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Tracing heterotopias: writing women educators in Greece

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ABSTRACT *Over the last fifteen years, feminist theorists have sought to redefine female subjectivity. Amongst a wide range of critical notions of the female self, this paper focuses on what Foucault has defined as heterotopias, 'different places' which disrupt the dominance of the one single 'real' social place, offering shelter to subjects in crisis. I will argue that this Foucauldian notion is a useful tool for the exploration of the multifarious ways that some women educators attempted to define and describe themselves at the turn of the 19th century in Greece, particularly focusing on the writings of Alexandra Papadopoulou.*

Working with *heterotopias*

In this paper I am tracing *heterotopias* in the auto/biographical [1] writings of Alexandra Papadopoulou (1867-1906), a Greek woman teacher and novelist who lived at the turn of the 19th century. I will argue that *heterotopias* is a useful Foucauldian theoretical tool, which helps the analysis of a complex store of narratives that Alexandra relied on, in order to make sense of herself and hold on during acute existential crises. I will further suggest that as an analytical trail, *heterotopias* can thus be inscribed in the cartography of contemporary feminist research and theorisation of female subjectivity as a multiple collective entity in the process of becoming [2].

Using Foucauldian notions in feminist research is a theoretical encounter full of tensions. Indeed there is today a rich body of literature revolving around the danger encounters of feminist theories with foucauldian analytics [3]. Feminist theorists have critically problematized Foucault's work as unconcerned with gender issues. In theorising gender as a set of technologies Teresa de Lauretis (1987) has drawn on Foucault's conceptualisation of sex as a technology, but has criticised his lack of interest in the different implications such a technology can have on male and female subjects. Judith Butler has stressed Foucault's ambiguities with regard to the precise character of the 'regulatory practices' that produce the category of sex (1990:128-134). Foucault's view of the body has also come under criticism. Butler has seen contradictions in Foucault's conceptualisation of the body and the role of history in connection with the body. Sawicki (1991) and McNay (1992) have pointed to the difficulties arising from Foucault's lack of any sort of normativity and his insistent refusal of any commitment to certain principles, truth claims and value judgements. Jane Flax (1990) has criticised Foucault's persistent refusal to consider the implications of gender relations in the deployment of his genealogies as well as his theorisations of the aestheticised selves. Foucault's analysis of power has been criticised as creating difficulties in the development of an adequate theory of women's resistance to power (Ramazanoglou, 1993). However, while criticising the work of French post-modern philosophers mainly on the grounds of their

silence with regard to the feminine specificity, Braidotti suggests that ‘the theoretical programmes suggested by Foucault and Deleuze respectively are, in contemporary philosophy, the least harmful to women’ (1993:124). As already restated, in this paper the notion of *heterotopias* is taken as an analytical trail, which should not be restricted within any absolute or closed theoretical or methodological framework. Such an approach seems to come closer to what Foucault has suggested about his work:

Still I could claim that after all, these were only trails to be followed, it mattered little where they led; indeed it was important that they did not have a predetermined starting point and destination. They were merely lines laid down for you to pursue or to divert elsewhere for me to extend upon or redesign as the case might be. They are in the final analysis, just fragments and it is up to you or me to see what we can make of them. (Foucault, 1980, p.79)

But, what are heterotopias about and how does this notion relate to the analysis of female subjectivity? The notion of *heterotopias* emerges as an effect of Foucault’s attendance to the importance of space in his analyses. ‘The great obsession of the nineteenth century’ he writes ‘was history [...] The present age may be the age of space instead’ (Foucault, 1998, p.175). Given his interest in the catalytic role of space for the formation of ways in which knowledge emerges, what mostly intrigues Foucault is not the analysis of the internal space, ‘the space of our first perception, that of our reveries, that of our passion’ (Foucault 1998, p.177), but the outer space, ‘the space in which we are living, by which we are drawn outside ourselves, in which, as a matter of fact, the erosion of our life, our time and our history takes place’ (Foucault 1998, p.177). In deciphering the complicated and often contradictory structure of various relational emplacements that constitute the outer space of our living experiences, Foucault turns his attention to what he calls ‘different spaces’, those emplacements ‘that have the curious property of being connected to all the other emplacements, but in such a way that they suspend, neutralize, or reverse the set of relations that are designated, reflected, or represented by them’ (Foucault 1998, p.177). Foucault designates two types of ‘different spaces’: utopias and *heterotopias*. Utopias are unreal, while heterotopias are actually real places, but ‘utterly different from all the emplacements that they reflect or refer to’ (Foucault 1998, p.178). In being different, *heterotopias* interrogate discourses and practices of the hegemonic space within which they are localizable, they are ‘a kind of contestation both mythical and real of the space in which we live’ (Foucault 1998, p.179). As it has been suggested, Foucault’s interest in real exterior spaces, which are however fused with spatial metaphors, challenge the silence and immobility of the ‘eternal space’ and reveal spaces full of motion and noise, this noise being imagined as the noise of freedom (Dumm, 1996, p.35).

As clearly pointed out by Foucault, *heterotopias* are not about internal, intimate spaces, but about what is out there, the space outside [du dehors]. The question therefore comes, how are these ‘exterior’ spaces related to the construction of subjectivities? *Heterotopias* are to be found in the outer space, but although outside ourselves, they are most forcefully intervening in what is happening inside us, they are planes within the space, which ‘eats and scrapes away at us’ (Foucault 1998, p.178). As has been widely argued, the formation of subjectivities does not take place in a spatial void [4]; on the contrary, the multifarious structuring of space is fundamental in the ways our subjectivities are constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed. It is this critically important spatial dimension in the moulding of subjectivities that the analysis of *heterotopias* highlights.

