



Author nominee for the  
2020 Hans Christian  
Andersen Award  
Greece

Maria Papayanni

# Contents

---

- Biographical information . . . . . **4-13**
  - A statement on Maria Papayanni's contribution  
to literature for young people . . . . . **14-27**
  - Interview & article . . . . . **28-35**
  - List of awards and other distinctions. . . . . **36-37**
  - Complete bibliography of the books for children. . . . . **38-43**
  - List of translated editions . . . . . **44-45**
  - Ten of the most important titles by the candidate . . . . . **46-51**
  - List of the five books sent to the jurors . . . . . **52-53**
  - Published reviews of the books submitted to the Jury . . . **54-89**
-



# 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 but she always made up stories, even before she knew how to read and write, as she has been trying to answer the ‘why?’ questions which kept turning up.

When her first book was published she left journalism behind and devoted herself to writing. 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 (8 novels, 10 picture books, 10 early readers, 2 books with CDs) 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. But, like everything else, imagination needs training.

Books will give them wings. I don't know how we will manage to pass on to them our love for reading and for books. I think the only way is for them to enjoy books. To meet one book that will change their life."

#### 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.

Setting off on a season ticket to see the wonders of the world



#### PES PES

The ladybird you see on the little hands is Pes Pes, my close friend. When I meet children, I always start by telling her story. Pes Pes means Tell me, Tell me. Pes Pes is crazy about stories and fairy tales. I have been feeding her since I was a kid. She devours stories. Whenever I pause to catch my breath, she insists: Pes! Pes! (Tell me! Tell me!). That is how she got her nickname. She is very much like me: all day long she travels and at night she whispers stories to me. I owe her much. She taught me to love stories since I was little. Children love her: they know how much she enjoys stories, so they often send her their own.



#### EVENTS

... in libraries, on city squares, in bookstores and parks... we're there to share stories for that's the only way we can understand, we can feel the joys and difficulties in other people's lives.

through children's eyes.



My favourite motto is  
"So what if, alone,  
you can run faster?  
WE can go further  
together."





### 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.





PTOLEMAIS – CORFU: a tribute to my work  
 Pes Pes travels around making friends. One time she visited a town in order to make new friends in a municipal library. They loved her so much, she became the town's mascot and everyone celebrated her having come over. But she needed to fly off to a different town and tell her stories.

Because that's how it is... stories need to travel. So she flew off to the island of Corfu where they were expecting her... she was turned into a board game, and into a character in shadow puppet play.





BERLIN: participating in the festival I was invited to Berlin's 12th International Literature Festival. So many students there, schools, events, the exchange of ideas... and in the end, a collective book: *Keys to the Future – What kind of Children's and Young Adult Literature does Europe need?*





## THE ILLUSTRATORS

I've also been lucky to share my stories with brilliant illustrators. I love stories that don't flatter the ears or the eyes. The point is for the story (the text & the illustrations) to expand one's limits, to show how big the world can be, to challenge the child to grow.

with Effie Lada



with Eve Tharlet





## 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.



# The Fictional Universe of Maria Papayanni— *her future will last a long time*<sup>[1]</sup>

**Triantafyllos H. Kotopoulos**, *Associate Professor in Creative Writing  
& Greek Literature, University of Western Macedonia, Greece*  
**Elita Fokiali**, *PhD, Transmedia storytelling expert, Political scientist*

## A. Introductory Remarks

Maria Papayanni is rightfully regarded as one of those creators whose writing has influenced Greece's reading audience for more than twenty years; doubtlessly, international recognition would allow many more readers of different countries to discover and enjoy her very important work. Her literary texts can sometimes be classified as children's literature, young adult, or adult literature, and

other times, they challenge the work of critics, as they capture and appeal to hearts and minds of all ages. The only sure thing is that Papayanni's stories are not meant to be read just once. They march into our lives, unique and valuable as they are, appealing to each of us separately, as happens with all great stories: they show up just when we need them, embed themselves onto our DNA, 'fitting'<sup>[2]</sup> perfectly into our interests and preferences. Remaining

---

[1] The title of the article is a paraphrase of the title of "The Future Lasts a Long Time" by Louis Althusser (published posthumously in 1992).

---

[2] Kane, B. (2013) Stories That Matter: Introducing «StoryWorlds». [<http://www.tor.com/blogs/2013/07/story-world-introduction-stories-that-matter>]



open to innumerable interpretations as they are, these stories never leave us. They rest on our nightstand like a child's favorite teddy bear, they evoke a sense of defamiliarization<sup>[3]</sup> towards texts with low level reading expectations, they open windows to ourselves and to our respective worlds<sup>[4]</sup>. Texts that intentionally stir up experience and awaken the reader's imagination, texts that grant the reader the active role of interpreter, of co-creator – texts that set and explore perennial questions that

---

[3] The term 'defamiliarization' was first coined in 1917 by Viktor Shklovsky in his essay "Art, as Device" (alternate translation: "Art as Technique").

[4] Todorov, T. (2006) *La littérature en peril*.

concern people of every time period. Books that mold not only dedicated readers but also critical-thinking and active citizens – those people with unwavering faith in the constructive influence of literature.

In her work, Papayanni incorporates Greek folk traditions through motifs and topics drawn from folktales and myths – ancient and contemporary – and simultaneously engages with philosophical, intercultural and metafictional concepts and ideas like diversity, intertextual retelling, subversion, and genuine cultural representation. She handles and develops setting, characters, and the plot of her texts in an exemplary way, embodying in her texts the daily life we

all share rather than a utopian world; she manages to grasp the fundamental yearning of the human being to decipher the world through narrative, and to find her own place in it. Equipped with solid literary artistry, novel aesthetic perceptions, and pristine language, Papayanni crafts her own authentic voice, a kind of modernist writing, away of trends that very often perpetuate mass culture norms.

Usually, she writes for children and teenagers. Books that matter, books that transform worldviews, evoke an entire range of emotions – a rare occurrence –, and suggest allegorical interpretations of the world. Books that, at the same time, forge an unexpected, close bond between the adult reader and children’s literature. It is easy to see that her stories fulfill the thematic, morphological, and ideological criteria that we encounter regularly in adult literature – further evidence for the flexibility of genre categorization. Besides, Papayanni herself dislikes pigeonholing literature strictly by age group, and agrees with Selma Lagerlöf that a children’s book is good when it is loved by both young and mature audiences, and when it invites readers of any age “to follow the wild geese on their long flights”.<sup>[5]</sup> She recognizes the dangers of self-censorship

and the naïve opinion “that things must be softened around the edges and sugarcoated,” which is precisely what she is trying to avoid. She says, “I think when we talk to children we should be daring so that through our texts we can help them grow.” We should emphasize that Papayanni not only writes for the individual in the abstract and theoretical sense but for the person who undergoes the harsh repercussions of complex, contemporary economic apparatus.

In the pages that follow, we highlight –necessarily with limited and selective priority but nevertheless critically– the fictional universe of the writer, with its respective ideological and cultural dimensions, its symbolic and imaginative ambit, while focusing mainly on three novels (*The Lonesome Tree; As If By Magic; Shoes With Wings*) and two illustrated tales (*The King Who Had Too Much of Everything; I Want to Win!*).

---

[5] Interview from [tospirto.net](https://tospirto.net), February 28th, 2017. [Available on: <https://tospirto.net/book/people/29071>].



## B. The basic ingredients of her fantastical universe: its role and functions

Methodical, analytical approach to the selected texts of Maria Papayanni showcases the multiple dimensions of her entire work, which for purely methodological reasons are classified as follows:

1. A 'big story' or else, a holistic fictional universe built on fantasy storyworlds that are interconnected by a network of multilayered relationships.

2. Modernist writing with elements of metafiction (in thematology, a mix of writing styles, a mix of realistic with fantastic elements, ingenious narrative choices, intertextual references, magical realism, fertile and original interaction between illustration and text).

3. Literary writing with moral content, thematic, historical, and sociopolitical dimensions, as well as an ideological scope that lend themselves to a radical educational cause. Cultivating attitudes that imbue values and behaviours that support human rights, the environment, cultural heritage, respect for diversity, social responsibility, perseverance, the love of reading, etc., which means attitudes that can actually uniquely support the healthy cognitive and

psychological development of children.

4. Narrative with transmedial dynamics.<sup>[6]</sup> The consequences and trustworthiness of fantastic worlds, the number of stories and the three-dimensional characters allow for the creation of textual extensions across different mediums.

All of the above dimensions showcase different theoretical and methodological approaches to the work of Maria Papayanni, with emphasis on the content, language, and narrative techniques or even the reasoning behind the narrative choices. For the purposes of this particular statement, the basic analytical axis is how the critical worldbuilding illuminates both the dynamic of the respective stories and their interactions with each other as well as within a wider, cohesive fantastical universe.

The holistic consideration of literary work as a dynamic system of interacting elements and relations,<sup>[7]</sup> which in the last years has been continually gaining ground in the field of critical analysis

---

[6] Jenkins, H. (2006) *Convergence culture: Where old and new media collide*, NY Press.

[7] Herman, D. (2002) *Story Logic: Problems and Possibilities of Narrative*. Chesham: University of Nebraska Press.

and in the interpretation of texts<sup>[8]</sup>, gains special meaning in young adult and children's literature. If the purpose of this kind of literature is, among other things, to give meaning to the world of children and illuminate it from many angles, the capacity of narrative to inspire the mental representation of worlds is invaluable. The dialectical coexistence of narrative worlds –either existing ones that children might not otherwise get to know or fantastical ones with their own rules and values– suggest alternative social and political views of the contemporary world to the young readers,<sup>[9]</sup> meanwhile giving them space to make their own value choices.

### 1. The Construction of Fantastic Worlds (World Building)

The components of Maria Papayanni's literary oeuvre –including the characters, the ideas and the emotions, the settings and the action–, first, comprise of such a rich mixture that only the term 'world'

is capable of capturing, and second, appear to originate from the same source, which is greater than the sum of the individual texts. Far from a case of isolated creation, her work is placed conceptually within the larger context of a multi-layered ontology through the integrated use of multiple interconnected worlds and texts which, in the end, tell a 'bigger' story.

