



BERND-PETER LIEGENER

Anglistic Papers

*An Inspiration not only for Students of
English Language and Literature*



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Publisher: tredition, Hamburg, Germany

ISBN

Paperback: 978-3-7482-5022-7

Hardcover: 978-3-7482-5023-4

eBook: 978-3-7482-5024-1

Cover: “Green Planets in the Sunset” by B-P Liegener

Printed on demand in many countries

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This opusculum is dedicated to my beloved wife
Mechthild Liegener.

Dear Mechi, thank you for including me in your life!

Acknowledgements

My sincere expression of thanks to all Professors of the European University of Cyprus, who accompanied my way through the wonderland of Anglistics in these last two years. All of them gave me inspiration to write this inspiration.

Dimitris Evripidou
Constantina Fotiou
Stella Hadjistassou
Stavros Karayanni
Dimitra Karoulla
James Mackay
Lena Papadopoulou
Petra Tournay-Theodotou
Charis Xinari

Ευχαριστώ για το χρόνο και την προσπάθειά σας!
Χάρηκα πάρα πολύ!

INTRODUCTION

This Booklet is not designed to give an introduction to or even a general view of a study of Anglistics. The collection of essays and studies originates from my own master study of English Language and Literature at the European University of Cyprus. I arranged the term papers, which I prepared for the different courses in temporal order. This seems a bit arbitrary at a first glance, it is however completely accidental, as I had not much choice in choosing my courses. In order to complete my studies in four semesters I had to enroll in whatever course my alma mater was able to offer. Almost. There was one “special topics“- course to select during the study, and I refused to choose a continuation course in Teaching Methodology. As I had deliberately refrained from entering a TESOL-course of studies, I had felt even the first Methodology-course to be a bit out of place. For the same reason, I decided not to include the respective term paper in this collection, although the class was quite interesting and instructive after all.

My first essay belongs to the course “Postcolonial Studies”. There is no need to mention that “Zorba the Greek” was no topic of this class. It is, however, always exciting to leave the trodden path and see if you can find fresh ideas by looking at well-known literature through new glasses.

The paper on “learning a language” investigates one of many topics covered in the course “Core Issues in Language Acquisition”. It is amazing how much there can be learned about language by occupying oneself with its acquisition. Accordingly, this essay is of interest not only for developmental scientists, but for everybody interested in linguistics.

In our class “Theories of Literature” again, there was a wild field covered in a few months. Every theory, one gets acquainted with, opens new views on literature, and the more views we have on it the more fascinating it becomes. Speaking of fascination, it is quite easy for the reader to feel my fascination for intertextuality in the third essay. Get infected!

At the latest in my study about orientalism in a practice I cannot conceal my first profession nor my nationality. Yes, it was written for the course “Cultural Studies” and it is astonishing how much it influenced my own views on intercultural problems in daily life.

The next two papers originate from the class “English in Globalization”. Once again, even two essays can’t reflect the unmeasurable diversity of varieties of English. Therefore, they should be understood as no more than appetizers, covering only very small topics of a very large field. Don’t hesitate to taste- there is enough food for everybody’s brain!

I you read of a class titled “Research Methods”, you don’t feel that this will be a really exciting course. It was, however, not only very useful to get instruction in structuring studies, but turned out to be more and more

gripping, the more one's own study was at stake. My paper on attitudes of EFL-teachers would have probably looked different, if I had written it after the course and not during it. Still, the opportunity of occupying oneself with the topic of English as lingua franca is definitely worth reading it.

Finally, there is my study on language in a fashion magazine. It clearly shows, how the attempt to fulfil an assignment can develop into a more and more fascinating occupation with a new topic. Of course, these considerations of "English on top" just scratch a tiny aspect of the vast area covered in the class "Discourse Analysis". In fact, Discourse Analysis helps us to understand what we do all the time, and accordingly this course helped me to understand what I had studied all the time. It is no coincidence that terms and topics of other courses kept reappearing permanently. This might be called experienced intertextuality. The comprehensive field of discourse analysis provided me with a frame for all information and knowledge obtained by this study.

One important notion of discourse analysis is that any form of discourse not only influences the language of its participants but also is influenced by their language. If my writing in some places seems to be unusual or even inappropriate for scientific texts, I am happy to have contributed my share of this influence on academic discourse with this booklet.

RE-READING "ZORBA THE GREEK": NEW INSIGHTS INTO MECHANISMS OF ORIENTALISM

Abstract

The novel "Zorba the Greek" by Nikos Kazantzakis is investigated under postcolonial aspects. We find that orientalism can be regarded as a continuum which can be interrupted by gaps deriving from negative attitudes against the other. It will be shown how colonialism-like structures develop from these gaps due to human nature. A comparison of mechanisms of colonialism and suppression of females shows that there are repeated patterns which create similar phenomena.