Foucault (1998) has elaborated a detailed description of various types of *heterotopias* and has meticulously pointed out to their heterogeneous elements and diverse functions. What emerges as particularly important for the analysis of this paper, however, is what Foucault has described as *crisis heterotopias*, privileged, or sacred or forbidden places reserved for individuals who are in a state of crisis with respect to society and the human milieu in which they live' (Foucault 1998, p.179). What is interesting about these *crisis heterotopias*, is that they have actually been set up to shelter subjects in crisis. The private secondary school in the nineteenth century is an example Foucault uses to illustrate a *crisis heterotopia*, creating 'another space' outside the family for male sexuality to be enacted (Foucault 1998, p.180). In the same vein, the honeymoon trip in the twentieth century is another example of a *crisis heterotopia*, an unfamiliar space, where 'girl's deflowering should take place' (Foucault 1998, p.180). These heterotopias have been established by social practices to accommodate subjects in transition. I have discussed elsewhere how women's colleges at the turn of the nineteenth century in the UK can be theorised as *heterotopias*, that gave refuge to women in crisis and offered them possibilities to transgress, or just play away with their gendered roles (Tamboukou, 2000). The heterotopias I want to talk about in this paper, however, are of a different form. They have not been set up previously and they are not always real. They are actually created by the subject herself, to shelter her in difficult times and support her overcome her existential crises. They are real, in the sense that they are to be found in existing geographical and social spaces, but their function as 'different' can also be imaginary and/or fictional as well as real. It is to these self-created and sometimes fictional *heterotopias* that this paper now turns.

Fictional *heterotopias*

Tracing *heterotopias* in auto/biographical texts of Greek women educators at the turn of the century has proved to be a very difficult, if not impossible endeavour, simply because there were no auto/biographical texts to be traced in the first place. Greek women did not use to write very much, but even when they did, they did not touch their personal sphere. Angelica Psara (1979, 1999a, 1999b) has presented the difficulties Greek writing women had to face at the turn of the century. When Eugene Zografou confessed that 'a woman today cannot write freely about what she feels or understands (cited in Psara, 1999b, p.419), it is not so difficult to imagine why autobiography is a genre, which attracted scarcely any Greek women. Even when some autobiographical texts are traced, they remain unpublished and practically non-accessible in private collections [5], or they are published after strict censorship. However, Carolyn Heilburn has noted that a woman's life may be told by the woman herself, in what 'she chooses to call an autobiography' or 'in what she chooses to call fiction' (1989, p.11). There have been indeed influential feminist analyses of how the female self constitutes herself, through fictional writing and of how literature can open windows to the author's life, albeit not unproblematically [6]. Following this trail, I have therefore attempted to trace personal 'moments of being' in fiction, focusing in particular on literary writings of Alexandra Papadopoulou, a Greek woman teacher and novelist. In this paper, Alexandra's fiction is read in parallel with some of her letters. In this way 'reality' is somehow framing fiction, offering some glimpses on what was like being an educated working woman and novelist in a fin-de-siècle Greek landscape.

This paper draws on genealogical research which is still in progress, and therefore the role of the fragmented auto/biographical texts on which I draw here, is both illustrative and

is taken as raw material for working upon and thinking about *heterotopias*. The analysis of the paper presents one way of thinking about these stories. I am not suggesting a perfect 'fit' at each point in the discussion between the stories and the concept in play. Although I am focussing on texts of Alexandra Papadopoulou [7], I do not intend to paint her portrait. I want to try and move beyond the impulse to represent her actuality. Rather, I am reading these auto/biographical fragments as 'tellers of experience', whose telling is 'constrained, partial and determined' (Britzman, 1995, p.232), but prefigurative of discourses and histories. I will argue that they are texts, which can open up paths for the exploration of *heterotopias* in the theorization of female subjectivity.

Posing genealogical questions

In his genealogies of the subject [8], Foucault had put forward a crucial question: 'I asked myself: How had the subject been compelled to decipher himself in regard to what was forbidden?' (Foucault, 1988, p.17). I have used this Foucauldian question as a bridge to my own project. In playing with Foucault's question, I have thus asked: How had the female subject been compelled to decipher herself in regard to what was forbidden? How did she play the games of truth? How did she move in the matrix of power relations and managed to construct herself?

My particular choice of education as the context of my inquiries relates to my own autobiography, my lived experiences as a woman teacher, but it certainly goes beyond the limits of the personal. I have seen education as an arena of antagonistic discourses, a site of power from which women have been traditionally excluded. A whole web of discourses, special knowledges, analyses, legal and institutional arrangements, have settled upon this historical exclusion. Education, however, has been also the locus where counter-discourses and counter-practices emerged, to oppose the truth regimes and social structures that had legitimated and perpetuated women's exclusion.

Following Foucauldian lines, my analysis is set in a specific historical and cultural context; otherwise it would slip in dangerous totalisations. The turn of the 19th century is a critical period that signalled major changes in the education of women not only in Greece, but also in Europe, America and Australia. There is today a growing body of work looking into the feminist movement and women's education in Greece at the turn of the century. Eleni Fournaraki (1987) refers in particular to the emergence of writing women educators, who attempted to play an important role in the public spheres of their society. Alexandra Papadopoulou was one of these women. Her writings reflect ideas, thoughts and lived experiences of a woman who was a teacher and novelist. Alexandra was not exceptional. In Greece as in other countries women would use the teaching profession as a stepping-stone to become independent, go out in the world and take up other careers.

Living in uncertainty

In focusing on the texts of Alexandra Papadopoulou I will argue that her fiction as well as her letter-writing can reveal certain ruptures, uncertainties, and contradictions, which are interwoven in the construction of herself, in a critical period of her life, to which I will refer later. I will therefore suggest that the case of Alexandra Papadopoulou constitutes a research

paradigm in the exploration of *crisis heterotopias* in the life and work of a Greek women educator at the turn of the century.

Alexandra Papadopoulou was born in Constantinople [9], in 1867. She became a teacher and worked either as a governess or at various high schools for girls till the end of her life. Her father died when she was very young, and she took over the responsibility to look after her mother and her younger brother. She began writing very early in her career and she published in many journals and newspapers in Athens, Constantinople and Voukouresti. She died in 1906 at the age of 36 in Thessaloniki, Greece.

