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Re-Imagining Union in Europe: The Politics of Body, Family, and Reproduction in Sotiris Dimitriou's Short Stories

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Abstract

In an era of intense migrant labor flow followed by economic crisis in Greece and in several other European countries, Sotiris Dimitriou's short stories reflect on the affective influence of these changes on the fragile body of the individual as well as on social and sexual reproduction. As the body becomes a receptacle of social tensions, the ideals of healthy reproduction and communitarian identity, an ideal "union" based on family, are disrupted in Dimitriou's work. The author's dystopias of reproduction provide an insightful portrayal of the way neoliberal regimes of production in contemporary Europe bring migrants and the underclass together: both groups are subject to the violent politics of disposability of bodies under an economy obsessed with efficiency. Dimitriou's short stories, elusive as they are to social and political analysis, render visible a population excluded from the promise of prosperity in post-Cold War Europe and propose alternative forms of community.

In 2006, the Austrian Presidency of the EU Council of Europe launched a cultural project titled *Café d'Europe* for Europe Day, 9 May, the day set aside for the annual celebration of European unity.¹ *Café d'Europe* was premised on the idea of European cafés as quintessential public spaces for intellectual exchange and thus a "symbol of our common European heritage" (EUAT 2006). Twenty-seven cafés in capitals from Dublin to Athens housed discussions on "the diversity and colorful nature of the European Union" (EUAT 2006). Three posters prepared by the EU Council for the project associated European culture with leisure and gustatory pleasure, showing: a colorful pile of twenty-three books in the diverse languages of the EU; twenty-seven desserts lined up in columns and rows; and twenty-seven coffee mugs lined up in the same grid of columns and rows. The posters display the diverse inspirations for the gut and intellect offered by each member country.

At the center of European diversity, as presented by *Café d'Europe*, was the multi-cultural sweet cuisine. The official website was flavored with traditional recipes of sweets from Austrian *Gugelhupf* to Cypriot *Baklava* (capitalized and spelled thus on the website). Beyond the display case of arbitrarily nationalized yet colorfully coexisting sweets, there was an explicitly literary aspect to the project. A selected writer from each member country was asked to write his or her own “story of Europe.” Jiri Gruša, the President of International PEN at the time, composed an exemplary short piece to guide the prospective authors. Gruša’s story “Temptress Europe” goes back to the myth of Europa as a unified source that brings the writers of Europe together on a common supra-national ground and provides inspiration for the multiplicity of European languages:

We owe Europe to a heavenly being from the time of the Gods when they took on a corporal form to seduce and make love to earthly maidens. The daughter of a king was abducted, one whose beauty enticed both men and Gods. There must be something divine in this fiendish love, for from the homelands of Europe we were given the gift of writing. . . . O God! O Zeus! O you suffering literati of the national willfulness! We have written so many words against one another that the ink circulates through our bodies like a mischievous genie. Europe is no victim, no battlefield, not a piece of property. She is the Goddess of languages.²

While admitting its “fiendish” nature, Gruša optimistically blends the myth of Europa, commonly interpreted as that of an abduction and rape, with that of King Thamus mentioned in Plato’s *Phaedrus*. The latter tells of god Theuth’s offering of the “gift of writing” to the Egyptian king. In this appropriation and blending of myths, Europa becomes the necessary sacrifice for a productive or reproductive divine love affair, a sacrifice for the creation of the heritage, languages, and literatures of Europe. Zeus’s semen turns into the ink that circulates among “literati of national willfulness,” and writers of Europe are bonded together in a family or a blood lineage.

In Greece, Sotiris Dimitriou was selected to respond to Gruša’s call for a “story of Europe” as inspiration, temptation, and seduction. Originally from the Epirot region of Northern Greece near the Albanian border, Dimitriou, after working as a superintendent in the Athens City Council’s Department of Refuse Collection for many years, published his first collection of poems in 1985, to be followed by multiple short story collections and novels.³ Productive and well recognized as he is in Greece, he became famous for writing grotesque naturalist narratives dominated by the portrayal of extreme corporeal violence. Both his novels and short stories predominantly depict the lives of marginal characters—sex workers, the disabled, migrants, mad men and women, and other class, ethnic, and sexual outcasts. His works have both attracted and alienated national readership not only due to the multiple forms of violence they portray (physical, psychological, structural, and symbolic)

but also as a result of the sheer foreignness of the language he uses, mixing standard Greek with heavy local dialects. As literary critic Venetia Apostolidou explains, Dimitriou's fiction is "governed by feelings of depression, deprivation, disorientation, displacement, and exile" (2004, 97).

Thus Dimitriou was a paradoxical choice, when the mission was to tell a story of multicultural Europe and its heritage as one of temptation and seduction, just as Gruša describes. Dimitriou's narratives, especially his short stories, continuously affiliate temptation and seduction with violence, as his approach to the concept of "union" is rarely optimistic in his narratives on incest, prostitution, sexual deprivation, and racism. It was no surprise that the short story he presented in *Café Ianos* in Athens on Europe Day 2006 twisted the idea of Europe as a land of cultural diversity. Unlike Gruša, Dimitriou's story, "My Personal War"⁴ hardly celebrates Europa as a beautiful seductress of artful creation or multicultural Europe as a family of her descendants. As will be discussed at length in the next section, Dimitriou's story of seduction between a German woman and a Greek man first presents and then upsets the promise of a love affair beyond cultural and linguistic borders. "My Personal War" and Dimitriou's several other short stories analyzed in the following sections present problems in the conception of union as imagined in Europe and explore alternative forms of community.

This article examines how the treatment of the body—and specifically the multiple forms of violence against the body—in Dimitriou's short stories stand as an ongoing critique of Greece and Europe imagined as diverse, mobile, and united. The author's short stories link physical to structural violence and thereby manifest the effects of growing social and economic disparities in Greece and in Europe more broadly, especially on economically marginal citizens. Some of the short stories explored in this article were published as early as the late 1980s, immediately before the influx of migration from the Balkans and two decades before the current, ongoing economic crisis in Greece. Yet, almost prophetically, they convey what Raymond Williams refers to as a "structure of feeling" of today's Greece, an amalgam of feeling and thought with "specifically affective elements of consciousness and relationships" (1977, 132). The "structures of feeling" within cultural texts relate the intensely personal experience of the social moment and provide insight into affective economies in formation: "a kind of feeling and thinking which is indeed social and material, but each in an embryonic phase before it can become a fully articulate and defined exchange" (131). Dimitriou's texts articulate the affective "embryonic phase" of the 2000s. These stories' commentary on the commodification of bodies, structural violence, and the idealization of the family and its values are all the more relevant today. In their attempt to break the imagination of union as an ethnic, racial, and national communion and to replace it with an alternative model of community based on people's shared experience of crisis, these stories

demand to be re-read and re-interpreted in the light of contemporary political, social, and economic problems in Greece.

