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# Cypriot english literature: A stranger at the feast locally and globally

## **Abstract**

My focus in this essay revolves around a corpus of literature written by Cypriots in English that has yet to define itself either as a hyphenated branch of a national literature or as a minor independent category. So from the outset, my paper has a twofold task: firstly, to draw attention to the paradoxical position of Cypriot English writers who remain outside the literary feast both at home and abroad; and secondly, to explore the literary vicissitudes of some works of this corpus, and to examine how their minor position locally in relation to the dominant literatures in Greek and Turkish, and internationally in relation to global English — a position that Deleuze and Guattari (1986) describe as ‘minor literature’ — has engendered syncretic aesthetics.

MARIOS VASILIOU

## Cypriot English Literature: A Stranger at the Feast Locally and Globally

My focus in this essay revolves around a corpus of literature written by Cypriots in English that has yet to define itself either as a hyphenated branch of a national literature or as a minor independent category. So from the outset, my paper has a twofold task: firstly, to draw attention to the paradoxical position of Cypriot English writers who remain outside the literary feast both at home and abroad; and secondly, to explore the literary vicissitudes of some works of this corpus, and to examine how their minor position locally in relation to the dominant literatures in Greek and Turkish, and internationally in relation to global English — a position that Deleuze and Guattari (1986) describe as ‘minor literature’ — has engendered syncretic aesthetics. Through this analysis, I also intend to draw attention to the literary cross-fertilisations that occur from such minor positions and suggest that perhaps we should be wary of using globally fashionable literary terms (such as magic realism or postmodernism) in our reading of such syncretist works. Instead we might start viewing them as Eleni Kefala suggests, ‘as responses and reactions to multi-temporal and heterogeneous traditions ... where there is a symbiosis of elements and narratives, originating from different places and times, which might or might not (entirely) belong either to the so-called modernity or postmodernity’ (258).

Gregory Jusdanis finds that while generally Greek Literature has been on the periphery of the global literary stage, there was a brief phase after WWII when Greece captured the world’s literary focus since it fitted into its idea of the exotic. However, as he rightly argues this is no longer the case since the literary focus has shifted once more to different geographical locations. For example, the predominance of discourses such as post-colonialism and multiculturalism, has kept the study of literatures in English centred on Britain, America and those countries under their aegis that have sought to win political and cultural independence. In this world context, Greek literature became once more a stranger at the feast (Jusdanis 25). Without lamenting the phenomenon, Jusdanis argues that the world has been split between the ‘haves’ and ‘have-nots’ (26), those who speak English and those who do not. Similar to Greek literature and other national literatures that are found on the so-called periphery, Cypriot Greek (CG) and Cypriot Turkish (CT) literatures are also strangers at the international feast. But what about those Cypriots who write in English and belong, according to Jusdanis’ model, in the ‘haves’, and not in the ‘have-nots’? Have they fared better than their CG or CT counterparts? In other words, has English opened pathways to a wider audience

or to any form of international recognition? The answer to this question is grave indeed; not only do they generally remain unknown internationally but even more sombrely, for the most part they remain outside the local feast too. Lately a change of attitude towards Cypriot English writing in Cyprus may be observed amongst both major communities, as exemplified by inclusions in a few literary magazines and journals, such as *Cadences*, *Arteri*, and *In Focus*, or sporadically in literary anthologies, such as the recently published volume entitled, *The Series of Modern Turkish Cypriot Literature* (2009) which dedicated some space for literary works in English by TC writers. Despite this recent slight change of attitude, the general picture remains sobering indeed: with a few exceptions the literary institutions in both communities remain ignorant of writers who write in English, as well as of each other, as Mehmet Yashin points out (223).

