

FEMININITY OF THE MURDERESS. FEMINIST READING OF ALEXANDROS PAPADIAMANTIS' *Η ΦΟΝΙΣΣΑ*

Nina Anna Trzaska
University in Poznań, Polonia

Abstract: The purpose of this article is an examination of femininity depicted in Papadiamantis' *Φόνισσα* through the elaboration on four selected masks of Frankojannou: Mother and Daughter, Christian, Witch, Murderess. The innovative contribution lies in the application of Ardener's model of the muted group to the society of Skiathos, deeper analysis of the cause of Hadoula's madness as well as contestation of traditional paradigm. The feminist reading of the text concludes that Papadiamantis associates womanhood with death which returns as a reoccurring motif throughout the story. Despite the grim outcome, the novel is presented as a positive example of an androtext.

Keywords: Alexandros Papadiamantis – Murderess – *Φόνισσα* - feminist literary criticism - Modern Greek literature

LA FEMINIDAD DE LA ASESINA. UNA LECTURA FEMINISTA DE *Η ΦΟΝΙΣΣΑ* DE ALEXANDROS PAPADIAMANTIS

Resumen: El objeto de este artículo es un examen de la feminidad descrita en *Φόνισσα* de Papadiamantis a través de la elaboración de cuatro máscaras escogidas de Frangoyanú: Madre e Hija, Cristiana, Bruja, Asesina. La contribución innovadora radica en la aplicación del modelo de Ardener del grupo silenciado a la sociedad de Skiathos, un análisis más profundo de la causa de la locura de Jadoula y la impugnación del paradigma tradicional. La lectura feminista del texto concluye que Papadiamantis asocia la feminidad con la muerte, lo que vuelve como un motivo recurrente a lo largo de la historia. A pesar del sombrío resultado, la novela se presenta como un ejemplo positivo de androtexto.

Palabras clave: Alejandro Papadiamantis - Asesina - *Φόνισσα* - crítica literaria feminista - Literatura griega moderna

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Correspondencia: Nina Anna Trzaska

Email: nintrz@amu.edu.pl

ORCID ID: 0000-0002-8447-1015

University in Poznań, Polonia

Εἰς τοὺς λογιισμοὺς τῆς, συγκεφαλαιούσα ὅλην τὴν ζωὴν τῆς, ἔβλεπεν ὅτι ποτὲ δὲν εἶχε κάμει ἄλλο τίποτε εἰμὴ νὰ υπηρετῆ τοὺς ἄλλους. Ὅταν ἦτο παιδίσκη, υπηρετεῖ τοὺς γονεῖς τῆς. Ὅταν υπανδρεύθη, ἐγίνε σκλάβα τοῦ συζύγου τῆς – καὶ ὁμως, ὡς ἐκ τοῦ χαρακτήρος τῆς καὶ τῆς ἀδυναμίας ἐκεῖνου, ἦτο συγχρόνως καὶ κηδεμὼν αὐτοῦ· ὅταν ἀπέκτησε τέκνα, ἐγίνε δούλα τῶν τέκνων τῆς· ὅταν τὰ τέκνα τῆς ἀπέκτησαν τέκνα, γίνε πάλιν δουλεύτρια τῶν ἐγγόνων τῆς. (Papadiamantis, 2012, p.26)

La femme a toujours été, sinon l'esclave de l'homme, du moins sa vassale; les deux sexes ne se sont jamais partagé le monde à égalité. (De Beauvoir, 1949, p.22)

State of the art and purpose of the following research

Alexandros Papadiamantis' *Η Φόνισσα*, as a recognized masterpiece of Modern Greek prose, has already been established as a subject of literary criticism with the application of various theoretical methods. Since the subtitle determines the novel as *Κοινωνικόν μυθιστόρημα*, the standard approach seems to be socio-related (collective monography, 2000); however, there are also psychological and psychoanalytic studies (Aslanidis, 1988), examinations of metaphysical dimension (Orfanidis, 2000), comparative inquiries (Chatzimavroudi, 2007), as well as juridical commentaries (Kourakis, 2006). Yet, there is hardly any argument regarding feminist literary criticism.

Indubitably, in the field of hermeneutics and general interpretation there are two crucial categories: the applicability and adequacy of the selected theoretical approach. In case of *Φόνισσα*, the application of feminist criticism is certainly possible, as is evidenced by at least one extensive academic work dedicated to Papadiamantis' female characters (Gasouka, 1995). Furthermore, Antonopoulou (2000, p.29) proves that *Φόνισσα* might be categorized as a feminist novel, since it fulfils all three necessary conditions regarding its setup, plot, and the portrayal of a female protagonist. Therefore, considering

that the possibility remains unexploited, the second issue becomes essential: does the discourse necessitate a feminist approach to the novel? Although feminist literary theory already shifted its focus from a feminist reading of androtexts to gynocriticism in the 1970s, many classical literary works written by men have been analyzed and criticized through the category of the female reader. This practice resulted in the exposition of patriarchal, phallogentric, and heteronormative narratives as well as inaccurate depictions of female characters in the majority of the works; however, concomitantly, a smaller group of positive or equivocal androtexts has also been recognized. *Φόνισσα*, undoubtedly, fits into the second category because of its gynocentricism (Gasuka, 1995, p.8), criticism of patriarchal *status quo*, and ambiguous complex female protagonist who defies a standard gender role. Hence, Hadoula Frankojannou¹ deserves to be examined along with Euripides' *Medea*, Shakespeare's *Lady Macbeth*, and Ibsen's *Nora*.

