book • Age Group: 3-6

32 pages

First edition: 2020

Original title: Πες-πες Μία ιστορία

Patakis Publishers

Isbn: 978-960-16-8402-4

The Path to Love

Illustrated by Louíza Karageorgíou

Picture book • Age Group: 3-6

32 pages

First edition: 2020

Original title: Ο δρόμος για την αγάπη

Patakis Publishers

Isbn: 978-960-16-8336-2

Early Readers

Who's in Charge?

Illustrated by Petros Bouloubasis,
Sophia Touliatou
Early readers • Age Group: 5-8
24 pages
First edition: 2004
Original title: Ποιος είναι ο αρχηγός;
Patakis Publishers
Isbn: 978-960-16-1095-5

How Long is 'Always'?

Illustrated by Petros Bouloubasis,
Sophia Touliatou
Early readers • Age Group: 5-8
32 pages
First edition: 2005
Original title: Πάντα;
Patakis Publishers
Isbn: 978-960-16-1446-5

Top of The Class

Illustrated by Petros Bouloubasis,
Sophia Touliatou
Early readers • Age Group: 5-8
32 pages
First edition: 2005
Original title: Πρώτος!
Patakis Publishers
Isbn: 978-960-16-1657-5

The Accidental Bookworm!

Illustrated by Petros Bouloubasis,
Sophia Touliatou
Early readers • Age Group: 5-8
24 pages
First edition: 2006
Original title: Βιβλιοφάγος κατά...
λάθος!
Patakis Publishers
Isbn: 978-960-16-1931-6

Go to the Blackboard!

Illustrated by Petros Bouloubasis,
Sophia Touliatou
Early readers • Age Group: 5-8
24 pages
First edition: 2007
Original title: Στον πίνακα!
Patakis Publishers
Isbn: 978-960-16-2254-5

Back to School

Illustrated by Petros Bouloubasis,
Sophia Touliatou
Early readers • Age Group: 5-8
32 pages
First edition: 2008
Original title: Επιστροφή στο σχολείο
Patakis Publishers
Isbn: 978-960-16-2877-6

Petros' Stories

(an anniversary edition that includes the stories: Who's in Charge?, The Accidental Bookworm!, Go to the Blackboard!, How Long is 'Always'?, Top of The Class, Back to School)

Illustrated by Petros Bouloubasis,
Sophia Touliatou

Early readers • Age Group: 5-8
168 pages

First edition: 2014

Original title: Οι μικρές ιστορίες
του Πέτρου

Patatakis Publishers

Isbn: 978-960-16-6159-9

Tomorrow the Earth Will Grow

Illustrated by Apostolos Karastergiou

Early readers • Age Group: 5-8
32 pages

First edition: 2005

Original title: Τρεις παλάμες όλη η Γη

Patatakis Publishers

Isbn: 978-960-16-1680-3

Ellie on the Moon

Illustrated by Thanassis Dimou

Early readers • Age Group: 5-8
40 pages

First edition: 2012

Original title: Η Έλλη στο φεγγάρι

Patatakis Publishers

Isbn: 978-960-16-3069-4

Ellie's Secret Recipe

Illustrated by Thanassis Dimou

Early readers • Age Group: 5-8
40 pages

First edition: 2015

Original title: Η μυστική συνταγή
της Έλλης

Patatakis Publishers

Isbn: 978-960-16-5486-7

Thekla's Treasure

Illustrated by Chiara Fedele

Early readers • Age Group: 5-8
40 pages

First edition: 2020

Original title: Η κιβωτός της Θέκλας

Patatakis Publishers

Isbn: 978-960-16-8390-4

The Pot That Sang Stories

Illustrated by Myrto Delivoría

Early readers • Age Group: 5-8
40 pages

First edition: 2020

Original title: Η χύτρα που κελαηδούσε
ιστορίες

Patatakis Publishers

Isbn: 978-960-16-8608-0

CDs & Books with CDs

Isn't it Strange?

Music by Thanos Mikroutsikos

Story & lyrics by Μαρία Παπαγιάννη,

Melina Karakosta

CD • Age Group: 4-10

First edition: 2007

Original title: Παράξενο δεν είναι;

Legend Recordings

EAN: 5202846560020



Says One, Says the Other

Music by Thanos Mikroutsikos

Story & lyrics by Μαρία Παπαγιάννη

Picture book with CD • Age Group: 4-10

First edition: 2017

Original title: Λέγε ο ένας, λέγε ο άλλος...

Cobalt Music

Isbn: 9786188349001



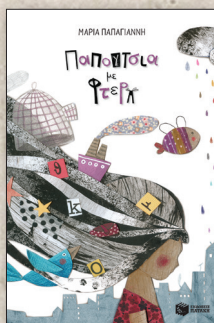


List of awards and other distinctions



The Lonesome Tree

- State Prize
- Diavazo Literary Magazine Award



Shoes With Wings

- Greek IBBY Award



As If By Magic

- Greek IBBY Award
- Diavazo Literary Magazine Award



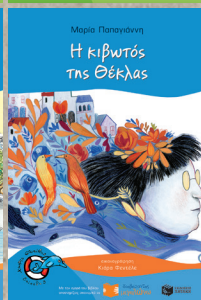
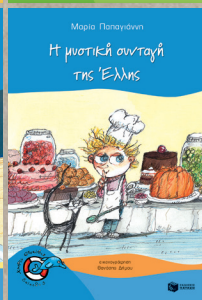
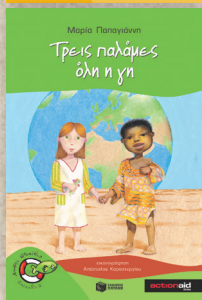
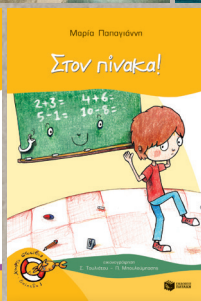
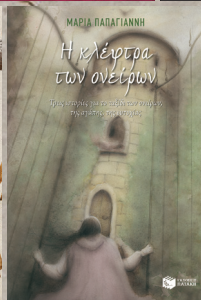
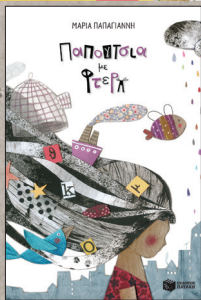
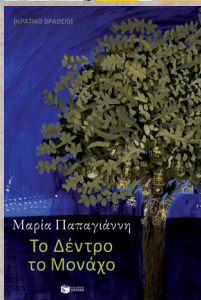
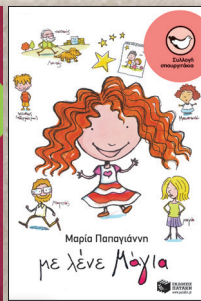
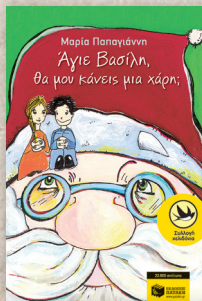
Catch Them!