Disrupted mobility in Europe

“My Personal War” opens in Varkiza, the touristic seaside area near Athens. Azerin, the main character, whose name suggests «την μακρινή καταγωγή της» (her distant origin), is an attractive German nurse in her thirties on an extended summer trip traveling through Southern Europe in search of love: «Πήρε τους δρόμους του Νότου. Όλη η ζωή της, όλες οι προσδοκίες της για την αγάπη ήταν εκείνο το καλοκαιρινό ταξίδι» (She took the road south. All her life, all her expectations for love were that summer trip; Dimitriou 2007).⁵ On her journey, she carries a tape recorder to collect sounds from the countries she visits. Rather than being carried away with the obsession of capturing images with a camera, Azerin yearns for recording the interaction of languages. This kind-hearted nurse’s desire to go beyond images also reflects on her belief in a definition of love that surpasses the physical attraction of bodies, since «χωρίς την αγάπη και στο πιο λαμπερό σώμα караδοκει η απέχθεια» (without love, even the most radiant body harbors repulsion). Rather than a summer fling she pursues an idealized permanent relationship, a passionate and lasting heterosexual union in which «η αγάπη θα δημιουργούσε περίπου μόνιμες προϋποθέσεις ηδονής . . . η αγάπη θα περιέβαλε την ηδονή με φως» (love would create nearly permanent conditions of pleasure . . . love would surround the pleasure with light).

Soon, a young man wandering around the beach looking like he is «ρέμπελος και παραδομένος» (idle and lost) with a «μόνιμη ανησυχία» (permanent anxiety) on his face approaches Azerin. This man, who seems to be abandoned and in need of attention, appears to be a perfect match for the caring nurse looking for love. They start to have a conversation; Azerin tells him about her travels, specifically how she was stopped at an airport once because the guards thought she was from Libya but «αυτή βέβαια ήταν Γερμανίδα» (she was German, of course), emphasizing that she was wrongfully stopped and searched. Azerin tries to convince the man that contrary to common belief, Germans are in fact «Θεμοί άνθρωποι» (wam people). He corrects her, laughing, «Θερμοί άνθρωποι» (warm people). The story of a romantic search for love and union on a beautiful sunny Mediterranean beach, blending languages and cultures on a tape recorder, turning minor communication problems into flirtation, seems to move towards a happy union. It celebrates the borderless and leisurely migration that distinguishes a European citizen from that of less flexible others—such as Libyans, for example. Yet, the story also signals Azerin’s inescapable mark of Otherness despite her passport, the discriminatory treatment she receives at the airport, possibly due to her «μέτριο

ανάστημα, με έντονα μελαψό δέρμα» (medium stature and intensely dark skin), since «καθόλου δεν έμοιαζε για Βορειοευρωπαία» (she didn't look at all like a Northern European).

A series of disappointments and misunderstandings follow this scene of intercultural flirtation. After her conversation with the young Greek, Azerin stands up, and the man realizes that she is not quite as flexible or mobile as she claims to be: «Αυτή δεν σταθεροποιήθηκε. . . . Το κορίτσι χώλαινε» (She could not find her balance. . . . The girl was limping). As they separate with a kiss, with hesitation on the young man's part, they make an appointment to meet later in central Athens, and then he «έστρεψε πάλι να δει τα νώτα της. Να δει αυτόν τον στρεβλό κυματισμό που δημιουργούσε η χωλότητα» (turned again to see her back. To see that crooked movement the limping woman was making). He is surprised and disappointed at this unforeseen disability and at her rejection of any help from him. When he tries to help her stand up, she pushes him aside and says, "my personal war" in English—a third language. These last words between them become a sign of distancing between their bodies or in the way he imagined her body next to his, between the potential union at the beach and the failure of the union in the chaotic heart of the city.

On her way to Syntagma Square, where they are supposed to meet, the traffic slows down, and the cab driver explains, «Καμιά πορεία έχουν πάλι» (There is some demonstration again), thus hinting at the contrast that underlines her movement from the leisurely beach to the center of social and political tension. As the cab traverses Syngrou, Athens's notorious avenue for transsexual and transgendered prostitution, a banner advertises, «τερατώδη αθλητικά έργα» (monstrous sports projects), and a billboard shows kids saying, «Η δική μου Ελλάδα έχει μεγάλη ψυχή» (my Greece has a big soul). The banner and the billboard promote national ideals of a healthy body and of a young population embracing an all-encompassing future, which appear ironic in an area where bodies become objects of conspicuous consumption. Azerin, not familiar with the area, observes a couple of girls whose manner of dress accentuated «τα φυσικά χαρίσματά τους» (their natural endowments). She thinks how mistaken these women are in their attention to outside appearance. For her, physical ornamentation cannot turn desire into something «πιο υποκειμενικό, πιο προσωπικό και μόνιμο» (more subjective, more personal and permanent). Yet, she may be looking at sex workers dressed up for that very reason she despises, to attract men's temporary passions. She is lost in translation: her idealist aspirations of love and passion are misplaced in a context where bodies become commodities.

The story abruptly veers from the initial prospect of flexible migrancy of sounds and bodies along with a passionate, long-lasting union between two European citizens. The narrative ends with a picture of physical closure and psychological desperation, the failure of the possibility of a communication

that transcends visual attractions. The dream of a happy, permanent heterosexual union in borderless Europe is shattered. The last scene shows Azerin stranded, quite meaningfully, in Syntagma Square, the square where Greeks received their first σύνταγμα (constitution), in the heart of Athens, struggling to cross the busy main street amidst the chaos of roaring vehicles, while she is holding, instead of the hand of her Greek lover-to-be, that of an old woman. Azerin, stood up by the man she met on the beach, has been surrounded by motorcycles, nearly run over by a car, ridiculed by a taxi driver because of her disability, and ignored by other cabs while she desperately tries to find her way back to the beach. She discerns passersby partially in their body parts: «Γόνατα, κνήμεις, τένοντες» (knees, calves, tendons) and senses a bad smell from deep within: «δεν ήταν απ' το στόμα της, αλλά απ' τα σωθικά της» (it did not come from her mouth but from her guts). The people around her are breaking down into their body parts, and she herself seems to be slowly decaying from inside.

Diversity in this story turns out to be the seduction of physical appearances—perhaps a sarcastic remark on the diversity of recipes for sweets on the *Café d'Europe* website. The banner showing the “great Greek soul” and the billboard of a youthful future on display on Syngrou Avenue are both bound up in the ideal of a healthy body; they reject and expel the physically unfit from the center of the city. The promise of a harmonious blending of sounds and languages is shattered in the cacophony of car horns in Constitution Square. The potential Greek lover is drawn to the beautiful immobile tourist on the beach whereas he is repelled by her “imbalanced” movement and disrupted fluency. Hence the contingent union of eternal love turns into a slow disintegration and decadence of bodies. Meanwhile the Platonic ideal of truth and love on Azerin’s mind dismisses the material conditions that put bodies on display on Syngrou and in Constitution Square, a setting associated with law and order that is anything but orderly. Eventually, the union realized in Constitution Square is one on the level of compassion: Azerin walks with the old Greek woman, two decaying bodies helping each other through chaos and strife. Dimitriou’s pessimistic contemplation on European unity and diversity is even more ironic when one considers that the unfulfilled union of lovers was supposed to take place in the very space where the *Vouli*, Greek Parliament, is located. The Parliament had, only a year before Dimitriou wrote this story, ratified the European Constitution—described on the official website as a necessary step for “the completion of a long process of integration marked by ever closer integration” (*Europa: A Constitution for Europe*)—that is supposed to fortify the union between the member states.

