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TOWARDS CREATING A TYPOLOGY OF GREEK PERSONAL MEMOIRS ON LATE OTTOMAN ISTANBUL

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Usually, at the end of each history book, the author lists the sources from which he has drawn the necessary data, so as to substantiate what he has written. Friends who read the draft of my work inquired about the sources I have used, as well as the corresponding references. I replied that there are neither sources nor references. My sources are primarily everything that I myself experienced and my recollections of various events, people and situations that were to my mind of such great significance to ethnic Greeks that I felt the need to record them for posterity...¹

The title of the study states in advance that this is but a suggestion for creating a typology of the evidence provided by Greek memoirs of Istanbul during the latter years of the Ottoman Empire. The text aims to set out some issues for discussion, in anticipation of a research programme that intends to expose and study these sources.²

Setting a Research Agenda

Ia. Some clarifications about the personal memoirs

It is useful to provide certain clarifications about personal memoirs, which constitute the scope of our research, since these can throw light on the principles articulating their typology.

Firstly, I include below, in the personal testimonies about Ottoman Istanbul, everything that is an autobiography, memoir or diary. There is not yet an adequate theoretical distinction between the autobiography and the memoir, only objections and concerns about the literary quality of these different personal narratives³. I therefore include them in one category as they all highlight the relationship of the subject, author or narrator, to the public.

¹ Nikos Apostolidis, *Αναμνήσεις από την Κωνσταντινούπολη, Τρεις γενιές, Τα νοσοκομεία Βαλουκλή 1930-1940, Χρόνια αναταραχής 1935-1965, Εκκλησιαστικά και αναμνήσεις της τουρκικής κυβερνήσεως, Οι Τούρκοι ως λαός* [Memories of Istanbul, Three generations, The Baloukli hospitals 1930-1940, Restless years 1935-1965, Ecclesiastical issues and memories of Turkish governance, The Turks as a people], (Athens: Trochalia 1996), 349-350.

² The text that follows is an editable form of the paper I presented at the Workshop 'The Ottoman Imperial Center in Personal Memoirs of Greeks (19th-20th century)' on 22 April 2012 in Istanbul, which was organized by the Orient Institute in collaboration with the Institut für Turkologie (University of Bamberg) and the National Hellenic Research Foundation (Athens).

³ I cite indicatively some studies from the huge volume of bibliography: Karl J. Weintraub, "Autobiography and Historical Consciousness", *Critical Inquiry*, 1/4 (Jun. 1975), 821-848; Paul de Man, "Autobiography as De-facement", *Modern Language Notes*, 94/5 *Comparative Literature*, (Dec. 1979), 919-930; Georges Gusdorf, "Conditions and Limits of Autobiography", in: James Onley ed., *Essays Theoretical and Critical* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), 27-80; Susan A. Grane, "Writing The Individual Back into Collective Memory", *American Historical Review* 102/4 (Dec. 1997), 1372-1385; Julie Rak, "Are memoirs autobiography? A Consideration of Genre and Public Identity", *Genre XXXVI* (Fall-Winter 2004), 305-326; Mary Jo Maynes, Jennifer L. Pierce and Barbara Laslett, *The Use of Personal Narratives in the Social Sciences and History*

Secondly, as Takis Kagialis points out, personal narratives in Greek historiography 'are used as testimonies from which we extract information about persons and events or as evidence in the historical study of consciousness or ideologies'⁴. He is however particularly critical of the treatment reserved for these sources by Greek literary critics, who at least until the late 1990s, saw them as candid and true expressions of lived history, focusing their interest exclusively on assessing the reliability of the text. He accuses them of lagging behind, as since the early '60s, the autobiographical text has been recognized internationally as evidence of human consciousness. Such texts are regarded as the locations in which the author explored and internalized social complexity, recounted the interpretation of incidents and events and reported the writer's feelings and experiences in relation to the world. The autobiographical text is then shared with other people, in wider social groups and therefore continues through space and time⁵.

History scholars in Greece today are well aware that personal memoirs comprise valuable historical documentation, which embellish the mosaic of history in which the experiences and expectations of their writer intervene. Personal memoirs reveal aspects of social and cultural composition that provided the framework for personal narration, and the role of the historian is to identify these signs and decode the ideological context. In other words, regardless of the form of writing or means of expression used, the historian seeks the author's external relationship with history⁶. In addition, let us not forget that autobiographical texts are not written to be used as evidence. Even when a writer cites such an intention, the primary objective of the text continues to be vindication, reference and self-exhibition.