- Greek IBBY Honor

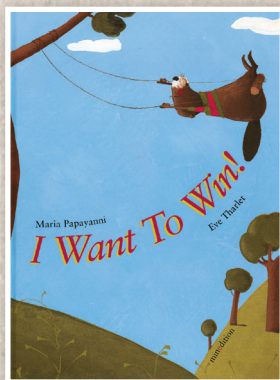


The King Who Had Too Much of Everything

- White Ravens catalogue



List of translated editions



ENGLISH EDITION

I Want To Win!

Publisher: Minedition
(2013)

ISBN-13: 978-9881595492



FRENCH EDITION

**On ne gagne pas
tous les jours**

Publisher: Minedition
(2013)

ISBN-13: 978-2354131906

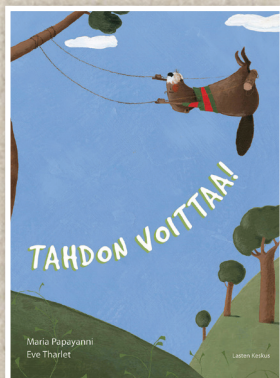


GERMAN EDITION

Wer gewinnt?

Publisher: Minedition
(2013)

ISBN-13: 978-3865661661



FINNISH EDITION

Tahdon Voittaa!

Publisher: Lasten Keskus (2013)
ISBN-13: 978-952-288-014-7

KOREAN EDITION

Publisher: Kyowon (2016)
ISBN-13: 978-952-288-014-7



and their languages



ROMANIAN EDITION

The King Who Had Too Much of Everything

Publisher: cartemna /
Editura Univers (2020)

ROMANIAN EDITION

The Moonling

Publisher: cartemna /
Editura Univers (2020)



RUSSIAN EDITION

The Lonesome Tree

Publisher: SAMOKAT
(2021 tbp)

SERBIAN EDITION

The Lonesome Tree

Publisher: PROPOLIS
BOOKS (2021 tbp)

NORTH MACEDONIAN
EDITION

Shoes with Wings

Publisher: IKONA
(2021 tbp)

Ten of the most important titles

listed in chronological order

An Adventure for Romeo

Young readers fiction • Age Group: 5-9 • 64 pages

Illustrated by Michael Kountouris

First edition: 2003

Original title: Μια περιπέτεια για τον Ρωμαίο

Patakis Publishers

Isbn: 978-960-16-0714-6

Young Romeo lives with his mother, Lavinia and his father Homer next to the theatre stage, but has never seen a real performance. He dreams, however, of becoming an actor. Seeking the magic of the theatre, he will experience the warmth of friendship and love. The stage director, the Third Bell, the Light, the Director, the Sets, the Costumes, and even Shakespeare, will all help young Romeo in the great fight for love and justice. On 2004-2005 this story went on stage, as a puppet theater.

Thanos Mikroutsikos composed music for the play. You can listen to Romeo's song here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mR9sACj-g1k&list=RDmR9sACj-g1k&start_radio=1&t=23



Tomorrow the Earth Will Grow

Early readers • Age Group: 5-8 • 32 pages

Illustrated by Apostolos Karastergiou

First edition: 2005

Original title: Τρεις παλάμες όλη η γη

Patakis Publishers

Isbn: 978-960-16-1680-3

Two girls the same age grow up in different countries in very different conditions.

Ηαδιγα lives in Ghana. Anna lives

in Greece. They both dream of seeing the world when they

grow up. They wonder how big the Earth is and how short distances become when there's a little love.

You can find the text in English at the APPENDIX.

As If By Magic

Middle grade novel • Age Group: 9-13 • 224 pages

First edition: 2006

Original title: Ως διά μαγείας

Patakis Publishers

Isbn: 978-960-16-2201-9

One of the five books sent to the jurors. See page 60

The Lonesome Tree

Cross-over novel • Age Group: 12+ • 176 pages

First edition: 2010

Original title: Το Δέντρο το Μονάχο

Patakis Publishers

Isbn: 978-960-16-3599-6

One of the five books sent to the jurors. See page 42

Shoes with Wings

Middle grade novel • Age Group: 10-15 • 288 pages

First edition: 2016

Original title: Παπούτσια με φτερά

Patatakis Publishers

Isbn: 978-960-16-6682-2

One of the five books sent to the jurors. See page 54

Tell, Tell a Story

Picture book • Age Group: 3-6 • 32 pages

Illustrated by Iris Samartzis

First edition: 2020

Original title: Πες-πες Μία ιστορία

Patatakis Publishers

Isbn: 978-960-16-8402-4

One of the five books sent to the jurors. See page 50

Thekla's Treasure

Early readers • Age Group: 5-8 • 40 pages

Illustrated by Chiara Fedele

First edition: 2020

Original title: Η κιβωτός της Θέκλας

Patatakis Publishers

Isbn: 978-960-16-8390-4

Kyria Thekla rolls her cart through the city. One day she meets Hashim, and the two of them travel in her small ark to his home country, where his goldfish still lives.

Before they say goodbye, Thekla gives him a book. "Is your cart full of books?"