Accordingly, the objective of this article is to explore the femininity presented in Papadiamantis' novel. Since the general socio-feministic layer has been already covered by Gasouka, the present article focuses on a deeper analysis of the protagonist. While the criterion of femininity is, as a concept, elusive², I propose its deconstruction and elaboration based on four selected aspects of the character's life, her 'masks' of Mother and Daughter, Christian, Witch, and Murderess. The reasoning behind the selection of each aspect is revealed at the beginning of the corresponding section. Conventionally, feminist criticism relies on eclectic methodology, so-called *playful pluralism* (Kolodny, 1980, p.19), however, I emphasize the role of dreams³ and relations by leaning strongly on Aslanidis' psychoanalytical study.

1 All names, toponyms, and specific terms are transcribed or translated according to the translation of Peter Levi (Papadiamantis, 1983). Yet, all the quotations and footnotes are linked to the above-mentioned Greek edition. In order to maintain the flow of the argument, the protagonist is referred to with the use of all the available variations of her name from the novel: Hadoula Frankojannou (each of the names can be used separately), Jannou or Frankissa.

2 The category of femininity lacks coherence, which is visible in, *exempli gratia*, Humm's *Dictionary of Feminist Theory* (1989), entry "Femininity".

3 *Φόνισσα* contains seven dreams (mostly nightmares) of the protagonist; their main themes are as follows (corresponding pages in the brackets): 1. the sound of crying baby (Papadiamantis, 2012, p.138); 2. four lettuces turning into children's heads (p.147); 3. coins turning into faces of dead girls (pp.147–148); 4. a cistern filled with raging water chanting "Murderess!" (pp.156–157); 5. Hadoula's daughters turning into murdered girls who, under the form of a necklace, are strangling her (pp.157–158); 6. dead girls inside a cave and choppy waters screaming "Murderess!" (p.191); 7. Kambanachmakis sending Hadoula to the hermitage (p.192).

This article is a continuation of the research conducted for my BA thesis «*Η Φόνισσα του Παπαδιαμάντη ως φεμινιστικό μυθιστόρημα*» (2013, University of Warsaw, supervisor: M. Borowska) as well as the paper «*Η δολοφονία στην Φόνισσα του Αλεξάνδρου Παπαδιαμάντη*» presented at the international conference “Modern Greek Queries” (Poznań, 16–18.04.2015; publication forthcoming), and the speech “The crisis of faith. Criticism of the Church in selected works of Alexandros Papadiamantis and Emmanuel Rhoides – comparison” presented at the 6th European Congress of Modern Greek Studies (Lund, 04–07.10.2018).

Mother and daughter

The mother-daughter relationship is relevant especially for the field of feminist psychoanalysis, represented by works such as *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender* by Chodorow (1978). Showalter (1981, p.196) perceives the mother-daughter configuration as a source of female creativity; hence, the concept of motherhood seems to be the key to a feminist interpretation of the novel. However, in *Φόνισσα* the roles of mother and daughter are so intertwined that they become inseparable and the distinction between them seems unrecognizable; and, precisely because of that, they ought to be examined together. Yet, before proceeding straight to the elaboration of the topic, it is crucial to note the obvious: fathers in the novel are barely present, which is conspicuous through their laconic descriptions. The reader receives only a generic and desultory mention of Hadoula’s father as «οικονόμος και εργατικός και φρόνιμος» (Papadiamantis, 2012, p.27) as well as the information that he was unaware of the continuous larceny committed by his wife and daughter. Jannou’s husband (deceased in the novel’s time frame) is portrayed as «ανίκανος», since he is unable to provide for his family and marry his daughters off. Lyringos’ gullibility (or even stupidity) causes him to believe in the most irrational lies of Jannou and Mr Anagnostis stays oblivious to the affair and the pregnancy of his step-daughter Marousa. Gkasouka (1995, pp.77–78) goes one step further by surmising that men, in opposition to resourceful and active women, tend to play a passive role in Papadiamantis’ universum.

The story arc of Delcharo, the mother of Hadoula, develops asymmetrically in comparison to that of her husband. Being portrayed as «κακή, βλάσφημος και φθονερά» (Papadiamantis, 2012, p.27), she represents negative character traits. Tzembelikos accuses her of not giving enough affection to her only daughter (Kourakis, 2006, p.4). The feminist reading of the text concludes that Papadiamantis associates womanhood with death

which returns as a reoccurring motif throughout the story. Even her name is meaningful as it is based on a pejorative play on the words «δελής/ντελής» and «Χάρος/Χαρά» (Saunier, 2001, p.242). Yet, despite all the deprecatory characteristics, it cannot be denied that the witch Delcharo seems to be more relatable to Hadoula than her good but naïve father. She is addressed with the diminutive «μάννα», while her spouse is called in an official manner—«πατήρ». Overall, the protagonist’s retrospections prove that Delcharo taught her all the paramount knowledge that ensured her later survival, especially by sharing with her the fundamental wisdom regarding the topography of Skiathos and herbs (Papadiamantis, 2012, p.141). Likewise, Frankojannou’s resourcefulness and «πονηριά» (2012, p.38) seems to be acquired through the observation and imitation of her mother. The worst felony committed by Delcharo was sentencing her own daughter to live in poverty by not giving her a proper dowry (2012, pp.37–38). Conclusively, the relationship between Delcharo and Hadoula is quite complex. Initially, the mother was a teacher and role model for the daughter but when it came to marrying Hadoula off, their dynamic turned into pure antagonism.