Clearly, her life patterns were diverting from the domestic stereotypes and discourses of her era. Alexandra was an educated working young woman. Of course her case was not exceptional. As it has been commented, at the end of the nineteenth century, female education was advanced both in Greece and in the Greek communities of the Ottoman Empire (Ziogou-Karastergiou, 1986). From 1861 the number of women teachers was growing so rapidly, that soon there were problems of unemployment amongst them. After having finished their teacher training, many of those young women were look for a teaching post, all over Greece, but also in the affluent Greek communities of the Diaspora [10]. They would work as teachers for a short period of their life, often preceding their marriage. Alexandra, however, had ‘other plans’. She wrote novels, edited literary journals and travelled; she was dreaming of a better future, for which she wanted to work; Her creativity soon surpassed the geographical limits of Constantinople and made her well known in the literary circles of the Athenian society, the capital city of the newly established Greek state. Throughout her life, she was in constant correspondence, discussion and collaboration with already established novelists in Athens and elsewhere in the Greek communities of the Diaspora. This is how, Kalliroi Parren (1859-1940), an eminent Greek feminist [11] was writing Alexandra’s obituary, in 1906: ‘I first met her in Constantinople. We were both in the beginning of our career [...] She was active, clever and had daring ideas [...] she had certain hopes, which, alas, were never fulfilled!’ (Papadopoulou, 1987, p.252). Beyond her dreams there remained little space for Alexandra in which to perform her role as ‘an ordinary woman’. Being therefore, an ‘odd woman’ (Miller, 1990), she had to place herself elsewhere, in ‘different spaces’; she was thus in the process of creating *heterotopias* through writing in the gendered spaces of her social milieu. Not being married herself, she would often point to the economic and social interests underlying marital choices. In criticising the hypocrisy of human relations within the institutions of marriage and family she was often ironic, as in the following extract, a humorous depiction of the husband-seeking performance:

[...] In case you see that he is the poetic kind of character [...] if you are adept, you will be moved, if you are clever, you will cry [...] you can talk about nature [...] don’t show that you are bored [...] you have to show interest [...] if you manage to blush often it will be wonderful, but believe me, it is not easy [...] you have to talk with frequent breaks and raise your eyes constantly [...] sometimes you can express your disgust about human malignancy [...] if your *performance is artful*, you have won. And of course art is more moving than reality [...] you have to study men’s attitudes beforehand [...] when you smile you should be careful [...] appearance is a stumbling point for every beauty [...] a newly-married woman had the posture of the spoilt child, a posture, which all beautiful and beloved women adopt, and which I strongly recommend [...] when his gaze rested upon me [...] I lowered my eyes [...] and blushed [...] I was playing the role of the savage and would stay in my room for days [...] whenever Nicholas said

something eccentric, my mother smiled [...] Oh, my God, Evlalia would agree on that [...] now, I have written all these for you to try and benefit from my teaching, if however, you find them inappropriate and humiliating, then it's your fault [...] you have to deceive to be happy [...] (Papadopoulou, 1987 [1894], pp. 56-66)

Her writing violates here the sacred space of marriage: the advice of husband seeking relies on the ways in which the future wife will manage to discipline her body and respond to the requirements of her role. But of course a successful performance is just a part of the game; in the trade of marriage [12], the dowry is the most important part of the transaction. Gregorios Xenopoulos (1867-1951), was a well-known Greek author from Athens, with whom Alexandra exchanged letters over a long period. As he admits in his autobiography written in 1938, a romantic love relationship developed through their letters [13], which was abruptly stopped by him when Alexandra first asked him to meet her. He admits being terrified by the idea of family commitments, given the fact that Alexandra had no dowry to support their marriage. Love, however, was the only reason for Alexandra to choose marriage. As I have noted elsewhere, the theme of romantic love seems to be extremely important, almost the only reason Victorian intellectual women at the turn of the nineteenth century would find strong enough to consider marriage (Tamboukou, 2002). 'Marriage in love' is here constituted as a *heterotopia* within the institution of marriage. It is the only space in which Alexandra can see herself sheltered as a woman. In the absence of love, marriage is 'slavery to me, a kind of compulsory relationship, where each partner has to bear for life the drawbacks -either big or small- of the other and -without even ask them- to give birth to creatures which are destined to become unhappy' (Papadopoulou, 1980, p.19). It is here interesting to note, that in the above extract from her novel 'Aunt Eftihia', Alexandra criticises through fiction not only the conventional marital life, but motherhood as well; she does not only violate the sacred space of marriage, she also interrogates motherhood. This desecration of the family space however, is only temporary: in the plot of the novel, 'Aunt Eftihia' becomes a model mother when she is called to bring up the children of her dead sister. Although being a mother outside marriage can be seen as a heterotopic space in motherhood, what we also have here is the normalisation of the spinster within the institution of the family. The *heterotopia* of being a mother outside marriage is juxtaposed to the *heterotopia* of being 'a childless spinster'. In other novels, there are various normalisation procedures for the 'spinsters' who often take over family obligations after the usually premature death of the father. In addition, the obligation to bear for life the drawbacks of the partner is annihilated by the magic power of love: 'I thought that love is a kind of sanctuary' she writes in her novel 'Family obligations' (Papadopoulou, 1980, p.120). Alexandra criticises the gendered structure of power relations within marriage, creating various *heterotopias* within it, but even in the poetic license of her fiction, marriage as a social institution, remains sacred and untouched.

Crisis *heterotopias*

To return, however, to the 'real Alexandra', her letters which are read in this paper, were written in a critical stage of her life, when she had taken the decision to leave Constantinople and look for a teaching post in Voukouresti. Her move to Voukouresti was related to an outcry against her in August 1899, when she published a short story in the commonly