In agreement with the theoretical approach to narrative as an art of worldbuilding,<sup>[10]</sup> Papayanni's stories compose worlds or story worlds which combine consequence, realism, and trustworthiness and form the canvas of her fictional creations. The fantastical worlds that unfold through the various stories are related in aesthetic ways,<sup>[11]</sup> thus creating a coherent, continually expanding, literary universe. This dynamically evolving fictional world settles a rich, cohesive foundation upon which those implicated in the writing and reading experience (writers, illustrators,

---

[8] Ekman S. & Taylor A. I (2016). Notes Toward a Critical Approach to Worlds and World-Building, *Fafnir – Nordic Journal of Science Fiction and Fantasy Research*, 3 (3) 7–18.

[9] Bradford, C., Mallan, K., Stephens, J., McCallum, R. (2008) *New World Orders in Contemporary Children's Literature: Utopian Transformations*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

---

[10] Ekman S. & Taylor A. I (2016). Notes Toward a Critical Approach to Worlds and World-Building, *Fafnir – Nordic Journal of Science Fiction and Fantasy Research*, 3 (3) 7–18.

[11] Bakhtin, M.M. (1935/1981). Discourse in the novel. In M. Holquist (Ed.), *The dialogic imagination: Four essays by Mikhail Bakhtin* (pp. 253, 254). University of Texas Press.

the audience) co-create new characters and plot structures, enriching the settings while directing the development of new interpretations.

We are concerned here, with the theoretical conception and organization of a cohesive mythology by way of creating individual fantastical worlds, according to what is called the “narrative gestalt” where the whole is bigger than the sum of its parts.<sup>[12]</sup> So, within the context of Maria Papayanni’s fantastical universe, every story exists within a wider network of texts, remaining in either direct or indirect conversation with the rest of the author’s texts as well as with a larger literary corpus, from which she borrows elements that she weaves creatively into her own work. With remarkable narrative mastery, the author re-envisions classic fairy tales, preserves ancient myths by reconstructing them, engages in conversation with Sappho and Dickinson, Borges and Neruda, Elytis and Ritsos, Rimbaud and Éluard, Woolf and Plath. An entire array of intertextual evidence (words, topics, references, excerpts etc.)

---

[12] 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.

highlight the conversational dimension of each narrative world<sup>[13]</sup> and unlock its interpretation in addition to its modern and timeless coexistence with the worlds of great authors and poets.

At this point we should clarify that our approach utilizes the typological theorizing of Ryan, Klastrup, and Tosca,<sup>[14]</sup> according to which the fundamental components of worldbuilding are:

- The Heroes (the main characters who are integral to the story)
- The Myth (plot, archetypal myths, legends, traditions)
- The Setting (environment as a space governed by certain natural laws which define its specific geographic character)
- The Ethos (social rules, values, ethical elements of the story)

---

[13] Bakhtin, M.M. (1963) *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, published in English in 1984, translated by Caryl Emerson, with an introduction by Wayne C. Booth.

[14] Ryan, M.L. and Thon, J.N.,(2014). *Storyworlds Across Media: Toward a Media-Conscious Narratology*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, Klastrup, L., and Tosca, S. (2004), *Transmedial Worlds-Rethinking Cyberworld Design*. In: *Proceedings of the 2004 International Conference on Cyberworlds*, edited by Masayuki Nakajima, Yoshinori Hatori, and Alexei Sourin, 409-416. Los Alamitos, CA: IEEE Computer Society.

- The natural events that take place during the narrative's timeline
- The inner action (goals, plans, motives, emotional reactions, and other aspects of the characters' inner life).

We will attempt a brief mention to the Heroes, Myth, Ethos, and Setting in Papayanni's work, in addition to those elements that ultimately showcase the quality of her texts and rightfully justify their place among major creations of true artistic merit.

Let us also underline that in her fictional works that were published during Greece's recession (2009 – today) we have found textual evidence that affirms and denounces social structures. Not however through the lens of a mechanical, dry, and didactic representation of the crisis, but through a revolutionary search for the causes and antinomies of a contemporary globalized multicultural society – further evidence that her work requires a dialectic approach.

### 1.1. The Heroes

The heroes of Maria Papayanni's literary universe live among us. They are unique personalities that ingeniously stand in for common human universalities.<sup>[15]</sup> Her heroines and heroes pervade different generations, represent differing ideas, positions, beliefs, and desires and urge us to sympathize with "the other" as well as to realize the complicated nature of acting in the real and fantastical world. Their special traits –physical, psychological, behavioural, social– motivate the choices and decisions of the characters, determine their actions and shape their interactions with the surrounding characters.

Particularly notable is the presence of a realistic and authentic teenage voice on the cusp of transition, from childhood to adulthood, and a revolutionary process of self-discovery that takes place in the fictional, social sphere. The invented narrative voices observe every step of the journeys of the young heroes towards adulthood by juxtaposing them against a backdrop of an emotionally and ethically immature human environment. Papayanni

---

[15] Wierlacher, A. (2000) *Die anthropologische Konstanten*, Universität de Berlin.

does not relate nonetheless with this backdrop; she does not reproduce nor reinforce the existing interpretations of reality. On the contrary, she uncovers its weaknesses and its peculiarities through her heroes, who stand out from the rest by not participating in pointless human exchanges. Their deep emotional and ethical growth displays the transformative power that supports one's understanding of the construction of meaning while restoring the individual and action in the heart of History.

In the forgotten land of Kofinas (*The Lonesome Tree*), Simos and Marko come of age through a series of important challenges: the Lonesome Tree, the broken-down house of a woman with a dark fate whom everyone avoids, the search for the votive offerings that were stolen from the church. Simos is the sole person who will believe in Violeta's innocence; Violeta, in turn, will become the catalyst for the entire community to transition from singular to plural, from 'me' to 'we'. Rosa (*Shoes With Wings*) will carve her own transition from a magic matchbox in the wall of her bedroom; she will follow Gambito, her one-eyed cat, to the Underwater Kingdom: "She sat on her bed, opened her box of crayons and removed the red color. On the side of the road, she drew a box of matches. She

put the red back and took out the black. She drew a black cat which had one wild eye while the other one was covered with a patch, like a pirate's [...] And suddenly, she saw him move. He stretched his body, looked around with his single eye and then started walking towards the matchbox. With a single dive, he disappeared into the matchbox (p. 95)."

In her imaginary world, the Princess—who depending on her mood is Princess Smiles, or Princess Crazy or Princess Grumbles, when she is angry—wears shoes with wings and fights for languages, fairy tales, and songs which cannot afford to be lost. At the same time in the real world, in the Kingdom of Cats on Fate Street she is surrounded by an array of usual, special people: Hassim from Pakistan, Athena, Kostis from Syria, Anna the pianist who lives in a car, sensitive Louisa who runs a small theatre-café that provides a roof for all young, daydreaming actors and musicians, Sad Mrs. Elisenta, and Irene, who runs the kiosk and fights the men in black who patrol the neighborhood and intimidate the frightened children who have arrived from other countries.

In different countries, but still within the same universe, there are two more princesses of the same age growing up, Hadiya from Ghana, and Anna from

Greece (*Tomorrow the Earth Will Grow*), who both dream about travelling and getting to know the world. Eva, who lives in a patchwork house, dreams of travelling to the country of music; she goes to the fourth grade and believes that people who are different help the rest of us see life through different coloured lenses. Different just like the little moon who's an only child (*The Moonling*), who somewhere, in some corner of the sky, flatters himself thinking he is better than everyone else and will one day grow to be bigger than every other star in the sky: "I am better than everyone else. When I grow up, I'll be brighter than all the stars of this neighbourhood and that one and the next one. I have myself, I don't need anyone," he boasted. Different, like six-year-old Maya (*My Name Is Maya*), full of curiosity and questions, like Petros the daydreamer (*Petros' Stories*) who always aces his lessons and prevails at games, and like Sammy, the inconsolable little beaver (*I Want to Win!*) that has to always watch his brother, Danny, win. And as much as Sammy sits wondering when the day will come when he will finally yell, "I beat you!" Mrs. Beaver, stoic and collected, without reducing the wins of the 'strong' simply advises him to be himself. Real life is full of big and little

wins and losses, she explains, "You 'll win another day."

If Mrs. Beaver is a special mom, so is Madalena, Eva's mother (*As If By Magic*), who dresses like a rainbow, treats a fever with hugs, speaks to the birds and the animals, and grows daisies under her bed. And since people are frightened by those who are unlike them, Madalena might be called special, or weird, or strange, or unstable, or even, a witch. Depending on who is looking and where they stand. Eva's dad is a whole other story: he is a doctor who cures fever with antibiotics, who has forgotten how to dance, and who knows nothing about upside-down wishes, nor does he have any idea about the daisies growing under his bed. Rosa's dad is also different: fisherman by trade and hidden poet by nature; he's the person who in few words and a smile can transform the dark, hard side of life into light and tenderness for his daughter, and every other creature he encounters on his way.

As for the dark side of daily life, there is always a poison-tongued neighbor, on whom Eva and every Eva can test her upside-down wishes, there is always a principal who forbids laughter and hugging at school. There is always some king who has everything (*The King Who Had Too Much of Everything*) and lives

happily until the fear that he will lose it all takes hold of him from the inside. And since he doesn't know, because he's naïve, that joys and sorrows are meant to be shared, he doesn't tell anyone about his nightmares. And one day, nothing is the same anymore.

As the lives of many and different people from every corner of the earth unfold, readers of all ages meet familiar and realistic peers of theirs who invite them to take a stance in matters which figure as real. A universe replete with regular people who insist on dreaming, on remembering, on fearing, on hurting, on being free, on loving, on helping, on navigating the problems and paradoxes of everyday life. Papayanni prioritizes the maturing of her readers as a prerequisite of utmost value if society is ever to be transformed.

## 1.2. “Mythos”

At the heart of every narrative, there is always Myth (Mythos), the central knowledge needed to interpret the facts and happenings of that world. Sometimes it requires modern invention and other times it derives from that which is “already known and said”: legends, traditions, old myths which trace back in time. Papayanni's recourse to mythical and historical archetypes transforms

the literary universe into a land where ‘ancient stories’ full of witches, giants, and haunted forests come alive to act and to breathe new life.

In *Dream Thief* a woman accepts to sacrifice her dreams in order to bear a child. After years have passed, her son will set off on a difficult journey to bring back his mother's dreams.