Aslanidis (1988) applies the term «μητρικό στοιχείο» (while Saunier (2001, p.239) uses the term «οικογενειακός μύθος») but shifting the accent in it results in the word «στοιχείο», which seems more explicit as it means “ghost”, “something that haunts”. Indeed, this sinister wording suits the story, since the mother seems to follow the protagonist like a curse in order to incarnate herself in her daughter. During a careful reading of the novel, it is impossible not to notice that Delcharo’s and Hadoula’s vicissitudes develop analogically. Both have feeble husbands, both achieve their goals via manipulation and both are witches. Besides, Hadoula’s escape from policemen replicates Delcharo’s escape from outlaws. Both mother and daughter seek refuge in natural hideouts. Psychoanalytical interpretation enucleates these convergences as follows: Hadoula is trapped within her mother’s body, lacking spiritual birth, which would be considered a salvation; she moves from cavity to cavity without any outcome (Aslanidis, 1988, p.23). Daughter and mother share the same fate, and so, even if she is dead, Delcharo seems to be ubiquitous («πανταχού παρούσα μητέρα»).

Another way of expressing duality is the subtle use of recurring names. Traditionally, names in Greece often skip a generation, so it is very common that granddaughter shares the name of grandmother. Researchers tend to overlook this detail, since Papadiamantis’ prose is known for being faithful to the culture of second half of the nineteenth century. However, the repetition of names is so meaningful, that it should be seen as something more than mere

factual recording of old custom. There are two Hadoulas and two Delcharos in *Φόνισσα*, representing different generations:

Delcharo (mother) --> Hadoula (protagonist) --> Delcharo (daughter) --> Hadoula (granddaughter)

The fact that the original victim of Hadoula is her namesake cannot be coincident. The very first moment, when the duality becomes visible is when Delcharo-daughter wakes up after Hadoula-protagonist has killed Hadoula-granddaughter. Delcharo-daughter is convinced that Hadoula was calling her: «Μου φάνηκε πως κάτι είπες... πως μ' εφώναξες, μες στον ύπνο μου» (Papadiamantis, 2012, p.88). It may seem strange that Delcharo hears the killer and not the sufferer. However, it can mean that two Hadoulas are linked together and merge into one person. The death of the granddaughter initiates a chain reaction of more and more tragic events that leads to the death of the protagonist, so that the killer becomes the victim. Analogically, as is pointed by Kokolis (1993, p.49), who the addressee of the call is remains a mystery—is it Delcharo-daughter or maybe Delcharo-mother?

Aslanidis tries to explain this duality through the metaphor of vigil and dream. According to Freud, the dream is the guardian of sleep, since it stays awake during unconsciousness. Therefore, the protagonist's crime as a result of her vigil transforms reality into a dream (Aslanidis, 1988, p.18). In consequence, if in *Φόνισσα* the murder takes place in a dream, there is one question left: who is the sleeping dreamer? Aslanidis believes that it must be the eternally asleep (*id est* deceased) Delcharo. If Hadoula's vigilance is the dream of Delcharo-mother, then the protagonist becomes the hero of the dream and her actions (killings) are dictated by the dreamer. Therefore, Frankojannou's catchphrase «ο Θεός μ' έστειλε» is justified (Aslanidis, 1988, p.57). This theory creates the grounds for further consideration. By dreaming the story of the Murderess, Delcharo is punishing Hadoula for her theft. Therefore, the duality occurs again: two Delcharos are sleeping and two Hadoulas are suffocating. The plot loops: as Delcharo-daughter does not wake up when her baby is strangled, Delcharo-mother does not intervene from beyond the grave when Hadoula-protagonist is drowning in the sea. Aslanidis therefore reaches a similar conclusion to Saunier (2001, p.239): «το μητρικό στοιχείο σημαίνει το φόνο» (Aslanidis, 1988, p.60).

The convention of the dream can be also used in the determination of Frankojannou's motherhood. In fictional reality, Hadoula is a mother of seven (Papadiamantis, 2012, p.41). Her sons, like their father, are almost totally absent. The only son that genuinely appears in the story (and only in retrospections)

is Mitros. However, he grows distant from a proper representation of the male element, as he is characterized by having «θηλυκόν νουν, όπως έλεγεν η μάννα του – νουν ο σποίος εγέννα» (2012, p.58) and his name is associated with «Δήμητρα» or «μήτρα» (Saunier, 2001, p.243). The daughters of Hadoula are more important for the story's development. The above-mentioned Delcharo is the only one leading a life as wife and mother. Amersa is a spinster and Krinio also remains unwed (her exact age is unknown). Between Delcharo and Amersa, the latter is more similar to Jannou—a bold, resourceful woman who does not yearn for marriage (Papadiamantis, 2012, p.74) and shares a witch-like intuition (Frankissa even calls her «αλαφροϊσκιωτη» (2012, p.57)).

However, the list of Jannou's biological children does not cover the topic—there are also 'other' children, victims that haunt the subconsciousness of the Murderess. They appear in her nightmares, manifesting themselves in the sound of crying, and taking the shape of cabbages, coins, necklace or biological daughters. The crying recurs in the first, fourth, and sixth dreams as well as echoes in Hadoula's *ego*—«εις το βάθο της ψυχής της» (Papadiamantis, 2012, pp.96, 138, 139), «μέσα της» (2012, pp.140, 155), «βαθιά στα σωθικά της» (2012, p.155). In the fifth and sixth dreams, the pangs of conscience materialize, so that the faces of the victims become recognizable. The granddaughter never appears in these nightmares. Kokolis presupposes that she was too young to speak (1993, p.54) or to have determined characteristics (1993, p.52); however, it also supports the above-mentioned theory that the namesakes equate. Dead girls from the oneiric realm seem to see their mother in Frankojannou and crave her attention but, as a part of Hadoula's subconsciousness, they are recreating the *ethos* of their killer. *Ergo*, Hadoula herself believes that she adopts daughters (or even gives birth to them) via the process of killing. The words of one of her 'daughters', Xenula: «Εσύ μας γέννησες, μας έκαμες! Μας γέννησε... στον άλλο κόσμο» (Papadiamantis, 2012, p.158) mirror the philosophy of Hadoula expressed during her ecstasy-insanity episode: «Και η λύπη ήτο χαρά, και η θανά ήτο ζωή, και όλα ήσαν άλλα εξ άλλων» (2012, p.75). In the fifth dream the whole situation turns around so that the victims become killers, as they, in the form of a necklace, are strangling their 'mother' and oppressor. In three dreams (the second, third, and fourth) Hadoula's childhood and motherhood merge together—her alternative life story is distorted by the image of her victims.