spoken Greek. This publication aroused the language problem in Constantinople [14]. Alexandra was accused of introducing 'vulgar language' and this incident activated a whole debate around the language problem in the Greek community of Constantinople. This time, it was not her personal choices, but literary creation, her intellectual work that opened up *heterotopias*, challenging cultural edifices of her society, violating the sacred temple of language. As Foucault has noted '*heterotopias* are disturbing, probably because they secretly undermine language [...], they dissolve our myths' (1992, p.xviii). This 'profane' act of using 'vulgar language' had a direct impact upon a crucially important space of the public arena, the space of education, where Alexandra was active. As a result of this agitation, Alexandra could no longer teach at any of the educational institutions of Constantinople. The accusation that she had used the commonly spoken Greek language, which was regarded as 'inappropriate' or even 'vulgar', marginalised her professionally and motivated her to leave. On August 20th 1899, she was writing to family friends: 'Oh, my God, how much I have detested those days, with this war raging against me [...] I am now pushed to get away, far away' (Papakostas, 1980, p.248). Thus, Alexandra chose to leave at the peak of the conflict. She did not give in, but she displaced herself, opening up this time 'real' rather than fictional *heterotopias*, at literally the frontiers of her geographical and social field. As Dumm comments, 'the *heterotopia*, as a site of juxtaposition in which there is contestation and struggle, exists in contrast to the empty site, the evacuated space that maintains its neutrality by evading opportunities of conflict' (1996, p.42). Distancing herself from familiar places was perhaps a way for Alexandra to search for freedom, since '*heterotopias* emphasize freedom's connection to imaginary possibilities as much as to movement through space' (Dumm, 1996, p. 42). Alexandra's getaway from her home city and her family, her decision to distance herself and travel was once again shaking social conventions and norms of her culture. Similarly in her fiction, her heroine Elisa is accused of 'arrogance' because she always dreams of travelling [15]. Moving, travelling, crossing borders, are themes which cut across Alexandra's own life as well as the textual lives of her fiction since in Foucault's analyses 'the location of freedom is an experience born in the margins of order' (Dumm, 1996, p.43).

As already noted above, there is today a growing body of research and theory addressing the crucial role of space in structuring gendered power relations. The notion of place has been related to the imposition of limits and the enclosure of subjects who share common characteristics and properties in opposition to 'the other' who are outside the established boundaries [16]. In her short stories, Alexandra often refers to the problems of 'foreigners', whatever their gender or class might be [17]. In certain short stories, spatial immobility and eternal order mirrors women's dead-end lives.

When however, we reached that big and silent house, I felt my heart heavy and at that moment I wanted to leave. However, Sofia dragged me and I passed all those wide, but dark corridors almost automatically. For a moment I thought that I was the sleeping beauty and I suddenly woke up and found myself surrounded by the very same objects and I felt that I had only slept for a night. Everything was in the same position as they had been eleven years ago. The curtains were arranged in the same way, the sofa was the same and the women's seating positions were the same: the old aunt was sitting on the right side of the sofa, Mrs Domna on the left and all the rest in the same positions I could remember them as a five-years-old child. (Papadopoulou, 1987 [1892], p.199)

What is mostly striking in the above extract is the big, dark, silent house enclosing like an Egyptian tomb, three generations of women. Nothing has changed in this house. The female subjects, like the objects have been petrified in the same positions for years. Encasement, immobility and restriction paint the image of the homebound life; they become universally recognisable signifiers of the ultimate female destiny. Spatiality is a theme frequently traced in Alexandra's writings. As opposed to the homebound life, however, getting away is a practice related to an on-going search of herself. As demonstrated above, Alexandra's preoccupation with leaving home is reflected both in her fiction and her 'real life'. Her tendency to leave home and seek herself elsewhere is certainly shaking the patriarchal structures of her society, where home is regarded as the woman's place par excellence. Either as a result of choice, or coercion, escape permits Alexandra to distance herself from a battlefield that could be detrimental for her and offers her space and time to reflect upon herself and the world around her. In an on-going attempt to compromise conflicts both inner and outer, escape opens up existential *heterotopias*, creating moments for reflection, as well as for change. The *heterotopias* Alexandra opens up for herself rely on the structures of her society: the opening up of the teaching profession for women as well as the existence of rich families in the affluent Greek communities of the Diaspora, who can afford personal tutors for their children to be instructed in the Greek language and culture. However, the trajectory of Alexandra's life reveals inherent contradictions and paradoxical situations. Her freedom to move around, have a career and be independent interrogates the very same structures that have created the conditions of her freedom. There are always acute tensions between Alexandra and her social milieu, tensions that cut across her life and are resolved in many different and not rarely contradictory ways. As we have already seen, these paradoxes lie at the very heart of the notion of *heterotopias*, defined as '*real places, actual places, places that are designed into the very institutions of society*, which are sorts of actually realized utopias in which the real emplacements, all the other real emplacements that can be found within the culture are, *at the same time, represented, contested, and reversed*' (Foucault, 1998, 178, my emphasis).

Heterotopias of Self Writing

In displacing herself, Alexandra did not however want to lose contact with familiar spaces. Letter writing became a significant medium for such links to be sustained. It also became an important practice of Alexandra's *technologies of [her] self*, those set of practices that in Foucault's analyses 'permit individuals to effect, ... a certain number of operations on their own bodies, and souls, thoughts and ways of being so as to transform themselves, in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection or immortality' (Foucault, 1988, p.18). Thus, Alexandra kept a regular correspondence with Anastasia and Elpiniki Stamouli, two of her beloved students from Silivria of Eastern Thraki, where she had taught for about two years at the Greek community girls' college [18]. Her letters give outlet to suppressed feelings, existential worries and disillusion, but they also shape strong wishes for new experiences: '16/9/1899: I am leaving on Wednesday for the Austrian frontiers, near Carpathia, where I will meet my students. They have a German governess and I plan to study German as well. I am well. I am going to read Taine's Phil(osophie) de l' art (Papakostas, 1980, p.250). At this point, Alexandra's escape has opened up *educational heterotopias*. Despite her almost compulsory get away, she did not give up. Studying hard to enhance her knowledge was a way to continue holding on and she was determined to exploit every opportunity she could have: the German governess to teach her German, her retreat to

the estate to study philosophy. She was in a continuous process of acting upon herself, she wanted to change, and in a Deleuzian sense, 'unfold herself', 'become other' (Deleuze, 1993).

