

Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies

<http://journals.cambridge.org/BYZ>

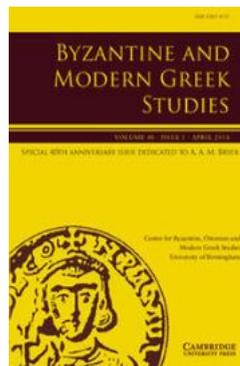
Additional services for *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*:

Email alerts: [Click here](#)

Subscriptions: [Click here](#)

Commercial reprints: [Click here](#)

Terms of use : [Click here](#)



Dimitris Papanikolaou, «Σαν κ' εμένα καμωμένοι»: Ο ομοφυλόφιλος Καβάφης και η ποιητική της σεξουαλικότητας. Athens: Patakis, 2014. Pp. 1–358.

James D. Faubion

Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies / Volume 40 / Issue 01 / April 2016, pp 182 - 183

DOI: 10.1017/byz.2015.21, Published online: 04 April 2016

Link to this article: http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S030701311500021X

How to cite this article:

James D. Faubion (2016). Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, 40, pp 182-183 doi:10.1017/byz.2015.21

Request Permissions : [Click here](#)

In contrast to Psycharis, Argyris Eftaliotis was attached solely to a Greek idea. Pateridou begins her third, and perhaps most accomplished chapter, by aptly summarizing three critical stances towards his work: one that saw Eftaliotis as a staunch defender of Greekness who denied any sense of foreignness; another that saw his writing as primarily spurred by nostalgia, and a third that primarily identified the imaginary (re)construction of a desired place in his work (p. 100). Pateridou regards Eftaliotis as the archetypal diasporic subject: born in Mytilini, but living most of his adult life in Liverpool, where he was a successful merchant, Eftaliotis consumed himself in imagining Greece from a distance. She discusses his novel *Μανόλης ο Νελμπεντέρης* as tainted by the objectives of a diaspora community, to which it was primarily addressed. 'If the solution for the diasporic subject is the connection of the different selves into a more coherent unit, which will differentiate itself from the previous ones after having absorbed them [...], then the central character (like the author) has hardly touched it' (p. 124) my translation. It is precisely this friction between the imaginary, idealized homeland and the reality of British life that animates Eftaliotis's stories. Pateridou correctly defines a diaspora community as the 'place in between'.

If the tension between the reality of a foreign place and an imaginary homeland is obvious in Eftaliotis, an altogether different kind of tension is to be identified in Karkavitsas' «Ο Ζητιάνος». Pateridou reads Karkavitsas' naturalist text as a novel of place that distinguishes itself from the technical advances and the progress of the 'Western' world, to which Greece aspired to belong. Both (fictional) villages featured in the novel, Krakoura, where the beggar received his evil training in begging and manipulation, and Nychteremi, with its naive inhabitants, so easily led astray and fooled, are constantly contrasted with a virtual place (a city perhaps?) that would function in the advanced ways of science and progress. Pateridou's reading is particularly effective regarding the ways in which the perspective of an omniscient narrator functions as a 'panopticon' that exposes the shortcomings of these villages. Reading place against the failed grand national narratives of the 1890s, the defeat in the war of 1897 and the bankruptcy of 1893, Pateridou illuminates the detailed effort Karkavitsas has made in displaying the workings of a small community.

In contrast to the preceding case studies of prose authors whose narrative output is more or less compact, Papadiamandis poses a problem for Pateridou, in that the majority of his texts deal with place. Which should one single out? The problem may be reflected in an introduction, which, compared to the mood of the rest of the book, may be too general. She finds her stride in the analysis of the short stories, «Ο Αμερικάνος» and «Ο ρεμβασμός του Δεκαπενταύγουστου»: both stories shed light on Papadiamandis's conception of 'home' as the blending of place, particularly the natural landscape, community and tradition, and the terms on which home-coming can be achieved.

Pateridou's readings offer a fresh approach to these texts. She correctly identifies key issues in each author, and these issues are dealt with in a succession that can be said to offer a narrative of place in its own terms: otherness for Vizyenos, hegemony for Psycharis, diaspora for Eftaliotis, community for Karkavitsas and home-coming for Papadiamandis. Some ideas discussed in the book, particularly the exact terms of the friction between East and West, may need a bit of fine-tuning. However, Pateridou's book shows what direction the discussion of older texts should take in the future. It offers an exciting perspective, theoretically informed and inquisitive, which, it is to be hoped, will find imitators.

Eleni Papargyriou
Thessaloniki

Dimitris Papanikolaou, «Σαν κ' εμένα κατωμένον»: Ο ομοφυλόφιλος Καβάφης και η ποιητική της σεξουαλικότητας. Athens: Patakis, 2014. Pp. 1–358.