The subject is far from being over, as the examples multiply. The conclusions are, however, already visible: the outcome of the mother-daughter relationship is death. The mother is acknowledging her daughters by killing them and the daughters kill their mother in a reversed act. Being a woman

in Papadiamantis' fiction means to kill and to be killed at the same time. The vicious circle never ends as it repeats itself throughout the generations. The death of the protagonist does not mean that the story is over—as Hadoula's existence was the continuation of Delcharo's life, Hadoula also has her heiress. The next link in the chain seems to be Amersa, a character so underrated by researchers (Gasouka, 1995, p.189).

Christian

The whole plot of *Φόνισσα* could be summarized as: 'an older Christian woman mistakes her trauma for religious ecstasy and starts to kill little girls believing that this is her holy mission preordained by God'. The second aspect of the femininity of Hadoula Frankojannou, her Christianity, was selected because of its moral controversy, which is visible on two different levels: fictional and factual. The first category is connected to the *ethos* of protagonist and the second category is linked to the author himself. Accordingly, I have submitted below questions for further reflection:

1. Why does Hadoula Frankojannou, a devoted and practicing Christian, consider the grave sin of murder as salvation? Why does she believe that God wants her to kill little girls?
2. Why did Alexandros Papadiamantis, known as «Κοσμοκαλόγερος», create the character who behaves in a strictly blasphemous way?

Starting with the fictional dimension, the most pressing matter seems to be Hadoula's belief that killing is the mission given her by the Christian God. The initial point of her conviction is the scene of her madness (stylized as religious ecstasy) in the chapter 5 of the story, when Frankissa sees all the values as their binary oppositions: «Αφού η λύπη είναι χαρά, και ο θάνατος είναι ζωή και ανάστασις, τότε και η συμφορά ευτυχία είναι και η νόσος υγεία» (Papadiamantis, 2012, p.75). I believe that the key to the explanation of this phenomenon is the application of Ardener's (1977) model of 'muted group' (female culture within general, *ergo* androcentric, culture) to the society described in *Φόνισσα*. A careful reading of the novel divulges that female ethics do not always coincide with a Christian (patriarchal) pattern. This notion can be illustrated with the example of Marousa's pregnancy. The women of Skiathos judge Marousa because of her infidelity, yet, none of them reveal her

secret to the men. On the one hand, they disparage her, while, on the other, they help her with the abortion. The schizophrenic double mentality is already visible—part of their behavior corresponds with the Orthodox morality and part of it belongs to the unwritten law of ‘female society’ which seems to head in the direction of the welfare of an individual woman. Marousa states that she would kill herself if she had to carry the pregnancy to term (Papadiamantis, 2012, p.136). The ‘female law’ protects her, since it perceives the abortion as ‘the lesser evil’ in a world where women are supposed to obey and serve men, where they are deprived of political rights, where they are not supposed to have a libido, where the recognition of rape within marriage is non-existent. To be a woman in Papadiamantis’ Skiathos means to commit and to justify the crimes of the patriarchal system.

The protagonist follows the same path and, even if her action is perceived as a sin from the perspective of Orthodoxy, it does not contradict her conscience: «Ερευνώσα την συνείδησίν της, εν πράγμα εύρισκεν· ό,τι είχε κάμει και τότε και τώρα το είχε κάμει διά το καλόν» (Papadiamantis, 2012, p.138). Hadoula performs abortions, steals money from her parents and spouse, seeks herbal contraception methods («στερφοβότανο») as well as eugenic means («παλληκαροβότανο») (2012, p.101). She hides her deeds from (the necessarily male) authority: she does not confess her true sins to the priest (2012, p.47) nor does she admit her doings to her father or husband (2012, p.48). For her, a cleric does not represent God; she prefers to pray in an abandoned ruined chapel than in a church (2012, pp.98–99). She seems to feel a little bit more comfortable only among other women, which is visible when she comes back to Lyringos’ house, not being afraid that his mother-in-law could betray her (2012, p.180), believing in female loyalty.

This short recapitulation is enough, I reckon, to draw the conclusion that the insanity of Frankojannou is directly linked to the schism between Orthodox and female morality. As a woman, she is unable to live by the unrealistic standards determined by a patriarchal society. Yet, the unwritten rules that constitute the female law are too ambiguous to create any solid support. Hence, in a society where generally forbidden abortion is silently accepted by the women as the only means of salvation, the eradication of less desired children seems to be an almost logical succession. Therefore, the madness of Hadoula relies on the further shift of already precarious values—the catalyst of this process, her trauma, triggers the alteration so that her morality loses its stability and drifts away in an abstract direction. As a consequence, the belief that killing girls is a holy mission seems more comprehensible.