Hashim asks. "No. It's full of pirates, castles, dragons, and princesses."

You can find the text in English at the APPENDIX.

The Pot That Sang Stories

Early readers • Age Group: 5-8 • 40 pages

Illustrated by Myrto Delivoría

First edition: 2020

Original title: Η χύτρα που κελαηδούσε ιστορίες

Patakis Publishers

Isbn: 978-960-16-8608-0

Is there a dish that can make a perfectly ordinary family sing stories? Surely not, Ria believes, and so she decides to spy on her grandmother Victoria. She'll do whatever it takes to learn the magic recipe.

You can find the text in English at the [APPENDIX](#).

The Path to Love

Picture book • Age Group: 3-6 • 32 pages

Illustrated by Louiza Karageorgiou

First edition: 2020

Original title: Ο δρόμος για την αγάπη

Patakis Publishers

Isbn: 978-960-16-8336-2

A little hedgehog, Eva, dreams of returning home. To a place she doesn't know, but that she's come to love through her mother's stories. But does that place really exist? Does that home exist? A tender tale about the daring it takes to follow your dreams.

The Golden Oars

Middle grade novel • Age Group: 9+ • 176 pages

First edition: 2021

Original title: Χρυσά κουπιά

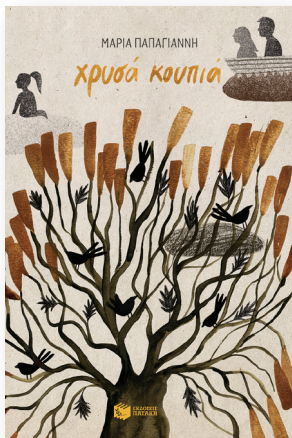
Patakis Publishers

Isbn: 978-960-16-9210-4

One of the five books sent to the jurors. See page [38](#)



List of the five books sent to the jurors

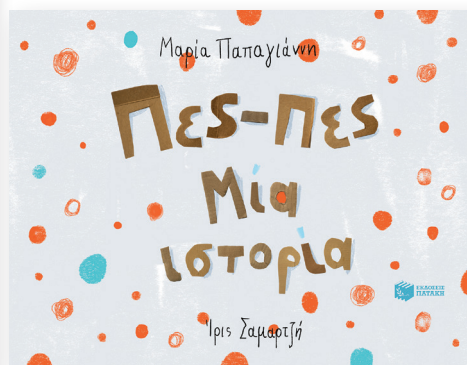


The Golden Oars **The Lonesome Tree**

Middle grade
176 pages



Cross-over
176 pages



Tell, Tell a Story

Picture book
32 pages



Shoes with Wings

Middle grade novel
288 pages



As If By Magic

Middle grade
224 pages



The Golden Oars



That summer, the entire group of children will discover that miracles aren't easy. They will realize that they have to stay united and that sometimes "together" spans all languages, all time and lands.

Suddenly their life was turned upside down. Leda and Hero have to spend the whole summer with a grandpa they don't know in a village in the middle of nowhere up in the mountains and far from the sea. Their mom won't hear any of the girls' objections. Their dad is in the hospital. But that's something they don't discuss at all with their mom. And when the girls ask her, Mom answers in riddles they can't decipher.

A few days later, the girls arrive at the farm of the "gloomy" grandpa. In the beginning, everything seemed hard and all they could think about was the day they would return home. But not

too many days later, the girls started to get to know the village and the people who lived there. People who held onto secrets, who were afraid, who longed for a warm embrace, who cared about those who dreamt of adventures and those who saw with the inner eyes, the eyes of the soul. And just as all lives look like a complicated spider web with bright moments and steep cliffs, in their room the girls will find their mom's old diary and discover just how common to hers their fears and desires are. The girls are thrilled to meet Olivia, an unusual young woman who owns a little bookstore, who tells them terrific stories, legends,

and customs about tree giants, magic trees and—mentions that she would love to meet their mysterious and heroic grandfather. The girls are riveted. Their grandpa, mysterious and heroic? Like the kinds of heroes who live in books? Olivia tells them, also, that beyond the dark canyon, a little before the lake, there is a Tree King. The elders used to call her Ship. They believed that when the moon got full her branches became oars. The legend said that whoever managed to ride her branches when they appeared golden would acquire mighty strength and magical abilities. During these same days, Leda falls in love with Thomas and Hero confides her secret to Vangelis. She wants to beg the King of the Forest to make her dad better. Grandpa, though, and all the adults, forbid them from crossing the dangerous dark canyon.

That summer, the entire group of children will discover that miracles aren't easy. They will realize that they have to stay united and that sometimes "together" spans all languages, all time and lands. While Leda discovers that love is a kind of art as well, little Hero will chase after the miracle that will make her dad well. But that very night a tremendous storm will put her life in danger, and as she fights with the water of the dark lake, her father promises her, "I will always be here, somewhere. You will grow up, Hero. Remember to chase joy, not sorrow. Just the way we lived together. Promise me. Hold on tight to your oar. You're the captain. Set sail for life." And even though Hero wants to go with him, she promises him that she will always chase joy.



The Golden Oars by Maria Papayanni is a moving portrait of familial grief and a startling image of Greece's cultural heritage. As Hero and Leda's father lies terminally ill in the hospital in Athens, their mother sends them to her village (where they've never been) to stay with their grandfather (whom they've never met). There, we witness the gentle unfolding of the girls' confusion, worry, and secret longings as they bond with the village and its people only to discover several traumas that course through its history, including its massacre during WWII by the Nazis. Papayanni interweaves the voices of a wide gamut of characters—humans and nature itself, e.g., the trees, the night—and trails through time and memory

so fluidly that the present, future, and past start to reflect one another, becoming one and the same. This way, Papayanni narratively constructs a collective memory—a human fabric Greek culture so dearly prizes—which underlines the natural healing powers of human connection, collective mourning and memorialization. Along with the protagonists, the reader will embark on an exciting path of discovery stylized at times, to be dreamy and at times, mythical, with lyrical and concise prose as the channel between layers of action and suspense, and deep emotional truths. *The Golden Oars* is a fine literary achievement by an author at the height of her narrative prowess.

