

A new scene of a new era?

Young Cypriot authors explore literary inspiration post 1974

Faced with the challenge of introducing their literary work to Cyprus readers, six young Cypriot authors recently began to probe changes in the local literary scene. Is a transition underway that surpasses or reinterprets the historical and political contexts of their island? Are there new co-ordinates in Cypriot literature?

But this isn't the only issue that propelled them to organise four literary meetings across the island throughout the month of July.

On the one hand, lies a misconception of the local market and on the other lack of communication between the multilateral processes a book has to go through before it reaches its final destination - the reader.

"The reading public of Cyprus is much bigger and much more widely read than what some insist it isn't. The author him/herself has to come out of their shell and reach out to the reader, at least until the literary world matures in Cyprus, until the communication between the author and reader is undertaken by publishers, critics and bookshops themselves," says Erina Charalambous one of the six authors in question.

Most of them born post 1974, the group reached out to make contact with readers and to meet and discuss contemporary Cypriot literature, an art form they believe is somewhat unfairly overlooked or unknown, even among people who read.

Their four meetings entitled "The Other Space: The new Space" referred to a divided notion within the literary space, between pre and post 1974. This notion is shared by authors from both eras who, depending on the experiences and the socio-political environment they create from, have developed alternating points of view.

"Each new generation has a new outlook on things, a new approach and this is an anthropological aspect of the world that is constantly evolving. In Cyprus' case, we observed a transition of topics and literary space, which was the subject of meetings since 1974 in a wider sphere also.

"Young artists have not experienced 1974, neither the war nor its direct consequences, so if they are inspired by this event, which they have not experienced but know well, they do so in a completely different way than the previous generation who went through it. In many texts 1974 is absent," explains Avyi Lilli, another author on board.

But regardless of whether 1974 is a subject matter in any form, another reality lies in the fact that, the younger generation has more stimuli and concerns which give fruit to a prevailing multifaceted subject matter, she added.

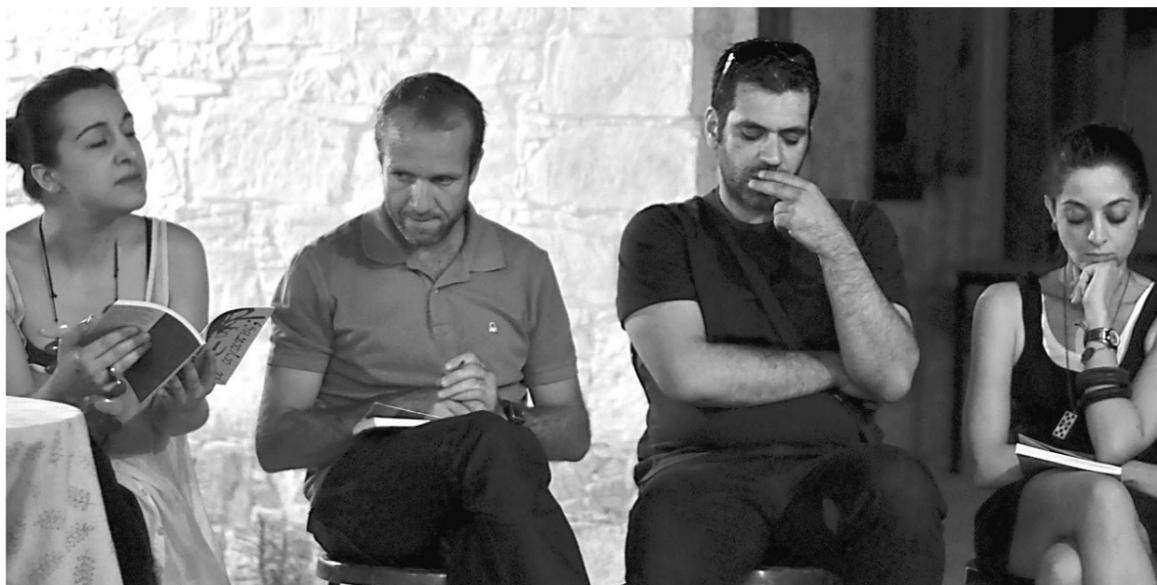
Through the successive readings of extracts from their works and the convergences and divergences these revealed, the authors questioned whether in the end, the other "scene" in which Cypriot literature is now producing fruit is indeed a new scene of a new era?

In their view, the answer is positive and comes from within.

"The literary 'scene' in Cyprus is expanding, as it is doing abroad. This is because collectively the world and art in particular expands the possibilities of expression and creativity, taboos dwindle, but also because on a personal level, the need for creation regenerates and it is not that difficult any more for one to expose and publish his or her works," Lilli told the paper.

Set in cultural locations in suburbs in the capital and the Limassol old town, the authors' worries were embraced by the public which consisted of writers and artists, but also people of all ages who love books and who particularly seek to discover Cypriot books and literature, says Charalambous.

Although discussions revolved around modern Cypriot literature and the transition or enlargement it presents to writers born after 1974, participants were also interested in issues regarding publishing and promotion, personal style and Cypriot dialect, the process of writing and inspiration, proving that people were willing to envision a new literary space, without forgetting the books that make that vision



Photos by Evaggelos Xydias

become a reality.

All being published locally and in Greek, these books are available from selective bookshops across the island and include: *H gigantiaia ptosi mias vlefardas* by Maria Ioannou (Gavrielides publications, 2011), *Ston Agnosto erasti* by Marina Konstans (Self-published, 2010), *Proxeires simioseis pano s'ena sosivio* by Avyi Lilli (Armida publications, 2011), *Erga kai Imeres enos Hamenou Kormiou* by Apostolos Makrides (Aigaion publications, 2008), *Einai meres pou anapneo ti siopi tous* by Kostas Patinios (Armida Publications, 2011) and *M'agapous* by Erina Charalambous (Pantheon Cultural Association Publications, 2010).

The positive reaction to these meetings demonstrates that although the vision of the Cypriot Literary Space is ambiguous, there is a future that Char-

alambous believes can only be determined by authors themselves. In reply to whether there is a particular lack in the Cypriot literary space or scene, Charalambous was prompt to identify that there is an essential need for literature that revolves around the realms of fantasy, of fiction and surrealism.

"Although we were and still are prolific, we don't easily dare to shake off our realism. Perhaps we want to keep our feet firmly on the ground..."

Perhaps there is a literary space beyond 1974 which sets aside the historical and social strings that spark inspiration, in this case, through the written word. But that space has to be filled with authors who explore their means of expression without "holding back" and readers who are more exposed to the literary space itself, never forgetting that reading happens both in the physical and virtual worlds.