It is important to note that the act of killing surpasses not only the Christian commandments but also her personal conscience. Her first murder is committed in a trance-like state; after coming to her senses she feels stings of remorse (Papadiamantis, 2012, p.93). Frankissa is not sure if she has properly interpreted God's intention. She prays to John the Baptist for a sign of approval and only after receiving it (in the form of two girls playing near a cistern without parental care) she carries on her 'holy mission'. Her first conscious killing is against her own moral compass—while drowning Myrsouda and Asetoula⁴, she experiences «μέσα της φοβερών πάλην» (2012, p.105). Shortly after the murder, she feels compassion towards their mother (2012, p.110). The third murder, from Hadoula's perspective, seems to be the pure realization of God's intent. Xenoula falls into the well as soon as Frankojannou makes a wish (2012, p.117). Even when she understands that this 'divine intervention' is more problematic than helpful, she continues to believe that she participates in God's cruel plan. Her faith is expressed by her catchphrase: «Ο Θεός μ' έστειλε» (2012, pp.106, 108, 111, 162). According to Saunier, Hadoula performs heresy on different levels. First of all, she kills her victims in a way mimicking the Sacrament of Baptism and selects John the Baptist as her patron (Saunier, 2001, pp.234–235). While climbing the mountain barefoot, bleeding and falling down, she reenacts the Way of the Cross (2001, p.249). During the moment of Xenoula's death, the protagonist plays the role of God—«'Ο Μεγαλοδύναμος' (δεν επιλέγει την επωνυμία στην τύχη) που θα πάρει το κοριτσάκι δεν είναι άλλος από την ίδια τη Γιαννού» (2001, p.247). Even though, Jannou does not seem to be internally in peace with the idea of her role, which is visible in her recurring nightmares. In the fourth and fifth dreams her own subconsciousness calls her *Φόνισσα*, while nobody else uses this term in reality.

To address the second issue, the intention of the author, it is necessary to realize that an average reader engages rather in paradigms than in the actual text (Kolodny, 1980, p.10). During standard educational process, we are taught *how* to read having in mind specific assumptions and predispositions. By defying this paradigm and attempting to take an unbiased position, it is possible to determine the motive of the writer (or, at least, to establish its most convicting variation, as the author, aka the only person that knows the truth, is deceased). In the case of Papadiamantis' prose, an average recipient is programmed towards religiousness—they seek signs of devotion while ignoring evidence of the criticism towards the Orthodoxy-oriented *status quo*. However, Stafilas in his work calls Papadiamantis a 'revolutionary Christian'

4 Levi probably misspells the original name *Αρετούλα*.

and follows Pronkidis that «κανένας άλλος συγγραφέας δεν μας βασάνισε τόσο, όσο ο Παπαδιαμάντης» (Stafylas, 2000, p.340). He argues with three other researchers (Dimaras, Bastias, Gritsi-Miliex) and concludes that: «Και τα προβλήματα του τόπου τον ενδιέφεραν. Και τη φτώχεια δεν την λογάριαζε σαν την ευλογία Θεού. Και τα κατεστημένα θα χτυπούσε με τόλμη περισσισια» (2000, p.336). This can be observed on the example of *Φόνισσα*: even if Hadoula's actions expand far above the Orthodox ethics of Papadiamantis, it seems that he does not intervene or take a judgmental stance. The author not only describes the deeds of his character but also provides all the factors leading her to commit the murders as well. In this way, he shifts at least part of the blame from Frankojannou to the inequitable patriarchal system.

His critical stance can be observed via the narrative technique applied in the novel. Believing that the third-person narrator shares many traits of the author, I disagree with the notion proposed by Antonopoulou (2000, p.30) that Papadiamantis ideologically and psychically identifies with the protagonist; on the contrary, I agree with Vardoulakis (2003, p.5) that not only the narrator's but also the writer's true nature (via *porte-parole*) is revealed during the part when Xenoula drowns in the well:

Αλλόκοτος στοχασμός της επήλθεν εις τον νουν. Ιδού ότι μόλις σχεδόν ως αστεϊσμόν είχεν εκφέρει την ευχήν, να έπιπτεν η παιδίσκη μέσα στο πηγάδι, και ιδού έγινεν! Άρα ο Θεός (ετόλμα να το σκεφθή;) εισήκουσε την ευχήν της, και δεν ήτο ανάγκη να επιβάλη πλέον χείρας, αλλά μόνον ήρκει να ηύχετο, και η ευχή της εισηκούετο. (Papadiamantis, 2012, 117)

This short rhetorical question in brackets, the only interjection in the whole novel, may expose the *modus operandi* of Papadiamantis himself. As an indication of shock and disbelief, the insertion demonstrates the writer's passivity and creates the illusion that Frankissa is living on her own. The author seems to be only the observer puzzled by the independent choices of his character. This is only a theory, as no one can say for sure at what point (if at all) Papadiamantis equates with Hadoula, but it is possible that the writer and the protagonist depart from the common point of the general dissatisfaction with the social system and follow two separate ways—the character is killing small girls while the author is writing a book about the Murderess.

Witch

Woolf (1945, p.42) elaborates on the fate of a gifted woman in the past, stating that she “would certainly have gone crazed, shot herself, or ended her days in some lonely cottage outside the village, half witch, half wizard, feared and mocked at”. This description partially relates to the fortune of Hadoula, even if she does not live in the sixteenth century like Woolf’s Judith Shakespeare. The witch is a powerful figure for the feminist movement—*Dictionary of Feminist Theory* mentions some researchers who have examined the topic: Gage, Christ, Plaskow, Daly, Adler, Cixous, Starrett, Starhawk (Humm, 1989, entry “Witch”). *Η Φόνισσα* also explores this subject. In the very first chapter Delcharo, the mother of Hadoula, is introduced as «μία από τας στρίγλας της εποχής της» who «Ηξευρε μάγια» (Papadiamantis, 2012, p.27). After her escape from the outlaws she practiced spells against them «να φέρνη εις αυτούς πολλά «κεσάτια», ώστε πουθενά πλέον δεν υπήρχε πλιάτσικο» (2012, p.30). Papadiamantis does not call his protagonist indirectly a witch; however, Frankojannou fits into this category as well since she is exceptionally skilled with herbs and natural medicine, she knows how to deal with «μάτιασμα», and her own mother addresses her with the word «Στριγλίτσα» (2012, pp.38, 40).