Eleni Theodoropoulos

Writer and literary critic, and PhD student in Comparative Thought and Literature at Johns Hopkins University

The art of narrative in the novel is a masterpiece. The interchange between serious and funny moments, deliberation and action, the building tension of

scenes that find the characters hovering between life and death make for a thrilling read.

Elpiniki Nikoloudaki-Souri

Emeritus Professor in Modern Greek Literature, University of Crete

In her new book, Maria Papayanni revives the classic motif in children's literature of the transition from childhood to adulthood through the fictional narrative of a summer. For Hero and Leda, Papayanni's heroines, summer, the quintessence of carefreeness and joy, becomes one of change, of the investigation into the family past, of the familiarization with the 'Other', of friendship, of love and acceptance of loss, of a transition to a new way of life. On this journey of theirs, they get to know the nature and history of their place of sojourn, as well as the people, who mirror the multifaceted nature of human existence. The setting—time and space—of the narrative is transmuted into yet another hero itself, with its own distinct character, who 'converses' with the heroines, welcomes them, 'whispers' secrets in their ears about legends, myths and local lore, providing them with both

a foundation and fertile ground to root themselves and grow; it takes them by the hand and leads them into maturity, towards adulthood.

The elements of nature function symbolically as a path of trial, atonement for the past, protection and reconciliation with the present. The dark lake, the lake of death, of remembrance and oblivion, wrestles to keep the young Hero in its waters, while the Tree King, with its great roots and branches, its 'golden oars', holds her steady in life, teaching her to face it with strength and optimism. Maria Papayanni masterfully builds a novel centering around the heroines' coming of age, loss and the confrontation of a human's greatest and deepest fear—death. At the same time, she skillfully creates an entire world that stands on its own, praising, in the end, life, friendship, nature, tradition and faith in the human being.

Chryssa Kouraki

*Ph.D. in Children's Literature, University of Ioannina,
Coordinator of Cultural Issues in Primary Education
Directorate of East Attic*

The Lonesome Tree

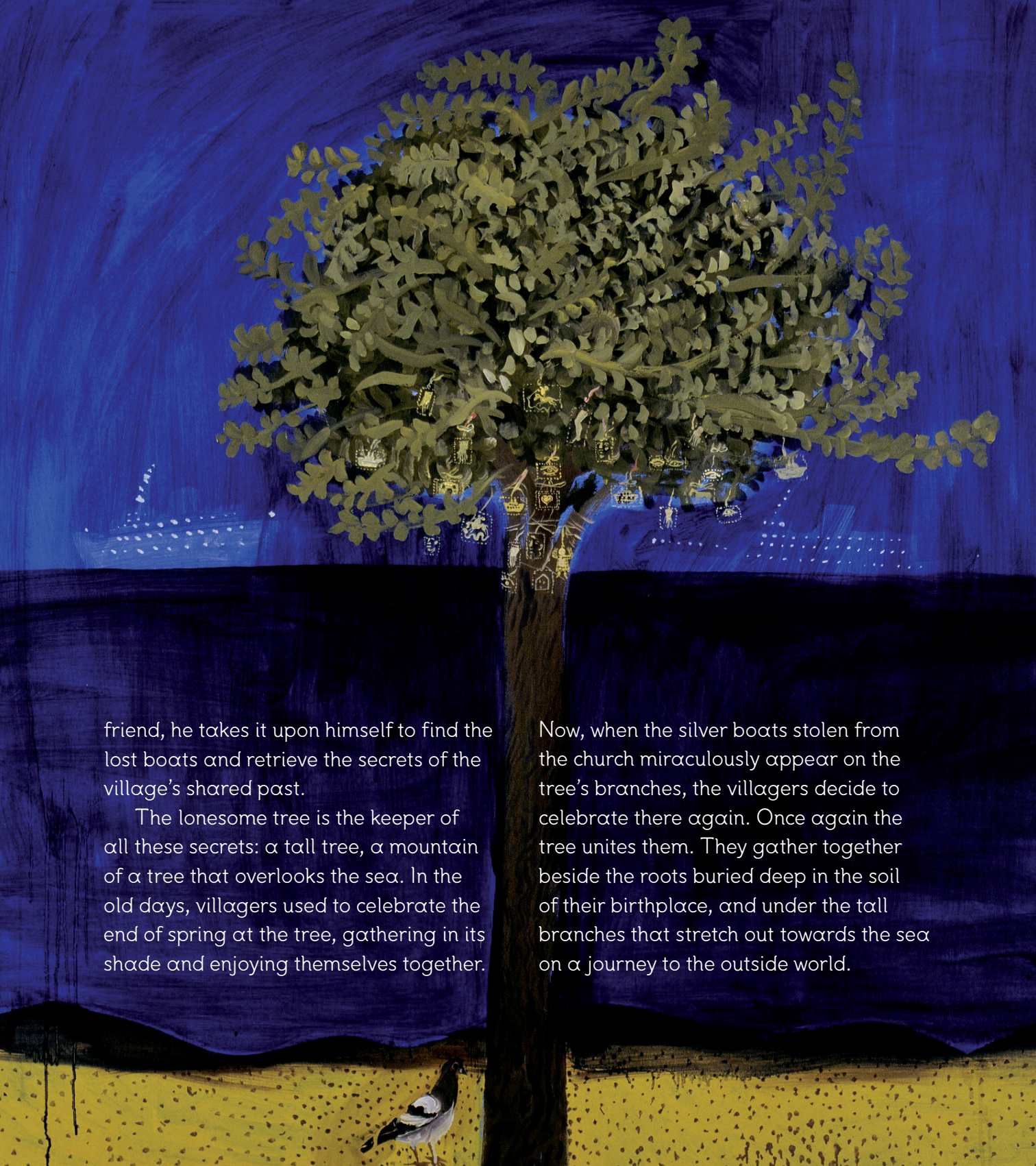


A story about the dreams of a village...
 about a child grown on legend and fairytales...
 about a woman everyone calls crazy...
 about the votive offerings that travelled
 on the branches of a tree.
 That lonesome tree that gazes out to sea
 and brings people together.