In the fairy tale, *The Birthmark*, the fates foresee that once three girls come to know love, they will become hurt and withered. The third girl, who's born with an unusual mark on her chest and watches her sisters wither, decides to find the fates and change their destiny.

In *The Elixir of Happiness*, just before he dies, a father asks of his three sons to bring him the elixir. Every son takes a different road, discovers the world, and understands that there are as many truths as there are births of the earth. The third son will meet the giant who guards the elixir of life and will succeed in delivering his father one dose.

In Papayanni's narratives, myth and fantasy converge and diverge. Beginning from myth, the author builds fairy tale worlds within reality. In villages perched on rocks, for example, where in the old days, there used to live people who could explain the unexplainable and see the unforeseeable, stories of the

heroes' past travel us back to the times of oral tradition. Or, in the microcosm of a multicultural neighborhood, Rosa lives her story which features animals who can speak, and together they give a courageous battle to save endangered languages, using magic matchboxes that lead to fantastical kingdoms.

The inspiration for Rosa's story comes from a fairy tale about a dervish, who ordered an artisan to make him a pair of 'shoes with wings'. Ever since, each craftsman would wish his son would be the one to do the undoable, but this same wish turned into a curse (the curse of Halil), as no one could properly make shoes with wings. Until a wise man, a wizard of his tribe took over the debt. Before he died he told his sons that they may have never been able to make a pair of shoes with wings, but that the order of the dervish put wings on their feet by pushing them to continuously chase a crazy dream.

If the danger in the Underwater Kingdom is the eradication of languages (What will happen if languages die out? What will happen to fairy tales and poems? How will emotions be expressed? How will songs be sung?), in Rosa's real world the problems seem to be monstrous and insurmountable. One fear seems to bear another, though the

heroine will uncover the courage to fight for what is important: for the right of people to live freely, to make choices, to wear their own 'shoes with wings'; which essentially means to not allow those who exercise authority to control people's consciousness.

Contrary to Rosa, the king of the fairy tale (*The King Who Had Too Much of Everything*) got caught in a net of fear and forever remained on the dark side. Handsome as heaven and strong as a mountain, he had too much of everything, but still, he did not know the secret of every simple and innocent heart: that when joy and pain are shared, pain is divided and joy is multiplied. When he has nightmares about losing all of his possessions, instead of sharing his problem, he increasingly keeps to himself, and anything he can no longer enjoy, he forbids the enjoyment of to his people. Papayanni's art does not reconcile with ways of thinking that sink into subjectivity. The dark thoughts, the nerves, the fear of the king, and his gradual transformation into an autarchic dynast are a denunciation of obsession and fixation and suggest –by showing not telling– the value of holistic reevaluation. The text functions as a refuge for anything that haunts us, the readers, offering us space where we might meet and reconcile



with ourselves. The dreamy illustrations accomplish the best narration of the story, elevating it, and inviting the reader into a new yet parallel story.

### 1.3. Ethos

Notable stories bear some meaning. As exciting as their characters, their settings, and their plots can be, they wouldn't be worth anything if they didn't say something about the "spoken and silent ethics of the world and the ethical codes of behaviour",<sup>[16]</sup> about values, ideals, and heroic qualities. The great literary achievements express via ideas, traditions, and the rules of their artistic expressions, something of the practice of the intellect and art.

Ethos is reflected in Myth, poses questions, and searches for answers to the major problems of humanity, namely, the battle between good and evil, the resistance to authoritative behaviors, and the chance that anyone should have to act and effect change. These, along with political and social issues, like the acceptance of diversity, interfamilial relationships, education, environmental consciousness, the right to work etc. all arise in the larger mythology of Maria

Papayanni. The values that permeate each text offer themselves for multiple readings, feed our concerns, lead down paths of philosophical discovery, and invite new forms of dialogue with oneself and the world.

In the worlds that the author constructs, Ethos is related to social conventions, values, and ethical codes of behaviour: love, the importance of friendship against individualism, solidarity, and fellowship. The little son of the Moon (*The Moonling*), who finds himself in a foreign environment and faces the fear of the unknown, will understand how beautiful it is to share both the difficult and the happy times with those you love. The illustration of this tender story about friendship interacts with the text and builds an even lovelier world on the cusp between fantasy and reality. On the other hand, Sammy's Ethos (*I Want to Win!*) is proven when he is given the chance to win in a game against his brother, but realizes that brotherly love matters more than winning: "And the value of this victory is greater than all of his brother's victories, since it is comes with rising above personal weaknesses and desires, and with the maturation of Sammy, who realizes that life is full of big and small tests of survival that

---

[16] Klastrop & Tosca, (2004). As above.

entail the overcoming of difficulties and adversities.”<sup>[17]</sup>

Against negative qualities like autarchy, prejudice, intimidation, non-acceptance or the inhuman treatment of diversity, the author juxtaposes the ethical values of Simos, Eva, and Rosa, as well as all the other heroes who must dive into the Underwater Kingdom to ultimately realize that, in order to find courage to fight for what’s right, she should only be willing to fly. References to ethical and cultural values through the behavioural and moral backbones of the fictional characters deter from didacticism and fulfill a substantial “intercultural,” socializing function that serves readers of every age.

#### 1.4. “Topos”:

The Setting (Topos), the place of the story, also markedly includes the time in which Papayanni’s heroes exist. It affects action and the plot and decisively contributes to the understanding of the actions of her heroes. In any case, the setting offers the readers a clear picture of the fantastic reality which they are entering and simultaneously offers valuable information about cultural

heritage, problems, social traditions, and human complexity, which may hone in on a particular time period or may extend into multiple. Whether real or imaginary, symbolic or allegorical, every setting draws its origin, structures, and materiality from the geography of the real world.

The Setting is both dark and light. It overlooks the sea but the sea is far in the distance. It is sometimes located in the depths of the sea and others on earth-bound kingdoms. Sometimes, it is limited and barely fits in a cage, whose door, however, remains open. It is just visible behind the shutters of scared citizens, like in Crete, where there is Kofinas, Eleni Svoronou writes, “but that doesn’t make a difference. It could be anywhere in Greece. In the same way that no mountainous part of our country is ever too far from the sea (the ride from Mount Olympus to Platamonas lasts merely a few hours; in Greece, mountain and sea are always embracing), Kofinas embodies every Greek countryside. The isolation, the inaccessibility of the area, allows for the revelatory baring of the soul, not only of the Greek but the Human soul.”<sup>[18]</sup>

[17] <http://miaforakienankairoimikrieleni.blogspot.com/2013/04/blog-post.html>.

[18] Diavasame.gr, <http://www.mariapapayanni.gr/content/Pages/rview.aspx?rID=2&about=1>.

### C. Concluding Remarks or the Metalanguage of Papayanni

In contemporary novel writing, there is a discernable weariness that goes unregistered and unacknowledged. Everything seems to have ended. Visions, ideologies, big narratives, hopes for a better and fairer world are considered by many naïve and dated approaches. Works like those of Papayanni remind us of the issues from the 20th century, 1960 in particular, where political word, in its wider sense, was uniquely affiliated with the word of love for one's fellow human and demanded the development of the intellect and spirit, the right to work, the acceptance of diversity, the care for the place where we live. The artist combats the entertainment industry and the admission of self-deception. The

objective of her mythologies is to make us doubt stereotypes, of any kind, to avert us from the trite and the banal, from the debased cataclysm of art. She aims to confer a deeper insight into human existence with her contributions. And this is the very purpose that shaped the novel of the Western civilization, with Rabelais and Cervantes, with *Gargantua* and *Pantagruel*, and mainly, *Don Quixote*.

The language of Papayanni redefines meanings and ideas in ways that differ from everyday conventions. She is simultaneously a carrier of individual identity and collective memory, cultural capital, influencer of ethical values, and spokeswoman for dreams. Her language is not simply made up of words, it is made up of people's stories and history – of what we remember, of what we dream.



# Maria Papayanni: “Stories prime kids for life’s difficulties”

The virtuoso of stories and words speaks to elnplex

*Extract from an interview with Apostolos Pappos for online magazine elnplex.com, November 2018*

**It seems that your choice [to become a writer] vindicated you. You’ve written a number of books, you’ve won many awards... What do you think has been the greatest return from your writing career?**

If I am honest, I can’t think of my life in any other way anymore: how it could have been had I not dared become a writer, for example. But do I feel vindicated? I feel happy. When I am with children, when I write, when I read, I feel like I’m home, at that very special place where one feels replete, where one thinks *“It’s here I wanna be when it rains, when it*

*snows, when the sun shines”*. I think that’s a great thing to have earned.

**You were concerned with the beauty of simplicity and the enjoyment of small things back in *The King Who Had Too Much of Everything*. Would it be an exaggeration to suggest that your books equip children with a more... philosophical mode of thinking, before they encounter philosophy –in practice or on paper– later in life, as adults?**

Dare I suggest that children are already great philosophers when little and that later when they enter the rat



race, they simply forget how to be thus? I am a true believer in that statement, you know: I look at small kids, who are full of joie de vivre, and then I look at teenagers, who are disappointed and angry at the world, scared about their future. Try convincing them that life's worth it! Try convincing them to care for what goes on beyond their front porch. When they have their own difficulties to bear, when they see no road to walk on, try convincing them to look outside their closed windows; to talk of their nightmares... That's what happened to the King in *The King Who Had Too Much of Everything*. He never parted with his fears like he never parted with his wealth. He chose to carry the burden alone. Some people thought this was a difficult story to tell kids. On the contrary, I think we should be talking about everything with our children. That's what fairy tales do. They prime children for the difficulties in life, later on. I often recount what Tolkien used to say, that the best books –like the best clothes– need to be 'oversized' to allow kids to grow in them.

**Money and fame: are there any other means of measuring wealth? Like education, travels, culture? Are money and fame the end of the road?**

Is this question some kind of a trap?!

Woe to us if this were the only way to measure happiness and wealth: money and fame and distance from everyone and everything you love. What great penury that is! The end of the road is when you can say... I'm home. When you've acquired the kind of maturity and wisdom that allows you to relish the small, everyday joys.

