

with and identical to power. The strongest condemnation of the bureaucratic machine appears in another Murdoch novel, *The Nice and the Good* (1968), where the progress of the central character, John Ducane, towards moral maturity and "goodness" is illustrated by his resignation from a high and prestigious civil service position. In the major statement of the novel, which occurs after a brush with death, Ducane comes to an awareness of the futility of man's pursuit of power: "All power is sin and all law is frailty. Love is the only justice."<sup>2</sup>

Ducane's reference to love highlights power's conceptual opponent. Love, which according to Murdoch is "a central concept in morals,"<sup>3</sup> is dramatized in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and in Murdoch's fiction as the antidote to power. Moreover, love, to Orwell and Murdoch, functions inseparably from freedom. This umbilical connection between love and freedom fundamentally entails that love be offered and received by free choice, and be founded on truth and on respect for the identity and separateness of the partners. These provisions invalidate, for instance, the crowd's enchantment with Big Brother, an enchantment couched in fear and rooted in submission. By the same token, any infatuation with Mischa Fox of *The Flight from the Enchanter* is not love but merely represents the adulation of a slave to a master. The works of Orwell and Murdoch suggest that when love and freedom permeate social and human relationships, power becomes irrelevant; on the other hand, when power dominates, love and freedom disappear. No wonder then that the Party's "priests of power" prohibit freedom and prevent love, promote hate and practice war. Correspondingly, Murdoch's power figures disregard the wishes of their victims, violate their freedom, and coerce them into surrendering their independence.

The correspondences that emerge in the fiction of Orwell and Murdoch reveal that each writer complements the other. By treating Big Brother as a precursor to Murdoch's power figures, and by probing the analogies and contrasts in the vision and treatment of power, I argue that understanding one author enriches the appreciation of the other. The perception of power of both Orwell and Murdoch is similar, notwithstanding the different angles from which they approach the issue. To Orwell and Murdoch, power is evil because it violates the sanctity of man's right to think, to choose, and to act. Their ultimate vision crystalizes into a Kantian categorical imperative which stipulates that the individual is an end in himself, and should not, in any way, be used as a means. Human beings cannot, therefore, be treated as mere puppets or slaves or be swallowed up in a massive historical calculation.

## A note on Elias Papadimitrakopoulos's *Toothpaste with Chlorophyll* and *Maritime Hot Baths*.

JOHN TAYLOR

Though hardly a prolific author or one whose name is constantly on the lips of the average Greek reader, Elias Papadimitrakopoulos enjoys the greater merit of being esteemed by his peers, by his fellow Greek writers and critics, as a stylistic virtuoso, a sensitive, perspicacious craftsman of the emotions who has given voice

---

<sup>2</sup> Iris Murdoch, *The Nice and the Good* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1968), p. 305.

<sup>3</sup> Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good* (London: 1970; rpt. New York: Schocken Books, 1971), p. 2.

to a community neglected by modern Greek letters, the small provincial town, in the present case the town of Pyrgos in the province of Ilia. The recent publication (with masterly typographic care) of the second and third editions respectively of *Maritime Hot Baths* (1980) and *Toothpaste with Chlorophyll* (1973)—his two collections of short stories—should establish Papadimitrakopoulos, for a still larger reading public, as one of the leading Greek writers, one whose work recalls such painters of the triste and the ephemeral as Peter Altenberg and Anton Chekhov, with here and there a maudlin brushstroke of James Thurber. Papadimitrakopoulos, born in Pyrgos in 1930, a doctor by profession, otherwise writes film and literary criticism for the journal *Hártis* (of which he is a member of the editorial staff) and for several other magazines and newspapers. His works include a collection of his earlier criticism (*Parakímena*; 1983) and several studies devoted to Nikos Kachtitsis.