A contemporary story set in a remote Cretan village, high up on the rocks in the shadow of a mountain, the sea far off in the distance. In the old days, the village was inhabited by people who explained the unexplainable and predicted things to come. Now the younger people have forgotten all that, but they love the way their village is isolated from the outside world. However, something tragic has happened in this village, the tragedy is surrounded by myth and fear, and the villagers tell a fairy-tale-like narrative of ghosts haunting secret passages. These tales are where the small, isolated

community hides its secrets, and they often serve to justify the way some people are arbitrarily excluded from the village. These same tales are the cornerstone, the driving force, of this story.

And of course the story—the adventure—needs a hero, someone who is somehow special and who will solve the mystery: Simos, whose name means ‘marked’, chooses to go up against the children’s leader and befriend the village’s so-called madwoman. But when the votive offerings in the shape of silver boats disappear from the church and the village starts targeting Simos’s new



friend, he takes it upon himself to find the lost boats and retrieve the secrets of the village's shared past.

The lonesome tree is the keeper of all these secrets: a tall tree, a mountain of a tree that overlooks the sea. In the old days, villagers used to celebrate the end of spring at the tree, gathering in its shade and enjoying themselves together.

Now, when the silver boats stolen from the church miraculously appear on the tree's branches, the villagers decide to celebrate there again. Once again the tree unites them. They gather together beside the roots buried deep in the soil of their birthplace, and under the tall branches that stretch out towards the sea on a journey to the outside world.

Papayanni's *The Lonesome Tree*: On the Verge of Magical Realism



Petros Panaou

*Associate Professor, University of Georgia,
Language and Literacy Education*

Reading the first page, I confess to feeling slightly disenchanted with the book at hand. The style, the dialogue between Foto and Nana, their adherence to superstition and old wives' tales brought to mind something that might have been written several years ago, perhaps by one of those “greats” who tormented me in high school as exam material... Still, I gave the work a second chance and read a few more pages.

I didn't need to read any more in order to change my initial estimate, which turned out to be completely off

the mark. The writing is fresh, natural, immediate and above all, sweet. Qualities of which, in the face of today's alienation, we are in dire need. They fulfill and charge—or, better, recharge—us, at a purely emotional level. But at an intellectual level, too, I was also already convinced. A childhood love against the background of social inequality. A village clinging to the rocks, next to the sea, yet under the mountain's shadow. The people, too, clinging to the rocks with the sea by their side, yet identifying as mountain folk.

What great openings for symbolism and interpretative playfulness.

The book's remaining 160 pages did not disappoint. I played with symbols, concepts and images, followed the characters in their picturesque but dangerous itineraries and arrived at the conclusion that this story is altogether contemporary and timeless, so much so that I thought it had reached me both through the past and the present, but also from the future.

A few pages further down from my first encounter with Foto and Stratos, I meet their son. The main character whose adolescence is the best possible vehicle for this particular plot and choice of themes. Adolescence is frequently associated with concepts such as transitioning, questioning, searching for identity and agency, all of which play a central part in *The Lonesome Tree*. Before taking up Simos, though, I want to make the point that the adolescent main character in no way restricts the age- group of the readers who may take an interest in this story. *The Little Prince* and *Harry Potter* both feature child protagonists, yet they are just as readable by children and adolescents as by adults. Similarly, although Maria Papayanni's protagonist is an

adolescent, the book addresses adults as much as it does adolescents, since both may be enchanted by the same, or different, elements in the book's plot and themes. In this respect, I think the book may aptly be called cross-generational or crossover fiction.

But let us go back to Simos who was born on Saint Symeon's day, protected forever from evil spirits thanks to the single-day cloth his mother was wearing at the time of his birth. I watch him with great interest, racing like mad up and down the dark alleys and haunted niches of the village, trying to prove to the gang and, especially, to their leader Marko that he is not afraid of darkness or ghosts. He even decides to brave Violeta's Rocks, rejecting the narrow-mindedness of his fellow village boys: "Don't go there, Simos. You'll also go mad." "What if she eats you?"

Violeta: An old woman with a child's heart. To me, the most likable character I have come across in any book in recent years. To the villagers, a mad woman who should have stayed in the asylum, rather than return to the village after all these years to haunt their dreams.

There wasn't a house where at night the conversation didn't turn to Violeta. But when the kids sidled up, the conversation

was cut short. When they wanted to frighten them, they used Violeta to do it: "I'm calling Violeta," or "I'm going to leave you at Violeta's Rocks." And here was Simos now, violating their nightmares.

"Yeah, I'm telling you I'll go to Violeta's rocks."

And that is exactly what he does, to discover that the rumors about Violeta being crazy are quite false, as are the accusations against her for being involved in the disappearance of the votive offerings, the silver ships, from the church.

Violeta, together with Odine, the girl who arrives from faraway Australia, will help Simos see his own birthplace through different eyes, but also see past it, out and over to the sea. This is no mean feat, if we take into account that it takes place in a village built in that particular mountainous location precisely so that it is out of reach of the sea and the 'malign' influence of the outside world. The sea here takes on truly symbolic dimensions as the body of the work is strewn with images and concepts making it the counterpoint to the mountain and the village; the counterpoint to seclusion and introversion.

Violeta leads Odine and Simos to the sea and mediates so that a conciliation comes about; a balance between

mountain and sea, local and foreign, tradition and cosmopolitanism.

Through Odine's eyes, Simos sees his village anew and falls in love with it once more, as he does with Odine.

At another point, through the pictures Odine takes, Simos realizes how enormous his little village really is. These kinds of contrasts and contradictions pervade the best part of the story, which eventually moves from antithesis to synthesis, weaving and balancing the seeming opposites. The main characters and the narrative itself as a whole, appear to have an intensely ambivalent relationship with tradition, local identity, customs, superstitions, and beliefs, only settling and attributing a positive value to them through the mediation of the "other" – the "mad woman," the "foreigner."