Finally, a third clarification that is required, and which should probably precede all the others, is related to the identity of the authors. The origin of the writer and the culture he has inherited provide yet another important perspective on personal memoirs. In the case we are discussing, the content of the term Greek must be clarified, as the term refers both to the Helladite Greek as well as to the subject of the Ottoman Empire. The question arises as to whether the personal memoirs of Greeks in late Ottoman Istanbul should include only those of the Rums, the Christian Orthodox also of the Helladite Greeks, those inhabitants of the free Greek kingdom, who lived and worked in Istanbul as journalists, diplomats, teachers, or passed through as visitors. I intend to include personal narratives from both populations, as this will give a multifaceted impression of their contemporary Istanbul.

(Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008). Exemplary are the studies assembled in the volume (eds) Olcay Akyıldız, Halim Kara, Börte Sagaster, *Autobiographical Themes in Turkish Literature: Theoretical and Comparative Perspectives* (Istanbul: Orient-Institut, 2007). Vasiliki Kontogianni, "Και ο ελληνικός αυτοβιογραφικός λόγος;" [And the Greek autobiographical discourse?] in: *Για μια ιστορία της ελληνικής λογοτεχνίας του Εικοστού αιώνα, προτάσεις ανασυγκρότησης και ρεύματα* [On a history of 20th-century Greek literature, reconstruction proposals and trends], (eds) Angela Kastrinaki, Alexis Politis, Dimitris Tziouvas, *Πρακτικά Συνεδρίου στη μνήμη του Αλέξανδρου Αργυρίου* [Proceedings of the Conference in memory of Alexandros Argyriou] (Rethymno, 20-22 May 2011), Irakleio, Crete University Press and the Benaki Museum, 2012, pp. 503-513.

⁴ Takis Kagialis, "Η αυτοβιογραφία ως κατασκευή" [Autobiography as construction], *Περί κατασκευής. Τοπικά β'* [On construction. Topika II], Society for the Study of Human Sciences, (Athens: Nisos, 1996), 337.

⁵ "Autobiography is not a simple recapitulation of the past: it is also the attempt and the drama of a man struggling to reassemble himself in his own likeness at a certain moment of his history", notes G. Gusdorf, as he believes that "autobiography is not just about the past, or about literal facts. Like Fiction, it creates an individual in writing and in its aesthetics points to higher truths". See G. Gusdorf, p. 40.

⁶ Panagiotis Moullas and Pavlos Zannas, "Οι μεταμορφώσεις του αφηγητή" [The metamorphoses of the narrator], *Τετράδια Εργασίας* [Research Notebooks] 7, Seminar course, Athens 1984, 57- 84.

1b. Categories of Greek personal narratives

The category of autobiographical texts referred to above, namely autobiographies, memos and diaries, can be included in another large group of texts, in which their authors, while not writing an autobiography, bear witness to the era they refer to. These texts may purport to be neutral incident reports, but their authors usually succumb to the temptation of self-reference at the first opportunity, so turning their writings indirectly and partially into personal narratives. Let me explain:

Manuel Gedeon (Constantinople 1851–Athens 1943) was the Grand Chartophylax of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. He was privileged enough to experience Constantinople from the Phanar, surrounded by the wealth of written and oral tradition. He lived through and experienced first-hand some major events, and his writings sensitively detect imbalances, inequalities, inconsistencies and complexities. His experience of the Great Church, which is at the same time the local Archdiocese of Constantinople, as well as being the seat of ecumenical Orthodoxy, is reflected in his research and writings. Works of his such as *Η Μνεΐα των πρό εμού, 1800-1863-1913* (1934), [Reference to those [years] before me, 1800-1863-1913 (1934)], *Ιστορία των του Χριστού πενήτων 1453-1913* (1939) [History of the paupers of Christ, 1453-1913 (1939)], and his most autobiographical book, *Αποσημειώματα Χρονογράφου, 1800-1913* (1932) [Notes of a Chronographer, 1800-1913 (1932)], are texts that not only include valuable information, but also express both his opinion and his understanding of historical developments and the collective destiny of the Rum millet in the declining Ottoman empire. I borrow an assessment from the late Philippos Iliou, which supports my view on the autobiographical nature of the works of Manuel Gedeon:

“The relaxed and familiar combination of his knowledge with the sources – all accessible sources and in particular those which he himself knew how to construct – and the essential familiarity he had acquired with an age-old, scholarly tradition in which he physically participated and yet which he knew how to heed, to memorize and to decipher, always leaves the reader of his works with the strange sensation that whether he is talking about times past or referring to modern topics, M. Gedeon always seems to be writing his memoirs.”⁷