“My Personal War” calls into question two fundamental attributes of the EU, mobility and flexible citizenship, as core elements of unity. Dimitriou inquires into the complexities of unity in Europe beyond the harmonious brotherhood of sweets, the literati, and even the constitution, pointing to

mobility as a central component in the conception of a united Europe in practical terms.⁶ As political theorist Sandro Mezzadra explains, “the flexibility and mobility of European borders [is] a key characteristic of the institutional architecture of the EU . . . *border crossing* as a substance of citizenship, but also of *border reinforcing*” (Mezzadra in Bojadzijeve and Saint Saens, 22–23).⁷ Along these lines, Dimitriou’s narrative reveals that European citizenship is often defined as the privilege of flexible movement (“border crossing”), the internal physical mobility that exists thanks to the lack of mobility that marks its external borders (“border reinforcing”). Azerin moves freely in Europe only to the extent that she can show her passport and prove that she is not from a country such as Libya, despite her looks. Her mobility—under suspicious eyes before which she has to prove her identity and belonging to Europe—is not enough to facilitate the ideal of European unity as a heterosexual union with a youthful future. That is, she is not mobile enough to accomplish such an ideal union. Instead, she ends up moving hand in hand through a chaotic cacophony alongside another decaying body. Dimitriou’s critique of Europe’s union puts a particular emphasis on the body, revealing the required norms for mobility and unity: the invisible yet frequently experienced norms that have as much to do with having the “right” physical appearance as with having the “right” passport.

Body and violence in Dimitriou’s stories

Due to the ambiguous and multiple meanings that bodies and violence take in Dimitriou’s short stories, they pose challenges for the critic who sets out to analyze them in terms of their social meanings. While one literary critic has described Dimitriou as «ο πλέον (αν όχι ο μόνος) αμιγώς κοινωνικά προσανατολισμένος συγγραφέας σε σχέση προς τους υπόλοιπους της γενιάς του» [the most (if not the only) purely socially conscious writer of his generation] (Kotzia 2001), the analysis of his social politics has had a limited scope. The focus has been mostly on his two novels, *N’ακούω καλά τ’όνομά σου* (*May Your Name Be Blessed*, 1993) and *Τους τα λέει ο Θεός* (*God Tells Them All*, 2002), which thematize the experiences of Greek-Albanian border crossings. For instance, Dimitris Tziouvas, in his introduction to Leo Marshall’s English translation of *May Your Name Be Blessed*, praises the novel for its treatment of political problems. The contrast he draws between the novel and Dimitriou’s short stories is telling. “Unlike [Dimitriou’s short] stories,” he writes, “the novel does not focus on the particular case of some lonely individual, it deals with problems and situations that are more general and collective in character, acquiring thus a political and historical dimension” (xii). While the novel deals with social and political themes, the short stories explore lonely outcast characters and so fail to make clear social statements, in Tziouvas’s view. Tziouvas interprets the violent,

grotesque naturalism of Dimitriou's short stories as "negating the social and suggesting a desire to return to an elusive primordial state. It is the body which speaks in his stories" (xii). I suggest, however, that the stories are immediately social and political in today's Greece and Europe precisely by means of the bodies that "speak" in them. The stories reflect the physical, tangible effect of social violence on the body. The narration of the disturbing destruction of human bodies displays the influence of social violence (discrimination and economic demands for efficiency) on the individual body. Dimitriou's short stories foreground the victims of objectification—those who experience the increasingly exploitative economy of bodies in crisis-ridden contemporary Greece and Europe.

In the short story "Ντιάλιθ'ιμ Χριστάκη" (*Dialith'im Christaki*, Little Christos, my child), for instance—which transliterates into Greek the Albanian "dialith'im," meaning "my child"—the exploitation or objectification of a migrant woman's body gradually consumes her health: first her ability to reproduce a normatively healthy citizen, then her own mental health. In the story, a Greek baker decides to marry an Albanian woman, despite his sisters' objections: «Καλά, το 'χασες τελείως; Να μπάσουμε σπίτι μας την Αρβανίτω;» (Have you lost your mind completely? Are we to let that Albanian bitch in our house?; Dimitriou 1990, 51). His is not a marriage of love but of obstinacy; he marries the Albanian girl simply out of spite for his sisters, as the first sentence of the narrative conveys: «Απο 'να πείσμα την πήρε» (Out of stubbornness he married her; 51).

The narrator describes the family of the husband as a «φιδοφωλιά» (nest of snakes) that takes every opportunity to bite the Albanian bride and eliminate her vitality by means of «Μούτρα, μισόλογα, ξεθέωμα στις δουλειές» (Scowls, innuendo, deadly hard work; 51). What bothers the sisters much more than the bride's Albanian identity is her energy and life force, as she is a «γερή, νοστιμούλα» (healthy, tasty) girl who invigorates the bakery as soon as she enters: «όταν έμπαινε στο φούρνο τους, σαν κάτι να ομόρφαινε» (whenever she entered the bakery, things somehow became more beautiful; 51). Eventually, the husband and his sisters turn the bakery—a workspace affiliated with the production of nutrition—into her personal hell, draining out her life source.

Her isolation is intensified both by the deprivation of her mother tongue—she is derided when speaking in Albanian—and by the indifference of her husband. The only contact she has with her husband is during their sexual intercourse, which is described as a claustrophobic and mechanical process: «την πλάκωνε με το κεφάλι μόνιμα πάνω απ'το δικό της να την τρυπάει με το πηγούνι του» (he would lie heavily on her, with his head continuously above hers, puncturing her with his chin). Her body becomes the receptacle of derision, hatred, and indifference, subjected to hard labor, drained out, and

exhausted. The suppression of her desires, fears, and sadness in response to this isolation and alienation is articulated as a physical fragmentation and entombment of her facial expressions, body parts, and memories:

Είδε κι απόειδε, τα 'θαψε όλα μέσα της: τα μικρά της χρόνια, την αγάπη, τις φιλενάδες. Έθαψε τις τρεχάλες, τα πεζούλια, τις μυγδαλιές. Έθαψε βλέμματα πονεμένα, γελούμενα· βλέμματα, βλέμματα και χείλη.
Έθαψε τη γλώσσα. (53).

[All that she saw and everything she was looking for she buried inside: her youth, love, her friends. She buried the running around, the stoops, the almond trees. She buried the looks, both pained and laughing; looks, looks and lips. She buried her language (γλώσσα).]

The metaphorical fragmentation of her body (into eyes, lips, and tongue, the instrument of language, which is one and the same in the Greek word γλώσσα) caused by the suppression of her experiences and emotions is rendered in the structure of the story through the short phrases and sentences of the narrative. The abrupt, definitive, and repetitious sentence structure, along with frequent commas, force the reader to pause and feel the character's disrupted and scattered soul.

Along with a demand for excessive productivity and efficiency by her exploitative family/employers, in this alienating relationship there is also an expectation of normatively healthy reproduction. However, her body resists and rejects this demand; her reproduction is not "efficient" under circumstances that intensely consume her body. Her first pregnancy—during which her work hours at the bakery and her domestic labor load remain excessive—ends in miscarriage. The sisters accuse her of getting rid of the fetus on purpose so as to destroy the family line: «Επίτηδες, η παλιοβρόμα, ποιος ξέρει τι έκανε!» (On purpose, the dirty slut, who knows what she did!; 52). After the miscarriage, her husband starts to beat her routinely. The beatings aim to physically discipline her to make her a more efficient worker: «Το ψωμί άρπαζε, το κορμί της το πλήρωνε» (If the bread got burnt, her body paid the price; 52).