Like Kachtitsis and like Nikos Gabriel Pentzikis, another writer whose work has interested him as a critic, Papadimitrakopoulos has forged as his mode of expression a language immediately recognizable as his own. Ever concise, melodious, with much attention given to the overall rhythm of the story—the very music of the prose in “Eleonora” mimics the huffing and puffing of sexual intercourse, this paralleling plot on the prosodic level, thus creating what the author himself has described as a “metaphysical calembour”—the language in *Toothpaste with Chlorophyll* and *Maritime Hot Baths* reveals a delicate juxtaposing of purist (*katharévousa*) and demotic Greek. Not least among Papadimitrakopoulos’s gifts is that of parody. In “The Spanish Guitar” and in “The Check,” for example, the author parodies the infelicitous *katharévousa* of the local newspaper and of the well-meaning provincial townsman, a stylistic tour de force which attains unprecedented heights in his unforgettable story “The General Archivist” (originally published in *Diálogos*, 1981, and doubtless intended for a third collection). In the dialogue “Did It Agree With You?” Papadimitrakopoulos mimics the Greek of the nouveaux riches. The dialogue, set in a train compartment, could be transformed into a lively one-act play.

It is the literature of the midwestern small town to which Papadimitrakopoulos’s stories set in Pyrgos might be contrasted, with the evident difference that his parody contains none of the scorn of a Sinclair Lewis or the relentless, sometimes artless, drive of a Sherwood Anderson to lay bare the sexual facts. Papadimitrakopoulos’s touch is gentle; it is around the modest upturns and mishaps of everyday life that these stories revolve. The leitmotif is death, of the narrator’s father in “In Memoriam,” of several of his classmates in “The Last Survivor,” of the ever hapless, yet happy-go-lucky Mihalis in “The Red Flag,” of the lovelorn bathing beauty in “Toothpaste with Chlorophyll,” of the old church cantor in the rest home in “The Check,” of the thievish Yiannis in “The Spanish Guitar,” of the young Russian show-off in “Maritime Hot Baths,” of the courageous ne’er-do-well Nikos in “Nikos the Seretis,” of the Civil War combatant with gonorrhoea in “The Execution.” Even in “Cushions,” by form more an essay than a story, the narrator recalls “the day when Yiannis the Sailor slit the throats—according to some with two knives, according to others with just one—of twelve in a row right in the middle of the sheepfold.” The setting is of course the Civil War and those whose throats are slit are not sheep but men: Papadimitrakopoulos’s stories differ from many stories and novels written by his contemporaries in that the tragedy is ever human, not ideological. Like Chekhov, Papadimitrakopoulos seeks not to provide solutions but rather to describe situations so truthfully that the reader can no longer evade them. It is to the emotions that the critic of Papadimitrakopoulos’s work must look for meaning, not to ideas, to ideologies or to narrative innovation. And it is the emotions evoked in Papadimitrakopoulos’s work which ring so true—the septuagenarian editor-in-chief’s hand expressionlessly poised on the pack of white paper after his relationship with “the nightingale” has ended; Nikos in “The Last Survivor” hurriedly calling back to the narrator as they are separating in the airport: “I didn’t have time to tell you about my illness. My liver has been giving me fits.”

Above all it is the narrator who emerges as the principal character of the twenty-three stories included in these two collections, all but one of which are written as first-person narratives. ("A Summer Afternoon" is the exception, but, not surprisingly, in that story the manifestly ironic use of the third-person only more conspicuously indicates the author as the true subject of interest.) Through the wry descriptions given of the traditional objects, customs and everyday occurrences of the Greece of the author's childhood—Papadimitrakopoulos's generation is the one par excellence that not only suffered through the German Occupation and the Civil War but that also saw the last vestiges of the Old Greece bulldozed away during the fifties and the sixties—the narrator reveals himself to be melancholic, nostalgic, if not embittered. But the genuine source of the narrator's melancholy is less the remembrance of an age that has passed than the recognition that he himself has aged; his nostalgia for the objects and events of his childhood reposes upon the intermittently occurring awareness that time is passing. Often apart, severed, excluded, ever an observer even when also a participant, the narrator in *Toothpaste with Chlorophyll* and *Maritime Hot Baths* has frequent intimations of mortality, and what upon first reading seem to be so many objectively or humorously described acts and gestures reveal themselves in time—such is the subtle effect of these stories—to be subjectively colored at heart with the painful connotation of transience.