Reading sustains self-practices, notes Foucault. Reading is also closely related to writing, it is a way of putting together critical thoughts (Foucault, 1988). When Alexandra was referring to her readings in her letters, she did not only want to exchange ideas about literature, she was also attempting to reflect upon herself and her deeds: '9/1899: I read Taine. I recommend it to dear Soterios. Taine suggests that the artist is influenced by his surroundings' (Papakostas, 1980, p.251). In writing letters to her friends, Alexandra would also refer to her writing activities and speak out her inner thoughts. In this context, the self-reflection enacted by letter writing would inevitably raise doubts and questions about her self and her literary creations:

11/1901: I am writing a short novel. Its title is 'From our sins'. I am also writing a play for the Royal Theatre, 'Aspasia', but I think that I am going to destroy it. I am scared by the idea of play writing and I think that if theatre is people's school, then perhaps Aspasia is not such a good teacher figure, and perhaps Alexandra is not a very good performer. (Papakostas, 1980, p.271)

However, reading and writing were not the only themes of her letters. Her letters were also a means to represent herself in her daily routine, but also in exceptional moments. As Foucault notes, writing becomes a way to expose oneself to the gaze of the other (Foucault, 1997, p.216):

6/9/1899: The journey was fantastic. I remember I used to write about the roughness of Bosphorus. But now, the sea was so calm and blue. I saw the sun setting in the sea, there was nothing, but the sea. A big wet circle and the sun the sun kept changing shapes through the golden clouds.(Papakostas, 1980, p.249)

Alexandra writes here about her sea-passage: her voyage has constructed a *heterotopia* for reflection and enjoyment. While flying away from the constraints of her lived experiences, the boat becomes a heterotopic plane to shelter and comfort her. Memories of 'the roughness of Bosphorus', representing perhaps the roughness of her own life, are transformed into havens, where the blue of the sea merges with the gold of the sun. The boat, as it has been suggested, 'is the *heterotopia* par excellence, a floating space that connects all other heterotopias' (Dumm, 1996, p.41). Here, her correspondence becomes a route connecting her experiences in the transitional space of the *heterotopias* she creates, with the people she loves in the places she has left behind. Thus, letter writing not only sustains links and creates high levels of communication, but it also becomes an important technology of the female social self. It seems that the writer of the letters not only represents, but also constructs herself through her advice and ideas that are transferred to the recipients of her letters:

9/1899: How is it possible that the human spirit can move through mountains and seas, to meet beloved persons? Distance can become insignificant. Dear Anastasia you should not feel bored. I don't want you to feel bored when you are surrounded and protected by the people you love and for whom you care so much. Every time you fell miserable think of all of us, who are estranged and alone. How are we supposed to feel? (Papakostas, 1980, p.253-54)

Alexandra paints here the image of being ‘surrounded and protected by the people you love’ as the ideal of happiness. However this idealised ‘happiness’ is strikingly juxtaposed by the ways, Alexandra herself, has chosen to live, as they are depicted in the following extract from a letter (12/1902) to her former student, Elpiniki, where she writes about new professional engagements and plans for further travelling:

Dear Elpiniki,

I am leaving for Vienna, shortly and from there to Melenikon, via Budapest, where I am sent as an educational supervisor and after that, if everything goes fine I will return by train. I wrote a short story, which is going to be translated in German and in Russian, and they say it is my masterpiece. It is called ‘Faith, hope and love’. (Papakostas, 1980, p.272)

According to Foucault, the letter somebody writes acts upon the author in the same way that it acts upon the recipient (1997, p. 214). The image that Alexandra is projecting about herself acts as a mirror, reflecting back to her, the image of the strong determined woman, she needs to identify with: ‘12/1902: Do you remember me sometimes, when I was telling you that I can move the world? This was how strongly I felt and this is how strongly I feel right now!’ (Papakostas, 1980, p.273)

Behind the strong image of the front page, however, there is always the dark side of the moon, the flip side of the self. Alexandra often feels lonely and disappointed and these feelings of isolation and fear are also depicted in her letters: ‘I have abandoned everything and I can only communicate through letter-writing’ (Papakostas, 1980, p.260). As a matter of fact Alexandra was spending most of her time secluded in the estate mansion, outside Voukouresti, where she worked as a governess. However, she experienced solitude as a way to know herself better and become stronger. ‘... I am not afraid of solitude anymore. I get to know myself better, I don’t have to put on a mask of indifference and what is more important, I am my own master’ (Papakostas, 1980, p.267). In her fictional writings, she considers the dilemma women face in choosing between the spirituality of a solitary life and the risks and dangers of a mundane, socialising life. The theme of silence is elaborated in her novels, as a way of coping, a conscious survival strategy. Her fictional female characters often remain silent, since if they don’t, they know they will be punished, like Kassiani, a Byzantine princess who is obliged to spend her life in a monastery because she has answered back her royal suitor [19]. In real life terms, we have already seen that Alexandra herself was penalised for taking the initiative to suggest a meeting with the well-known Greek novelist, Gregorios Xenopoulos, with whom she was exchanging romantic letters over a period of time. ‘I felt upset, I somehow thought I had been insulted and I sent her an angry response. She never wrote me again. I know through friends that this letter of mine almost destroyed her’ Xenopoulos was writing in his autobiography (1938/39), admitting at the same time -as we have seen- that he had rejected her partly because she was poor, she had no dowry [20].

The rule of silence is inscribed in the very discourses that framed Alexandra’s education. Her teacher, Sappho Leontias (1832-1890), was a poet, a journalist and gave public lectures propagating her ideas about equal education between girls and boys with no differentiation in the curricula [21]. She was a woman who spoke and wrote widely, actively intervening in the public sphere. In her poetry, however, she celebrated women’s silence: ‘your heart can achieve anything as long as you remain silent’ (Leontias, 1891). This view about silence may seem to be in contradiction with her views about equal opportunities for women in

education. However this attitude should be inscribed in the discourses about equality and difference. Leontias adopted an essentialist view with reference to sexual differences [22], and silence was inscribed in these essentialist differences.

However, the dark side of the moon does not wholly overshadow Alexandra's life. There were disillusionments and rough times, but Alexandra had not given up hope; she waited for a new dawn, she wanted to be part of the progress of her era, and what is more, she wanted to do something about it. This is what she was writing in a letter, a short while before the turn of the nineteenth century (22/12/1899): 'In a few days the previous century is leaving and a new era is coming. Since we have to progress on a daily basis, imagine how much more progress, we have to present in this new century, so that they don't blame us for having stayed behind' (Papakostas, 1980, p.257). It is indeed interesting, how these optimistic feelings about progress in the new century are almost simultaneously interwoven with despair about the present conditions of her life: in writing to her student Anastasia in 1900, about her rough experiences as a governess in Voukouresti, she admitted at the same time, her attempts to hide these difficulties and draw on her literature creation to survive and keep trying:

In reading my letters you must have understood how deeply I have been suffering, despite my efforts to keep it under control. It's not an imaginary agony, and it's not at all easy to live as a foreigner. While I am writing this to you, I beg you not to show this letter to anybody. I was wrong. This position was not suitable for me. And now, my life is hell and I live in complete misery and despair. Perhaps you thought I was exaggerating when I was writing you about my successes, but that was my only consolation. The idea that I suffer while I serve my country and that my work is influential has kept me alive. I wanted to tear up this letter and that's why it is so wretched. (Papakostas, 1980, p.259)

Her attempt to reveal deeper concerns by writing to her beloved student was not easy. The image she had created for herself was torturing her. It was not easy to admit that her decision to leave her family, something that was unusual and unacceptable for a young woman of her era, had already led her to new impasses. She was struggling with herself, she had attempted to destroy the letter, but she had finally sent it. Seeking a different life is not an easy thing to do. However, despite her difficulties, her wish to displace herself would stay firm, even when this decision kept her away from her sick mother, because as she wrote in 1900, 'I left with the idea that I had to leave' (Papakostas, 1980, p.259). Here the idea proves to be stronger than the lived reality. Even when her conscience was deeply troubling her, Alexandra went on struggling with her contradictions and juxtapositions of her different selves. 'Now, living abroad, seems even bitter, because my mother is very ill ... but keep on, keep on ... I can listen to my destiny and I have to obey' (Papakostas, 1980, p.267). In the end of the same year (1900) and while things have been running, Alexandra would still feel guilty and distressed about her mother's death: '... I see this year going away and I feel that it laughs at me while carrying my mother's corpse. Who can persuade me that I did not play my part in this death?' (Papakostas, 1980, p.267).

Only paradoxes to offer [23]

As already demonstrated, Alexandra's activities were not restricted to literary creation. While working as a governess, travelling, studying and writing, she met the editor of a Greek newspaper and offered voluntary work by writing patriotic articles; she was also teaching at the Greek community schools, following various activities to heighten the morale of the Greek Diaspora [24]. As she was stating in the above extract of her 'blue' letter (1900), 'the idea that I suffer while I serve my country and that my work is influential has kept me alive' (Papakostas, 1980, p.267). Alexandra's idea of serving her country is here inscribed in the nationalist discourses of her era. We should bear in mind that she lived at the turn of the nineteenth century, in a period when the Greeks attempt to hegemonise the Orthodox communities of the Ottoman Empire. According to Kanner, the Greek leading caste in the Ottoman Empire was trying to establish a position of power among the wider Orthodox populations, by colonising their language and culture, in other words by attaining to their hellenization (Kanner, 2000, p.3). Alexandra's patriotic activities were indeed intense and had many times raised severe criticisms [25]. The high idea of 'serving her country' is also an effect of prevailing discourses rationalizing the necessity of women's education as a means for the well being of the nation. As already mentioned, Alexandra was a student of Sappho Leontias, who had strongly suggested in her journal articles in *Euridice* [26] that the woman is destined to live not for herself, but for the others who constitute society and the nation [27]. Alexandra's dynamic presence and activities can initially be taken as a threat against the nation, since they interrogate the private role of the woman and its significance for the well-being of the family (see Kanner, 2000). However, this 'female selfishness' has the possibility to be transformed into altruism, when it is directed towards the expansion and establishment of the Greek language, 'a mission' which was critically important for the domination of the Greek element in the Orthodox communities of the Ottoman Empire. Alexandra's patriotic activities should therefore be placed and conceptualised within the discursive context of her era. As it has been commented, women's organisations at the turn of the century rationalised their very existence by adopting the nationalist discourses of their era and by identifying their activities with the reform of the Greek family and the Greek nation [28]. Research has shown many instances of women teachers' patriotic activities. As it has been commented (Varikas, 1987, 1993), the need and strong wish of those women to become independent and escape a meaningless and idle life was combined with their patriotic activities, patriotic exaltation on the one hand and attraction for travelling and adventure on the other. Therefore, the enlivenment of the Great Idea, the idea of the expansion of the Greek state and the reappropriation of its past glory, opened women teachers a path for political involvement and was used by them as a vehicle to claim the right of citizenship [29]. In getting away Alexandra was forming *heterotopias*, in the peripheries of the dominant space of the family; this profane attitude however, was counterpoised by her accommodation within the sanctity of the national space. Emerging from her seclusion within the *heterotopias* that she had formed to shelter herself, she was empowered to enter the public sphere and was able to act in extremely risky and ambivalent political territories. *Heterotopias* became the marginalised emplacements wherein the female self was in a continuous process of becoming other.

As already discussed, the gender discourses of the era Alexandra lived, were most of the time contradicting, and juxtaposing with each other, with trails that often lead to their reversal. The active role that the women of the middle classes were called upon to play in maintaining

the integrity of the family and the nation often led them to the public sphere, through the channels of philanthropy, the propagation of the Greek language and the patriotic activities [30]. We therefore see that Alexandra's ideas and modes of life were deployed within the constraints and the paradoxes of her time. In 1887, she was editing 'The ladies' diary', while in 1893, she founded the 'Progressive Ladies' Association in Constantinople, activities that had provoked a whole series of criticisms [31]. It is at the same period however, that she bitterly criticised the current ideas about women's emancipation through her articles and novels [32]. These contradictions were not only torturing her as we have already seen, but had also created a riddle around her. This is what Parren, the well-known feminist pioneer was writing about Alexandra in her diary (n.d, pp.147-148):

Well, this new friend of mine is so smart and so good at analysing women's inner selves and revealing their weaknesses, resulting from their pointless and idle lives and their lack of decent education. At the same time, however, she altogether rejects the idea of the women's question. How can this attitude be possibly explained? On the one hand she recognises the effects of the old system but when the way forward is suggested she protests and repeats the same old stereotypes. And what is even stranger is that her own way of life is so different from her own ideas and conventions: she edits a number of journals, she works as a teacher, she writes and she travels frequently.