DOI: [10.1017/byz.2015.21](https://doi.org/10.1017/byz.2015.21)

Constantine Cavafy is today unquestionably the most widely read, widely translated and widely inspiring of all modern Greek poets. Why so? In his passionate and often breathtaking book, Dimitris Papanikolaou reiterates what others have claimed before him: that Cavafy is an exemplary modern; that he is a trenchant critic of the moral atmosphere of his time; that he is homosexual. Papanikolaou, however, doesn't constrain himself to affirming again what—in the Anglophone world at least—is now common opinion. He gives it a twist. His Cavafy is quite so

modern and quite so trenchant a moral critic 'because he is homosexual' (49; emphasis in the original).

On the face of it, the twist might seem modest. Didn't the editors of and contributors to a special 1983 issue of *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* already assert as much? Papanikolaou cites their precedent—but proceeds to bring to what was going on in that upper-storey Alexandrian flat on *rue Lepsius* a light much more dazzling than any we have yet seen. Papanikolaou's Cavafy tests the waters of Decadence and Aestheticism without drowning in either one of them. In his life as in his art, he proves himself to be a master strategist of the dialectic of hiding and revealing that underpins the epistemology of the closet (147). His erotic poems reveal less of an ambition to cultivate a lyrical voice than to give collective representation to the sensibility and responsibility that may be or may become available to those vulnerable selves 'made like him' as a 'new phase of love' unfolds. Papanikolaou's Cavafy is an erotist. He is also an ethicist. He is 'radical' on both counts.

Papanikolaou takes from the later Foucault his guiding analytical framework—and masterfully so. He calls on the broader resources of queer theory as he needs them. He occasionally casts Cavafy as 'gay'—a term he finds as 'productive' as it is anachronistic (14). He is more emphatic in casting the poet as a homosexual, but is far from taking even this classification for granted. It rather functions as his point of reference and return in a lengthy investigation of the extent to which Cavafy is drawn into and draws upon the regime of truth of a rapidly coalescent biopolitics in which homosexuals as we still know them have their discursive birthplace. His scholarly treatment of the sexological writings of the early 20th century is far more extensive than Foucault's treatment of them in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*. It pays off. Of particular brilliance is his juxtaposition of the 'half-naked' officer who approaches and excites the Italian author of the *Roman d'un inverti*—a confessional text sent to Emile Zola, but ultimately published in the *Archives d'anthropologie criminelle et de psychologie normale et pathologique* in 1896 under the pseudonymous editorship of Georges St.-Paul—and the 'half-open clothes' of the lovers in Cavafy's 'To Remain' (or better, 'Remaining'), published in 1919. Papanikolaou amasses evidence from Cavafy's diaristic notes that suggests that he had read the *Roman* and that the imagery of 'Remaining' reflects his encounter with it. His argument is original and persuasive, but by his own account, it's less than definitive. Perhaps it can never be definitive—but Papanikolaou urges the current keepers of the Cavafy archive to open its doors to scholars who might come closer to settling the case. He is adamant in insisting that, until its doors open, it can only come under the suspicion that it is suppressing more than it is revealing of the closet that Cavafy methodically stocked for posterity. His objections to what he regards as a concerted effort among Hellenophone biographers and literary critics to 'dehomosexualize' the poet precede this complaint (53). Papanikolaou could have written his book in English—and let's hope we'll have it in English sooner rather than later. His bold challenge to Hellenophone archivists, biographers and critics, past and present, surely informs his decision to write the book in Greek.

Cavafy as homoeroticist and homoethicist: Papanikolaou sparkles with originality in his sustained analytical attention to the poet's long and increasingly refined series of erotic poems. Not a small number of Cavafy's readers (this author included) have been less than impressed by the poet's lyrical achievements in many of those poems. Almost all readers have been vexed by his 'discretion', which almost always leaves the gender of his erotic actors in suspension. Papanikolaou doesn't reject our disappointment (244), but directs us to another and much less simplistic engagement with what is available of the Cavafian corpus (poetic and prosaic). He invites us—and, to my mind, ultimately persuades us—to recognize even in the most 'stilted and pompous' of Cavafy's poems an attempt to articulate at once the historical particularities and the general parameters of a form of life whose 'new phase' could—if or when liberated from its biopolitical pathologization—blossom at once as a coherent erotism and a coherent ethics (282). Calling on Foucault's conceptualization of the dynamics of ethical subjectivation in the second volume of *The History of Sexuality* and on the essays concurrent with it, Papanikolaou invites us to read Cavafy's erotic poetry as the concerted attempt to fashion the parameters of and give practical substance to an ethics in which desire is not merely internal but also always a connective tissue that inextricably binds the care of the self to caring for another. Connection is all.

There's much more to appreciate and savour in *They Who are Made Like Me*. Justice can't be done either to its vision or to the details that sustain it in a brief review. Justice comes in reading the book from its first page to its last—and then reading it again.

James D. Faubion
Rice University