Approaching the subject of the witchcraft in the novel, it is important to note that its denotation differs from the standard Occidental understanding. In Western Catholic Europe, the idea of witchcraft is stigmatized with the history of witch hunts and trials from the late Middle Ages and the early modern period. Works such as *Malleus Maleficarum* have constituted the *witch-Satan* correlation and, therefore, the anti-Christian nature of a witch has been imposed. The Greek perception varies, as put by Greenfield (1988, p.250): “There are, it is true, traces of the concept of the pact with the Devil, which was to become so important in Western witch belief, but these are scattered and this element clearly never became a central feature of Byzantine magical theory”. *Φόνισσα* is set in the nineteenth century, so the idea seems to be even more liberalized: Papadiamantis never gives the assumption that Hadoula’s skills are satanic, as he associates his character rather with mythological, pre-Christian beings such as nymphs or Dryads. His other works (for example *Ο αβασκαμός του Αγιά*) suggest that he was rather ironic and skeptical towards the belief in spells and curses. *Ergo*, the magical dimension of the novel manifests itself mostly through dreams and nature, not by supernatural actions performed by Frangojannou.

Apart from the seven dreams of the protagonist, there are also three other ones, described only indirectly, dreamed by Amersa, Delcharo, and Konstantis. Their brief collective analysis will come in useful as the foundation for further

consideration. Each of those dreams functions as an admonition, as they warn the sleeper about the murder. The alarming dream of Delcharo has already been mentioned in the “Mother and Daughter” section; the dream of Amersa seems even more prophetic. In the oneiric realm, she sees the dead Hadoula-daughter and the protagonist with a black cloth in her hand. The grandmother uses the cloth to bind the corpse but her hand turns black in the process. To get rid of the stigma, she puts her palm into a fire (Papadiamantis, 2012, p.56). The main difference between the dream of Delcharo and the dream of Amersa is the time: Amersa’s vision precedes the first murder and only comes true later—Jannou kills the girl and cannot move her hand afterwards (2012, p.89). Konstantis’ dream is the most cryptic, as he says only: «Για τούτο έβλεπα κάτι αναπόδα όνειρα, ζάβαλε!...» (2012, p.90). He, however, in opposition to his wife and his sister-in-law, does not wake up. His case is quite similar to that of Iannis Perivolos who, having a gruesome feeling, ignores his intuition leaving, thereby, his daughters to die (2012, p.111). Given the above, it can be concluded that two sexes behave differently towards the unknown: men tend to neglect their inner voice while women embrace it and some of them even show signs of clairvoyance.

Bearing in mind this pattern, Hadoula’s horror caused by her nightmares does not seem strange. Apart from the disturbing imagery, the protagonist is terrified of her potential fate, represented by the strangling necklace from the fifth dream. The raging waters, appearing in her fourth, fifth, and sixth nightmare, do not seem to be the mere reminiscence of her killing method, as they may be interpreted also as an ill omen manifesting metaphysical force or even, knowing that Papadiamantis and Hadoula are both Christian, a symbol of God’s wrath. Because of her desperation, Frangojannou eagerly tries to fulfill her last dream, the only one that promises consolation and hope. Pursuing the salvation hidden in the Old Man’s Hermitage, Jannou finds death in the sea, so similar to the oneiric waters.

The water, as an element, is also linked to the second aspect of the magical reality represented by nature. In the general discourse around the Papadiamantis’ prose, nature is far from being an indifferent background for the plot, since it performs an active role in the story, as is pointed out by Gianniris (2000, p.68). From the feminist perspective, the most important argument seems to be the stance of the female characters towards nature. As was already mentioned, the witches Delcharo and Hadoula are directly linked to the environment by treating it as a refuge or as a source of herbal remedies. During Frangojannou’s escape, the fact that women and men behave differently towards nature becomes so clear, that the whole novel could serve

as an illustration to the Ortner's (1972) essay *Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?*. The witches feel safe surrounded by nature, in contrast to the male characters who are afraid of it (Papadiamantis, 2012, p.196). Thus, Papadiamantis' writing stays faithful to the patriarchal pattern in which women are seen as the sex closer to nature; however, his take is not deprecatory, as nature for him represents metaphysical force rather than primitiveness. Gianniris (2000, p.72) compares Papadiamantis' scenery to the church where the presence of God is obvious. His theory is sealed by the fact, that the key prayer of Hadoula takes place in the ruined chapel of St John in Hiding in which the natural environment is united with the temple.

During the course of the action, nature becomes gradually more hostile towards Frankissa, which can be interpreted as a divine punishment. In the most down-to-earth explanation, this metaphysical 'wrath' is a reaction to the murders perpetrated by Jannou. By killing girls, she breaks the natural law established by God and, in consequence, she is tormented by nightmares, suffers natural stoning (a very Biblical punishment) and, eventually, drowns in the sea. Some researchers, however, seek for the deeper reasoning. For example, Tziovas (2002), who perversely calls the novel «αντικοινωνικό μυθιστόρημα», believes that the death of the protagonist symbolizes her rebaptism and rebirth, as she retreats into nature which epitomizes salvation. He applies literary Darwinism to the novel, since he states that «Ο Παπαδιαμάντης υπονοεί ότι η κοινωνία δεν μπορεί να αντιμετωπίσει τα προβλήματά της και η μόνη διέξοδος είναι ένα είδος δαρβινικής φυσικής επιλογής» (Tziovas, 2002). For him, Jannou prevents her victims from entering society (or, to stay faithful to Ortner's theory, culture) by returning them to nature and a comforting past.