Soon, she gets pregnant again, and this time gives birth to a mentally retarded child: «Τότε έγινε η εχθρότητα. Ούτε κουβέντα πια. . . . Μονάχα την κοίταζαν» (Then came the enmity. Not a single word anymore. . . . They only stared at her; 53). Her husband drives her out of their room; the sisters do not talk to her anymore, while still controlling her with their degrading looks. Her son, the only connection with the world around her, dies after puberty. She experiences another burial: after the metaphorical self-burial of her own body parts and memories, she goes through the literal burial of the product of her body. With her son Christos's death, the "distorted" link between her and her husband's family is broken, and she lets all the words and feelings bottled up inside her explode. She speaks in a mixture of languages:

Στο νεκροταφείο ξέσπασε.

Έπεσε στον τάφο κι αλάλαζε στ'αρβανίτικα, λόγια αγάπης, αναθέματα,
νανουρίσματα.

Ντιάλιθ'ιμ, Χριστάκι μου, ντιάλιθ'ιμ. . . .

Κύματα κόκκινα πάφλαζαν στα σωθικά της οι λέξεις κι ανέβαιναν στο λαιμό να
την πνίξουν. . . .

Έλεγε, έλεγε. Ποτάμι. Λύθηκε το κορμί της. . . .

Της έφυγε τελειώς ο φόβος και την κατέκλυσαν άλλα πράγματα.

Βρήκαν τρόπο και την έβαλαν σε ίδρυμα. (55–56)

[At the cemetery she exploded.

She fell on the grave and screamed in Arvanitik words of love, curses, lullabies.

Dialith'im, my little Christos, dialith'im. . . .

Words splashed red waves in her guts and rose in her throat to choke her. . . .

She talked and talked. A stream. Her body was released. . . .

Her fear completely left her and other things flooded in.

They found a way and put her in an institution.]

The narrative is not only fragmented into many pieces at the level of the sentence, but also the paragraphs disintegrate: the author lays one sentence after the other in a vertical manner. Movements are broken down into the smallest grammatical units and, like pieces of a shattered mirror, reflect a world in social and psychological collapse.⁸ Literary critic Kostas Stamatiou describes Dimitriou's prose in the following manner: «Ασθμαίνουσα, καλπάζουσα, 'σωματική' βγαίνει από σπλάχνα κι αγγίζει κατευθείαν τα σπλάχνα. Κι ο λόγος κοφτός, άμεσος, μεστός, απέρिटτος, ρέων, πλούσιος στη λιτότητά του» (Gasping, galloping, "physical," it comes from the gut and directly affects the gut. And the narrative is curt, direct, concise, plain, gushing, rich in its simplicity; 1988, 11). Indeed, what particularly distinguishes Dimitriou's writing is its flat and direct tone, which clashes with the most extreme experiences and explosive emotions in his characters' lives. This style brings out the tension between the distant objective third-person narrator's speech and the in-your-face subjectivity, the feelings and desires of the character. In "*Dialith'im* Christaki," many words—"exploded," "fell on," "screamed," "splashing," "stream," "flooded in"—convey the feeling of an abrupt break, the explosion of feelings.

Her son's death is the moment when the protagonist starts living again. The family situation that has been an institution of fear where she kept all of her feelings bottled up breaks apart, and she digs out the pieces of her body and her mother tongue. Her monologue relieves her from her "transformation into a 'muted' being, that is, into a subject with no responding audience. All the while, it conveys the dislocated person's desire to create, through the vehicle of . . . her voice, a space for existence" (Gotsi 2012, 170).⁹ This "space for existence" which she opens up for herself through her monologue, however, is then forcefully closed upon her. The protagonist moves away from one

claustrophobic institution, the family/employer, to be contained within yet another, the insane asylum.

In “*Dialith’im* Christaki” the author imagines a future generation of disabled bodies or minds as the outcome of an exploitative economy. The production of economically inefficient bodies both reveals the disposability of the human body and counters the demands for extreme efficiency. In other words, the writer shows a regime of production and labor that takes the body to the edge of its limits, and the body in response rejects normative reproduction, understood as the production of healthy citizens and workers.

Migrants have an important role within the economy defined by the requirements for efficiency in production and anxieties about reproduction. Yet, Dimitriou also portrays non-migrant underclass characters disposed of by this economy of bodies. In another short story, «Βαλέρια» (Valeria), Dimitriou explores the neoliberal economy’s violence towards the body within an unconventional family in Athens. “Valeria” portrays an unnamed sex worker who lives with her sickly mute son and works at a park in exchange for «διαίτερη περιποίηση» (special treatment) by the park-keepers, who go at her like «λυσσάρικα σκυλιά» (rabid dogs; Dimitriou 1990, 10). Her customers are from the underclass—pensioners, bakery workers, garbage collectors, and young men from the provinces. Her child, an unhealthy boy who occasionally has fits, is raised without any affection. He is an undesired side-product of her work, an accident sustained on the job, so to speak, who continuously reminds her of her body’s commoditization:

Φύτρα άγνωστου, περαστικού άντρα. . . Θα το ‘ριχνε, αλλά ο γιατρός τής είπε πως ήταν αργά. Προχωρημένη εγκυμοσύνη.

Δεν έχανε ευκαιρία, από τότε που γεννήθηκε, να το μουρλαίνει στο ξύλο. (10)

[Seed of an unknown, transient man. . . She would have gotten rid of it, but the doctor told her it was too late. Advanced pregnancy.

She did not miss any opportunity, from the day he was born, to beat the life out of him.]

As she gets older she loses her appeal for the customers, who start giving her names like «ζιάπα» (scumbag) (11). When she is almost totally consumed and has become disposable, another career opportunity presents itself for her. One night a customer pulls out a five-hundred drachma note and says, «Τον μικρό . . . Θέλω τον μικρό» (The little one . . . I want the little one; 11). She immediately makes a deal and takes the money while the boy silently complies: «ποιος ξέρει ποιο μακρινό όνειρο θαλπωρίς το ‘κανε να τον αγκαλιάσει κι αυτό» (who knows what distant dream of affection made him return the embrace; 11). Seeing his potential market value, she prepares her son for the job. She changes his outer appearance first: washes him, buys him women’s clothes. Like a savvy entrepreneur she looks for better, more lucrative markets.

After doing some market study, she takes her son out to Syngrou, where she meets fierce competition but eventually earns a niche for her commodity in the market of bodies.