I would also include in the same category the work *Υπόμνημα περί του Γραικικού Νοσοκομείου των Επτά Πύργων...* [Note on the Greek Hospital of the Seven Towers] published in 1862 by the scholar physician Alexandros Paspatis (Chios 1814–Athens 1891), even though he calls it a *note*. Like an artist he creates a mural of the various social strata among the Rum inhabitants of Istanbul. By studying hygiene, living conditions and Rum eating habits, Paspatis provides vital anthropological information. He comments on and compares the life of the Rums to that of other millets, while voicing his criticism on the subjects covered. Below is a typical phrase revealing his personal approach:

I speak of the inhabitants of cities and towns, the workers and artisans beleaguered by poverty. In my book I describe their miserable life and the high mortality rate caused by the harsh conditions. I appeal to the nation to care for these people. For them and for other workers like them I wrote the previous pages, as I believe that my fellow citizens and all homodox Christians do not turn away

⁷ See Philippos Iliou's introductory note in the edition M. I. Gedeon, *Ιστορία των του Χριστού πενήτων, 1453-1913* [History of the paupers of Christ, 1453-1913], I, Philippos Iliou ed. (Athens: National Bank Cultural Foundation 2010), 7.

from such testimonies that are presented for the good of the nation and for the good of all our poor, wretched fellow-men⁸.

In a second category of personal memoirs I would place refugee testimonies from the Oral History Archive at the Centre for Asia Minor Studies, in which refugees recount the experience of Istanbul that they or their relations enjoyed before the Asia Minor disaster and their lives as refugees in Greece. The Archive at the Centre portrays the entire spectrum of life in the "lost homelands" and was based on refugee testimony. The testimonies reflect the necessarily divergent processes instigated by that historical moment and the pressure that this exerted both on the refugees themselves, as well as on those who attempted to elicit information from them.

A third category contains texts in newspapers and periodicals in which personal testimony is given in the form of a feuilleton. In the current case, personal memoirs include authors like Sofia Spanoudi (1878-1952), a renowned piano teacher who was appointed to give piano lessons to the daughters of Sultan Abdul Hamid. She became familiar with the Yildiz palace and described it in her book, *In the palaces of Hamid*. These memoirs were first published in 1935 in Dimitris Lambrakis' newspaper "Αθηναϊκά Νέα [Athenian News]" and they were recently collected and published in one volume⁹. Sofia Spanoudi, who witnessed the Young Turk movement and the overthrow of Hamid, and also the attempt to create a Greek-Turkish federation, describes the impact these events had on the Rums. She concurrently presents political events on a par with stories from everyday life in Istanbul, brimming with nostalgia and aromas, like the feuilleton entitled, "Literature on sweets," describing the rose, strawberry, raspberry and gooseberry preserves prepared by Istanbul housewives¹⁰.

I would also include the writings of Eleni Chalkousi (1901-1993), the vivacious and impulsive Constantinopolitan actress, who wrote "Πόλη αγάπη μου [Istanbul my love]". Both she and Spanoudi were refugees in Athens. Spanoudi arrived in 1922 and in 1925 Chalkousi first appeared on stage at Spyros Melas' theatre. Their texts portray the refugee who yearns for their home and strives to incorporate in their words all the images of their native land.¹¹

An additional special category of studies appear to address the urban landscape, but actually locate and describe important "sites" of collective memory. Their subjects are as diverse as the Fener and Pera, the Buyuk Ada and Moda as well as gastronomy. The majority of these studies are initially

⁸ Alexandros G. Paspatis, *Υπόμνημα περί του Γραικικού νοσοκομείου των Επτὰ Πύργων* [Note on the Greek Hospital of the Seven Towers] (Athens: Printing Press of Lazaros Vilaras, 1862), 110.

⁹ Sofia Spanoudi, *Στα παλάτια του Χαμίτ: η πραγματικότητα χωρίς θρύλους* [In the palaces of Hamid: reality without legends], Alexios E. Savvakis ed. (Athens: Eikostos protos, 2009). She was the wife of journalist Konstantinos Spanoudis, editor of the political newspaper 'Πρόοδος [Progress]', whose ultramodern machinery was not used due to the outbreak of the Greco-Turkish War (1919-1922), but where the newspaper *Cumhuriyet* was later printed for many years. In 1932 she found herself back in her beloved Istanbul, ten years after the Asia Minor disaster, as a correspondent for the newspaper 'Πρωϊά [Proia]', which wanted to tell its readers about the new European and modernized Turkey of Kemal. These texts were censored by her and by the Turkish censors before being sent for publication in Athens. They were recently published under the title *Γράμματα από την Πόλη* [Letters from Istanbul] (2008).