It is important to mention that some researchers try to define the sex of nature presented in *Φόνισσα*. Aslanidis (1988, p.21) associates the sea with the mythical mother, while Saunier points out that at the beginning nature in *Φόνισσα* takes shape of Dryads (which are feminine by their nature) and Moraitis' pine. The pine in the text does not represent the male element (as the Greek word *πέυκος* is of masculine grammatical gender), since it is hollowed out and so it creates a 'feminine' cavity, inside of which Delcharo could hide. *Ergo*, Saunier (2001, p.241) considers all the natural hideouts (and the water) through the lens of maternity. Karamvalis (2000, p.152) focuses on the masculine element which presents its gender through the wording:

Αυτές οι περιγραφές της φύσης, ιδιαίτερα σε μια ανάπαυλα του κυνηγητού της με τους χωροφύλακες είναι συγκλονιστική και αποκαλύπτει την παρουσία του άνδρα μέσα σε συνηχίσεις του τύπου αήρ-ανήρ ('και ο αήρ ο ευώδης θα ήτον ικανός να

βαλσαμώση και αυτά της γυναικός ταύτης τα πάθια') ή 'το κογχυλοειδές άντρον' ή ακόμη 'ο βράχος έως κάτω ήταν τόσο κάθετος, ώστε αδύνατον ήτο βροτός ανήρ ν' ανέλθη ή να κατέλθη' ή ακόμη και τα πουλιά που πετούν είναι αρσενικά ('... άνω της κεφαλής της ήκουε την κλαγγήν των αετών και τους κρωγμούς του ιέρακος').

By merging the above-mentioned interpretations, the recipient could be under the impression that nature in Papadiamantis' prose is divided by its gender, showing its masculine and feminine side, according to the situation. While Saunier and Aslanidis perceive the Dryads and cavities as feminine and helpful, the exemplification provided by Karamvalis portrays the masculine as the mostly penalizing element. The sea seems to be the moot point, because it is generally seen as a feminine motive and at the same time kills the protagonist, but it does not fall into the binary opposition *helpful-penalizing*. Aslanidis associates it with motherhood, which for him is the equivalent of the murder; yet, Tziovas identifies it with the ultimate salvation.

At the end, there is no definite answer to the question, 'what does the metaphysical element mean in *Φόνισσα?*', because of its open composition. Paradoxically, the death of the protagonist does not close the action properly, since the reader is left with an ethical dilemma. Papadiamantis has never openly stated where his morally grey character belongs in the afterlife, as he closes the finale 'in between':

Η γραιία Χαδούλα εύρε τον θάνατο εις το πέραμα του Αγίου Σώστη, εις τον λαιμόν τον ενώνοντα τον βράχον του ερημητηρίου με την ξηράν, εις το ήμισυ του δρόμου, μεταξύ της θείας και της ανθρώπινης δικαιοσύνης. (Papadiamantis, 2012, p.200)

Murderess

Papadiamantis very carefully characterizes the social background and the mental state of the protagonist, so, besides a brief recounting, nitpicking seems redundant. The factors that have led Hadoula Frangojannou to the murders fall into two categories: 1. socio-material; 2. psychological. To the first category belong all the external agents which are linked to her low position in social strata, like poverty, traditional submissive position of the woman, a patriarchal system supported by politics and religion, a lack of men caused by migration, the social requirement of the dowry, the minimal impact of the suffragette movement, *et cetera*. The psychological aspects are linked to her internal response to the family situation, such as her deep misery caused

by the emotional and physical abuse by her mother, the internalized sexism exhibited by general antipathy towards girls, and the dissatisfaction with the assigned gender role. Those factors, however, were not enough to provoke the killings. The catalyst of the reaction is the psychotic episode caused by sleepless nights filled with the recapitulation of traumatic memories, which results in a perverse version of ‘spiritual ecstasy’. Frankissa sees all the values as their binary oppositions, which, as was already evidenced, is the further relativization of the already precarious morality.

The argument that I would like to engage in is the character arc of the Murderess, especially when it comes to the emotional dimension. The author very convincingly describes the gradual moral decay of his protagonist, so it is easy to distinguish three stages in her criminal transition, as is shown by Kourakis (2006, pp.11–17) in his hypothetical juridical study. During the first stage, Hadoula initially seems to be a regular woman deprived of any violent inclination. Even her seemingly morbid language—«Τι να σας πω!... Έτσι του ‘ρχεται τ’ ανθρώπου, την ώρα που γεννιούνται, να τα καρδοπνίγη!...»—is softened by the following disbelief in her own death wishes—«Ναι μεν το είπεν, αλλά βεβαίως δεν θα ήτο ικανή να το κάμη ποτέ... Και η ίδια δεν το πίστευε» (Paradiamantis, 2012, p.45). However, some of her behaviors are concerning, especially from the perspective of nineteenth-century Christian society—for example, her tendency to talk about the potential death of little girls, feeling «της μεγάλης και ιεράς ανακούφισις» (2012, p.74) after the funeral of the neighbor’s daughter, stealing money, and conducting at least one abortion. To the first phase belongs also the first murder, preceded by the vision in which «κανέν πράγμα δεν είναι ακριβώς ό,τι φαίνεται, αλλά παν άλλο – μάλλον το εναντίον» (2012, p.75). The same quotation could be used to describe the whole scene, since the wise old grandmother Hadoula, who is supposed to protect her granddaughter, kills her instead. Death transforms into life and the defender transforms into the Murderess. The action seems unreal, as it takes place in an altered state of mind similar to a trance—«να ψηλώνη ο νους της», «Είχε “παραλογίσει”», «Δεν ενόει καλά τί έκαμνε» (2012, p.77). The vision of Hadoula creates the grounds for the assumption that she was chosen by God to fulfill His will, although this premise is not apparent right from the start, since she needs assurance. It is found in the alleged ‘sign’ sent from John the Baptist, under the disguise of two little girls playing carelessly near the cistern filled with water without any parental surveillance.