**Most children today have lost this special connection and balance with nature and animals. Why do you think that is? Should technology be blamed for it?**

I am not sure it is a matter of 'losing' it rather than never discovering it in the first place. If you don't take your kid to the park if you never go walking on mountains and beaches, if you keep scaring them every time they meet a dog that the dog will attack them... What I'm trying to say is that everything takes practice. Our relationship with nature, animals, and people too. A kid who grows up in front of the TV and the computer, playing video games, is an entirely different kid from that who grows up playing in vacant lots and playgrounds and in the neighbourhood streets. It all takes practice; it all needs watering. For me, the single most important thing you can do to your kids

is to bring them into contact with nature and animals: that's where they're going to find whatever material they need to build their dreams with.

**So how can you strike that golden balance between technology and screens, on one hand, and books and the arts, on the other?**

Things aren't very easy there. There's no recipe to follow. The single most important thing is to have children grow up in the presence of their parents. And for the parents to pay attention: to be able to listen for that slender balance between what the child says and what she cannot say. Every child is different. And the only general rule is our common concern to see

them grow happy. To me, for example, happiness equals traveling. I never missed a chance to go out walking with my children, go exploring with them, take them on short trips. So it's natural for me to think that kids who've climbed canyons and greeted the dawn in the company of eagles rising from their nests, kids who've taken care of wounded animals, these are the kids that will find their way, eventually. I'm not worried about those kids. They might have their laptops on their backs, but they'll always be ready for the next adventure down the road.

<https://www.elniplex.com/συνέντευξη-μαρία-παπαγιάννη-elniplex>

Illustrations by Effie Lada  
extracted from "The Moonling",  
by Maria Papayanni,  
Patakis Publishers 2017



# A Grain of Sand in Europe

*Maria Papayanni*

In the small country I come from, I discovered a tiny village that cannot be found on any map. I often go there to watch the Libyan Sea and look out towards the Asterousia Mountains, which reach to the stars. Eagles live here who eat nothing but the marrow that they carefully suck out of the bones of their prey. It is a small place with no road that might lead somewhere else running through it. The people there live from what they can produce in their gardens; they keep animals and take from the land all of the things that make life delicious: salt from the sea cliffs, and honey – a gift from the bees who greedily harvest the thyme that grows abundantly in this region. The people from here have never travelled, but they know the history of every single stone in their surroundings. As if their eyes have never forgotten, as if they had never become tired and were able to see and hear more things than other people can. I am always impressed by their dignity

in the face of their lack of money, of their pain and their joy. And there is a passion in their songs and their dances. The only thing I don't understand is why they are so indifferent to travelling. For them, all life takes place here. This small village is a grain of sand in the expanse of Europe. And the village is also inhabited by young Europeans, who walk kilometers every day to get to school and back.

By contrast, there are two young guys in my neighbourhood in Athens who dream about studying and travelling around the world. They go to school, to the theatre, to museums, concerts, and to bars. They and their friends are also Europeans with the same rights, I hope, as the children and young people who live in the remote village in Crete, but also with the same rights as the children and young people who are growing up in all the large cities of Europe. They are all children. Small parts of a large family. They must learn to share the same world and to take care of one another.



All of these young people meet up today and play around in the Internet paradise. A happy era with a flood of information in which the computer is everything. Games, information, knowledge. However, it is not a self-contained thing with a beginning, a middle and an end, like a book, a performance or a film. How can we then address children and young people who are surfing at high speed across the surface of the sea?

How can we take up the thread of Ariadne, how can we overcome the injustices surrounding us in the labyrinth of the Minotaur? In the times we live in, no matter where they grow up, our children see and learn fast that the world is full of unfathomable wars, senseless violence, and social injustice, and that good does not always conquer in the end.

And yet, in the hustle and bustle of everyday life, the realm of "Once upon a time" can assume another form, but still remain as steady and secure as the windmills of Don Quixote. Is this perhaps our reaction to the barbarity of modern times? Is it perhaps our need to simply live our lives like the inhabitants of an old village, eavesdropping on what the Earth has to tell them and observing the movements in the sky? Is it perhaps our need to dream a new fairytale? Wasn't

it, after all, the myths that attempted at different points through time to explain the unexplainable? Have we perhaps arrived at a similar juncture in our times? At a point at which we need a modern myth that teaches us to listen to one another, to listen to the earth before we destroy it forever and then suck out its marrow like the eagles in Crete?

I love fairytales and, if I have learned anything from them, then it is that the person who wins out, in the end, is he or she who takes on all the elements, dares to pass through the dark forest and stops for a second to listen to what the dragon, the orange tree or the wrinkly old woman has to say. Those driven by haste never hear the magical message. So, has the moment perhaps come to start listening to one another?

One time when my son was still small, we hurried out of the house so that we could reach the schoolyard before the bell rang. All of a sudden my son stopped dead in his tracks. "I just heard something in the trees. A lizard asking desperately for help." I looked at him angrily. Another lame excuse not to have to go to school. He started crying. I turned round and saw nothing but a tired-looking tree in the middle of a large city. But my son remained stubborn: "Listen." And all of a sudden

I felt so wretched! How difficult it is for me to hear the desperate cry of a lizard in the hustle and bustle of everyday life. How rich my son was, who could hear cries for help, who could transform reality in order to survive. How rich are the children throughout the world before their imagination is stunted.

What kind of books do the children of Europe need? Fairytales, lots of fairytales, to teach them how to cope with the bad things in life. And then I think of the scattered words from the books I loved as a child, which enter my mind now like good wishes. For example, the words of the great Greek writer Nikos Kazantzakis: "Go as far as you can, or even better: as far as you cannot." And the verse from Nikos Kavvadias, one of my favourite poets: "Dance on the shark's fin and feel pity for those who do not dream." And above all, high up on the mast of a well-built ship that is to travel through Europe, a blind storyteller who says:

"Tell me, Muse, of that man, so ready at need, who wandered far and wide, after he had sacked the sacred citadel of Troy...and many were the men whose towns he saw and whose mind he learnt, yea, and many the woes he suffered in his heart on the deep, striving to win his own life and the return of his company. Nay,

but even so he saved not his company, though he desired it sore. For through the blindness of their own hearts they perished, fools, who devoured the oxen of Helios Hyperion: but the god took from them their day of returning."\*

So, get to know the whole world, become wise from experience...everyone has to make their own mistakes in life. Begin. Fly. Look out for the marrow. And if you find a book that really means a lot to you, one you devour, then you will sense that – when you stand on your tiptoes – you can touch the stars.

---

\* Excerpt from the first verse of the "Odyssey" by Homer, Translation by Samuel Butler.

*In 2012, during Berlin's 12th International Literature Festival, twenty six authors and illustrators were asked to reflect on and exchange their visions for Europe and to collectively create an imagined library for young readers. Maria Papayanni, representing Greece, wrote the text A Grain of Sand in Europe and proposed Homer's Odyssey.*

*The text was published in a collective book: Keys to the Future - What kind of Children's and Young Adult Literature does Europe need? First edition: 2013*

*<http://www.literaturfestival.com/ablage/kjl/archiv/projekte/europa/buch>*



# List of awards and other distinctions

2004

## Catch Them!

- *Greek IBBY Honor*

2007

## As If By Magic

- *Greek IBBY Award*
- *Diavazo Literary Magazine Award*

2011

## The Lonesome Tree

- *State Prize*
- *Diavazo Literary Magazine Award*

2016

## The King Who Had Too Much of Everything

- *White Ravens catalogue*

2017

## Shoes With Wings

- *Greek IBBY Award*



# 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: 7/10/2003  
Original title: Άγιε Βασίλη,  
θα μου κάνεις μια χάρη;  
Patatakis 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: 15/5/2003  
Original title: Μια περιπέτεια  
για το Ρωμαίο  
Patatakis 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: 22/10/2003  
Original title: Πιάστε τους!  
Patatakis Publishers  
Isbn: 978-960-16-0870-9

#### As If By Magic **AWARDED**

Middle grade novel • Age Group: 9-13  
224 pages  
First edition: 02/11/2006  
Original title: Ως διά μαγείας  
Patatakis 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: 05/12/2008  
 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: 19/11/2009  
 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: 19/04/2010  
 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: 24/06/2016  
 Original title: Παπούτσια με φτερά  
 Patakis Publishers  
 Isbn: 978-960-16-6682-2

## Picture books

### Goodnight, Mom

Illustrated by Daniela Stamatidi  
 Picture book • Age Group: 3-6  
 24 pages  
 First edition: 7/11/2001  
 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: 01/12/2006, republished  
 in new format in 28/05/2015  
 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: 25/11/2008  
 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: 25/10/2012  
 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 Λαδά  
 Picture book • Age Group: 4-10  
 32 pages  
 First edition: 09/10/2015 / republished in  
 new format in 18/05/2017  
 Original title: Είχε απ' όλα και είχε  
 πολλά  
 Πατάκης Publishers  
 Isbn: 978-960-16-6503-0 /  
 978-960-16-7457-5

## The Moonling

Illustrated by Effie Λαδά  
 Picture book • Age Group: 3-6  
 32 pages  
 First edition: 30/11/2017  
 Original title: Τουλάχιστον δύο  
 Πατάκης 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: 18/10/2018  
 Original title: Πες το μ' ένα παραμύθι -  
 Οι περιπέτειες του Νιλς  
 Πατάκης Publishers  
 Isbn: 978-960-16-7803-0

## Early Readers

### Who's in Charge?

Illustrated by Petros Bouloubasis,  
 Sophia Τουλιατού  
 Early readers • Age Group: 5-  
 24 pages  
 First edition: 19/04/2004  
 Original title: Ποιος είναι ο αρχηγός;  
 Πατάκης Publishers  
 Isbn: 978-960-16-1095-5

### How Long is 'Always'?

Illustrated by Petros Bouloubasis,  
 Sophia Τουλιατού  
 Early readers • Age Group: 5-8  
 32 pages  
 First edition: 18/2/2005  
 Original title: Πάντα;  
 Πατάκης 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: 25/10/2005

Original title: Πρώτος!

