

703: Modern Greek Seminar

Columbia University; The University Seminars

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Chairs: Stathis Gourgouris and Maria Hadjipolykarpou

Rapporteur: David Schneller

Speakers: **Elsa Korneti & Patricia Felisa Barbeito**

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Topic: **Poetry reading**

Text:

“Another Dimension”

The unhappy narcissist is threatened by the loss of beauty, the sophisticate takes reward from the geometry of desires, the eccentric from defective passions, the restive spirit makes bold experiencing a series of liberating falls, the daydreamer is charmed by planetary coincidences, the womanizer falls victim to fatal attractions, the loner finds amusement “feeding” his inflated imagination with scenes of mystery. The awareness of mortality leads them to the expression of passions, perhaps even mistakes.

The carousels of all these people’s little panics perpetually rotate, each circle closes for another to open and the tyranny of existence continues to be summed up in the agonizing question:

the eternity of the temporary
or the temporary eternity?

Against a background of the universe’s vast mirror, to what extent can the instantaneous, the insignificant and the random leave any trace on time’s relentless flow, giving another dimension to eternity?

A writer, a poet is essentially a spy

As a writer, a poet, I search for answers. I try to understand the meaning of life. At the moment I feel I found something I need to share it with other people.

Poetry means to me the specific illuminated moment where the personal experience turns successfully to a universal experience.

It is important for me to observe the human behavior. The way people move, express themselves, change, succeed, strive or fail, the way people are involved in the mysteries of life. At the end with this way I observe myself. A writer, a poet is essentially a spy.

The world changes dramatically. All I need is to present it. Besides, Poetry retains the specialization in human pain. Social and existential factors play vital role in the production of high literature and poetry as well. Poetry in our times should not be so self – centered but human - centered.

A poem should not mean. But be. Poetry is a criticism of life.

3 Personal Points

First point If we consider that for the average poet – writer, art means an act of consciousness – consciousness is a kind of universal human condition – then for me being an artist in our times means bearing a global responsibility.

Second point – If we bring in our minds the equality of sentiments of all mankind, then it is easy to understand that the position of each poet and writer in the modern communities is the key ring of an unbreakable chain of human creation.

The subjects are common worldwide: love, death, pain, anxiety, fear, motherhood, lust etc.

Third point - We are at the same time the responders and receivers of sensitive signals and social messages – poets and writers use to act with an almost high social sensitivity regarding difficult issues of life like oppression of human rights, injustices, misery, poverty, immorality, violence, etc

When Biology commands

If you ask a medical student how a human body looks like from within, it is most likely that he or she would answer:

It is dark. It is dark in there.

Writing is associated with this. Darkness and desire. The desire to enter that darkness, to illuminate something and bring it back to light.

Women talk about the cycle of life and death with the body. Women measure time with the body. They are like watches. They are always attached to the soil, with a hypersensitive ear to hear every single little bestial sound. Sexuality is one of the most normal parts of life

In women's literary works mostly in poetry the gender can be "visible". There are so many biological expressions : 1) The complexity of the female reproductive system and the biological confusion and distress it causes 2) the fragility of sex role in the sense that it could be oppressive 3) the powerful maternal filter 4) the brutality of social requirements of the combined roles

So many certainties fight so many other questions

At that point my mind recalls the famous aphorism of the American poet Robert Frost: "A poet should never apologize for his work." Paraphrasing Robert Frost's saying I say that :

“ A poet, a writer should never apologize for HER gender”.

But do the poems or literary works have a gender?

Perhaps both sexes have their dreams, I would say, as seen from the point of view either of men or women. As the Serbian writer Milorad Pavic's wrote in his novel "Hat made by fish skin", "If you want to become a magician, a wizard, it is not enough to have your male dream. If you want the key to the future, you must learn to

dream male AND female dreams. You need to know what is the difference between them. "

Yes it is true. There are male and female poems, as there are male and female dreams.

Poetry in Hard Times

People in crisis, a society in crisis, values in crisis, the economy in crisis, a society in decomposition.

Are we people in crisis or is the crisis within us?

Do we expect from Art too much? Do we retain great expectations more than Art could offer?

Art could give comfort and consolation, but what about solutions for salvation?

Dimitris Dimitriadis a Greek playwright and poet, well known for his heretical and nonconformist statements, said that
"the filthiest violence could give the purest poetry".

Political Poetry exists at the mercy of time, history and other people. But this doesn't mean poetry itself is passive. Words can be dangerous.

A poet is always engaged in a battle, though the opponents may be nuclear, the targets unknown and the victories and defeats felt far away in different domains by other people than himself.

Poetry is written by humans, not angels, nor devils, nor elves.

Poetry is a gently but also violent type of demonstration and protest.

Poetry is the kind of never healing wound bleeding inside.

Poetry bears humanity's pains.

Poetry often acts like a soul laundry.

Poetry is the devise which renders the invisible visible.

Poetry is the never ending GAME with words that makes us wonder whether we are prisoners of our words or if our words are our prisoners? Are we imprisoned within our own consciousness?

So, a poet acts like a giant ear which hears what the others don't hear, a giant eye which sees what the others can't see.

The word is like a virus

You are born with a demon which happens to live inside you.

An inner anxiety keeps torturing you during all your life by forcing you to create. You are doomed to express yourself dramatically. It is a creative passion. A passion for creation.

What you obtain internally (in your soul) changes your external reality.

The power of the word

Every poem is a chemical reaction. The success of the recipe

depends upon the reactivity and power of the words.

What is the word?

It is a weird strange phenomenon. The men's attraction to the word. What is the word? Is it communication?

Is it a way of existence?

Yes it is.

It is a reason to be.

The international artist Yiannis Kounelis has been asked once:

“What means Art to you?” and he answered something unexpected for a visual artist, he said: “ Art is not iconography Art is language “.

And I truly believe that my culture, the continuation of the civilization of my Greek or Balkan ancestors, everything that I am and that I inherited lives and breaths in my language.

The simplicity of the glance “

For the poet's work which at the end represents the poet himself I have chosen a reference to one of my favorite philosophers, Plotinus.

Plotinus wrote in “ The simplicity of the glance “

Turn inside you and look, if you don't see inside yourself the beauty, do as a sculptor does who desires to create a beautiful statue. He removes, scratches, smooths, refines, till a beautiful face on the statue appears.

Well you, like him, remove the superfluous, right the wrong, lighten whatever is dark and don't ever stop sculpturing your statue till the virtue's glow shine in it. Keep your glance stable and look on . . . !

Elsa Korneti