

**Explorations in World
Literature, from Ancient
to Contemporary**

**Edited by
George Poulos & Stavroula Varella**

**Athens Institute for Education and Research
2013**

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List of Contributors

- Shahrameh Afrougheh**, *Assistant Professor, Boroujerd Branch, Islamic Azad University, Iran*
- Saul Andreotti**, *PhD Student, University of Essex, UK*
- Fateme Azizmohammadi**, *Professor, Arak Branch, Islamic Azad University, Iran*
- Narges Bagheri**, *Assistant Professor, Vali-e-Asr University, Iran*
- Lea Baratz**, *Chair, Department of Literature, Achva-College of Education, Israel*
- Meenu Bhatnagar**, *Assistant Professor, Jawaharlal Nehru University, India*
- Catalina Botez**, *PhD Student, University of Constance, Germany*
- Nicoleta Călina**, *Lecturer, University of Craiova, Romania*
- Yildiray Çevik**, *Assistant Professor, International Balkan University, FYROM*
- Kaustubh Kumar Deka**, *PhD Scholar, Jawaharlal Nehru University, India*
- Dr. Sanaz Fotouhi**, *University of New South Wales, Australia*
- Ahmet Gögercin**, *Assistant Professor, Selçuk University, Turkey*
- Shahrooz Hamidi**, *M.A. Student in Psychology, Payame Noor University, Iran*
- Karabi Deka Hazarika**, *Professor, Dibrugarh University, India*
- Li Fu**, *Dean, Foreign Language School, Harbin Institute of Technology, PR China*
- Sandra S. Hughes**, *Associate Professor, Western Kentucky University, USA*
- Kathleen A. Kelly**, *Professor, Babson College, USA*
- Shahram Kiaei**, *Faculty Member, Department of English, Qom Branch, Islamic Azad University, Iran*
- Sae Kitamura**, *PhD Student, King's College London, UK*
- Xue Li**, *Associate Professor, Harbin Institute of Technology, PR China*
- Nasser Mahmoudi**, *Professor, Islamic Azad University, Iran*
- Javier Verdejo Manchado**, *PhD Student, University of Oviedo, Spain*
- Aurelija Mykolaitytė**, *Lecturer, Kaunas Vytautas Magnus University, Lithuania*
- Cheng Teik Ong**, *Lecturer, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore*
- Hiteshkumar Parmar**, *Associate Professor, P.D. Malaviya College of Commerce, India*
- Efpraxia Pollatou**, *PhD in Social Anthropology, Independent Scholar*
- Elena Popovska**, *Assistant Professor, University of Graz, Austria*
- George Poulos**, *Vice-President of Research, ATINER & Emeritus Professor, University of South Africa, South Africa*
- Roni Reingold**, *Chair, Department of Education, Achva-College of Education, Israel*
- Georgios Tsarsitalidis**, *MA Student, Uppsala University, Sweden*
- Ipek Uygur**, *Instructor & PhD Student, Adnan Menderes University, Turkey & Porto University, Portugal*
- Stavroula Varella**, *Academic Member, ATINER & Senior Lecturer, University of Chichester, UK*
- Saeed Yazdani**, *Department of English, Bushehr Branch, Islamic Azad University, Bushehr, Iran*
- Dennis Yeo**, *Teaching Fellow, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore*

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Explorations in World Literature, from Ancient to Contemporary: An Introduction

*George Poulos, ATINER & University of South Africa, South Africa
Stavroula Varella, University of Chichester, UK*

Attending ATINER's philological conferences every summer has always been a great learning (as well as social) experience. The variety of papers is huge, as is the origin of presenters and attendees. Editing this volume of twenty-six selected papers, however, was no easy task. The papers feature literature from ancient to contemporary, and from East to West. There are papers on poetry, drama and fiction, celebrating the world's most creative minds. There are also papers that feature less known forms of creativity. Reviewing the papers we got to learn more about ancient Greek myth and drama, the canon of English literature including Shakespeare and Jane Austin, great European authors like Kafka, and lesser known writers from Eastern Europe, the Middle East and Asia. We learned more about Russian film, Malaysian poetry, and Indian literature. We discovered a fascinating way of involving the audience as currently practiced in Cephalonia, and the dialogues composed twenty-five centuries earlier on nearby Sicily.

Despite this huge variety in featured texts, there is a great deal of commonality in topics and themes. Universal issues like migration, trauma and loss, diaspora, memory, and national identity, feminism, class and social transformation, love, emotional life and dehumanisation reccur in these studies. Writers from around the globe have illustrated such great topics in their work, and scholars everywhere have recognised the universality of literature. Beyond cultural borders and restrictions based on genre, human creativity will draw, after all, on what matters most for human life.

The papers presented in this volume are classified in a rather conventional manner, to include the main genres of poetry, drama and prose. In Section 1, Poetry, Calina focuses on the religious poems of Giovanni Papini. Baratz and Reingold examine poetry by Israeli-Palestinian women. Ong, finally, applies a critical discourse approach to Rajendra's work. Section 2, Drama, includes a comparative study of Sophocles and Shakespeare by Parmar. Shakespearean drama is also examined in two other papers, by Kitamura and Uygur respectively. Kelly, lastly, moves us forward to the 19th century with a play by

Strindberg. Section 3, Prose Fiction, begins with a paper on Jane Austen by Cevik. Hughes examines the short stories of Nathaniel Hawthorne, while Yazdani and Mahmoudi, Azizmohammadi and Afrougheh offer two papers on Kafka's works. Gogercin contributes a study of Marguerite Duras and Kiaei of Doris Lessing. Andreetti compares the work of Attali and Ende, while Botez focuses on a novel by Sebald. Mykolaityte tells us how contemporary Greek literature is received in Lithuania. Bagheri and Hamidi examine the work of Iranian women writers, while Fotouhi focuses on Iranian writers in diaspora. Hazarika and Deha take us even further afield with a study on Assam literature. Tsarsitalidis brings together work by McCullers, Medoff and Boyle. Li and Fu, finally, study David Lodge's style. Section 4, Film, includes papers on Bosnian and Serbian film (as well as literature) by Popovska, and Russian film by Bhatnagar. Nolan's Batman films, finally, are the focus of Yeo's paper. Section 5, Other Creative Texts, includes studies that are no less interesting, but whose subject matter falls outside conventional genre descriptions: Manchado writes about Sophron of Syracuse, whose prose dialogues are often regarded as poetry, while Pollatou introduces us to teasing events on an Ionian island.

This is indeed a diverse selection of papers, which we hope readers will find stimulating and thought provoking. Our special thanks go to the contributors to this volume, not only for reviewing and submitting their articles, but also for their lively presentations and the debates they triggered during ATINER's Third and Fourth International Literature, Languages and Linguistics Conferences. None of that would have been possible, of course, without the Institute's energy and spirit, so thank you, too, to ATINER's director and administration staff.