The purpose of this essay is to bring attention to Cypriot English writing as part of what Deleuze and Guattari have called ‘minor literature’ (18) whose significance lies in its multiple tensions: on the one hand, with the dominant languages locally, and on the other, with the major language from which it springs, internationally. Using Kafka and the tensions engendered by his authorial location as a Jew of Prague writing in German as paradigmatic of ‘minor literature’, Deleuze and Guattari expound on the revolutionary and subversive potentialities that such literatures can reveal. As they argue, ‘A minor literature doesn’t come from a minor language; it is rather that which a minority constructs within a major language’ (16). Kafka’s position with its attendant multiple frictions, is indeed similar to that of the Cypriot English writers. A Jew living in Prague writing in German is in essence a multiply deterritorialized subject: deterritorialized from [his] ‘primitive Czech territoriality’ (16); cut off from the major German language by his position in Prague; but also in a problematic position in relation to the German language accentuated by his Jewishness which renders him at the same time ‘part of this minority and excluded from it’ (17). Similarly, Cypriot English writers are deterritorialized since they are cut off from the local Greek and Turkish speaking establishments that erect linguistic barriers to them, while concurrently being in an ambivalent position in relation to global English and its attendant colonial and imperial connotations. Cypriot English is indeed exemplary of a literature that is theoretically in a majority position in relation to its local counterparts, by virtue of its allegiance to a major language, yet is in essence in a minority position both at home — since it is ignored and excluded — and internationally relative to global Anglophone writing since even its own postcoloniality does not seem to bestow it with enough marginality to elicit the literary world’s attention. I am interested in locating the position of this corpus of literature both at home and internationally and in exploring the aesthetic results of its dialectical exchanges. This task must also consider questions of identity. In Cyprus, the relationship between language and identity has been profoundly important, since language has been considered by the two major communities to be the primary proof of identification with the

corresponding motherland, as much as with the island itself. As Ashcroft et al. argue, '[t]he study of English has always been a densely political and cultural phenomenon' (3). The history of the reception of English in Cyprus and in effect its paradoxical marginalisation — considering the global presence of English that marginalises other languages — is complex as it began in the late nineteenth century by ushering in a British-sponsored literary cosmopolitanism in opposition to 'traditional' Greek and Turkish cultures that gave way to a fervent nationalism from the 1950s onwards that reinstalled the two local cultures as definitive of Cypriot identity.

In an era where literature is still predominantly produced, categorised, distributed, and consumed based on linguistic and national markers, Cypriot writers in English find their work outside such seemingly neat categories of Cypriot, CG, or CT literature, but are also often ignored by the category of 'post-colonial English'. In essence, in the island they either face the indifference of the literary establishments or when given some attention they are usually treated as anomalies that are better understood as part of the cosmopolitan globe; from the global perspective they constitute a very small dot on the map and appear insufficiently victimised to warrant postcolonial attention.

In most other countries which have had their own unique experiences of colonisation and postcoloniality (India and Nigeria being exemplary), the sheer volume of literary works produced, as well as their position in the global literary market — that has shifted its interest to the so called third-world — enabled them to carve out some space for themselves and become established either as part of English literature or as branches of their national literatures (for example, Indian Anglophone literature). Without disregarding the tensions or the politics of appropriation, absorption, and exclusion that are involved in such processes, let alone the desirability of being part of such categories, it is evident that Cypriot English writing is in a somewhat less established position, one that is better understood within the frame of Deleuze and Guattari's definition of 'minor literature'.

Before I begin my analysis of these works, I should explain the way I use the terms 'centre' and 'periphery', as well as 'syncretism'. The relationship between centre and periphery, a product of modernity, does not denote a cultural hierarchy in this essay; its use is meant to expose and challenge the literary geopolitics of the world and, in my references to it I intend to interrogate its validity by bringing out from the works I analyse what Kefala has called the 'multiple modernities' (22), that are not necessarily inadequate, failed, or belated but simply 'alternative modernities' (23). By interrogating the cultural hegemony implicit in the binary of centre and periphery, critical discourses have exemplified that 'each centre ... has its own periphery, its osmotic porous space of ambivalence, where disparate traditions meet, contest and mingle with each other' (Kefala 35–36). In other words, the exclusivist binary itself allows for a zone of syncretism that can be reclaimed as importantly constitutive rather than a poor by-product.

Consider for instance, the work of a promising young writer such as Miranda Hoplaros who, in her novel *Mrs Bones* (2008), explores ‘what it meant to be a Cypriot girl living in a small township north of Rhodesia — learning English at school, attending Greek lessons and speaking the Cypriot dialect at home’ (8). Hoplaros’ work is neither part of Cypriot, nor of English, African or Zimbabwean literature. It is a novel at the crossroads par excellence. Ambivalence may characterise the work of many contemporary writers, but the ambiguities and contradictions inherent in a work such as *Mrs Bones* have brought about their own fascinating syncretic aesthetics which I will explore.