And now he thought of little Odine, teary-eyed, in her faded jeans, going into the tree hollow without being afraid. He fell asleep and was visited by a hazy dream. The two of them were walking again, only they were in the interior of the olive tree. They were going down and down and its roots were never ending.

The roots of the olive tree, Simos' roots, communicate and coexist with the sea. At a time when people respond

to globalization by either shutting themselves into the shell of their national/local identities or by completely denouncing those identities, Maria Papayanni's narrative seems to offer an alternative solution, where one may both remain solidly planted in the soil of their birthland and, at the same instance, fly away, travel, engage, and explore the world.

Two magical images at the end of the story, a lonesome tree, and a sauntering eagle, reconcile these seemingly incompatible aspects. Strangely, these images reach us through the eyes of two secondary characters, Markos, another adolescent and Stratos, Simos' father. The writer has managed to also develop the secondary characters to the extent that the images they present us with are singularly intense, with great symbolic value.

The Lonesome Tree stands alone, tall amongst the rocks. A great big tree, a mountain of a tree, facing the wide sea which in turn embraces it, providing the pale blue background that highlights its beauty. In the old days, the villagers used to celebrate the Lonesome Tree. At the end of spring each year, they gathered beneath its large shade to feast and dance, while gazing out to sea. When in a way short of magical, the lost votive

offerings, the silver ships, appear on the tree's branches, the villagers decide to celebrate it again. In the concluding scene, we meet again Foto and Stratos (one of the village's few seamen):

Foto reached out and touched Stratos. She feared the ships would cause waves in his soul, draw him back out to the sea, and dash her against the rocks. But his thoughts were different:

"See how well the ships are traveling on the tree? I've had my fill of the sea, little gecko. Now I'm dreaming of the time when we'll get drunk on our first wine."

In the same scene, Marko is present, watching, along with Violeta, the eagle who roams high with spread wings and then suddenly dips and grazes the top of the Lonesome Tree.

"If only we had the gift of old, of reading the future in a birds' flight," he heard Violeta behind him.

"I know that particular kind," Markos said. "He's a bone breaker. He feeds on marrow and does away with the bones."

"Well, I wish you to be just like him."

"To fly high or to only eat the marrow?"

Violeta shrugged and gave him a grin.

In conclusion, I'd say the novel touches on the borders of magical realism, which as inspired writers like Gabriel-

Garcia Marquez have demonstrated often manages to reveal truths about the reality of a place in a manner and intensity and passion that realism cannot even approximate. The story of Simos and Odine, Foto and Stratos, Violeta, Markos, and various other vivid characters explores ideologies and concerns that are anything but dated. Identity negotiation, ambiguity, fluidity, and a distaste for sealed-off categories and binaries, are all traits of our postmodern era. From my own perspective – a different reader might interpret the text very differently, delving in aspects I have hardly touched – through the eyes of its adolescent protagonist, *The Lonesome Tree* navigates and captures the very essence of our postmodern condition.



*Details of paintings by the Greek painter Tassos Mantzavinos. The painting "Tamata on the tree" adorns the cover of *The Lonesome Tree*.*



Nikos Psilakis
Author, journalist

Violeta represents some kind of revolutionary force. She lives on the edge; on the edge of the village, on the edge of society. She is active and she is not, she is alive and she is not, she is a local and a foreigner, she reacts and resists, and she carries a social stigma; Violeta dresses up the village madwoman. In the past, she was held in an asylum for the mentally ill and her release is considered an escape. Besides, she has already escaped from life itself, or rather from the norms that rule everyday life.

Violeta expresses multiple identities, multiple contradictions, multiple convergences. The madwoman might be *more sensible* than others, she might talk to a dog, to a flower, to a poet, to a poem. She might overcome

tradition and enjoy different types of music such as Traviata, the ‘song’ of another fallen woman.

The village madwoman is not really mad. She carries the social stigma and attracts people looking for human prey, she becomes either a *tragic character* or a *Deus ex machina* that plays with fire in a way that she has already been doing her whole life.

This might be the key for Papayanni: cultural interaction and renewal. Traditional culture is neither static nor timeless but follows the law of evolution. The dynamics of oral tradition, i.e. folk creation, interacts with literary forms. It’s not nostalgia for the past but a message for the future, about coexistence and collaboration.



Tell, Tell a Story



Sometimes, just like that, a friendship is born, from sharing a story. And the more stories you share, the greater the friendship grows.

A story of two kids so different from one another, but also so similar. Like all kids, they dream, sometimes with their eyes shut and sometimes with eyes open. They dream of adventures. But to live an adventure, you have to dare.

One evening a little girl called Onceupon will hear that on a certain night, if a child makes a wish, it's bound to come true. That very same evening, another little kid, Tell-Tell, hears her parents tell the same story. In two different worlds, two kids make the same wish at the same time. They both wish for a best friend and the entire universe conspires to make that wish come true. The next day Onceupon and Tell-Tell wake up in the same world. Both of them are crazy about stories. And does it really matter that Onceupon is a child and Tell-Tell a ladybug? Sometimes, just like that, a friendship is born, from sharing a story. And the more stories you share,

the greater the friendship grows. Ever since, Onceupon and Tell-Tell have been best friends.

“Years ago, during my first visits to schools, many children were asking how I became a writer. I thought about telling them a story and that’s how Tell-Tell was born. She’s wild about fairytales and stories and as soon as I try to catch my breath, she insists: *tell, tell*. That’s how she got the nickname. Tell-Tell never gives up. All day long, she travels and at night she whispers stories to me. I owe her a lot. Ever since I was little, she taught me to love stories. Now I always take her with me to the schools I visit to introduce her to the new friends I make there. The kids love her, and because they know how much she loves stories, they often send her stories of their own.”

Maria Papayanni

Maria Papayanni's short stories are "arks of words". Every short story that she gifts her young readers is a long adventure. A literary work that evokes feelings, with a strong storyline, and characters that come to life.

The words are chosen carefully as if they have been there forever; nothing more and nothing less. As if the story can only be told this way, with the innocence of a child's language, touching the heart of every young reader as well as of any reader's young at heart.