¹⁰ Sofia Spanoudi, *Literature on Sweets*, Digital Arvanitidis collection, ANEMI Digital Library of Modern Greek Studies (University of Crete), available at http://anemi.lib.uoc.gr/metadata/7/9/3/metadataafb22a5a65fb090a3bbaf554604e24af9_1251441615.tkl (25/9/2020)

¹¹ The book by Stefanos Papadopoulos, *Αναμνήσεις από την Πόλη* [Memories from Istanbul] (Athens, 1978), also belongs in this category.

autobiographical. They describe the native neighborhood, Cibali, Beyoglou (Stavrodromi), Büyükağa (Prinkipos), making the history of the place the vehicle for their nostalgia.¹²

Personal reasons lead me to accumulate over a period of twenty years written and oral material about Pera and its Rum inhabitants, who constituted a key urban unit with a significant contribution to the economic and cultural life of Modern Greece. I was born in the German hospital in Pera like many other Istanbulites of my generation. I lived in the district of Cihangir, a stone's throw from the Zappeion School for Girls which I attended, the church of Aghia Triada where I got married, the "Grand Rue" with the theatres and cinemas, where as a teenager I was fortunate enough to watch exceptional performances by Greek companies. I believed that I would grow old and die, as my parents and ancestors before me, in the most beautiful city in the world, the queen of cities. Utopia or a delusion which lasted until 1980 when I left. Since then I often return to the city that raised me and cosseted me with myths and true stories. An intruder in my old home, where the new inhabitants desperately struggle for survival. They know almost nothing of former inhabitants.¹³

A saunter through the streets of a Rum neighbourhood in Istanbul recalls its image during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, when the Greek population comprised one third of its one million inhabitants and the Greeks exhibited both glamour and power. These cityscape narratives reflect the nostalgia and melancholy of the expatriate Constantinopolitan, and reveal the tremendous sense of loss felt for the erstwhile National Centre following the Asia Minor disaster and the foundation of the Kemalist state.¹⁴

Such texts, which have multiplied over recent years and refer to topics related to Rum cultural heritage, essentially recover the minority history¹⁵. Ilay Romain Ors for example, explores the link between city and identity in the diaspora, through the prism of the former residents, the Rum Istanbulites. His subjects are the Rum Polites who fled to Athens after the Istanbul Riots in 1955 and the mass expulsions of 1964. They refer with nostalgia to late cosmopolitan Istanbul, before it was disrupted by the nationalist policy of the Kemalist state.¹⁶

Finally, among personal memoirs I would also include letters, the writing of which is not much different from that of memoirs. Even more so when the drafts of the letters, as well as the replies received, are preserved, automatically creating a corpus of memories. It is material largely left unused in archival collections, particularly when the letters are from unknown figures.

This is all I have to say at present about certain categories of Greek personal writings on the late cosmopolitan Istanbul, which undoubtedly create a typology as they share certain basic common

¹² I refer indicatively to some studies: Akylas Millas, *H Xálkē tōn Prīnkipōnēsiōn* [Chalki in the Princes Islands] (Athens: Association of Historical and Folklore Research "Mnemosyne" & Agra, 1984); Melpo Kesisoglou-Karystinou, *Evroía tēs Aghiás Kōnstantinouπόλεως, Τοιμαλί* [Parish of Saint Constantinople, Cibali] (Athens: Foundation of the Hellenic World, 1998); Ari Cokona, *Fener* (Istanbul: Heyamola Yayınları, 2009).

¹³ With this note Soula Bozi opens her book, *Ο Ελληνισμός της Κωνσταντινούπολης, Κοινότητα Σταυροδρομίου-Πέραν, 19^{ος}-20^{ος} αιώνας* [Hellenism in Constantinople, Community of Stavrodromi-Pera, 19th-20th century] (Athens: Ellinika Grammata, 2002).

¹⁴ Of great interest to me was the analysis of literary texts of varying content and origin in which Istanbul is described as the Lost City or City of Collective Melancholy, see Hande Tekdemir, *"Collective Melancholy: Istanbul at the Crossroads of History, Space and Memory"* (PhD diss., University of Southern California, 2008).

¹⁵ See the study on Kuzguncuk and French Street (Beyoğlu) by Amy Mills, "Narratives in City Landscapes: Cultural Identity in Istanbul", *Geographical Review* 95/3, New Geographies of the Middle East (Jul. 2005), 441-462.

¹⁶ Ilay Romain Ors, *"The Last of the Cosmopolitans? Rum Polites of Istanbul in Athens: Exploring the Identity of the city"* PhD diss., Harvard University, 2006).

features. I deliberately did not put up for discussion the work of literary figures, such as the novel *Loxandra* by Maria Iordanidou¹⁷, in which the autobiographical element is all too obvious. 'Up to a certain point one could say that all literature is autobiographical', maintains Panagiotis Moullas, 'insofar as each form of creation contains at least one moment from the life of its creator'. But as he points out, it's all about the quantities and qualities of the personal experience included in the work and primarily the reasons for them and the part they play¹⁸. A literary historian would be the most competent person to explore this relationship.

