

**EROULLA DEMETRIOU AND JOSÉ RUIZ MAS. 2018. ENGLISH TRAVEL ACCOUNTS ON CYPRUS (1960-2004). THE JOURNEY TO EUROPE. GRANADA: CENTRO DE ESTUDIOS BIZANTINOS, NEOGRIEGOS Y CHIPRIOTAS. 143 PAGES. ISBN: 978-84-95905-93-2.**

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E. Demetriou (University of Jaén) and J. Ruiz Mas (University of Granada) are no newcomers in the genre of travel writing. The former is known for her recent edition of Sarah (Stickney) Ellis's *Summer and Winter in the Pyrenees (1841)* as part of the "Women's Travel Writing in Iberia, Chawton House Library" Series (2014),<sup>1</sup> and for other works on travels in the Eastern Mediterranean; the latter is remembered for his studies on British and American travellers in Spain in the 19th and 20th centuries mainly, as well as for his edition of Marianne Baillie's *Lisbon in the Years 1821, 1822, and 1823 (1824)* (of the aforementioned series, 2014, volumes I and II).<sup>2</sup> Dr Demetriou and Dr Ruiz Mas's latest book on English-speaking travellers in Cyprus is a logical sequel to their earlier *English Travel Literature on Cyprus (1878-1960)* (2004).<sup>3</sup> In their 2004-monograph they analysed the sub-genre of travel accounts on Cyprus as written and published by British and –to a lesser extent– American travellers during the period spanning the British occupation, that is, from 1878, when Lieutenant General Garnet Wolseley was sent to Cyprus as high-commissioner to the newly acquired British possession, up until the island finally refused to aspire to *enosis* with Greece and gained her independence in 1960. The two books on travel literature on Cyprus authored by Demetriou and Ruiz Mas (2004 and 2018) must be placed in the context of an increasing scholarly interest in English travel accounts of the last two decades, as is evidenced in Rita C. Severis and Loukia Loizou Hadjigraviel's *In the Footsteps of Women: Peregrinations in Cyprus* (1998),<sup>4</sup> Rita C. Severis's *Travelling Artists in Cyprus from the 1700s to 1960* (2000),<sup>5</sup> and Jim Bowman's *Narratives of Cyprus: Modern Travel Writing and Cultural Encounters since Lawrence Durrell* (2014),<sup>6</sup> among others.

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<sup>1</sup> London: Chatto & Pickering, 2014, volume V.

<sup>2</sup> London: Chatto & Pickering, 2014, volumes I and II.

<sup>3</sup> Granada: Centro de Estudios Bizantinos, Neogriegos y Chipriotas and A. G. Leventis Foundation, 2004.

<sup>4</sup> Nicosia: Leventis Municipal Museum and the Cultural Centre of the Popular Bank, 1998.

<sup>5</sup> London: Philip Wilson, 2000.

<sup>6</sup> London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2014.

*English Travel Accounts on Cyprus (1960-2004)* spans the period covered from 1960 up until 2004, i.e. the year when Cyprus officially achieved her longed-for entrance in the European Union, though without its northern part. The authors have employed these key dates in Cyprus's recent history to frame the travel accounts published in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century and the very early years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Naturally, this is no history book. However, the country's most traumatic 'civil-war' episodes in the 1960s and especially in 1974 and the subsequent massive migrations within the island of Greek Cypriots towards the south and Turkish Cypriots towards the north are inevitably referred to in it, albeit from an 'Anglo' perspective. Anglophone travellers in the 1960-2004 period did not fail to depict Cyprus in its uncomfortable infancy as an independent country. They also witnessed its first ethnical and religious clashes and the 1974 conflict, and included ample references about the embittered feelings and prejudices existing between many members of the two main communities regarding Cypriot identity.

The objectivity employed by Demetriou and Ruiz Mas deserves due credit in their scarce appreciations and interpretations: they have shown no preference for the cause of one or the other side of the Cyprus-conflict. This policy of non-commitment (for which one has to be thankful) has no doubt been aided by the fact that the authors are Spanish: they are not suspicious of favouring any specific side of the current communal conflict for reasons of national alliance. The same could not be said about the travellers themselves. Barbara Toy and Colin Thubron are clear-cut examples of travellers who sided with the Turkish Cypriots, whereas most of the other Anglophone chroniclers of the period did side with the Greek Cypriots.