In order to further improve the “quality” and marketability of her product, she follows the advice of a transvestite. She finds the boy an attractive brand name, “Valeria,” lets his hair grow, paints his nails, and, benefiting from medical technology, gives him hormones to make his breasts larger. These strategies yield impressive results: instead of blue-collar workers, now they have middle-class customers coming in their «Ντάτσουν και μερσεντές . . . γι’ αυτό το κελεπούρι» (Datsuns and Mercedes . . . for this bargain; 12). Her role changes from being an object of consumption in a low-end market to being a successful merchant recycling the product of her own objectified body as a high-profit-yielding good. The consumption of bodies engenders that of consumer goods: she buys clothes for herself, a TV, rents a flat and eats at expensive restaurants. But just as the business flourishes, the product—the commodified, unhealthy body and mind of her son—shatters into pieces and disintegrates:

Τα βυζιά απ’ την ορμόνη είχαν μεγαλώσει λίγο.
Τη στιγμή που τ’ αμάξια έφταναν, το μικρό ανάβλιαξε πάλι. Άφησε μια αλλόκοτη
φωνή κι όρμησε στο ποτάμι που κατέβαινε.
Χτυπήθηκε και πετάχτηκε, χρωματιστό κουρελόχαρτο. (13)

[From the hormones, his tits had grown a little.
The moment the cars arrived, the little one boiled over again. He let out a strange
cry and dived into the oncoming stream.
He was hit and thrown into the air, a colorful scrap of paper.]

The artificial growth of the body coincides with the growth of the chaos of cars around them, the flooding traffic, the disorderly marketplace of “transient men” rushing in their cars for the “bargain.” The vagary of the body goes against the extravagant demands of the marketplace, and the erratic product of her body “dives into the oncoming stream.” After the death of her child, the mother becomes paralyzed. Then she explodes, just like the Albanian bride after the death of Christaki. She starts shouting while gesturing obscenely at the customers: «Νά, νά! Νά, πούστηδες» (Here, here! Here, take this, faggots; 14). The story ends with the following line: «Τους έγραψαν οι εφημερίδες την άλλη μέρα» (The newspapers wrote about them the next day; 14). Even after the son’s suicide and her explosion into madness, the market finds a way to make a commodity out of their disposal. If their bodies cannot be sold anymore, then their stories can. They become news items, and the cycle of consumption continues.

Malfunctioning families

Why do these stories published in late 1980s about an Albanian bride who was driven mad and two sex workers in Athens continue to matter today? By pushing the body to its limits, both psychologically and physically, they show how an extremely exploitative social structure demands flexibility—and ultimately disposability of the human body. This schema bears a resemblance to the neoliberal structure whose detrimental effects have become obvious in Greece during the unfolding financial crisis. Sociologist Richard Sennett describes the kind of individual that the neoliberal economy both demands and creates: an individual who “can prosper in unstable, fragmentary social conditions” and respond to various challenges that require flexibility in terms of identity, temporal horizon (short-term and part-time jobs), type of occupation and talent (being able to move among different careers). One’s relationships to the self and the environment are continuously challenged, changed, or even eradicated as “the individual may have to improvise his or her life-narrative, or even do without any sustained sense of self” (Sennett 2006, 4). Dimitriou’s stories show the consequences of this loss of a “sustained sense of self” (or Sennett’s “corrosion” in the character of an individual) on the body of an individual (Sennett 1998). On the one hand, the body becomes incapable of producing efficient citizens and workers in normatively healthy family structures. On the other hand, the family becomes a preliminary site where the relations of power and economic precarity reshape and corrode individual bodies. Both “*Dialith’im Christaki*” and “*Valeria*” explore dysfunctional families that are incapable of healthy production and reproduction.

In a rare interview conducted with Dimitriou in early 2006, the author talked about family as a space where fear takes its roots: «Φόβου που αρχίζει από την παιδική ηλικία, μέσα στην οικογένεια, εντείνεται στο σχολείο και χειροτερεύει αργότερα στο γραφείο» (Fear starts in childhood, inside the family, grows in school, and gets worse later at work; Angelikopoulos 2006). Taken aback by Dimitriou’s description of the social production of fear in childhood, the interviewer asked the author what fear has to do with family. The author explained:

Η οικογένεια είναι εργαστήριο φόβου. Ένα μικρό στρατόπεδο όπου ο ένας φοβίζει τον άλλο. Παράγει παθολογική αγάπη για τους εντός της οικογένειας, αγάπη που καταντάει κακοήθης, αφού υποδουλώνει τον άλλο, δεν του αφήνει ελεύθερο χώρο να αναπνεύσει. (Angelikopoulos 2006)

[The family is a laboratory of fear. A small army camp where one person frightens the other. A pathological love is manufactured for those inside the family, love that is reduced to malice, since it enslaves the other, leaving him no space to breathe.]

What is striking in Dimitriou's formulation of the family is not only his association of the institution with claustrophobia, pathology, and fear, but his careful choice of a terminology of production (laboratory, manufacture) and the militaristic education (army camp) disciplining one's body.¹⁰

Dimitriou's comments in this interview shed light on the affective and political significance his stories attach to family as a microcosm of oppressive social and economic structures. Hence, his pathological family narratives do not quite signal the shift away from the more visible political and social involvement in his migration-themed novels that Tziovas has suggested. Short stories such as "Valeria" do not present a withdrawal from the public space of clear political commentary and into the asocial private space. While his novels focus on the challenge migration poses to the external borders of the nation, Dimitriou's short stories about malfunctioning families hint at the spreading and deterritorialization of borders in Greece and Europe, that is, a consolidation of internal borders in addition to the external ones. Narratives about malfunctioning families reflect on the pathological concern to protect the "inside" of Greece and Europe, a concern that carries the family to the core of internal borders to be secured and reinforced. In order to further clarify the larger social connotations of family as "a laboratory of fear" implied in Dimitriou's short stories, the next section will take a closer look at the policies and debates that give family the status of an internal border.

Union as one big family

Alain Badiou suggests that family has become the nexus of society in today's Europe: "it is striking to see that, as the century draws to a close, the family has once more become a consensual and practically unassailable value" (66). Badiou's observation is substantiated on various levels in Europe, ranging from scientific conferences to state policies on the family. In the mid 2000s major EU-funded conferences, such as "Families, Change, and European Social Policy" (Dublin 2004) and "The Demographic Future of Europe—from Challenge to Opportunity" (Brussels 2006), showed the upsurge of an institutional interest in population policies and the wellbeing of families. The interest in family is often connected to demographic anxiety in Europe, as seen in state policies such as the former Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi's 2006 offer of a baby bonus to specifically Italian parents who had a second child. Non-Italian, immigrant parents who were inadvertently sent baby bonuses were asked to return the money. As Berlusconi's policy highlights, frequently at the center of debates on demography and family is an anxiety about not bearing enough of the "right" babies, a tension due to migration and the growing presence in European nations of minorities of non-European origin (Joyce).

In Greece, journalist Tasoula Karaiskaki's article titled "Dramatic Population Decline" rang the alarm bell as early as May 1995, soon after the first influx of migrants to post-Cold War Greece: "We are doomed to turn into a state of foreigners unless every [Greek] couple has at least four children" (in Athanasiou 2003, 239). The connection between demographic anxiety and migration is more immediately felt in Greece due to the country's geographical position at the southeast edge of the European border, where it is "threatened" by the "intrusion" of illegal migrants, as Greece has the highest percentage of migrants in proportion to the total population in Europe. Immigration has exacerbated the already dominant nationalist public discourse of the δημογραφικό (demographic problem) due to low birth rates of "native" Greeks (Halkias 213).