Alexandra was therefore a riddle. Her life and work contradicted her ideas about women's social position. She had escaped the conventions of her era: she remained single, she worked, she was financially independent; she travelled and through her writings she was criticising the gender structures of her society. However, she refused to admit that there is a woman's question. Does this make sense? It has been suggested that Alexandra was constrained by the conventions of her society [33]. However she had chosen to be outspoken addressing the language problem. Why should she be constrained with regard to the women's question? Tracing the genealogy of the discourses of women's emancipation in Greece, Angelica Psara (1998a) points out that the notion of emancipation was identified with the demands for political rights and was therefore considered as an open threat for the social order. There were therefore women who thought that the claims of citizenship were extremely premature for their era, and as a consequence they chose to stay away from the discourses of emancipation as well. There is indeed an extremely complicated network of ideas, arguments, attitudes, discourses and practices weaving around the writing women at the turn of the nineteenth century in Greece [34]. To return to the question about whether Alexandra's attitude makes sense, the answer is that her position should be read within the discursive constraints of her era. In distancing herself from the movement for women's emancipation, Alexandra would avoid an open confrontation with the dominant space of her patriarchal society. Instead, she accommodated herself within heterotopic spaces at the peripheries of the single hegemonic space. Education became a locus par excellence for heterotopic spaces to open up and subject positions to be constructed. Through and within education, Alexandra moved beyond the boundaries of the private sphere, she became an independent woman. In entering the public sphere however, she was constrained by the rigid dichotomy of the social and the political. As Michele Riot- Sarcey has pointed out, the notion of the political has historically rested on a constructed distinction between the political domain referring to the representation of the nation and the social domain referring to individual and collective relations (1998, pp.11-16). If we can therefore accept that the

political depends first on the dichotomy between private and public and second on the separation of the social and the political domain, then we can perhaps map Alexandra's movements in the interstices of these dichotomies. Women's questions at the turn of the nineteenth century in Greece were constrained within the social; it was all about better education, work, self-control, morality, responsibility, while citizenship as indicated above, rarely appeared in the agenda (Psara, 1998a). These issues were inscribed in Alexandra's fictional and autobiographical writings and became critical directives in her way of life. It was therefore within the social that Alexandra created *heterotopias*, both real and fictional to shelter herself as 'an odd woman'. As for her involvement in the political, this is where she made strategic choices. The sanctity of national politics allowed her and indeed many of her contemporaries to become political. It was 'in the name of the nation' that Alexandra could find a subject position within the rigidly patriarchal realm of politics. However, this was not a heterotopic position. It was folded within the nationalist discourses and practices of the 'single' hegemonic space, creating paradoxical subject positions for a woman to inhabit: being political in the name of the nation, but not in the name of her gender.

Living in heterotopias, transgressing boundaries

I have argued, that *heterotopias* is a useful tool for the theorisation of female subjectivity, by focusing on a particular 'event' in the construction of the female self in the context of the fin-de-siècle Greece. Alexandra's auto/biographical narratives have been taken as a theoretical or working hypothesis, a basis for analysing the function of *heterotopias* in the making of the self. We have seen that as juxtaposed to *utopias* or unreal places, *heterotopias* contest the real space in which we live. They are juxtaposed to other emplacements to which they are linked and create transitory spaces, especially when people find themselves in conflict with the prevailing social conditions of their era. In this light, I have suggested that *heterotopias* and particularly the type that Foucault has defined as 'crisis heterotopias' can make connections with feminist theorizations of the female subject. Within a wide range of approaches within the feminist forum, I have drawn in particular on Teresa de Lauretis' notion of the 'subject of feminism' (1987:10). Feminist theory, de Lauretis has argued should conceive this subject as multiple, contradicted and heteronomous in relation to the social and cultural conditions that tend to define, control and dominate its very existence. The subject of feminism is thus emerging from the interstices and margins of hegemonic discourses, in what can be represented, but also in what is left without or beyond representation. Intrigued as I have been by this concept of subjects emerging from the margins, I have also wondered about the materiality of their position within particular spaces and places. My argument therefore is that *heterotopias* can function as real emplacements within which unruly subjects coming from the margins can accommodate themselves in between real and fictional positions. Inscribed as they are in micro-political practices at the local level of resistance in subjectivity and self-representation, these unruly subjects need not be constrained by the imperative of 'finding a position' in the social and/or symbolic order. Being open and smooth spaces, *heterotopias* can shelter them as they move along lines of becoming [36].

Seen as a paradigm of an unruly subject coming from the margins and interstices of hegemonic discourses, Alexandra lived within a 'constraining reality', the social boundaries of accepted womanhood. At the same time, however, she began to experience a 'new freedom', the kind of freedom, her involvement in education, her literary creation, her

economic independence and her political involvement could offer her. Many of her contemporaries shared the experience of becoming an emancipated woman. What I think is strikingly interesting with Alexandra however, is that as much as she refused to be ‘a dutiful daughter’ in the realm of the family space, she also refused to become ‘a dutiful teacher’ in the newly opened public spaces of women’s education. In what I have described as a profane way of being, Alexandra rarely wrote about education, or schooling, nor was she actively involved in the rising movement for the education of girls in Greece [37]. Amongst her prolific writings, there is only one novel whose central character is a woman teacher, but this novel refers again to the teachers’ life choices, rather than her work [38]. Thus, Alexandra seems to be moving in extremely difficult realms of representation. It is no wonder that she cannot find a place and indeed has not been given one, in the pantheon of the heroic pioneers of women’s education in Greece, neither has she been recognised and credited as a novelist in the mainstream canon. Alexandra is a grey figure, obscured in the margins of recognised social spaces. She has lived within the limits of her society, but also beyond them, in yet unrecognised and perhaps unrecognisable ‘different social spaces’, Foucault (1988) has described as *heterotopias*. In this light, I have suggested that the writings of Alexandra Papadopoulou, may be seen as revealing spaces of ‘transition and tension’, ‘sites outside society’ bringing together, heterogeneous discourses: equal educational opportunities, women’s emancipation, family values, nationalistic ideologies, literary creation. Seen through the Foucauldian lenses of *heterotopias*, Alexandra’s fictional as well as autobiographical writings depict a range of the multifarious difficulties women would face in navigating rough seas of contradicting discourses and practices. A woman like Alexandra has irrevocably shattered the rules, stereotypes and rhythms of her era. She studied instead of getting ready for marriage; she worked instead of staying at home and looking after her family; she wrote novels instead of promoting women’s education; she was against women’s emancipation at the same time as she was exposed to risky political terrains and antagonistic power relations. She opened up ‘odd paths’ to the public sphere, within which she so often felt extremely lonely. She lived in spaces, either real or fictional, which were neither inside, nor outside recognised social boundaries. They were therefore particularly risky spaces, subject to temporary and changeable rules, which did not derive from central and therefore visible and discernible power centres. In this context Alexandra had the possibility to actively intervene in the construction of her life: she took decisions for herself, she got away, she travelled, she chose her professional posts, she became active when she thought it was necessary, she created fictional spaces in the literary realm, when reality was too sad or too narrow to accommodate her dreams of elsewhere. At the same time, she was extremely vulnerable not only to external attacks, but also to internal contradictions and dilemmas. The *technologies of the self* that she adopted and further developed in the *heterotopias* where she chose to live draw on the historical and cultural tradition of her society, creating at the same time interstices and ruptures.