The Spanish compilers have analysed around thirty travel narrations written by visitors of various walks of life. It is true that among these Anglophone travellers in Cyprus in the last fifty years there is not one of the literary status of Lawrence Durrell, there is no Henry Rider Haggard, no H. V. Morton, no William Hurrell Mallock, no Sir Samuel Baker, no Agnes Smith, and no Esmé Scott-Stevenson either. With the exception of the professional British travel writer Colin Thubron, the contemporary travel writers and scholars on things Cypriot included in this monograph do not carry, on the whole, the literary weight of their Victorian, Edwardian or Colonial predecessors in British Cyprus. Nevertheless, included in this book are some relevant names in Anglo-Cypriot relations, namely the British historians Gordon Home and Sir Harry Charles Luke and the German art historian Kraus Gallas (the latter writing in English about his disappointing experience on visiting the other side of the Green Line); or the Anglicised Greek Cypriot Reno Wideson trying to promote the island's

touristic potential; or heavy-weight political journalists such as the Australian Barbara Toy and the English Nancy Crawshaw in pre-1974 Cyprus; or even some examples of British and Irish expatriates, the most famous of whom was Sheila Hawkins, who authored the so called ‘Beyond’ trilogy of travel accounts/memoirs about her paradisiacal life in a small Greek Cypriot village ‘in the middle of nowhere’; or the Australian archeologist Diana Wood Conroy, a modern representative of the strong tradition of archaeological travellers in Cyprus; or even two medical doctors of mysterious identities, the Irishman ‘Peter Paris’ –most probably a pseudonym–, who was working in a hospital in the thick of ‘the troubles’ in an EOKA-threatened British Cyprus, and the dynamic but also mysterious Anglo-Russian doctor George Sava, who authored a probably ‘imaginary’ travel account on the island and a (probably equally ‘imaginary’) interview with Archbishop Makarios. And last but not least, there is a unique example of a British tourist, Oliver Burch, author of the much sought-after travel account *The Infidel Sea: Travels in North Cyprus* (1990),<sup>7</sup> who spent some holiday time with his family in the Turkish Cypriot tourist resort of Girne/Kyrenia in the late 1980s and offered a first-hand depiction of what everyday life in North Cyprus was like then. Irrespective of their literary quality, most of the travel narrations described in this monograph may contribute to the knowledge of the period as valuable historical documents of the recent past of the island as depicted and/or interpreted by first-hand Anglophone witnesses, if one ignores any subjectivity they could contain.

The amount of English-speaking travellers who have written travelogues on Cyprus has not diminished after 2004 at all, as is proved in Appendix III of Demetriou and Ruiz Mas’s book. The interest of non-Anglophone readers in learning about the Mediterranean island as portrayed by the most relevant British travellers of yore is also noticeable in a large number of translations into French, German, Italian, Spanish, Chinese, Japanese, Portuguese, Turkish, Dutch and the various Scandinavian languages of Morton’s, Durrell’s and Thubron’s travel accounts, as collected in Appendix II. The most famous English travel books, especially Lawrence Durrell’s *Bitter Lemons*,<sup>8</sup> continue to be regularly reedited, as shown in Appendix I. Indeed, the three appendices of the book ascertain that Cyprus has of late been a moderately successful literary *locus* both for Anglophone writers and for worldwide potential visitors.

Cyprus is no simple land to comprehend despite its small size. Those who have landed on its shores at different times of her history have been many and their purposes amply varied. Few of her visitors have remained indifferent to its

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<sup>7</sup> Southampton: Ashford, Buchan & Enright, 1990.

<sup>8</sup> London: Faber and Faber, 1957.

mythological spell and to its unequivocal literary resonances, but no less to its politically and geographically strategic position as a crossroads between Europe and the near East. Its proximity to Palestine soon converted the island into the last stop in any sea pilgrimage to the Holy Land, a route that has been followed since medieval times to the early 20th century. Foreign travel writers (especially those coming from Britain) have sometimes endeavored to deny or at least disguise Cyprus's European vocation in their narrations. The most influential examples of this image of the country may have been Durrell's *Bitter Lemons* (1957) and Thubron's *Journey into Cyprus* (1975).<sup>9</sup> The island and its Turkish/Greek Cypriot inhabitants were depicted as the straightforward result of a peculiar blend of Oriental and Byzantine flavours. They also systematically depicted the relatively recent British 82-year occupation of the island as being too spiritually distant from the local lay population. For these travel writers it was as if Cyprus had the duty to remain picturesquely Oriental, Byzantine and medieval, more Phoenician than Greek, hardly Lousignan (i.e., French), hardly Venetian (i.e., Italian) and not at all British. As a matter of fact Europeism was more often than not denied to 20<sup>th</sup>-century Cypriots. However, in my opinion, the most relevant merit of Demetriou and Ruiz Mas's book is that it has successfully managed to attract the attention of the world historians and political observers and travel specialists, who have been able to ascertain that the Anglophone travellers in Cyprus of the last decades, unlike Thubron or Durrell, have fully noticed the bi-communal country's slow progressive growth into a fully-fledged European identity. This certainly complicated but eventually successful 'journey to Europe' became a reality for Greek Cypriots in 2004; alas, not for Turkish Cypriots.

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<sup>9</sup> London: Heinemann, 1975.