Etienne Balibar, in his book on the frontiers of post-1989 European identity, claims that there is an intimate link between the concepts of family, nation, and race. Balibar explains that family is a predominant metaphor that racial ideology uses to describe the ties that bind the nation: "the racial community has a tendency to represent itself as one big family or as the common envelope of family relations" (Balibar 1991, 100). The metaphorical link between nation and family (nation as family) is established through securing and promoting the genealogical link (nation as family protecting the purity of its blood). Such discourse inevitably excludes those groups defined as not belonging in the genealogy.

Why would the dangerous ideological link between nation and family still be relevant in a contemporary Europe where national borders have been all but eliminated? The transference from the national to the supranational EU identity, Balibar claims, is similarly bounded by genealogical terms. European identity (as *Café d'Europe*'s individually nationalized deserts also suggest) has replaced individual national identities without a critical re-conceptualization of the inherent limits of these identities. According to the Maastricht Treaty of 1992, European citizenship is mainly a reiteration of national citizenships at the European level. It is limited to those who are already citizens of the individual states, thus leaving open the problem of third-country nationals. Balibar calls this antidemocratic construction of the transnational space, which puts the migrant labor at the service of European citizens, a "European apartheid" (Balibar 2004, 31). Much like a colonial regime, it produces workers who are expected to economically produce inside EU borders and to reproduce, socially and sexually, outside the EU. In other words, Balibar emphasizes that while migrant and minority labor is welcome in Europe, it is not welcome for these communities to have children and to have access to social welfare such as healthcare and retirement benefits. Thus, Europe is constructed as an ever-shifting borderland where the inside and the outside become ambiguous, and where the population and social welfare policies promote the social

and physical reproduction of its hereditary insiders while discouraging that of migrants—as suggested by the example of Berlusconi’s Italians-only baby bonus—and sometimes minorities. As the borders within Europe became flexible, Balibar suggests, the external borders of Europe are duplicated in the form of “internal borders,” which stigmatize and repress certain populations. As borders expand and become deterritorialized, restrictions are placed on the kinds of people who count as European, who are permitted to remain inside the zone and become part of the European “family.” The obsessive protection of that restricted realm carries measures of control from the geographical borderlines into the heart of public space: “[B]orders are vacillating. This does not mean that they are disappearing. . . . On the contrary, borders are being multiplied and reduced in their localization and their function; they are being doubled, becoming borders *zones, regions or countries* one can reside and live” (Balibar 2002, 92).

In this realm, the family (that is to say, the “right” kind of family) becomes a frontier, an internal border at the core of the society to be protected from external intervention, controlled and disciplined in a way that encourages it to further close in on itself as unwanted families get excluded from the picture. Dimitriou’s disturbing short stories about malfunctioning couples and families are a subtle commentary on the increasing anxieties to protect the internal borders of Europe, an exclusionary turn that has emerged since migratory confrontations and the changing composition of society began preoccupying post-Cold War Greece and Europe. For Dimitriou, the concept of family becomes a central allegory for the growth of internal borders within a Europe anxious about its multicultural present. Dimitriou’s short stories present both the affective dimension of these fears and the socioeconomic crises they hide. The stories deconstruct the idea of the nation as a genealogical union in Greece and Europe by destroying the family and its values from within.¹¹

Dimitriou presents his readers with a picture of the not-so-sweet-but-quite-bitter Europe, an image that contradicts the one projected by *Café d’Europe*. Unlike the makers of *Café d’Europe*, who imagine diversity, flexibility, and unity horizontally (between the individual nation states), Dimitriou reconsiders these issues in a vertical, top-down Europe, seen from the eyes of those in the lowest socioeconomic strata. In his Europe, bodies are doomed to be consumed by death, impotency, madness, and deformation; they burst open or shut down; emotions are discharged through sudden impassioned action (murder, suicide, or acts of insanity). The efficiency in production expected from healthy bodies within a reproductive economy of the family is eliminated in each and every story, as the characters fail to be the loyal citizens who regularly produce, reproduce, and consume. His writing is not an allegory of the nation as a family in crisis; he does not even start from the traditional nuclear

family, but from the impossibility of the family's existence apart from social violence and subjectivization. The stories undermine the "naturalness" of family and subvert the creation of ideal citizens. His grotesque realism subjects the individual body to social violence and shows that for the subject constituted by the neoliberal market, the only agency lies in transcending the conventional conceptualization of family union and the regulated economies of the body.

Union reconsidered

In the interview in which Dimitriou talks about family as "a laboratory of fear," following this grim description, the interviewer asks about the writer's own marital status, questioning why he is still a bachelor and whether he consciously avoids marriage. Dimitriou expresses his need for freedom in a quite naturalistic manner: «αν η φύση μάς ήθελε δύο δύο, θα μας είχε κολλημένους εκ γενετής από τον αφαλό» (if nature wanted us to be in twos, it would have stuck us together at the navel from birth; Angelikopoulos 2006). Not satisfied with the answer, the interviewer insists on the social necessity of the family, questioning whether the author thought about what will happen in his old age and who will take care of him. Dimitriou responds, «Υπάρχουν . . . τα γηροκομεία. Όπου βρίσκει κανείς μια κοινωνικότητα υπέροχη» (There are . . . nursing homes. There one finds splendid sociability) and then he talks at length about the flourishing communities of the elderly in nursing homes (Angelikopoulos 2006).

These comments indicate Dimitriou's search for forms of community or union that would stand as alternatives to family. He presents such a quest in one of his rare short stories that ends in a slightly optimistic tone, «Ως κόρη οφθαλμού» (Like the apple of your eye, in Dimitriou 1998). This is the tale of a fragile, lonely man whose obsession with an ex-girlfriend—the only girlfriend he ever had—finally drives him insane. The story starts with a description of the character's desire for peoples', especially women's, attention. He continuously has dreams about embracing them while they, in turn, pay him no attention: «Λες και μυρίζονταν αμέσως την αδυναμία του, την παθητική ζωή του» (As if they immediately sensed his weakness, his miserable life; 1998, 12). The only time a woman shows interest in him, he becomes ecstatic: «Πρώτη του φορά το πλάσμα των ονείρων του είχε φωνή και βλέμμα, σάρκα και οστά» (For the first time the creature of his dreams had a voice and a gaze, flesh and bones; 12). Yet, those very flesh and bones of hers eventually cause the relationship to erode:

Όταν ήρθε η ώρα να κάνουν έρωτα, τον έπιασε μια φοβερή ταχυπαλμία, μούσκεψαν οι πάλιαμες του, δεν μπόρεσε. Όσες φορές ξαναβρέθηκαν, πάλι δεν μπόρεσε, ώσπου μια φορά του είπε ήσυχα να μην ξαναπάει, ότι θέλει να χωρίσουν. «Έχω σάρκα και οστά» κατέληξε εχθρικά. (12–13)

[When the time came to make love, a terrible palpitation overtook him, his palms dampened, he couldn't do it. Every time they were together, he failed again, until one day she quietly told him not to come again, that she wanted to break up. "I have flesh and bones," she concluded in a hostile manner.]

His body is too weak to support the intensity of his emotions, and so the girlfriend rejects being in a relationship with an impotent man. After the break up, he starts to chase his ex-girlfriend until she finally moves away in fear of the consequences. In his room he continuously masturbates and shouts in pain in the direction of the neighborhood where she used to reside, «μπορώ, μπορώ, μπορώ σου λέω» (I can, I can, I can, I tell you; 13). He thinks that the only way a union can be achieved between them is for her to become as weak and impotent as him; so he imagines her having an accident and becoming bed-ridden with no one except him to take care of her. In the meantime, he loses his job and cuts his ties with his relatives. The story describes his state: «Ψευτοζούσε» (He barely scraped along; 13). Overall, he is not able to satisfy the requirements of efficiency demanded of him as a productive or a reproductive citizen.