Patakis Publishers

Isbn: 978-960-16-1657-5

### Back to School

Illustrated by Petros Bouloubasis,  
Sophia Touliatou

Early readers • Age Group: 5-8

32 pages

First edition: 26/06/2008

Original title: Επιστροφή στο σχολείο

Patakis Publishers

Isbn: 978-960-16-2877-6

### The Accidental Bookworm!

Illustrated by Petros Bouloubasis,  
Sophia Touliatou

Early readers • Age Group: 5-8

24 pages

First edition: 31/03/2006

Original title: Βιβλιοφάγος κατά...  
λάθος!

Patakis Publishers

Isbn: 978-960-16-1931-6

### 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: 23/12/2014

Original title: Οι μικρές ιστορίες του  
Πέτρου

Patakis Publishers

Isbn: 978-960-16-6159-9

### 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

### Tomorrow the Earth Will Grow

Illustrated by Apostolos Karastergiou

Early readers • Age Group: 5-8

32 pages

First edition: 25/10/2005

Original title: Τρεις παλάμες όλη η Γη

Patakis Publishers

Isbn: 978-960-16-1680-3

### Ellie's Secret Recipe

Illustrated by Thanassis Dimou

Early readers • Age Group: 5-8

40 pages

First edition: 17/04/2015

Original title: Η μυστική συνταγή  
της Έλλης

Patakis Publishers

Isbn: 978-960-16-5486-7

### Ellie on the Moon

Illustrated by Thanassis Dimou

Early readers • Age Group: 5-8

40 pages

First edition: 29/03/2012

Original title: Η Έλλη στο φεγγάρι

Patakis Publishers

Isbn: 978-960-16-3069-4

## CDs and Books with CDs

### Isn't it Strange?

Music by Thanos Mikroutsikos

Story & lyrics by Μαρία Παπαγαννι,

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 Παπαγαννι

Picture book with CD • Age Group: 4-10

First edition: 2017

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

Cobalt Music

Isbn: 9786188349001



FRENCH EDITION

**On ne gagne pas tous les jours**

Publisher: Minedition (2013)

ISBN-13: 978-2354131906

ENGLISH EDITION

**I Want To Win!**

Publisher: Minedition (2013)

ISBN-13: 978-9881595492



List of translated editions, and their languages



GERMAN EDITION

**Wer gewinnt?**

Publisher: Minedition (Feb. 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

# Ten of the most important titles

*listed in chronological order*

## An Adventure for Romeo

Illustrated by Michael Kountouris

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

First edition: 15/5/2003

Original title: Μια περιπέτεια για το 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 at Paramithohora (<https://www.paramithohora.gr/παραστάσεις/paramythohora-1/μία-περιπέτεια-για-το-ρωμαίο.html>)

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](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mR9sACj-g1k&list=RDmR9sACj-g1k&start_radio=1&t=23)



## Will You Do Me a Favour, Santa?

Illustrated by Elli Griva

Middle grade novel • Age Group: 8-11 • 128 pages

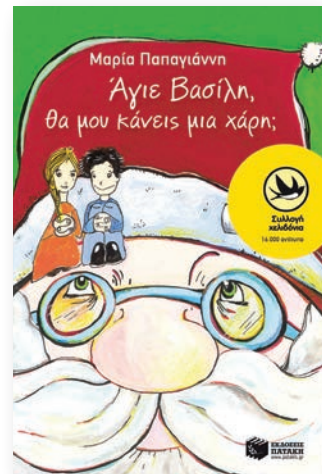
First edition: 7/10/2003

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

Patakis Publishers

Isbn: 978-960-16-0880-8

Two children, two different Christmas stories. Haris is indifferent to everyone, he challenges Santa's existence until the moment he meets him and discovers a different world. Sasha, again, cares for all, is interested in everything and always goes on with a smile. She learns to live in a foreign country, becomes trusted and loved by her classmates, gives many battles, and discovers that only when you fight for something you really want, you can achieve the impossible. On New Year's Eve, Santa Claus will come to their door to remind them that the world is full of miracles and that only if you look as far away as you can, you'll be able to see them.



## Tomorrow the Earth Will Grow

Illustrated by Apostolos Karastergiou

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

First edition: 25/10/2005

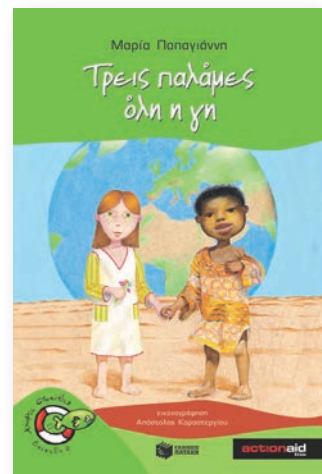
Original title: Τρεις παλάμες όλη η γη

Patakis Publishers

Isbn: 978-960-16-1680-3

Two girls the same age grow up in different countries in very different conditions. Hadiya 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: 02/11/2006

Original title: Ως διά μαγείας

Patakis Publishers

Isbn: 978-960-16-2201-9

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

## 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: 01/12/2006, republished in a new format in 28/05/2015

Original title: Η κλέφτρα των ονείρων

Patakis Publishers

Isbn: 978-960-16-2207-1 / 978-960-16-6279-4

You can read one of the fairytales (*The Elixir of Happiness*) at the APPENDIX.

All the fairytales of the collection are available in English (unedited).

## The Lonesome Tree

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

First edition: 19/04/2010

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 58



## 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: 23/12/2014

Original title: Οι μικρές ιστορίες του Πέτρου

Patatakis Publishers

Isbn: 978-960-16-6159-9

Peter is the oldest of three brothers. Each story about Peter is also about his struggle to overcome his anxieties, the kind all kids his age experience: how he's jealous of his younger brothers, how he worries whether his mother will always be there by his side, how he dreads being called to the blackboard or how he longs for summer that always goes by too quickly only to be followed by autumn and all the schoolwork again.

Omnibus edition, containing six stories of Petros, who is the well-known character of a first-readers series No lifejacket (Horis Sosivio)

You can read one of the stories (*How Long is 'Always'?*) at the APPENDIX.

All the stories are available in English (unedited).

## The King Who Had Too Much of Everything

Illustrated by Effie Lada

Picture book • Age Group: 4-10 • 32 pages

First edition: 09/10/2015 / republished in a new format in 18/05/2017

Original title: Είχε απ' όλα και είχε πολλά

Patatakis Publishers

Isbn: 978-960-16-6503-0 / 978-960-16-7457-5

One of the five books sent to the jurors. See page **78**

## 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

Published in Greece by Patakis Publishers

Published in Finland by Lasten Keskus

Published in Korea by Kyowon

ISBN-13: 978-9881595492/978-2354131906/978-3865661661

Publisher: Minedition (2013)

One of the five books sent to the jurors. See page **84**

## Shoes with Wings

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

First edition: 24/06/2016

Original title: Παπούτσια με φτερά

Patakis Publishers

Isbn: 978-960-16-6682-2

One of the five books sent to the jurors. See page **70**

The translation of this novel is still in progress.

To read the most updated version, please visit [www.patakis.gr/shoeswithwings.pdf](http://www.patakis.gr/shoeswithwings.pdf)  
(the password required to read the pdf is rosaHCAA2020).



ΜΑΡΙΑ ΠΑΠΑΓΙΑΝΝΗ  
εικόνα εξωφύλλου ΦΩΤΕΙΝΗ ΤΙΚΚΟΥ  
ΒΡΑΒΕΙΟ ΤΟΥ ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΟΥ ΤΜΗΜΑΤΟΣ ΤΗΣ IBBY

# List of the five books sent to the jurors



**As If By Magic**  
Middle grade  
224 pages



**The Lonesome Tree**  
Cross-over  
176 pages



**Shoes with Wings**  
Middle grade novel  
288 pages



**I Want to Win!**  
Illustrated by  
Eve Tharlet  
Picture book  
32 pages



**The King Who Had Too Much of Everything**  
Illustrated by  
Effie Lada  
Picture book  
32 pages



# As If By Magic



When young Eva finds out that the curses she places on people come true, she sets out to avenge the wrongdoings of the world through her newfound power.

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? Madalena teaches her daughter to punish wrongdoers with Upside-down Wishes. Eva inflicts her first Upside-down wish on their godawful gossip of a neighbour. Growing up, Eva will find out that life is full of miracles and magic. She will also discover that in order to succeed you have to put up a fight. Upside-down Wishes sometimes do come true, but sometimes you have to jump into the action and overcome your fears.

Eva and her parents, Diamandis and

Madalena, moved into a small house in the city centre, which looks like a small jungle amongst the grey blocks of flats. As bad luck would have it, a great gossip, Mrs. Frosso, lives in the building opposite and spends her time spying on the new family. As the house slowly turns into a small paradise, the gossiping neighbour gets jealous. Madalena's unconventional way of living and dressing upsets the neighbour who wants to maintain the status quo and to kick them out of the neighbourhood.

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." Sometimes the Upside-down wishes work, as if by magic.

*“My mum is not at all normal. Maybe she does resemble a witch ... Not that she does strange magic like ordering the broom to clean around the house or changing Frosso, the gossip, into a lizard – not that I would mind. But she is not like any other mum in the world, at least not like any I’ve met so far.”*

Not even their dog is normal. Si Do wanders around the streets all day and goes in and out of the house opening doors himself. Sometimes, Eva wonders why Si Do isn’t a normal dog who waits behind the door for his owners to take him out for a walk on a leash.

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.

*“My dad still says that my mum was born at the wrong time. If my dad is right, then I was born at the wrong time too, because I am my mother’s daughter... Sometimes I think my Dad doesn’t like my mum at all. Why did they get married, since they are so different?”*

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, they are always worth the trouble.

Still, Eva believes in miracles; after all, different people help us see life in different colours. And what is a miracle anyway? A growing flower, a wondering child, a sunset, a walk in the country – do these qualify as miracles? Well, obviously, miracles are not the same for everybody.

# 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. In my opinion, this is a really bold approach to magic, given, on the one hand, the trivial use of magic in recent children’s literature and on the other, the risk to be wrongly perceived by many adult readers.

Papayanni overcomes this risk by reversing 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.