Miranda Hoplaros’ *Mrs Bones*, an autobiographical novel, is a spatial and temporal journey into 1970s Rhodesia through the eyes of the child narrator, a journey that is both spatially and temporally utopian, or perhaps dystopian since both space and time have been profoundly altered (neither Rhodesia exists as such but only as a failed utopia imprinted on t-shirts, nor the narrator as a child). Instead of a customary plot, the novel presents a series of vignettes which blend personal, social, cultural, and historical events in such an intricate manner as to foreground the complex lives of diasporic people. Consequently, the reader is left with innumerable impressions about the experience of the author growing up as a diasporic person in Rhodesia. Through these simple narrative fragments, the author succeeds in conveying the particularities of her own diasporic experience as well as the complexities that are inherent to diaspora. For instance, in the chapter entitled ‘Maps’ — deliberately (mis)placed at the end of the book, as opposed to the beginning, considering the navigational purpose of these maps into the life of the narrator — the child narrator says:

Colonisers like to draw maps, to label and record like Robinson Crusoe. It’s a way of controlling the outside environment — outside the self. Things look neater when they are in front of you on a piece of paper. The outline of a whole country — the jutting edges and straight lines that represent borders — can be squeezed inside someone’s mind... Maps don’t speak of the mixed smells in shops, the taste of mango, the struggle for Independence ... maps are stuck in time. (181)

This allegorical fragment which foregrounds the political and historical implications of maps, particularly in the context of colonialism, blends with her personal cartography in the fragment that follows, completing the vignette called ‘Maps’:

My map is as still as the balancing rocks at Epworth. It has the cities and towns I have stopped at for a passing drink to get the red dust out of my throat, to throw away the egg shells collected in the moving car, lunches at Cypriot’ houses, holidays and the road to school. The spaces in between are empty. These are things I remember from the country I called home. (183)

Thus, the author succeeds in blurring notions of the personal and the political, of the historical and the fictional. In any given chapter, the child-narrator juxtaposes popular literary styles and translates them in the process through its seemingly naive eyes.

The realist description is contested by a post-colonial rewriting and remembering of space and names; the fragmented, inchoate, non-linear narration that echoes postmodern fiction is in tension with the fragments of realist narration of folktales and traditional customs, like the traditional reading of a coffee cup used in forecasting the future. Moreover, the admixture, twisting, and juxtapositions of these discourses, create a narrative style, that is neither one, nor the other, reminding the reader that perhaps these trendy literary modes can only serve as reference points to begin exploring syncretic aesthetics. *Mrs Bones* is indeed at the interstices of linguistic, cultural, geographical, and national categories — where, as Homi Bhabha argues, lie ambiguities, ambivalences, and contradictions. Although there is an increasing volume of literature that is characterised by ambivalence and ambiguity, and which has been analysed under the theoretical category of the post-colonial, I would like to argue that *Mrs. Bones* — as well as the majority of Cypriot English literature — is in a way beyond the post-colonial. The politico-historical terrain in Cyprus renders it recalcitrant to the prescriptive critical models of the post-colonial: on the one hand, Cyprus' membership in the European Union weakens its post-colonial victim status and consequently its claim for global attention as part of the post-colonial; and on the other, its ongoing intricate national politics marginalise its post-colonial identity in the name of nationalist politics. Nevertheless, the very 'minority' status of Cypriot English literature as deterritorialised writing in relation to the dominant Greek and Turkish, and internationally in relation to global English has enabled it to develop further its subversive potentialities by underlining its heteroglossic nature without exoticising it. An example may elucidate this point. In the chapter entitled 'Darwin', the author says that:

There is a struggle in Rhodesia. Charles Darwin spoke about the struggle for life. A good way to survive is to change and fit into the environment and not to resist. We live in a township in the north east of Rhodesia called Mount Darwin... The Africans had another name for it. They called it *Pfura* — large rhinoceros... It should really be called *Pfura* because the Africans were there first... We are the township people, the ethnic minority. We are the Cypriots and the Greeks (bundled together as 'the Greeks')... The farmers scattered around the township are happy with us. We don't cause trouble and buy lots of milk to make *haloumi*. (98)

By inscribing the difference between Cypriots and Greeks, the passage — as well as the novel as a whole — posits itself problematically in relation to nationalist discourses. Moreover, the passage reveals the complexity of its post-colonial identity; does it foreground its Rhodesian (or Zimbabwean) post-coloniality or its Cypriot one, or both? The insertion of *Pfura* and *haloumi*, both of which are italicised, inscribe its difference from metropolitan English, yet the refusal of the passage to linger on either of the two, and especially on the latter — which almost warrants an exotic explication but is lost in a narration that reads more like a fable — convey its resistance to the mode of auto-exoticisation that has been observed as pervasive in post-colonial fiction. This recalcitrant minority location of the text

which is paradigmatic of most of Cypriot English literature (exemplified in its heteroglossic nature and its attendant tensions in relation to domestic languages as well as global English) may bestow it with radical and subversive potentialities as Deleuze and Guattari argue, but at the same time has precluded it from any established categories of circulation. In Cyprus, it is excluded by the dominant Greek and Turkish literary networks of production, reception, and circulation and internationally, it is not exotic or victimised enough to fit comfortably in the literary circuits of the post-colonial.