*

I now present and briefly discuss some personal memoirs, beginning with the textual memories of Asia Minor refugees, from the manuscripts they themselves or their descendants handed over to Octave and Melpo Merlier's Centre for Asia Minor Studies. I chose as an example the Karamanli manuscript by Ioannis Tiftiktoglou¹⁹. I translate the first phrase with which the uneducated Tiftiktoglou begins his autobiography:

I decided to write my memoirs of the life I have lived in this transient world, beginning on 1st December 1869 in room no. 26 of the Astarджи Han in Istanbul, so they may survive as history in years to come.

This is the testimony of a life that lasted 81 years from 1817-1898, covering almost the whole of the nineteenth century. Tiftiktoglou came from Germir in Kayseri, also the birthplace of Elia Kazan, which was immortalized in his film 'America, America (1963)'. He lived most of his life in Yozgat and to a lesser degree in Istanbul; business and life's adventures taking him on many journeys to cities in Anatolia. His memoirs are an exceptionally rich source on life in the late Ottoman Empire, and the customs and mentality of its Christian and Muslim populations. They range over experiences of wars, famines, pandemics, Greek-Turkish relations, the economic situation of the Empire and are also a mine of information on Istanbul during the latter years of the Ottoman Empire. The Cappadocian Tiftiktoglou's narrative of the years of his apprenticeship under various masters in Istanbul and of his difficult living conditions, can be placed alongside other texts written by Cappadocian refugees from the Oral History Archive, which speak of life in the *gurbet*. Rums usually fled to Istanbul from poor villages in Kayseri, Niğde and Nevşehir, to seek their fortune, the majority of them young boys between the ages of 12 and 15. The Sinasos refugee Seraphim Rizos writes:

If the boy's father was a storekeeper he would keep him with him, if the boy's father was a partner he would go into the store as a *çirak* or his father would place him in a store belonging to someone else, but whom he knew, "to eat foreign food, to learn the value of the parent, to learn how money is earned". If the boy was poor, an orphan without a guardian, then the person who brought him to Istanbul looked after him and took him into his store or gave him to a store he knew until he learnt the job in the shop...²⁰

¹⁷ Maria Iordanidou, *Λοξάνδρα* [Loxandra] (Athens, 1963).

¹⁸ Αλέξανδρος Παπαδιαμάντης αυτοβιογραφούμενος [Alexandros Papadiamantis autobiographed] Panagiotis Moullas ed. (Athens: Hermes, 1974), xxxiii.

¹⁹ Manuscript by Ioannis Tiftiktoglou, *Αυτοβιογραφικά 1817-1898* [Autobiographical] (manuscript, Call Number: ΚΑΠΠ. 29).

²⁰ Evangelia Balta ed., *Sinasos. Images and Narratives* (Istanbul: Birzamanlar Yayıncılık, 2009), 174-175.

We read similar stories in many self-narratives by Istanbulites published in recent years, such as the one by Nikos Apostolidis,²¹ in which he recounts his father's hard life when he arrived in Istanbul as a boy from Niğde. The unhealthy living conditions in the lofts and attics of shops, where apprentices and masters lived piled on top of one another, are also described by the physician Alexander Paspatis. Here is how he describes the life of the stone builders working on the reconstruction of Istanbul during the last decades of the nineteenth century:

In small, dirty, stuffy rooms above the construction sites live the craftsmen. Here they eat, here they all stay together at nights, far from the fun and easy life had by other Istanbul residents. Such is the life not only of them but also of most Anatolians in Constantinople. They live like true hermits in a populous city, far away from everyone, foreigners and locals, their only desire being to ensure a comfortable life on their return to the homeland...²²

Vivid descriptions are also given by Paspatis, of Anatolian grocers from Nevşehir and Incesu who had made the Turkish mahalas into their places of work and residence²³. These descriptions describe daily life in Istanbul. They record the customs of hard-working Rums and Helladite Christians, alongside the lives of the Jews, Armenians, Turks, Kurds and others in the cosmopolitan capital of the Empire. Paspatis gives an account of the ethnic division of labour, with valuable observations on the enclosed and secluded life of expatriate Orthodox Anatolians and Helladites who lived and worked essentially isolated from the city, restricted to the circle of hemşeri, their fellow-townsmen, and to the solidarity they are forced to create between themselves to cope with a hard life in a foreign land. Scenes are brought to life from the caviar shops in Balık Pazarı, from the workshops in Galata and Unkapani and the mahalas of the bekar in Cibali. Similar stories of cosmopolitan Istanbul are recalled by the Armenian Hagop Mintzuri, when he arrives from his village of Erzurum to work as a baker in Istanbul²⁴. This is valuable material for the study of late Istanbul, particularly for the scholar interested in the lower social strata that are often absent from nineteenth-century texts.