Papayanni gets inspiration from the everyday life of children and from her precious memory as if telling her story

Maria Papayanni's works in short form embrace an entire world with its own laws, where grown-ups pointing fingers have no place, a world made of solid materials that shape children's imagination and dreams. She embraces her world with her words, chosen so carefully that they too become magical in order to narrate 'the secret miracles' children dream of—

to the individual (implied) reader. We, as readers, can conjure our own images. Very often, we feel that we have lent our voice to Papayanni's characters to speak about our joys and anxieties.

At the same time, with courage, Papayanni talks about the difficult side of life, holding children by the hand, ready to console, never to despair. Her narrative universe expands containing the lives of many of us, young and old. It is a universe protected, as is our mother's hug or our childhood hideaway, and in this universe, young readers will be enabled to gain the liberating power of reading.

Vasiliki Nika

Educator, MA, PhD

which is what children's books must do according to M. Lahy-Hollebecque. The power of magical discourse that defies every didacticism is the main quality of the short form in Papayanni's works. A discourse that, in the end, speaks to all of us about things we forget as we grow up; if remembered, these things might change our lives.

Titika Dimitroulia

Literary critic, Associate Professor of Theory and Practice of Translation at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki



Shoes With Wings



“When I am asleep, I dream in my language. I no longer have anyone to whom I can narrate my dreams. From this night onwards, I shall forever remain in the land of my dreams. I shall not be coming back. I bid you farewell, my friends. Continue your beautiful struggle.”

Young Rosa is growing up with her father, a fisherman who writes poetry, names cats after poets and speaks in poetry verse. On account of a movement disorder that Rosa suffers from, they move into a ground-floor flat in the ‘Kingdom of Cats’. There, Rosa will make new friends, such as Anna, a former pianist of great renown who lives in her car. It doesn’t take much for everything to shift, and for Rosa to follow Gambito, the one-eyed cat, down into the Land of the Deep. There she will make friends who use words and language, instead of money, to buy doughnuts. She will attempt to understand why languages

that are dying out are so important to these people. Until then, it had never occurred to Rosa that when languages die, fairy tales, music and dreams die along with them.

Rosa will dive headlong into the adventure of growing up in the most unconventional of ways. Step-by-step she will overcome her challenge and discover all that is seen and unseen, all that is and all that pretends to be.

This is a book about poetry, small miracles, great struggles, and pursuing a Utopia; and about ordinary people who never give up dreaming of the extraordinary.



With the precision of poetry



Krystalli Glyniadakis
Poet, translator

Poetry loves three things: precision, musicality, and play, that is the ability to see the world in a prismatic manner, so as to discover truths hidden in daily life.

But these things don't always come together.

But in the poems I love, the poems that do not take themselves too seriously, yet look with all seriousness at the uniqueness of life (and hence the contribution of artistic creation in glorifying it), these poems *do* combine precision and musicality with a prismatic language.

Precision, musicality, and play also come in the way children look at the word; and so, in any children and young adult book that's truly good. The precision of poetry is reflected

in the clarity of children's literature; musicality, in its joy and variegation. And playfulness hides in this suspension of natural laws and reason, in the reversal of cause and effect. A good writer of young adult books, therefore, is not just a good storyteller but a great poet. And through her enviable capacity for what is simple and essential, for what is musical and fascinating, for the magical and the playful, she is also a sort of philosopher, a psychotherapist and a disseminator of the ancient art of narrating myths.

Maria Papayanni, hence, is all this. A philosopher—because she has the ability to question the very basics of our existence (love/ acceptance/ coexistence/ truth and lies); a psychotherapist—because she can answer her own

questions; and a disseminator of the art of narrating myths—because she creates fake worlds that reveal the truth, worlds that look like ours and knowingly nod, showing us how ours can be.

Which means that—perhaps unbeknownst to her—Maria Papayanni is a poet. And as such, a poet whose work I like, because she doesn't take herself too seriously, yet knows how to look with all seriousness at the uniqueness of life.

And so it comes as no surprise that in the prismatic, dreamlike Land of the Deep, the biggest problem is that there are dying languages, taking along the memories, the stories, and the souls of the people who once spoke them. And, as Alice in Wonderland ate a piece of cake that said “eat me” to shrink herself enough to follow the Mad Hatter and the Hare into the wormholes, so little Rosa jumps inside the picture of a matchbox and finds herself in the Land of the Deep. And as the Cheshire Cat—who only asked the most essential of questions—was Lewis Carol's Socrates, so does Gabito, the one-eyed cat, guide Rosa through this unfamiliar, dream-like world. Rosa has Always, the forlorn Albatross and Marabou, with his pirate ship, she's got Nell and Babel and a whole cast of wonderful characters who fight against the Language-slayers,

so as to prevent them from stealing the map of endangered languages. This is the adventure of Rosa in the Land of the Deep.

And through this adventure, Maria Papayanni knows how to use allegory and a great dose of wisdom to talk about Rosa's life in the real world, in the Kingdom of Cats, a neighbourhood in Athens—or maybe not—a city filled with children of many races and many languages, many dreams and many memories, many difficulties, but also a great will to live together, in peace.

Ludwig Wittgenstein once wrote, thinking of the limits of our language which are the limits of our mind: *What can be said at all can be said clearly, and what we cannot talk about we must pass over in silence.*

Maria Papayanni, although a latent poet, psychotherapist, and philosopher—or maybe just because of it—replies to dear Ludwig: *And for what we cannot talk about there's always fairy tales and music.*

Words hang from trees



Lily Lambrelli
Writer, storyteller

Maria Papayanni is a very strange creature. She's strange because her simplicity cuts to the bone. Because she can put herself in someone else's shoes. Because she's fiercely generous. And above all: because she never ceases being surprised by the beauty of life; and has the ability to show it to others, too. These are characteristics usually pertaining to folk heroes and, dare I say, they are seldom acquired. Maria was born with them, that's why her texts flow so effortlessly; and none more than this book of feathers, impregnated with simplicity, empathy, generosity, *joie de vivre*, poetry, dreams, fairy tales.