In this story, as in "Valeria" and "*Dialith'im* Christaki," a connection is established between the economy of reproduction (the inability to form a heterosexual union) and of production and consumption (unemployment and insanity). Gradually, the main character loses his mind in sorrow. His mental consumption due to his inability to achieve an "organic" union with a woman is redirected towards a desire to destroy synthetic substances and so to accelerate his bodily consumption in the process: «Άρχισε να καπνίζεται με ό,τι πλαστικό έβρισκε. Χλωρίνες, νάιλον σακούλες. Τα άναβε και κατηύθυνε το καπνό στα ρούχα του, στο σώμα του» (He started to smoke himself with whatever plastic objects he found. Bleach bottles, plastic bags. He would inhale and direct the smoke towards his clothes, his body; 16). He exposes himself to the residue of chemicals and thus creates his own incense and performs his own liturgy in an alternative community instead of the "natural" family collective. Eventually, thanks to the smoke of this distorted incense, his desires for a union are fulfilled. Because he smells so bad, a group of elderly women in the neighborhood, out of pity, decide to wash him. These women almost re-baptize him, away from his family connections and his maddening aspirations to unite with a woman. He finally finds consolation in becoming «ένα με την γειτονιά. Του 'λεγαν κάνα αστείο οι μαγαζάτορες, οι γυναίκες του 'φτιαχναν κάνα καφέ, τα παιδιά δεν τον φοβόνταν» (one with the neighborhood. The shopkeepers would tell him a joke, the women would make coffee for him, the children were not afraid of him; 17). The men, women and children of the neighborhood take care of him. At nights he goes to the neighborhood park, watches couples, and sits next to women and gets a hold of their arm or shoulder, saying, «Ως κόρην οφθαλμου, ως κόρην οφθαλμου» (Like the apple of your eye, like the apple of your eye;

17). At the end of the story heterosexual union remains idealized, yet it is presented not as a possibility but as a stifling obsession that leads to madness. The character's insanity finds its consolation in the local community, which poses an alternative to heterosexual union and family.

Conclusion: alternative communities and solidarities formed in crisis

Dimitriou's "*Dialith'im* Christaki" and "Valeria" combine the anxieties of reproduction and production: they relate the threat of the "Other," sometimes perceived as a threat against the national family, to the personal experience of alienation particular to the neoliberal emphasis on competitiveness, efficiency, and individual success. Although the stories were written in the 1980s, their extreme corporeal violence coupled with the disruption of the economy of bodies needs to be re-read today in a socioeconomic context increasingly characterized by the disposability of bodies on the one hand and economic crisis on the other. The author portrays neoliberal Greece—and by extension, Europe—not as a region promising democracy and prosperity but as one of objectified bodies hovering on the edges of physical and mental health. In these fictional stories, Dimitriou depicts the changing ways bodies are being commodified, and he suggests that the way to eliminate the neoliberal economy of production and consumption is to destroy the association of reproduction with the institution of family and to eliminate the idea of a union based on the premises of a family. The connection between production and reproduction, body as a producer and reproducer, collides and uncontrollably explodes into dead and unproductive material. As national identity is tightly connected with sexuality, reproduction, and family relations, the explosion clears a way to pursue post-racial, post-national, sexually, and socially redefined identities and solidarities.

The traces of a possibility of such identities and solidarities may be found in Dimitriou's short stories "My Personal War" and "Like the apple of your eye." As pessimistic as they may appear, these stories seem to point toward an alternative kind of union based on the experience of struggling through a crisis together, supporting one another with small gestures in the struggles of quotidian life. The solidarity imagined in these stories is based on precarity. How does precarity, really living on the edge, help people imagine solidarity differently? As Athena Athanasiou explains, while neoliberal governmentality works through a perpetual state of emergency, introducing ever-new forms of precarity, it also opens the way to the emergence of new solidarities, intimacies, and paths of action:

As present neoliberal regimes increasingly expose to death, through differential exposure to the injuries of poverty, demoralization, and racism, a performative politics of protest emerges, one which mobilizes the radical potentiality

of transforming such injurious interpellations. Assembled bodies in the street, but also in various collectivities and alternative networks of solidarity (often organized in ways alternative to the archetype of the heroic activist), reclaim the unconditionality of public space, demanding a democracy *with* demos, and enacting a demos *with* differences. (Athanasίου 2014, 76, original emphasis)

An example of such “alternative networks of solidarity” appeared during the riots of 2008–2009 in Greece, when student protestors showed their solidarity with migrant worker Konstantina Kuneva. The students at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (Α.Π.Θ. or AUT) issued this statement of solidarity after they occupied the rector’s building in March 2009:

Φοιτητές, εργαζόμενοι και άνεργοι, φτιάξαμε την Πρωτοβουλία ενάντια στις εργολαβίες στο Α.Π.Θ. με στόχο σε πρώτη φάση την αλληλεγγύη στην Κ. Κούνεβα και τη δράση ενάντια στις εργολαβίες. Διεκδικούμε την κατάργηση των εργολαβιών στο Α.Π.Θ., με την παράλληλη εργασιακή αποκατάσταση των εργαζομένων. (*Ergolabies Blogspot* 2009)

[Students, workers, and the unemployed, we have formed the Initiative against subcontracting at AUT with our first goal to demonstrate our solidarity with K. Kuneva and take action against subcontracting. We demand the abolition of subcontracting at AUT as well as the restoration of jobs for the workers.]

The “K. Kuneva” the students mention is a Bulgarian migrant who was then working as a janitor for a cleaning facilities firm providing services for the public transportation company in Athens (ISAP), which got access to the cheaper workforce with fewer legal rights by subcontracting. Kuneva was also an active union member advocating undocumented workers’ rights in the Panattic Union of Cleaners and Domestic Personnel (PEKOP). In December 2008, after lobbying for the full payment of Christmas bonuses to janitors in her firm, she was attacked. Her attackers threw vitriolic acid on her face and then forced her to drink it. Kuneva was hospitalized with severe injuries.

While the violent treatment of Kuneva’s body did not immediately attract attention in the mainstream media, demonstrations that announced solidarity with her took place in front of her hospital. The students of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki compared their personal experience of neoliberal politics, namely its vain promises of individual success, the competition for jobs, and unemployment,¹² with the violence against individual bodies such as Konstantina Kuneva’s. Their politics point out the coexistence of demands of “productivity to the extreme,” on the one hand, and a perpetual exploitation and disposability of labor beyond ethnic and gender divides, on the other hand. Their solidarity with a migrant activist draws attention to the social and economic precarity influencing different communities in comparable ways.¹³

The visceral, ethnic, and gendered¹⁴ violence performed on Kuneva’s body was akin to structural and physical violence that the immigrants and the

other underclass populating Dimitriou's short stories undergo to display the effects of neoliberalism on human biology. For "in a fully globalized situation, capital expands not outward, spatially and geographically, but *into* the body, mining it of value" (Beller 92). Yet, the body also represents the limit to further consumption and the expansion of capital, as it is rendered unproductive and un-reproductive after a certain point. Dimitriou's consumed characters subvert the desirable characteristics of the human subject within the neoliberal market society ("competitiveness, efficiency, and individualism") and reflect the subjective consequences of the abstract "organizing principles" of the neoliberal market ("marketization, flexibilization, deregulation, and privatization") (Griffin 230). His work also shows the impossibility of normatively healthy sex and reproduction in a system in which the economic priority has shifted from production to consumption. Dimitriou's texts make a travesty of the Greek and European demographic anxiety, by showing that reproduction does not make sense when people are confronted with a bleak future. This corresponds to what the young rioters in Greece were rebelling against: the demographic anxiety that produces policies supporting "native" reproduction makes no sense at a time when neoliberal policies undermine social reproduction by cutting employment, welfare programs, public school funding, retirement benefits, and salaries.