ZORBA THE GREEK is neither a colonial nor a post-colonial narrative. Nikos Kazantzakis (born 1883 in Heraklion, Crete) wrote this novel 1941 in a first version. It was published 1946 under the title "Βίος και πολιτεία του Αλέξη Ζορμπά" (life and politics of Alexis Zorba) (Stavrou 2014). Although he has written other books depicting the Turkish occupation of Crete, in this novel this

issue is not the subject. There are however autobiographic elements concerning not only the experience of running a mine but also encounters with Turks. If we nevertheless re-read the text from a postcolonial perspective, this is due to the changes postcolonial studies have undergone in the last decades. Postcolonial today is not restricted to the investigation of the heritage of colonialism but has become a broader field. It is more a special way of investigating phenomena than the object which is investigated. (McLeod 2007) We want to look for elements of orientalism in the description of some characters of the novel and we will try to find out, how Kazantzakis handles the notion of oriental. In a second section we will see if there are colonial features in the way the lignite mine is run and, if so, why this occurs. Finally, we will throw a feminist view at the novel and try to link the oppression of females to colonialism. Will we be able to gain new insights into postcolonial mechanisms?

LET US HAVE a look at some characters of this novel and see if we find any characteristic features for orientalism (Said 1978) in their description. First of these characters will be the friend, who is not named in the beginning thus staying a bit unseizable for the reader. In fact, we come to know his name Stravradakis only when he really took his cross (the Greek word for cross is stavrós) and died for his ideas and his country. The friend seems to be very closely related to the narrator, they have the same values, being each other's teachers and disciples at

the same time. Although he is described in contrast to the narrator he also seems to be a part of him as well. We might see him as his super-ego, his desired self or his model. Generally looking at this character from an orientalist perspective we see a quite western man (the imagination "oriental" people might have of a westerner): he is very intelligent, learned, ironical, distinguished, has bluish-green luminous eyes and even aristocratic hands. Although the narrator obviously has many of these attributes as well ("I was ashamed of my delicate hands and my pale face") he contrasts himself from his friend as barbarian and not civilized. He seems to lack some of Stavradakis' "unmoving mask", expresses his feelings by uttering "a misplaced barbarian laugh" instead of a smile. Astonishingly he is the "bookworm", "chewing paper and covering himself with ink" the one good at preaching. Obviously not at all barbarian. Also, he is a man of thoughts rather than of action, an Epimetheus rather than a Prometheus. This is what he wants to change in his life: to get out of Plato's cave ("Till now, I told myself, you have only seen the shadow...now, I am going to lead you to the substance"), to swab, theologically speaking, his *vita contemplativa* for a *vita activa*. So, assuming there was such a thing as a scale of orientalism the two friends would probably be located at the same level, having similar and different features at the same time.

In his course of learning to live an active life he meets Alexis Zorba, who will have to endure our orientalist

glance now. He obviously shows many features which can be regarded as stereotypes of the orient (Said 1978). He is a creature of sexual pleasure, he is strange and peculiar, he is timeless (behaving like a youngster although he is old, "forgetting" the time when going to the city for purchasing material etc). If we accept laughter as barbarian, as it is interpreted by the narrator himself, we can see him as a laughing, singing, dancing and of course drinking barbarian. He is a Satyr, close to nature, wild, untamed. This impression is reinforced by the recurring motive of growing horns when being happy (sometimes only alluded to as pressure at the temples). He does not accept established categories such as good and bad, identifying God with the devil. All his confusing but powerful reasoning seems to be based on nature itself. His wisdom does not come from books (if your books don't tell you that, what the hell do they tell you?) but from elder people (grandfather, Retsep Effendi etc.) and of course from life itself. At least in comparison to the narrator and his friend he can be definitely regarded as oriental. We even read: "He sipped his coffee in a sensual way which was quite oriental". But the feeling of superiority which might be expected to rise, never really comes up. Both, the narrator and Zorba are different, but the latter becomes more and more the teacher of the first (he also can be compared to Prometheus, even more as he goes to the Caucasus in the end), both accept and appreciate each other. Addressing the question, why these two, different people become close friends we may trouble Freud again and look at it

at subject-level. Zorbas would represent the narrator's id. There is however another typical feature of orientalism which lacks in the description of Zorbas: Negative terms!

This brings us to the last character, whom we want to look at through the glasses of orientalism: Uncle Anagnosti, the illiterate reader (Anagnosti is the Greek word for reader), the influential grandfather in the village. At first his house is described in a positive manner. Simple but sufficient and, given the Buddhistic background of the narrator, appropriate. But soon the emptiness of the house, the conversation "confined to the everlasting topics", the "straightforward and peaceful life" of the man lose their charms, as we find out that Anagnosti is a brute. He is racist ("A Turkish woman - damn her soul"), he is superstitious (icons doing miracles), he is sexist ("She (i.e. the holy virgin) might have made me blind or an idiot, or hunchbacked, or even -God Almighty preserve us- she might have made me a girl!"), he is cruel ("of course it hurts him") and imperiously domineering his wife. At last we read negative terms like "primitive", "like a dog" and "like cannibals". The narrator's idea of opening his eyes is rejected, the "preacher" is convinced by the practical Zorba, that he can't change things. Interestingly however later he succeeds in bridging the seemingly unbridgeable cleft between Zorba and his opponent in a presumably deadly fight by addressing the very oriental Manolakas in his way of thinking, taking up his strange values.