Here, we find at least three levels of narrative: a third-person realistic narrative; a first-person narrative (through the eyes of Rosa); and the

dream-like narrative of the Land of the Deep, where the Guardians of Memory fight off the Language-slayers in a Don-Quixote-like war. All three levels are imbued with a strong fairy-tale-like elements. Rosa's daily life, for example, where she's called 'a princess' by her dad, doesn't take place in any actual neighbourhood but in The Kingdom of Cats.

Aris, Rosa, and the nightingale are all making their—parallel—journeys of initiation towards autonomy, towards growing up, flying free. They feed on love and freedom. They're looking for the feathers that will fly them towards the light.

[...]

The best journey is the journey without a goal—like dreams. On the road of

“ Rosa never pretends
to be something she’s not.
She’s Nobody and she’s all the girls
in the world, too. ”

dreams, Rosa found her struggle: to fight so that small, isolated languages do not die out.

[...]

At the beginning of the book, Aris gives Rosa a journal saying: “So you can write down whatever you want, princess. So you can write your fears too. And that you won’t be afraid no more. Words will look after you.” This I must say: Rosa—and all the characters in the book—never pretends to be something she’s not. She’s just herself, displaying honesty, endurance, humour, a trust in life. She’s Nobody and she’s all the girls in the world, too. She’s each and every one of us who, being the readers we are, are watched over by words.

Maria Papayanni paints many overlapping worlds with great craftsmanship. Everything is at its place. Maria Papayanni herself, her whole self, is there too. Cervantes is there, and Marquez is there, (Greek poet)

Kavvadias is there, and the music of Thanos Mikroutsikos is there too. The world of poverty and marginality, the world of art, the world of orphans and refugees, the world of bullies, the world of cats, the world of the sea, of the sky, and the seabed, the world of imagination, of dreams, and of fairy tales: the world in its ENTIRETY is there.

As If By Magic



In the age of speed and noise,
sometimes we forget to listen.

Or maybe we have lost the ability
to appreciate the small miracles of daily life.
But Madalena loves nature, speaks to animals
and to her flowers, and believes in fairy tales.

Is this the reason why strange things
keep happening to her?

Maybe Eva's mum is simply a witch...

Eva's mum is different. That much is certain. Her hair is as red as can be, she makes flowers bloom just by speaking to them, and animals seem to love her. Eva's dad says her mum was born in the wrong era but was there ever a time when Madalena would fit in?

When Eva moves with her family into a small house that looks like a jungle amongst the grey blocks of flats, the family becomes the center of

attention of a great gossip who lives opposite their house and spends her time spying. As the house slowly turns into a small paradise, Frosso gets jealous. Madalena's unconventional way of living upsets the gossiping neighbour even more and she does everything to kick them out of their 'patchwork' house and of the neighbourhood.

"I had another bad dream last night. Our trees had grown so big in the night

that they strangled Frosso's block of flats. She called the police and they came to take my mother."

Madalena tries to help her daughter overcome her fears by expressing her anger. She teaches her the game 'How to punish the bad guys with upside-down wishes' and as if by magic, this works sometimes.

Eva knows that her mum and dad do not get on well together. Her dad leaves on the pretext of a business trip, and sends his daughter letters from far, distant countries.

Eva is challenged at her school too, as an intransigent headmaster takes over and demands no laughter, fun or creativity take place at his school.

That year of big changes in her world, Eva realizes that taking action, daring the impossible, is more necessary to effect change than simply wishing for it. And it is then that the great adventure begins. Small or great, battles are always worth the trouble



As If By Magic: A subversive novel



Anta Katsiki-Guivalou

Professor at National and Kapodistrian University of Athens

Maria Papayanni's novel *As If by Magic* presents subversive ideas, mainly about interpersonal relationships of everyday life which, in a broad sense, are also political. The novel combines elements of reality and fantasy, the latter challenging the status quo by means of *unconventional, radical* views.

The author is concerned about diversity and its acceptance, but not from a racial, cultural or economic point of view, though occasionally, these aspects might be explored. In her work, diversity directly corresponds with freedom, self-identification at the familial and societal level, the right to freedom of expression, the right to resist violence, democratic consciousness, and the adoption of

innovative views and ideas.

In the novel, the established order of the school, the neighborhood, and wider society is governed by authoritarian powers fueled by violence and oppression, which are juxtaposed against democratic values, like freedom, love, and acceptance. The author's antiauthoritarian beliefs are expressed in the attitude to life of Eva and her mother, who form a *different* family. Such beliefs are directly related to the dreams and the miracles of everyday life and are actualized in the broader context of the story either at personal or interpersonal level (neighborhood, school).

Throughout the narrative, the alternative view of life is connected

“ In her work, diversity directly corresponds with freedom, self-identification at the familial and societal level, the right to freedom of expression, the right to resist violence, democratic consciousness, and the adoption of innovative views and ideas. ”

to magic, which plays a central, multidimensional role.

Papayanni reverses the conventional significance of magic, parodying its evil dimension and highlighting instead its enlightening, admirable, mysterious, and supernatural meanings that inspire fictional young heroes and heroines to struggle for a different way of life and thinking.

The first-person, confessional style of writing, in the form of an internal monologue outpouring onto Eva's diary, acts as a catalyst for the emotionally stressed young heroine. Writing in her diary reveals her emotional struggles against social injustice; these incrementally help her mature and fight for her own values. In addition, her diary entries offer the reader multiple perspectives; by narrating to herself, the protagonist relates from her own perspective the events of the story already told by the third-person

omniscient narrator.

Conflicts between multidimensional fictional characters and society, as well as their internal conflicts, create peaks, produce tension, contribute to changes in emotions, stances, and views, and motivate young readers to wonder about current social issues.

In her novel *As If By Magic*, Maria Papayanni vividly portrays a bright world of new values, emerging from society's new yearning for change, and juxtaposes it against the existing obsolete ideas and structures that remain dominant. The merging of fantasy, magic, childhood, humor, narrative techniques, and writing styles results in a subversive book that avoids didacticism and satisfies readers' needs.