A century later the Istanbul-born architect Panos-Nikolis Tzelepis (1894-1976) published stories about the 'humble' people of Istanbul, just as he heard them from Taşçı Stavri himself. Stavris the Stonemason was Tzelepis' relative, friend and colleague, and his stories became available for the first time in 1965.²⁵ In his prologue Tzelepis notes:

Having kept many precise notes from these stories, I venture to write them and publish them without any literary claim. Only with the thought that these short chronicles of a past era, set in a familiar place that changed so radically, may be yet of interest to people.

²¹ Nikos Apostolidis, 66ff.

²² Alexandros G. Paspatis, 159.

²³ Paspatis' excellent portrait of the Anatolian Orthodox Turcophone grocer is cited in my study, Evangelia Balta, "Modern Yunan Komedisinde Karamanlı", *Toplumsal Tarih* 234 (Haziran 2013), 54-62.

²⁴ Hagop Mintzuri, *Istanbul Anıları (1897-1940)*, çev.: Silva Kuyumcuayan, Notlarla Basima Hazırlayan: Necdet Sakaoğlu, İstanbul, Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2012. See also Florian Riedler, "Hagop Mintzuri and the Cosmopolitan Memory of Istanbul", European University Institute, Florence, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, Mediterranean Programme, EUI Working Paper RSCAS 2009/13 http://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/10913/EUI_RSCAS_2009_13.pdf?sequence=1

²⁵ Panos-Nikolis Tzelepis, *Ιστορίες του Νταή-Σταβρί ... στον καιρό των σουλτάνων. Μικρά χρονικά της Πόλης στα τέλη του 19^{ου} αιώνα απ' τη ζωή των ταπεινών* [Stories of Dayı-Stavri... in the times of the Sultans. Short chronicles from the life of the humble in late nineteenth century Istanbul] (Athens: Trochalia Publications, 2003); idem, *Ιστορίες του Νταή-Σταβρί, Βιβλίο Β', Μικρά χρονικά της Πόλης στα τέλη του 19^{ου} αιώνα απ' τη ζωή των ταπεινών* [Stories of Dayı-Stavri, Book II, Short chronicles from the life of the humble in late nineteenth century Istanbul] (Athens, 1971).

In addition to the ethnographic, anthropological depiction of life in Istanbul, the Rum personal narratives also reflect the impact of the changes brought about in the Ottoman Empire by the Tanzimat, the Crimean War and at the end of the nineteenth century, the decline of a once mighty empire. Emerging Balkan nationalism created nation states by dismembering the old empire, and the Great Powers became increasingly involved as regulators of a changing political landscape.

Manuel Gedeon - a keen intellectual, observant, precise in his characterizations - gave the name *Neo-Phanariots* to the governing classes of Constantinople Rums who worked for the Ottoman state and strongly reacted, as expected, to the disruption caused by Balkan nationalists (including Greeks). They were fanatically opposed to the partitioning of the Ottoman empire. These governing Ottoman Greeks sided with the Tanzimat ideology and believed that their compatriots would prosper not only financially but also sociopolitically, if they remained linked to a modern, pro-Western and cosmopolitan Ottoman empire.

This issue is explored in the memoirs of Georgios Zarifis (Constantinople 1880 – Athens 1943)²⁶, which tell the story of three generations of a banking family in Constantinople. Beginning with his patriarch grandfather, the wealthy benefactor Georgios Zarifis (1807-1884), who both supported the Sultan Abdul Hamid and benefitted from his favours, founded a business network. He maintained regular bank dealings with the Turkish state and possessed huge tracts of land in the Middle East. In addition he held the tobacco monopoly and was a shipowner, while also participating in various other third-party companies. How could a 'Neo-Phanariot' like Zarifis – and he is not the only one – with the economic power he had amassed through his relations with Turkish authorities, not support the status quo which was so beneficial to him? These viewpoints are expressed by Georgios Zarifis in his memoirs, along with fascinating topics and descriptions of Istanbul and its people in the nineteenth and early twentieth century²⁷.