# The Lonesome Tree



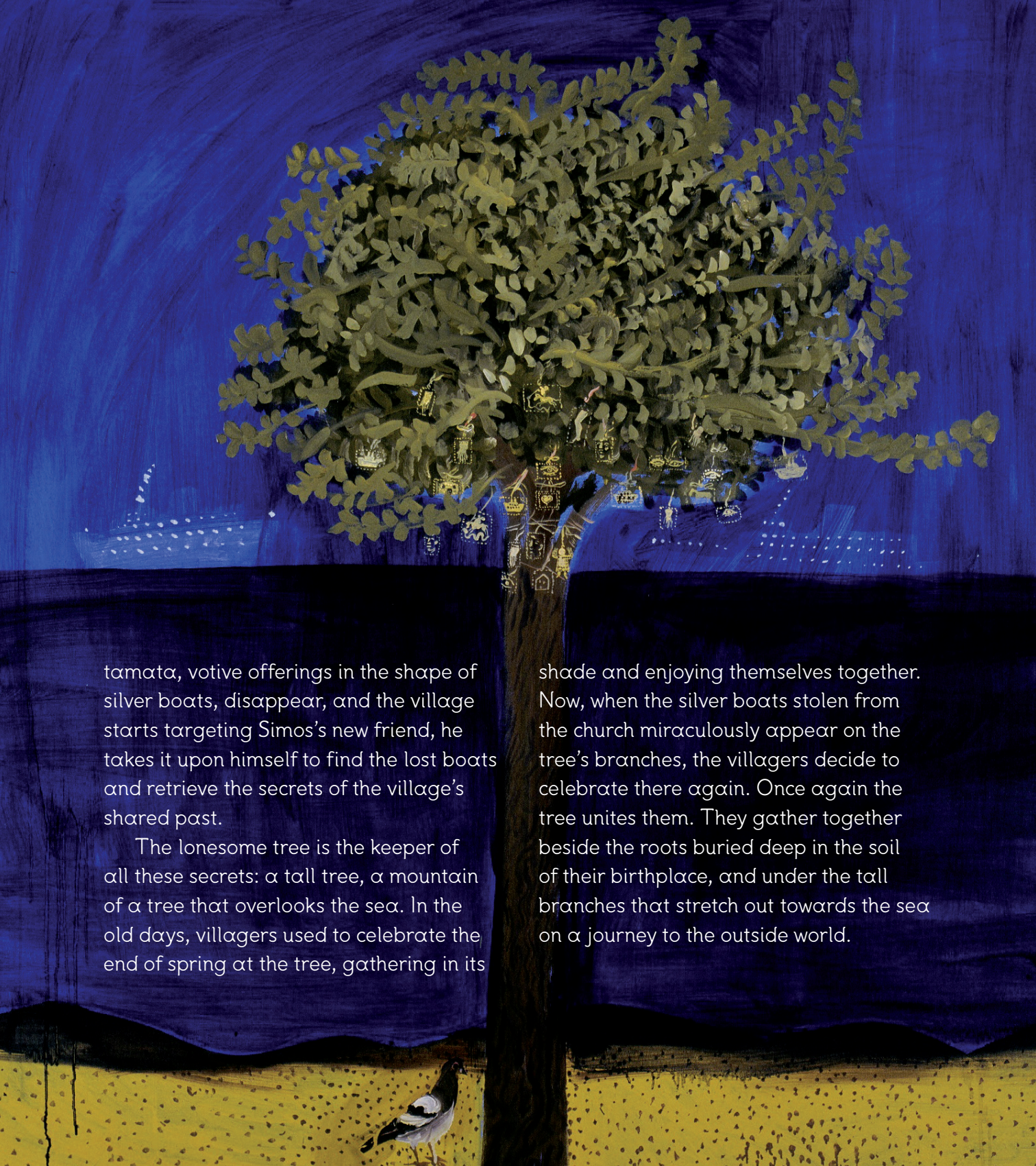
A story about the dreams of a village...  
 about a child grown on legend and fairytales...  
 about a woman everyone calls crazy...  
 about the votive offerings that travelled  
 on the branches of a tree.

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,' was born on single-day cloth, shielding him from any harm. This makes him bold and brave and Simos chooses to go up against the children's leader and befriend the village's so-called madwoman. But when the church's

A painting of a tree with a thick, dark trunk and a dense canopy of green leaves. Numerous small, ornate silver boats are hanging from the branches. The background is a deep blue with horizontal brushstrokes. In the foreground, there is a yellow ground with dark spots and a small white and black bird. The overall mood is nostalgic and serene.

tamata, votive offerings in the shape of silver boats, disappear, 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*

*Foto clutched her belly.*

*“Holy Mother, help me not give birth today for my child will come out marked.”*

*Since the day she found out she’d be going into labor after the feast day of the Three Hierarchs, she started sweating.*

*“Candlemas’s good, my girl, winter’s nearly gone. You’ll get over it soon. Winter’s no help in growing a child.”*

*“Nana, how do you know that’s when I’ll give birth? What if it’s a day or two later?”*

*“It’ll all be fine. Don’t let your mind turn to sobering thoughts.”*

*Still, Foto’s thoughts kept turning to doom. She counted the days over and over. She had always measured time by the great feasts. After the Three Hierarchs day came the triple feast ending with St. Symeon’s. Three great celebrations in just as many days. St. Tryphon, guardian of vineyards, Candlemas, day of Mary the Mills-topper, because even mills are idle then and if you start them, they won’t do the grinding, and third, St. Symeon’s. His name means to “mark”. If the child is born on that day, it’s born “marked”. Even if Foto tried to forget, the feasts wouldn’t let her.*

Reading that first page, I confess to feeling slightly disenchanted with the book at hand. I felt I was reading something outdated, something that hardly matched the esthetics and sensibility of a contemporary reader. 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.

*The village clang immobile on the rocks, shaded all through the day by the nearby mountain. The sea was only a stone's throw away, but the villagers felt like mountain folk, born under the shadow of Kofinas—that's what the summit was called. That's also where the name of the village came from.*

*Foto, too, was born under Kofinas, five years after Stratos, her husband. Together since childhood, living next door to each other, Stratos went in the front, Foto following behind. That was how Foto remembered seeing everything: over his back. One day Stratos turned around and looked at her. "What are you following me for, little gecko?"*

*Foto nearly burst into tears, thinking*

*he might chase her away. The boys in the village were rough. Taught to be hardy from early on. Soon as they were born, they were named after the chore they'd take up later on. One for the wood, one for the farmland, one for the pig, another for the donkey. Stratos was staring and Foto felt like she'd swallowed her tongue. She knew Stratos was heading to feed his family's pig and in her agitation, named that as her mission:*

*"I'm going to our pig."*

*"What you're talking about, little gecko, you've got no pig!"*

*Now Foto well and truly wanted to make a run for it. As if trailing him for no reason wasn't enough, they had, on top of that, no pig. This was now an affront of the first order. The families in the village with no pig were the poorest. It was even said that if, pre-Christmas, the wailing of a pig being slaughtered wasn't heard, no new year would be coming.*

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 phrase alone, "What are you following me for, little gecko?", would have been enough to win me over. 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, re-charge –

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, of Greece, and of Cyprus.

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. Although for the publisher's purposes, there needs to be a classification, the fact that the leading character is an adolescent does not necessarily bear on the age of the book's readership. *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. The now adolescent son of Foto and Stratos was born on Saint Symeon's day, yet without any mark and, moreover, protected forever more from evil spirits thanks to the single-day cloth Nana made Foto wear 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, 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.

*"By the sea, yet mountain folk," the little nana used to often say laughing. "That's why tourists never trampled our village. Tourists want the sea. Better this way. They leave us alone."*

*That's how everyone in the village thought and nobody wanted a road to be opened. They preferred the journey to take two hours on a donkey, and going a full circle to go down to the distant shore of Ai-Yianni, to collect the salt.*

Violeta, who loves the humble but free-growing violets of the beach, 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.

*"Have you been down to the sea?" Violeta asked.*

*"I love the sea. Simos doesn't."*

*"It's not that I don't love the sea but the*

*getting down is dangerous. The grownups won't let us go. The rocks aren't safe. A foreigner was killed there a few years back. He was gathering figs and looking at the sea below, got overconfident and misjudged the distance, he made to climb down the rocks and fell into the gorge."*

*"That poor fool didn't know the way. But I do. There's a secret trail."*

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

*And then they would stretch out on the rock. On one side you could see the edge of the mountain and on the other, the edge of the sea. Simos felt that showing Odine the village, through her sense of wonder, he also came to wonder about things he thought he knew inside out. But Odine's questions never stopped pouring out and sometimes, either because he didn't know the answer or because he didn't have the words, he would just shrug.*

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. 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. And Simos smiled.*

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."*

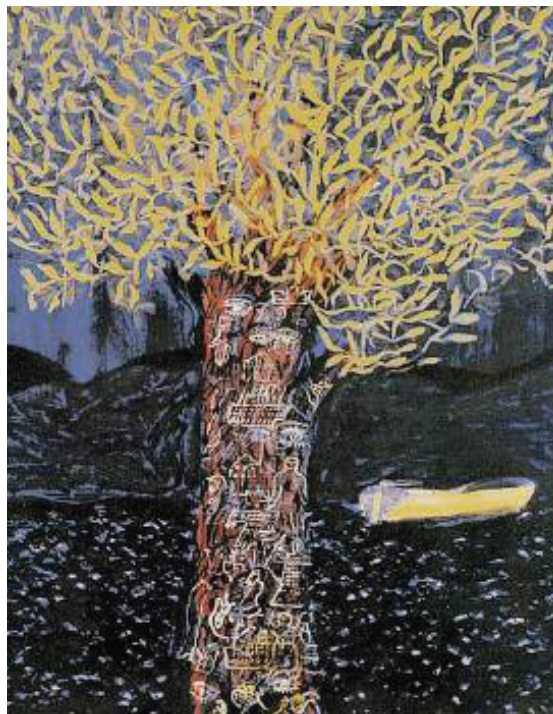
*"To fly high or to only eat the marrow?"*

*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.

Cyprus, February 2011



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

# The secret is how culture is perceived



**Nikos Psilakis**

*Author, journalist*

*Excerpt from Nikos Psilakis speech  
during the first presentation of the book in Crete*

In Asterousia, a unique Cretan village perched on a rocky mountain next to the sea, Papayanni spoke with the land and its people, spoke to the soul of the land. She saw the ethereal creatures that the folk imagination called “Telonia”, she listened to the prophecies of mount Kofinas and heard the sounds of the myth.