Another particularly interesting aspect of *Mrs Bones* is the way that it challenges the official historical narratives with their linear chronological sequence. The voice of the child-narrator is subtly contested by the author's editing, or 'artificial interference, a way of changing the story' (9) as the narrator tells us at the start of the book, thereby drawing attention to the process of making a story, or writing history. Indeed through the employment of story-telling that draws from various mythologies such as Greek, African and Judaic, the novel revisits the past and rewrites both time and place, exemplifying a post-colonial gesture of re-appropriation of history from the colonial narratives. The narrative that emerges is profoundly syncretic; it synthesises while violating orthodox notions of history and geography; it merges the personal, with the historical and religious, while subtly and wittingly contesting all of them; it fuses the real with the fictional in such a way, that they both shrink and expand at the same time. For how else are we to interpret the six consecutive chapters named flood narratives, starting with Noah's Ark, continuing with Nyaminyami, the River God, followed by Operation Noah, which relates the story of the construction of the Kariba Dam, and the loan from the World Bank?

In these chapters, apart from fusing and twisting ample references to the bible, African mythology, Cypriot and African history, and personal narratives, the novel draws attention to the effects the construction of the dam had on the lives of the Tonga. The reader is told that, 'The Tonga have peacefully inhabited the Zambezi [the name of the river] for thousands of years and are on good terms with the River God, who has a fish head and a snake's torso. But then the possibility of hydroelectric power destroyed the Tonga's lifestyle. Colonialism needed power to work... The wall separated Nyaminyami from his people' and he now 'sells his story and image to tourists' (143–45). This revisiting of the past enables the writer to expose the pernicious effects of both colonialism and neo-colonialism. Once more, the narrative fuses, splits and twists the historical and the mythical, the personal and the public, the real and the fictional, translating all of them in the process in a narrative that violates both spatial and temporal borders, adding layer upon layer of voices, discourses, and literary practices that exist at times symbiotically, and at times in tension, demonstrating thus syncretist aesthetics.

This syncretic nature of the novel is also eloquently and subtly foregrounded in the vignette called 'Reading Coffee'. The author begins by narrating in a rather

child-like manner the process of making the coffee. Nevertheless, instead of underlining the provenance of the coffee in such a way as to highlight its exotic nature or engage in petty nationalist debates — whether the coffee is Cypriot, Turkish, or Greek — the author prefers to relate it to Cyprus by casually dropping in some old Cypriot adages like when she says that

The coffee is for adults. I've heard women scare boys into not drinking coffee by telling them they won't grow moustaches if they drink it. It tastes like the sand I sometimes eat to make myself ill so I will miss Greek school... As mom reads the coffee, the women listen. They drown out their inner voice in the froth that surfaces their cup. They take the voice they hear to be their own. It's the same in Rhodesia. We hear things from other people. We don't know what is happening in the bush, outside Rhodesia, the fighting inside Cyprus. We depend for information on others. (77–78)

In a novel that is largely based in Rhodesia, these forays into a Cypriot cultural and historical terrain are certainly significant since they provide focal points for the reader to further appreciate not only the syncretic nature of the book but also the tensions that arise from its location as 'minor literature'. The above passage demonstrates some of these tensions: on the one hand its refusal to aggrandise and exalt its potential for the exotic, as shown in the symbol of the 'coffee' and thus benefit from the growing marketability of the 'post-colonial'; and on the other, its subtle mockery of Cypriot masculine stereotypes such as the 'moustache', as well as its defiance of the official war narratives. We may depend on others for information, yet who are 'they' on whom we depend and how 'other' are they? The concept of 'other', so deeply ingrained in alteritist discourses, is here invested with a particularly empowering and subversive ambivalence. The novel succeeds in bringing out the tensions that are at play in a literature that is located in diaspora but which still refuses to eulogise its diasporic nature.