Alexandra’s story as indeed every individual story is unique. However, in the deployment of her story there was a range of themes that we have seen moving beyond Alexandra’s plane, making multiple and multileveled connections with not only other life practices, those of her contemporaries, but also with some of the ways feminists have theorized paradoxical formations in contemporary women’s lives [39]. In thus contextualising what de Lauretis has defined as ‘the paradox of being a woman’ (1990, p.115), *heterotopias* I have suggested, create possibilities for new paths and analytical fields to open up in the theorization and problematization of the female self.

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NOTES

1. Liz Stanley (1992) has introduced the slash in the term of *auto/biography*. She argues that autobiographies and biographies are forms of life-writing which may be distinct, but whose distinctions are not generic.
2. The subject in becoming is a Deleuzian notion. See Braidotti 1991, especially the chapter 'The Becoming-Woman of Philosophy'.
3. See, Teresa de Lauretis, 1987; Irene Diamond and Lee Quinby, 1988; Linda Nicholson, 1990; Judith Butler, 1990; Jane Flax, 1990, 1993; Rosi Braidotti, 1991, 1994; Jana Sawicki, 1991; Caroline Ramazanoglou, 1993; Lois McNay, 1992, 1994; Elspeth Probyn, 1993; Susan Hekman, 1996; Ann Brooks, 1977; Heidi Mirza, 1997.
4. See Rose, 1993; Massey, 1994; Duncan, 1996; Kaplan, 1998; McDowell, 1999
5. See references to the diary of Elpiniki Zampeli in Varikas, E., (1987), pp.158, 186, 187.
6. See amongst others, Domna Stanton, 1984; Shari Benstock, 1988; Jean Perreault, 1995, Lee Quinby, 1995; Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, 1998, 2002.
7. I have translated all the Greek texts I draw on, in this paper.
8. Genealogy is Foucault's suggestion for doing research; it is concerned with the processes, procedures and apparatuses, whereby truth and knowledge are produced, in what Foucault calls the discursive regime of the modern era. A key Nietzschean insight that informs the Foucauldian genealogy is that truth cannot be separated from the procedures of its production and that therefore the task of the genealogist is to diagnose, criticise and demythologise 'truth regimes'. Genealogy conceives human reality -what we are- as an effect of the interlocking of certain historical and cultural practices, which it sets out to trace and explore from within -How we have come to be what we are-. See, Foucault, 1986.
9. Constantinople is the Greek name of Istanbul. I have used the Greek name to avoid inconsistencies, because this is how Alexandra uses it in her auto/biographical writings.
10. See Ziogou-Karastergiou (1986), especially the chapter 'I mesi Ekpaidefsi ton koritsion stin Tourkokratia' (Secondary Education for Girls in Greece under Turkish conquest).
11. Kaliroi Parren worked as a teacher for ten years. Later however, she left teaching and became a journalist. She founded the feminist journal 'I Ephimeris ton kyrion' [The Ladies' journal], which became the forum for women to speak publicly and be heard widely. See Varikas E., (1987) and Psara, A., (1999a).
12. *Marriage as a Trade*, Cicely Hamilton, 1981 [1909].
13. Xenopoulos writes in his autobiography: 'Since then we started a romantic correspondence' (cited in Papadopoulou, 1993, p.232)
14. This was about the short story 'Areti kai kakia' (Virtue and Badness) which was published in 'The Mail', a daily Greek newspaper in Constantinople. See Papakostas, 1987, p. 11. Language was a burning issue among scholars of Alexandra's time in Greece; they were divided into two camps, the one advocating the use of the sophisticated language of literary tradition, known as *Katharevousa* (pure Greek), and the other encouraging the use of the naturally-evolved spoken language of the people (demotiki).

15. See Papadopoulou, 1987, p.68
16. See amongst others, Massey 1990, especially chapter 7, 'A place called home', pp.157-174
17. See Papadopoulou, 1987, pp.29-31, 67 -73, 82-86.
18. See Papakostas, 1980, p.92
19. See Papadopoulou, 1987 [1893], p.129
20. See Papadopoulou, 1993, p. 233
21. See Ziogou-Karastergiou, 1986, p.268
22. See Psara, A., 1979, p.6
23. 'Only paradoxes to offer', Scott, 1996.
24. See Papakostas, 1980, p. 96
25. See Papakostas, 1980, p.98
26. *Euridice* was the first Greek literary journal for women. It was edited in Constantinople, between 1870-1873 by Aimilia Ktena-Leontias, and her sister Sappho Leontias.
27. See Kanner, 2000, p.6
28. See Psara, A., 1990a, p. 95, Varikas, 1987, 1993
29. See Varikas E., 1987, p.183
30. See Kanner, 2000, p.3
31. See Papakostas, 1980, especially the chapter 'Her persona' and Kanner, 2000, p.14
32. See Kanner, 2000, p.14 and Papadopoulou, 1987, pp.152-156
33. See Papakostas, 1987, p.15
34. See Psara, A., 1999a, p.97
35. See Psara, A., 1999bh, p.474
36. The notions of 'becoming' and 'smooth space' are elaborated in the influential work of Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* (1988)
37. See, Papakostas, 1980, Ziogou-Karastergiou, 1986.
38. See Papakostas, 1980, p.135 'Oi peripeteies mias didaskalisis' [The adventures of a woman teacher].
39. See amongst others, de Lauretis, 1990; Tseelon 1995; Tamboukou, 2000b; Buchanan and Colebrook, 2000; Reay, 2002.

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