Away from regionalism, Papayanni neither speaks loudly nor shouts; instead, she allows secret voices to be spread everywhere. Some of these voices come out of the depths of human agony, others from the depths of the soul, even from nature elements: the caves where ascetics

lived, the Rocks of Violeta, a flower, a secret underground passage, a lonesome tree functioning as a symbol.

Maria Papayanni knows how to tell a story. She knows how to narrate fairy tales. She knows the timeless, everlasting, and endless struggle between good and evil. She knows the secrets of narration, considering simplicity as a virtue. She knows how to choose the right words, and how to add symbolic meaning to them. Lonesome Tree is like a long fairy tale. The author often chooses to deviate from her main storyline, to add characters, to wander around the bright cliffs of Asterousia and the

“ This might be the key for Papayanni: cultural interaction and renewal. Traditional culture is neither static nor timeless but follows the law of evolution. ”

deepest caverns of the human psyche. Never *losing her way*, she always returns with new treasures to enrich her story: a sea flower, a homemade sweet, a flower wreath.

Simos is born on Saint Symeon's day. According to the tradition children born on this day are marked. Papayanni does not forget this permanent mark, but in this case, the sign is not a stigma; it is a seal of good and virtue. In this way, she does not reject the tradition but proposes her own interpretation.

Simos grows up. And at this point, another storyline is launched, when a foreigner arrives in the mountainous Asterousia to search for the 'DNA' of family narrative, the traces of his father that go back to the years of German Occupation. His daughter, Odin, a charismatic figure, is willing, as Papayanni herself, to join a new culture and become part of it. And then, Violeta appears as a vision, an unknown and enigmatic personality.

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.

Being an author of books for children and young adults, Maria Papayanni chooses a path that might not be easy but certainly does not lead to a dead end. It is a path where folk tradition merges with contemporary creation. I wonder if this is the secret for the renewal of narrative production, if the author is showing the way.

Papayanni returns to the relentless battle between good and evil.

There is the good and there is the naughty child, the good and the bad priest, there is the social reality that transforms the real into fantastic and the fantastic into the real. Catharsis comes when good is chosen over evil, when good finally dominates.

The secret, which the reader knows

but heroes ignore, is revealed by means of a strong, almost supernatural, scene: it is a tree which defines the landscape, like those natural boundaries of a community marked by trees. It is a tree miraculously decorated with church offerings.

Here Papayanni lingers on the image. She visualizes the words and makes you listen: to the music of the words and also to the music of the image.



# Shoes With Wings



My name is Rosa and I live in the Kingdom of Cats.

And if the world is to change, I have no idea what I would like to change into. My dad says that there are two sides to all things: the dark one and the bright one. If the dark side is that our house is on the lowest floor, the bright side is that we live in the Kingdom of Cats and that Carlito lives in our skylight looking out into the world. It is, I imagine, the only nightingale in the world that loves cats, and which cats love in return or which at the very least have gotten used to.

Little Rosa is growing up with her father, a fisherman who writes poetry, names cats after poets and speaks in poetry verses. On account of a movement disorder Rosa is suffering from, they move into a groundfloor apartment, also known as *The Kingdom of Cats*. There, Rosa will make new friends like Anna, a formerly great pianist who lives in her car. It doesn't take much for everything

to shift, and for a pursued little Rosa to follow Gabito into the Underwater Kingdom. There she will make friends who use words and language, instead of money, to buy doughnuts. She will attempt to understand why dead languages are so important to these people. Until then it had never occurred to Rosa that languages die and that fairytales die with them; music and dreams too.

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

All that is and all that pretends to be.

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

*Dad said I shouldn't be afraid and the next day he brought me a beautiful journal.  
"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."*

### Diary entries from Maria Papayanni's journal

13/4/2014

Thanos would always tell our children this story about an ideal society where fishermen write poems and poets fish. Was it a Utopia? I believe in miracles, so I'd like to believe in the greatest miracle of all: that there can once be a happy society, a Utopia. That's how Aris was born, the father of the protagonist: a fisherman who studies poetry by night.

15/8/2014

My daughter is leaving home to go study in London. I can picture her in the big city. *Find your own pace* I think and I realise why Eva, in my new story, has a bit of a limp. It's because she still hasn't found her own path.

20/9/2014

I've been reading Farid ud-Din Attar's *The Conference of the Birds*. Borges led me to him: it's about 30 birds who set out to find their spiritual leader. During their long trip, all sorts of stories are narrated... This is the way to what I call 'home', in the sense of the little sliver of time where, for a while, you feel you have everything, you're where you want to be. Only a few of the birds make it to the end of the journey. One of the lucky ones is the nightingale, which symbolizes love. A nightingale like Carlito, in my story. *Why did Carlito stop his journey? Why did he choose to stay with Aris and Rosa? Is it because he can sense that they're about to set off with him on the journey to self-knowledge?*

22/12/2014

I dreamt that Rosa was dancing. How is that possible? Rosa limps. I have to find a way in which all these come together. Without shortcuts. "A feather travelled through the night". What else would this be but everyone's journey to maturity? Something like... the truth... is that which we carry inside us but takes boldness for us to meet it...

27/5/2014

I just turned 50+ years old. I am where I've always wanted to be.

In the beginning of a story. I'm no longer in a standstill. And I'm glad I tore and threw away many pages because I am here now.

Now the book has a structure, a meaning. I found the other world. It's not going to be the 7 Valleys, but an Underwater Kingdom.

Water is like poetry. Thought needs language the same way a river needs its bed. I've been lured and won over by what I had repeatedly noted down: that a language, or a dialect, perishes per week. The images of refugees who can only carry what's most precious and sometimes feel their language like dead weight on their feet. There's something I want to say: losing your language is a dangerous thing. In my Underwater

Kingdom, there shall be Guardians of dialects. And the enemies shall be language-killers who want to eliminate all dialect so that people work as slaves.

28/6/15

At the beach. I ask a kid who is his favourite hero. He mentions someone from an online game. I think of my own paper-based friends. How much I owe them! Babel is Don Quixote; Panda is his trusted companion, Sancho; Nell: my favourite little girl from Dickens' *The Old Curiosity Shop*. I was devastated when she died. It was so unfair until I put her back into the Underwater Kingdom, where Urshanabi is the ferryman from the *Gilgamesh*. And Albatross, he comes straight from Baudelaire's poem. We are the children of many paths, of many stories. Like a spider's web, like communicating vessels, like those tiny Russian dolls my mom would bring from the Eastern countries.

22/1/2016

And now what? What did I understand these past two years? What have I learnt? Which 'why' I had inside of me did I cure? There's no answer to these questions, yet once again it bears out that poetry makes us better people and the people who believe in utopias, in revolutions, will always dream of another Utopia.



# 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 Underwater Kingdom, where the Guardians of Memory fight off

the Language-Killers 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'.

This is no ordinary family that just moved in 'The Kingdom of Cats', in the basement flat of No. 3 Fate Str., where the fates decide your fate when you let them. And when you quit, they let you go. When you decide to fight back, they're back at it. Three persons live here: Aris, the widowed fisherman and poet-in-secret, both a father and a mother to the young, orphaned Rosa, the disabled girl; and a nightingale, who chose to stay with them and flew free around their small flat. Nothing less but a theatrical framework for a story that's full of joy, full of life.

Aris, Rosa, and the nightingale are

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

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. This is why the fairy tales mentioned in *Shoes with Wings* are, essentially, tales of initiation: *Cinderella* (whose origin is Greek) is a magical, mythical fairy-tale a sort of *bildungs*-story, despite her feet aching inside the glass slipper, as Rosa’s feet ache when she walks; *Don Quixote*, too, whom we meet first at Rosa’s school library and then as Babel, leading the war against the Language-Killers in the Underwater Kingdom. The curse of the Khalils, where they try to make shoes with wings, is a story of initiation. Initiation stories tell us that to strive towards the unachievable, to journey towards ου-τοπία (=non-place; utopia) is the only means of reaching a place worth reaching, a place full of light. In the ancient epic of *Gilgamesh*, the Sumerian king who reigned in the 3rd millennium BC –the story that Rosa narrates when she gets to the Underwater Kingdom – Urshanabi, ferryman and guardian of the Ocean,

says the same thing: one must strive to find the path towards self-knowledge, towards soul-aggrandisement. The fairy tales referenced in Maria Papayanni’s book speak of this self-knowledge and of this autonomy.

*Shoes with Wings* is thus, replete with fairy-tale-like motifs. The street Rosa paints on the wall her bed stands against, is a road to dreams. Then Gabito, the cat, jumps into the picture on the wall. Then Rosa does too, following her sad neighbour’s lost cat with a chewing gum for an entry ticket, and food that one can buy with words and feelings: “Do words hang from trees?” “Are you asking?” “Words hang from trees!” “Enter.” AND YOU ENTER! If you get the password right, you enter a world where the tree of faith is rooted on seven castles...

The best journey is the journey without a goal – like dreams. But if you do want to find a goal, you shall find it on the way. On the road of dreams, Rosa found her struggle: to fight so that small, isolate languages –that whither every day, like a small piece of a soul that perish– do not die out.

In addition to being language-sensitive, *Shoes with Wings* – whose 25 chapters are superbly titled with lyrics fit for their text – speak of Rosa’s (and others’) initiation journey: Carlito’s initiation flight, Aris’ initiation flight, the whole neighbourhood’s initiation flight. At the end of the book, they resemble Attar’s 30 birds (each impersonating a different human trait) who fly to meet their luminous selves.

Rosa’s tale ends leaving all other tales open-ended. We don’t hear Anna playing the piano, but we know she will. We don’t see Louisa dancing flamenco, but we know she will. Irene and the immigrants of this neighbourhood, and the next neighbourhood, will make it through, despite the bullies’ threats. Aris will find love again. The brave Rosa, who now knows that her mother is asleep in her own seabed, will walk like all the other kids walk and perhaps, one day, she will take that big trip with her little friend from Pakistan, Hashim. Carlito will fly away from the basement flat. The albatross will fly away from the Underwater Kingdom and find his beloved. Maria Papayanni is essentially saying we will all fly, we will all find love, each in their own way, as long as words protect us.