Andreas Syngros' (Constantinople 1830–Athens 1899) *Memoirs*²⁸, in referring to the political situation of the time, expresses the same opinions and appears to speak for all ethnic Greek entrepreneurs in Constantinople: 'Before the Crimean War, the Greeks in Constantinople did not involve themselves in politics'. The reference to the Crimean war as *terminus post quem* identifies that this was the event that prompted leading businessmen in Constantinople to realise the extent to which the economy and politics were interdependent²⁹. In his *Memoirs* Syngros also claims the following (which conceals not only a grievance but also reproach): 'At that time national affairs were managed by a limited number of Ottoman subjects, who also handled the affairs of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, keeping them as their exclusive job or rather profession. On the other hand the representatives of the free Greek Kingdom also laid claim to this exclusive management, considering the Greeks of

²⁶ Georgios L. Zarifis, *Οι αναμνήσεις μου ενός κόσμου που έφυγε. Κωνσταντινούπολη 1800-1920* [My memories, a world that has gone, Constantinople 1800-1920] (Athens: Trochalia, 2001).

²⁷ See also the fascinating description of Stavrodromi by Alexandros Zoiros (Paşa), *Αναμνήσεις. Η Κωνσταντινούπολις κατά το 1860-1862* [Memories. Constantinople from 1860-1862], Reprint from the *Ημερολόγιον των Εθνικών Φιλανθρωπικών Καταστημάτων*, 1906 [Calendar of the National Philanthropical Foundations of 1906] (Constantinople: Printing Press of Aristovoulos & Anastasiadis, 1906).

²⁸ Andreas Syngros, *Απομνημονεύματα* [Memoirs], vol. I, t. I, Alkis Angelou & Maria-Christina Hatzioiannou eds. (Athens: Hestia, 1998). Dimitris Vikelas together with Georgios Drosinis edited the document of Syngros' *Memoirs*, which Syngros' widow entrusted to them for publication.

²⁹ Haris Exertzoglou, *Προσαρμοστικότητα και πολιτική ομογενειακών κεφαλαίων. Έλληνες τραπεζίτες στην Κωνσταντινούπολη. Το κατάστημα 'Ζαρίφης Ζαφειρόπουλος', 1871-1881* [Adaptability and policy of expatriate capital. Greek bankers in Constantinople. The store Zarifis Zafeiropoulos] (Athens: Institute of Research and Education of the Emporiki Bank of Greece, 1989).

Constantinople and other areas unworthy of participating'. These claims are verified in the *Φύλλα Ημερολογίου* [Diary Pages of the Helladite Ion Dragoumis], written while serving in the embassy in Constantinople during the two-year period 1907-1909. He envisions a "Hellenized Ottoman Empire", a prediction quashed by the Young Turk revolution of 1908.³⁰

The memoirs of the two renowned businessmen mentioned above were not limited to business or political matters. Syngros for example also provides a social survey of Istanbul, detailing the distribution of the Greek population in the quarters according to social class. He refers to the Rum's symbolic apparel which made them stand out both inside and outside the Rum millet, and he describes the inside of their homes. The pages describing his life in Istanbul before he settled in Athens provide a key anthropological study of Rum society during its attempts to follow post-Crimean War trends and westernize. Lengthy descriptions of dinners, balls, theatrical performances and concerts fill page after page of Syngros' *Memoirs*, for example:

Many middle-aged ladies attended meetings wearing a headscarf (*fakioli*) and a dress (the so-called robe). Round their shoulders they wore the classic shawl or *çar* or *bohça*; in the past they even wore furs from zibellina. Young girls and indeed dancers followed European fashion as best they could, though not always correctly. Men also, both middle-aged and older, appeared in a special kind of attire; most Ottoman subjects naturally wore a fez, the 'stambulina', and of course expensive furs and on their feet they wore 'babouches'. Non-Ottoman subjects and the more modern, the young, dancers and the ladies followed European fashion and the corresponding manners, but it goes without saying that in Tatavla even the word 'tailcoat' was unknown.

Similar scenes of social gatherings are also portrayed by Dimitris Vikelas (1835-1908) recollecting the approximately nine years he spent in Constantinople as a child. Vikelas in his work *Η ζωή μου* [My Life]³¹ describes neighbourhoods and people, the homes of Rum officers at the Porte and of old Byzantine families, as well as mansions belonging to the Ottoman pashas, stories from summers spent in the environs of Istanbul and on the Princes' Islands, tales of young girls who came from the poor Cycladic islands to work as servants or nannies in rich houses and descriptions of the frequent fires that destroyed property and entire neighbourhoods in Istanbul. References to historic events from the past are imprinted on his mind from tales told by his elders. For example, the retaliatory hanging of members of the Paparrigopoulos family, relatives of the future historian, during the Greek War of Independence in 1821.