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NOTES

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¹ Until 2010, the *Café d'Europe* project had an elaborate website that contained all its posters, information about the events and recipes for European sweets. Currently this website is down.

² The story was written in English. As the official website of the project is down, "Tempress Europe" is currently inaccessible. Part of Gruša's story appears in Kole 2006.

³ Dimitriou's first publication is the collection of poems *Ψηλαφήσεις* (Feeling the way, 1985). Since then he has published six collections of short stories—among which *Η Φλέβα του λαιμού* (The vein in the neck, 1998) won the *Diavazo* Magazine Book Critics' Award for best short story collection in 1999—and five novels. He was nominated for the European fiction prize for *Ν'ακούω καλά τ'όνομά σου* (May your name be blessed, 1993), which has been translated into English, German, and Dutch. Also a collection of his earlier short stories appeared in English under the title, *Woof, Woof, Dear Lord* (1995). Dimitriou's writing has inspired three feature films—*Απ' το χιόνι* (From the snow, 1993) by Sotiris Goritsas, *Η ζωή ενάμισυ χιλιάρικο*

(Life on sale, 1995) by Foteini Siskopoulou, and *Τα Οπωροφόρα της Αθήνας* (The fruit trees of Athens, 2010) by Nikos Panayiotopoulos—as well as two short films—*Chips* (1998) by Kostas Macheras and *America* (1999) by Savvas Karydas. Also his novel *Τους τα λέει ο Θεός* (God tells them all, 2002, 2009) was adapted into a play and staged as part of the Athens and Epidaurus Festival in 2007.

⁴The original title is in English.

⁵All translations from Greek are mine. Two of the short stories analyzed later, “*Dialith’im Christaki*” and “*Valeria*,” appeared in *Woof, Woof, Dear Lord*, the collection of short stories translated to English by Leo Marshall. I have benefited immensely from Marshall’s work, but tried to do a more literal though less artful translation.

⁶In the mid-2000s, the European Commission launched a website in an effort to show that “in its everyday activities, the Union in fact addresses many of your concerns as citizens, consumers or workers.” Each year it listed ten areas in which the EU was most actively serving its citizens (*Europe and you in 2006*). In 2006, the number one issue was enabling “cheaper phone calls when traveling” while number ten was “tackling illegal immigration” (*Europe and you in 2006*). The selection of these particular topics highlights the EU’s role as facilitating the movement of consumption, capital, and European citizens while tightly controlling the “Other’s” movement and labor. In the 2007 top ten citizen-friendly list, there is even more emphasis on borderless travel and consumption, with the appearance of issues such as “passport-free travel extended” and “more choice and cheaper fares on flights to USA” (*Europe and you in 2007*).

⁷For more on Europe’s schizophrenic regime of mobility, characterized by tight control of its external borders versus extreme mobility within its borders, see Verstraete 2010.

⁸The way Dimitriou formulates the fragmentation of the soul through short sentences is quite extraordinary both in terms of Greek linguistic structure and in comparison to the writing of his contemporaries. The scholar of Modern Greek literature and translator Martin McKinsey observes a different, novel linguistic structure used among contemporary Greek writers (such as Dimitris Nollas, Zirana Zateli, Yiorgos Skambardonis, and Maria Mitsora): the frequent construction of run-on sentences. Modern Greek, McKinsey explains, leaves much more room for run-on sentence structure than does English, which poses a challenge for the translator. McKinsey contends that such long, exhausting sentences reflect an edgy urgency in keeping pace with urban life, the experience of Greek and European youth.

⁹Gotsi provides this insightful analysis in relation to the monologue of another migrant woman, a trafficked sex worker from Russia, in Panagiotis Hatzimoisiadis’s novella *Καλά μόνο να βρεις* (May you only find good, 2006).

¹⁰Dimitriou’s description of family reminds one of Yorgos Lanthimos’s much acclaimed feature film *Κυνόδοντας* (*Dogtooth*, 2009), in which three young adults are confined from birth in a secluded country estate by their obsessively protective parents. Under the pretense of providing them with proper education, the parents justify the confinement with myths of monsters lingering outside the fence. *Dogtooth* can be considered part of a movement in Greek cinema of the 2000s towards the exploration of unconventional and malfunctioning families. This is a common theme in recent films by young and upcoming directors, such as *Attenberg* (Athina Rachel Tsangari, 2010), *Σπυρτόκουτο* (Matchbox, Yannis Economides, 2002), and *Στρέλλα* (A Woman’s Way, Panos Koutras, 2009). For a discussion of *Dogtooth* and the focus of young Greek filmmakers on pathological family narratives, see Celik 2013.

¹¹Throughout the article I often use Greece and Europe side by side. This usage does not imply that Europe is a homogeneous space. As one anonymous reviewer of the present article perceptively pointed out, one should be aware of hierarchies within Europe and Greece’s position in it, that is, the hierarchies that make the Greek body itself vulnerable to exploitation and structural violence by “healthier” Northern European economies. Without disregarding such hierarchies in Europe and the EU, I follow Balibar in his positioning of Greece as Europe’s

periphery that serves as a center in terms of both mythical origins and intense confrontations with non-European foreigners (Balibar 2004, 1–2). Hence, I suggest that Greece is symptomatic of various forms of precarity created by the neoliberal economy in Europe as well as alternative forms of solidarities, which I later discuss.

¹² Greece is the country with the highest percentage of university graduates in Europe (78%) and also the highest level of youth unemployment, which affects the latest university graduates the most. Thus, there is a great imbalance between higher education supply and labor market demands. (Kalamatianou and Kougioumoutzaki 2012).

¹³ As Kambouri and Zavos show, “interconnected processes of ethnicization, racialization, and feminization structuring the cleaning sector proved to be difficult to address from [the] reductive approach” taken by university students in the Kuneva case, as they focused exclusively on countering neoliberal tendencies (2010, 152). As the authors point out, the University of Thessaloniki students’ demand for subcontracted workers to become civil servants did not take into account the precarity of migrants within the Greek social welfare system based on citizenship rights. Agreeing with the risks of such reductionism in the student’s approach, I still would like to underline the significance of this solidarity movement and alternative communities formed under the shared precarity despite its varied appearances, levels, and consequences.

¹⁴ As Kambouri and Zavos observe, the attack “bears gendered characteristics,” as vitriolic acid is often used against women in response to “crimes of passion” such as betrayal or refusal (2010, 151).

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