Andriana Ierodiaconou's novel *Margarita's Husband* is also paradigmatic of syncretic aesthetics. It is a novel informed by various global discourses and practices woven together and suffused in a Cypriot setting that oscillates between tradition and modernity during the colonial times. As the title indicates, the novel revolves around Margarita's husband, a prominent landowner who changed his name from 'son of Lame Petris to Kyroleon' (Ierodiaconou 23). He is dreaded by his workers, hated by his son Adonis while adored by his daughter Polyxene, and pitied, loved, and feared at the same time by his wife. The sudden death of Polyxene plunges the family into mourning and further exacerbates the distance between Kyroleon on the one hand and his wife and son on the other. His son, Adonis, who returns to the village after being in Paris for his studies, seems to be a constant source of irritation for the patriarchal figure of the family. Instead of becoming a doctor as he was instructed, he returns to the microcosm of the village enamoured with surrealist poetry, and full of aspirations to become a poet. Through these main three characters the novel revisits colonial life in the 1930s, culminating in the demonstrations that resulted in the burning of the

colonial Government's house in 1931. Moreover, through the dynamics of their relationships, the novel negotiates the transition from traditional life to modernity, and the role of patriarchal nationalism in the incipient anti-colonial movement. The novel blends magic realist and postmodernist practices with such traditional Cypriot literary genres as the *tsiastista*<sup>1</sup> as well as with such traditional visions of Saints soothingly smiling during a nuptial ceremony — visions which modernity has hurled into the realm of the occult but which characterised village life at the beginning of the twentieth century. However, these 'magic' moments are fused with traditional beliefs that are redolent of the local colour of village life like the appearances of saints in dreams or the outlandish power of the crone of the village to make things come true. From the local point of view, this is 'village realism' and not magic realism. Tradition, as Karayanni argues, is also a product of modernity, since its construction depends on a selective exoticisation and definition (Thompson, Karayanni & Vassiliadou 285)

Moreover, the novel entails postmodern elements, like the non-linear narration, the complete collapse of narrative structure in chapter 11, entitled 'Gethsemane's story'. Yet these elements are woven into a narration that is realist for the most part. Through the sometimes serious, sometimes amusing splittings and fusions of identity, the novel interrogates ideas of purity which characterise nationalist and colonial discourses. For example, the mystery of Kyroleon's exceptional height compared to his co-villagers is alluded to in the long-forgotten story of his great-great-grandmother's alleged rape 'by a group of pirates, though whether they were Greeks or Arabs and what their height had been no one could say for certain' (19). Kyroleon's origins could thus be either Greek or Arab, or both. Evidently, the mixture which is indistinguishable in Kyroleon's nature, subtly undermines such orthodox conceptions of identity that typify nationalist and Orientalist discourses. It also suggests that cultural heterogeneity is characteristic of all societies.

The novel's reluctance to locate the story either spatially and temporally, may at first seem to be suggesting that it is indifferent to history, yet its textual fabric is carefully embroidered to precisely grapple with the events preceding the anti-colonial revolution and more specifically the 1931 uprising. Moreover, by reinscribing the events in ways that defy the nationalist narratives, the novel can be seen as a post-colonial rewriting of history that challenges the historiographical genre with its claims to true narrative and temporally linear unfolding. Through this revisiting of the events prior to the entrenchment of nationalistic positions, the novel brings out the tensions between the various nascent discourses that were vying for power at the time; tensions that were silenced by the homogenising processes of the nationalist discourse that predominated later on. The world of modernity exemplified in the presence of political parties, national education and working-class movements, coexists in this novel alongside the world of the so-called traditional life with its arranged marriages and its never-ending wedding festivities; its officially illicit but unofficially acceptable bribing of state employees

by their co-villagers. The survival of all of these practices even nowadays, at a time of post-modernity, renders such binaries as 'modern' and 'traditional' suspect and inadequate. Furthermore, by drawing from such heteromorphous genres and traditions such as realism, magic realism, postcolonialism, postmodernism, surrealist poetry, and *tsiatista*, the novel exemplifies what Nestor Garcia Canclini (1997 47) calls the 'multitemporal heterogeneity of the periphery' (qtd in Kefala 23). Similar to *Mrs. Bones, Margarita's Husband* exemplifies all the tensions that are present in 'minority literature'. While grappling with events that portray the beginning of anti-colonial movement in Cyprus, the novel disrupts the nationalist narratives and their homogenizing discourses by re-inscribing the events, swathing them in difference and plurality. Moreover, it posits itself defiantly in relation to English by inscribing its difference in its gesture of re-appropriation of the anti-colonial events, answering back to the empire in this manner. Yet, this response to the empire, which might normally make it accessible to the critical models of the 'post-colonial', does not, since the location of the novel in the global literary circuits renders it inadequately victimised for easy circulation under the 'post-colonial'.

