**The Forces of Life and of Writing**

Aris Marangopoulos, *Love [Gardens] ingratitude.* (Novel)

Athens, Kedros, 2002. 284 pp., ISBN: 960-04-21101-3

In *Love [Gardens] Ingratitude*, Aris Marangopoulos introduces and creatively handles a varity of narrative techniques belonging to the modern and post-modern novel. In his pages a host of literary styles coexist, but in their inventive combination the reader is not derpived of enjoyment as the text also possesses characters, plot and action.

The hero of the novel is Benjamin Sanidopoulos, an imaginary novelist whose work we met in *The Good Times of Benjamin Sanidopoulos*. In *Love [Gardens] Ingratitude* we are presented with his autobiography in the form of a novel (fiction mixed with genuine occurrences) as well as all the important events that were landmarks in his life and that have been transformed in his work. Marangopoylos gives us both the literary voices which have influenced his hero and led him to discover his own voice, and the conversations with the other voices in his private life which have had an effect on his actions and his work. We watch him speak to the “ideal voices”  of poets and relatives, taking refuge in his private gardens in order to meet them – a bordeline place, situated somewhere between fantasy and reality. In one such garden in Auxerre, a French town to which Benjamin has fled in self-exile, he writes and sends a photocopied letter to the four important women in his life, changing only the ending slightly. This letter is an invitation to meet him, after many years, in the National Garden of Athens, to which all of them hasten in order to meet once more the man who has had a dramatice effect on them. Urged on by the “blind forces of life”, they take part in a “ritual” which is catalytic and revelatory not only for them but also for the hero, who after this encounter leaves once again, changed and determined to accept his difference, which lies in the way he perceives the world. In the text of Sanidopoulos’ “autobiography” are incorporated excerpts from James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, the *Revelations* of St John, Kosmas Politis’ Eroica but also from Kafka’s *Letters to Milena*, as well a host of other texts, while the motif of the garden recurs repeatedly both as scene and as literary place, through references to the poems of Kostas Karyotakis, Odysseas Elytis, Miltos Sachtouris and others, defining the space in which through selective meetings the transformation of experience and life into art is achieved.

Between the chapters are interspersed comments on the process of writing as well as on Sanidopoulos’ epoch, each numbered and entitled “Useless Life”, revealing the manner in which, during the process of writing, the hero develops hs “private art of resistance” against the confusion prevailing externally. We might say that both the life and the writings of Sanidopoulos constitute a creative dialogue with the voices and the lives that have gone before, a biography of the relationship he has developed with them, which through the process of writing acquire their collective weight. In particular, the chapter entitled “The Last Train” presents an attempt to “orchestrate” these voices; through the use of the stream of consciousness technique (a modern technique par excellence) and through the recollection of impressions, experiences and references to a host of literary works, a striking, constantly changing dialogue is created which constitutes the quintessence of the nature of writing.

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