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, like the ones hidden inside the girl’s hair on the cover of the book, designed by Fotini Tikkou. When I finished reading the book, I felt a tinge of jealousy. For it has the grace of those magic fairy-tales where nothing is amiss and nothing is redundant. 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.

# With the precision of poetry



**Krystalli Glyniadakis**  
*Poet*

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 Underwater Kingdom, 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 Underwater Kingdom. 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 Panda –the forlorn Albatross– and Marabu, with his pirate ship, she's got Nell and Babel and a whole cast of wonderful characters who fight against the Language-Killers, so as to prevent them from stealing the Map of Endangered Languages. This is the

adventure of Rosa in the Underwater Kingdom.

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.*



# The King Who Had Too Much of Everything



Fear raises fear and love miracles

A once strong and beloved king is overwhelmed by distrust and fear after having nightmares of losing his possessions and his people's love forever. Ruled by his delusion, he isolates himself from his people and the people from each other. Joy, smiling, even eye contact are no longer permitted. The king carries around with him, in a giant sack, all that he owns and all that makes life worth

living. Until one day he dies of misery. The people then open the sack to finally share their happiness with each other.

Values such as freedom and fulfilled communal living stand opposed to materialism and fear of life in this fairytale-like story that draws on allegorical elements in a vivid and inspired way.



# The King Who Had Too Much of Everything



**Anta Katsiki-Guivalou**

*Professor at National and Kapodistrian University of Athens*

At a time when fear is systematically spread both at an individual and a socio-political level, with the aim of weakening people, keeping them isolated, and thus reassuring their easy manipulation, Maria Papayanni, in her fairy tale *The King who had too much of everything*, illustrated by Effie Lada, speaks symbolically but also eloquently to young readers about the tragic consequences of fear; mostly, the fear of losing everything and one's self-doubt when it comes to the views of others.

Similar to folk stories and classic fairy tales, the central fictional persona in this story is “a king who had too much of everything.” Being the book's opening line, the specific phrase is often repeated throughout the narrative, emphasizing

both the amount of wealth and the variety of goods. This very phrase, together with the sentence: “He never spoke to anyone of this dream” –which always appears as a conclusion to the king's nightmares– constitute two axes around which the narrative unfolds. Together they reveal the main issues the author addresses: the hero's fear of losing his belongings, and his tragic isolation from everything that really matters in life.

One after the other, bad dreams begin to destroy the happiness of a king who is “handsome as heaven and strong as a mountain.” He dreamt that he lost everything, that his treasure, despite him always carrying it around in a huge sack, was stolen. He dreamt that everyone was



making fun of him, that no-one loved him.

Due to his fears and distressing emotional states, the king becomes tyrannical, authoritarian and cruel towards his people. As a result, everyone is sent to prison and everything becomes forbidden, including visual communication; “no-one was allowed to look into anyone else’s eyes.” In other words, by spreading his own misery on the inhabitants of the kingdom, he imposes on them, too, total isolation.

When eventually he dreamt that a great army was coming from the East, he ordered people to lock themselves inside their houses and not to go outside. He shuts himself inside his palace and spends the rest of his life counting his treasure, always worried his imaginary enemies might steal it. He never tells anyone anything about his nightmares.

Unable to handle this situation on his own, he effects misery and hunger on his people. However, the reaction of the citizens, who had lost every joy in life, was pivotal.

In spite of the widespread fear and repression the king had inspired through his kingdom, his people managed to retain hope in their dream to recover happiness in their lives by channeling their shared knowledge, memories,

culture, and traditions into fairy tales that they related to the younger generations. They told fairy tales about a life where unafraid and free they could communicate and cooperate with each other, they could share their joys and sorrows, where they could “share their bread in equal parts.”

And as often happens in fairy tales, when the king dies under the weight of his accumulated wealth – “because too much of everything was too heavy for him to carry alone” – his people find the sack with the treasure and build the country they had dreamt of; a country without fear, built on values such as freedom of thought, harmony, honesty, and mostly, the sharing of difficulties and pain over a life of isolation.

In a simple and direct writing style, through fairy tale and parable, the author approaches important issues that readers of all ages face in today’s difficult times.

With the use of common characteristics of fairy tales, such as the anonymity of heroes and indeterminacy of space and time on the one hand, and expressive devices of folk literature, such as hyperbole (e.g. “He ate omelettes with twelve duck’s eggs and twelve hen’s eggs”), simile (e.g. “He was handsome as heaven

and strong as a mountain”), or phrases referring to folk songs, (e.g. “The wise men and women consulted together and decided”), on the other, without any tone of didacticism, Papayanni highlights the regenerative power of knowledge, imagination, and memory which together can bear the creation and recreation of a life full of optimism, joy, hope and most importantly, a life free of fears and nightmares.

In her modern, political—in a broad sense—fairy tale, Maria Papayanni uses an easy-to-read and pleasant writing style to highlight the values of freedom, free will, democracy, love, harmony, and resistance to autarky, often by juxtaposing them against the concepts of enslavement, blind submission, hatred, tyranny, personal and social isolation.

Obviously, *The King Who Had Too Much of Everything* is a story for children of all ages that is open to many readings and interpretations.

## From the White Ravens catalogue

• Please note that the creators’ names and the title were arbitrary translated in the catalogue. Below we reproduce the catalogue entry.

**Papagianni, Maria (text), Lada, Efi (illus.)**

He had it all and had a lot

Patakis, 2015. – [30] p.

ISBN 978-960-16-6503-0

Greed | Abuse of power | Meaning of life | Zest for life | Literary fairy tale

A once strong and beloved king is overwhelmed by distrust and fear after having nightmares of losing his possessions and his people’s love forever. Ruled by his delusion, he isolates himself from his people and the people from each other. Joy, smiling, even eye contact are no longer permitted. The king carries all that he owns and all that makes life worth living around with him in a giant sack, until one day he dies of misery. The people then open the sack to finally share their happiness with each other. In this fairytale-like story, critically acclaimed author Maria Papagianni promotes values such as freedom and fulfilled communal living that stand opposed to materialism and the fear of life. She does so by drawing on allegorical elements in a vivid and inspired way. The illustrations of Efi Lada – who also has received multiple awards and international acclaim – are delicate and at the same time expressive; they emphasize the affective dimensions of the text through shape and colour. (5+)





# I Want To Win!



‘Why am I always second?’

‘Don’t be sad, Sammy. Life is full of ups and downs.

You may lose now but you’ll win another day.’

‘Why hasn’t another day arrived yet?’

Nothing’s worse than always getting beaten by your little brother! He can even eat faster! But as Mrs Beaver tells Sammy, tomorrow is another day. And who would have guessed how that day would turn out?

## Sandrine & Igor Weislinger

Children like to take part in races and competitive games, but sometimes, those who lose get hurt, and lose a sense of their self-worth. This is what happened with Pollux, here. But this is also what will motivate him to overcome himself, to mature, and to realize that there is something more important than winning.

He understands that whoever loves and is loved is always a winner. An inspired and touching book with wonderful illustration. <https://toutelaculture.com/livres/jeunesse/on-ne-gagne-pas-tous-les-jours-de-maria-papayanni-et-eve-tharlet/>

**Gerald Jatzek, author & critique**

Is winning the most important thing in life? Or are there other, competing values? Of course, the answer might depend on your economic and political status, and differ –say– if you’re in Tokyo or in Athens. Maria Papayanni, however, definitely thinks that you can live better with values like friendship, empathy –and naturally, in the Greece of 2013– solidarity. With dexterity, the

author explores this topic by depicting the relationship between two beavers, two brothers with completely different personalities. The two siblings play, have adventures and talk a lot. It is these talks that –beyond being pleasurable to read– can be used as a good opening for philosophical musings with the children.

*Wiener Zeitung, June 2013*



## Annika Esch-van Kan

Who wins? In kindergarten, on the playground, at home with the siblings - children are always competing. And it is not unusual for the same children to lose out again and again. How can you deal with it if you lose? How do you keep a healthy self-confidence? How do you maintain loving relationships with others? And how can you break through or interrupt a culture of competition that seems to begin with birth? *Who wins?*\* is a tale of two little beaver brothers who, at the end of the day, embrace each other full of love and finally go to sleep with a changed view of the world.

A little beaver swings high, followed by the curved lettering “Who wins?” But beware: the ropes are bent, and this announces the change of direction backwards. Rocking – that means an eternal up and down, always threatened by the fall, which may be the outcome of the desire for “more”. Although in the end actually another little beaver falls from the swing and breaks a leg, however at the centre of the gentle tones and rather simple illustrations of this children’s book,

is not the fall which follows the boisterous conduct, but rather the negative consequences of competitive behaviour among siblings.

[...]

‘Who wins?’ is a question that goes beyond the confines of family life and addresses a fundamental problem in contemporary, competitive societies. As kids, we practice behaviours that permeate our entire lives: we constantly compare and compete. Victory and success define the value of a human being and affects her self-esteem. We succeed, essentially, when others fail. Does that have to be the case? What does it mean to have “success”? What makes individuals valuable and lovable? What kind of relationships do we want to keep up? And, finally, does the comparison with others play a role at all?

The story of the award-winning Greek author Maria Papayanni –whose work has not yet been translated and is hardly known in Germany– remains clear throughout. A story is told that is clearly recognizable as a fable but refrains itself from spelling out a precept. Both in the visual language and in the writing style it becomes very clear that something is

---

\* “Who Wins?” is the literal translation of “Wer gewinnt?” which is the German title of the book.

to be revealed. Readers and listeners are invited to follow the story without identifying with any of the characters, without distinguishing between good and evil, without immediately comparing and evaluating each behaviour.

[...]

*Who Wins?* is a children's book that lovingly and unobtrusively depicts a core problem of our time. It is a good idea to take the time to read it and to start a conversation with your children. Since it

stimulates an active co-thinking, and the visual language avoids typical stimuli for toddlers, the book is recommended for children from 4 years of age.

Conclusion:

A fairy-tale about the violence of comparison and the repercussions of competitive behaviour. Instructive, subtle, and a little sad—but still, so beautiful.

[www.kinderbuch-couch.de/papayanni-maria-wer-gewinnt.html](http://www.kinderbuch-couch.de/papayanni-maria-wer-gewinnt.html)

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. So, say it with a story, because there's nothing that can't be told in the form of a story.

M.P.