Comparable to both of these novels are the syncretist aesthetics of Stephanos Stephanides' memoir, 'The Wind Under My Lips', an autobiographical journey which as the author says has become 'layered with time' (102). The passage I discuss here is only a short excerpt from the memoir which has not yet been published in its entirety. Yet, from this short excerpt the reader may see that for Stephanides, as well as Hoplaros and Ierodiaconou, their experience of Cyprus itself is syncretic and their journey into the past usually entails some form of negotiation to bring back home what has been lost. Writing becomes a means of negotiation with the past, not in a way of retrieving the past intact, but in a manner that underlines the impossibility of retrieving it, or to echo the words of Salman Rushdie that 'the past is home, albeit a lost home' (9). The author endeavours to trace the beginning of this journey, and despite his vigilant attentiveness to the voices of sibyls, and to the advice of elders and sages of a faraway land to look into 'prenatal memory', he opts instead to 'speculate on crossroads for a while not paths' (103). The excerpt is an attempt by the author to revisit his past and re-member the scattered mnemonic fragments of his floating, unsettled, and diasporic childhood. Yet, instead of a *retour* to the past, the author finds himself constantly detouring. His own beginning 'detours' his narration to the beginning of his progenitors' 'peculiar chemistry' (102), while this in its turn leads his narration on a detour into their own personal itineraries before they met, and so on. Through this trope of constant detouring the author succeeds in foregrounding not only the fallibility of memory but also the process of writing as a way of bringing back home the experience of diaspora, or homelessness. In this short excerpt, the reader glimpses what it means to float between three islands, between the two islands where his parents ended up after their separation, and his final destination, Cyprus. During his peregrinations, he says, that

The island never stood still. I was floating with it as it revealed its contours to me anew on every journey... In between I was everybody's child and there was space for me on any journey for harvest, feast, pilgrimage ... we only reached Anatolia or the Levant with the imagination. These other places were like mirages for me as I would float on my back on the sea wondering if when I looked around I would be on the yonder shore. Or perhaps these places were already within us — implosions in our imagination, like islands exploding in the sea floating here and there with the uncertainty of detachment. (108–109)

Wandering and floating are metaphors in this work for cultural transfer and exchange, and the role of imagination is paramount in mobilising this process of transfer. The diasporic wandering of the narrator is here not one of lament and sorrow but one of sober optimism about the liberating potentialities that literal or imaginary journeys are impregnated with. The story's refusal to be located in any other place or time than crossroads is significant in light of the fact that, it challenges fixed notions of both time and space that typify nationalistic and colonial narratives. Temporal and spatial fixities are also negated both by the fragmented narration as well as by the constant physical or spectral displacement of characters and events. As the author says, '[m]y body is not always oriented about comings and goings. I do know I am still coming and becoming. And not yet ready to go, though I am always going somewhere — even when I stay still' (107). Crossroads is a metaphor for the space where the personal meets the historical, where literary modes like postmodernism, critical cosmopolitanism, and post-colonialism converge, contest, and mingle with one another revealing the ambiguities, contradictions, and paradoxes that are characteristic of syncretic aesthetics and that are at play at such shifting and transient locations.

I would like to conclude by reiterating the fact that my intention in this essay has simply been to point to the paradoxical position of Cypriot English writers who are not currently participating in local or international literary feasts. Cyprus English literature, being a 'minor literature' is paradigmatic of multiple tensions: on the one hand vis-a-vis the territorialised local languages, with their respective powerful alliances with Greek and Turkish metropolitan literary centres; and on the other, vis-a-vis English, the 'major' language from where it springs. These 'minor' voices however do not speak with one voice, but rather engender a uniquely syncretic literary aesthetics which challenge us to think about critical ways of reading and analysing, while also urging us to consider their position vis-a-vis local and international literary practices. Most importantly, their syncretism compels us to evaluate critically the facile application of literary modes of global marketability such as postmodern, postcolonial, or magic realist, on 'minor' literatures that do not perhaps fit easily into these prescriptive categories and focus instead on those critical discourses of cultural transference and cultural translation that are at play in such syncretic practices.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> An impromptu form of poetry consisting of verses of rhyming couplets that is generally performed live in traditional celebrations and which usually entails a competition between the poets for the wittiest poem.

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