Perhaps an even better description is that presented by Alexander Rizos Rangavis in the first volume of his *Απομνημονεύματα* [Memoirs (1894)]³², in which he relates his memories of a fire he experienced as a small child, which destroyed his family's property, forcing them to move to a cramped, miserable house. An entire chapter entitled *Fire* covers the first part of his memories of Constantinople, before he fled to Wallachia to be near his uncle, Alexander Soutsos³³. In the few pages

³⁰ Αρχείο Ίωνα Δραγούμη, *Φύλλα Ημερολογίου Δ'* (1908-1912), [Ion Dragoumis Archive, Diary Pages, IV (1908-1912)], Th. Veremis & I. Koliopoulos eds. (Athens: Hermis, 1988). See also the fascinating text by Dragoumis published in the periodical *Numas* in 1904 under the title "In Istanbul", see *Ίων Δραγούμης, 10 άρθρα του στο "Νουμά"* [Ion Dragoumis, his 10 articles in *Numas*], D. P. Tangopoulos ed. (Athens, 1920), 9-21.

³¹ Dimitrios Vikelas, *Η ζωή μου : Παιδικαί αναμνήσεις-Νεανικοί χρόνοι* [My life: Childhood memories - Youthful times] (Athens, 1908), 28-62.

³² Alexandros Rizos Rangavis, *Απομνημονεύματα* [Memoirs], t. I, Athens, Georgios Kasdonis, 1894. See Efthimios Soulogiannis, *Αλέξανδρος Ραγκαβής, 1809-1892: Η ζωή και το έργο του* [Alexandros Rangavis, 1809-1892: His life and work] (Athens: Arsenidis, 1995).

³³ Alexandros Rizos Rangavis, 33-46.

dedicated to his childhood in Istanbul, he describes the prerevolutionary years, parading before us the old Phanariot families of Kallimachis, Mourouzis, Ghikas, Karatzas and Aristarchis, whose power came to an end with the outbreak of the Greek Revolution in 1821. I believe the way his *Memoirs* begin is no coincidence.

I am a Phanariot by descent. Perhaps this sounds like a painful confession, since a title which in the past a section of our nation was proud to bear has ended up as slander and insult.

The phrase illustrates the dramatic changes that took place in the nineteenth century in the Rum millets. The structural changes that began in the Ottoman Empire with the Tanzimat and continued into the early twentieth century, affected traditional structures in the millet. New customs in its governance and representation before Ottoman authorities were introduced, new educational systems and modern ideas, all of which sparked a reaction in traditional Rum circles. A typical example is the book published in 1889 in Athens by Vasileios Georgiadis, later ecumenical patriarch from 1925-1929, under the pseudonym Dimitrios Periergidis³⁴. It is a personal memoir, in which he expresses his dislike of education in Istanbul in the late nineteenth century, which had been influenced by Western standards and had distanced itself from old values and customs. Indicative of this are his descriptions of the luxurious Girls' Schools, such as Zappeion, where the education received by the young girls alienated them from the time-honoured role of housewife (p. 15-16). In contrast at the Phanar Greek Orthodox College boys received a scientific education, while in principle they should have been taught all they needed to become good traders and businessmen. The new European systems introduced in schools required books to be purchased and the educational programme was burdened with lessons that were of no use in the moral and spiritual education of the young. His reaction reflects that of a section of Rums to the new state of affairs. Counterbalancing his text is the praise expressed by Despoina Papoutsoglou for the pioneering methods implemented in the Rum schools of Istanbul.³⁵

Conclusion

I have presented various types of personal memoirs in an effort to highlight their diverse categories, each of which requires the appropriate approach and treatment. The few examples presented here exemplify the significant potential contribution of this type of material to the history of nineteenth and twentieth century Istanbul and more generally of cultural memory. The emerging topics invite comparative study with other personal memoirs and archival sources. My aim was to emphasize the value of the personal writing of Greeks in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as an independent historical source. We must always remember that whatever becomes at some point a memory, a text, a creative representation through the written word, was first an experience, man's encounter with history, a sum of traumas, a complex relationship with reality. Personal narratives are sources of unique value, as they reveal traces of an elaborate web of relationships between the author and the testimony of his memory, outlining the limits within which he himself is revealed and defined.

³⁴ Photis Lampridis, *Δημητρίου Περιεργίδου Εντυπώσεις* [Impressions of Dimitrios Periergidis] (Athens, 1889).

³⁵ Despoina Papoutsoglou, "Η μαθητική ζωή στην Πόλη" [Student life in Istanbul] in: *Η καθημερινή ζωή στην Κωνσταντινούπολη στο τέλος του 19^{ου} και στις αρχές του 20^{ού} αιώνα*, [Daily life in Istanbul in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries] Proceedings of Second Conference of Kath'imas Anatoli, (Athens, 12 Dec. 1998), (Athens: Megaloscholiton Association, 1999), 57-74.