What can we conclude from our orientalist glance at some of the characters in this novel? Firstly, according to Kazantzakis there is a quality that could be characterized as oriental. There is however a continuum between "western" and "oriental". As long, as there is no negative connotation the differences between two different positions on that scale do not impair good relations between the respective individuals. This is a horizontal scale and not, as can be seen in many societies, a vertical one. As soon as the other is regarded as inferior and worse, a gap opens. This gap can occur at any point of the continuum between western and oriental (here between the protagonist and Anagnosti and between Anagnosti and the Turkish). Although this gap (which was artificially enlarged within the frame of colonialism) grows through the inherent mechanisms of orientalism, it can be bridged by resuming the point of view of the other.

ALTHOUGH CRETE has a long history of colonization, in this book there is no colonial situation. A Cretan is renting a lignite mine in Crete. He does not want to exploit the local people but rather has idealistic ideas: "to know and love the human material...to organize a sort of community in which everything should be shared". Why does it seem nevertheless that he is a stranger at this Cretan coast, that he can be regarded as other and that he needs the help of a guide: His Dante, his "travel companion" is put down, when he meets Alexis Zorba. We may assume, that he read the *divina commedia* and that he is

on his way to explore the hell. The role of Cicero, who guides Dante on his way through the different hells is adopted by Zorbas, he becomes his *cicerone* (the Italian word for tourist guide). Zorba, who is not Cretan. Obviously, this is due to the characters' different location on our constructed scale of orientalism as described above. This again is due to the special location of the Cretan island. If we look at its geographical position in Europe it can be regarded as lying at the intersection between west and east. So, one could expect its population as central between *western* and *oriental*. The average Cretan could therefore theoretically be described as neutral. The island's central position has however also led to multiple invasions from both sides, and from multiple cultures influences have been exercised on its population. This has created the immense differences in the degree of orientalism.

In fact, the whole countryside of this coastal region and its inhabitants are described in a way that shows the negative aspects of oriental. We read of dirty hairy faces, compared with Caliban thus implementing not only the idea of barbarism but also of slavery. We read of primitive peasants, the dirty cassock of the priest, an old woman delousing her grandson (reminding of apes rather than humans), the peasants' hard heads, the superstition, the barbaric slaughter of the innocent widow etc. The widow also represents the oriental stereotype of the "se-

sexually promiscuous exotic female", the "key to mysterious erotic delights" (McLeod 2000). The narrator believes at first, that he knows Cretan ways of acting and reacting advising Zorba: "We'll act like serious businessmen...". But his idea of "opening the people's eyes" is rejected by Zorba who convinces him to "let them go on dreaming". His own socialistic dreams are given up as "puerile ideas". (The motive of virility is quite often addressed in the novel: he wants to be as virile as Zorba, ignoring the fact that this *puer aeternus* succeeds in uniting the opposites of absolute virility and childish easiness, which we might store under "timelessness of the orient".) Given the fact that "souls are cheap in these parts" he develops from "preacher" to capitalist, seeing the impossibility of uniting the two ways of tackling his project. He follows Zorba's advice: "Don't delve like that in their histories, boss...you'll like them...they'll scamp their work", "when the boss is hard, the men respect him". The initial "instinctive reaction" of fear created by centuries of Corsair-attacks, which should have yielded to "our age of security" had started to wear off already. Now creating distance (Nilson 2011) to his workers, he enhances the differences between him and his subjects instead of reducing them. Fulfilling more and more criteria listed up by McCloud (McCloud 2007) the whole situation slowly reminds of colonialism. We may question, if there is an "exploitation of natural resources" as there is a rent to be paid for the use of the lignite mine. In fact,

this is in accordance with another criterium of colonialism: the interdependence. This idea is as solidly founded in the minds of the local people that Anagnosti says even of God: "The poor fellow counts on us, too...". The other natural resource however, the wood, is tricked out of the cloisters property by Zorba for a far too low price. That is what we may call exploitation.

How did it happen, that the originally well intended enterprise eventually turned out into a situation so close to colonialism? We might say, this is due to the character of Alexis Zorba. The narrator struggles with his own orientation in life, the whole adventure is designed rather to find himself than to gain money or to be helpful to the local population. "I felt, I was buying my own happiness cheaply". Zorba doubts if his "brain is quite formed yet". Such a brain can be influenced easily and that is what happens. We mentioned Zorba's role as being devilish before. Now he seduces the younger man and imposes his own ideas on him. Zorba, the Macedonian, Alexander the Great, who "cuts the Gordian Knot", the invader, the conqueror. "Man is brute" is his maxim. *Homo homini lupus*. We might be reminded of London's "Sea wolf", who lives for the moment just as he does, the dangerous difference being that Zorba is sympathetic.

A possible conclusion might be that colonialist mechanisms develop inevitably due to human nature wherever the conditions are appropriate. The same could be said