At this point, the first stage comes to an end and the second phase progresses. At that time, Frankissa drowns Myrsouda and Asetoula as well as leaving Xenoula to certain death. She kills consciously, with intent but without

satisfaction. Her deeds are against her own morality and even instinct as is evidenced by the words «Έξ εμφύτου ορμής, η Φραγκογιαννού ηθέλησε να φωνάξει και να τρέξει εις βοήθειαν. Αλλά τη μεν κραυγήν της η ίδια έπνιξεν εις τον λάρυγγα, πριν την εκβάλη, αι δε κινήσεις παρέλυσαν και το σώμα της επάγωσεν» (Papadiamantis, 2012, p.117). Hadoula tries not to draw attention nor suspicion on herself and thus she acts in cold blood and with caution. During this stage, her first nightmares appear.

The third stage brings change to her *modus operandi*, which is especially visible in the following fragment:

Ως εν αλλοφροσύνη και εν πλάνη ονείρου, έτεινε την χείραν προς το λίκνον, εντός του οποίου ωλόλυζε το μικρόν... Έκαμε χειρονομίαν ως διά να σχηματίση τους δακτύλους της εις δилаβίδα, εις αρπάγην και στραγγαλιάν. Ησθάνετο την στιγμήν εκείνην αγρίαν χαράν να πνίξει το μικρόν θυγάτριον... (Papadiamantis, 2012, p.164)

From this moment forward, the Murderess has successfully repressed her conscience and sentiment. She no longer feels the heavy burden of her mission and, quite the contrary, she has learnt how to enjoy the murderous act. Jannou loses her self-control and lets her urge guide her, which leads to sloppiness.

The point of my disagreement with Kourakis' theory lies in his confidence that Frangojannou's crimes do not belong to the category of «αλτρουιστικές ανθρωποκτονίες» (Kourakis, 2006, pp.17–21), based on the assumption that she does not feel deep love («έντονη αγάπη») towards her victims. The researcher supports his thesis with the quotation by Saranti: «η Φραγκογιαννού έχει εξυπνάδα, έχει μυαλό, έχει κρίση, έχει μαχητικότητα, μόνο αγάπη δεν έχει» (Kourakis, 2006, p.21). However, I believe that the mere outlook on the above-described character development questions this premise. It seems pointless to argue that Hadoula actually loves her victims but there are grounds to surmise that her case does not fit a modern understanding of the law.

Frangojannou lives in Greece in the second half of the nineteenth century, when the construct of maternal love was different than contemporary understandings (Badinter, 1981), as was evidenced in the previous sections of this article. The bond between women of the same family was complex and often based on rivalry. Undeniably, the maternal instinct is and was fundamental for the mother-daughter relationship and yet, the emotions and feelings then and now do not seem to coincide. It should be stressed that

Hadoula is not lacking her instinct, as she fights it in the second stage of her journey. Furthermore, even if we assume that the modern perspective should prevail so that the killer needs to fulfill the condition of ‘deep love’, we cannot possibly dismiss all the murders committed by the protagonist as the same, since the case of her first killing differs from the rest. There is not enough data to state if Jannou’s feeling towards her granddaughter can be defined as pure unconditional «αγάπη» but the feeling is clearly «έντονη». Bearing in mind that ‘namesakes equate’, the protagonist probably unconsciously sympathizes with the girl, which, I believe, is the finest expression of the previously-mentioned duality. The grandmother sees herself in the granddaughter and, realizing her own misery, she tries to save the girl from the same fate. Thus, the first killing is an act of mercy.

Whether mercy can be considered love is a matter of individual definition. Altruism is, nonetheless, visible and not only in the first but also in other murders. On the one hand, Hadoula perceives girls in general as a burden for their mothers; on the other, she wants to spare them suffering—a fact authenticated by the quotation describing her grandchild: «ουδ’ εφαντάζετο ποίους κόπους προξένει εις τους άλλους, ουδέ πόσα βάσανα έμελλε να υποφέρει, εαν επέζη» (Papadiamantis, 2012, p.27). The full affection, however, only occurs in the first case, which can lead also to the second theory: if the namesakes equate, it means that Hadoula Frangojannou, killing her *alter ego*, subconsciously commits suicide.

Conclusions or the dowry of the Murderess

The final words of the dying Hadoula Frankojannou, «Ω! Να το προικιό μου!» (Papadiamantis, 2012, p.200), are the proper opening for the summary. In the present article, the main character of Papadiamantis’ *Φόνισσα* was examined through the four masks: Mother and Daughter, Christian, Witch, and the Murderess. Each aspect was selected because of its meaning in the debate around Papadiamantis or the feminist discourse. The combination of four selected masks results in a simplified depiction of the femininity of the character. The recurring motif between them is represented by death. The conclusion of the mother-daughter relationship (Showalter’s “source of female creativity”) is the vicious circle of killing and being killed throughout the generations. The image of Christianity in the novel is distorted, because, as the application of Ardener’s model indicates, it relies on the relativized values of the ethics of the ‘muted group’. The psychotic episode of the protagonist provokes a further shift in this already relativized morality which leads to the murders. The killings, however, are not cruel in their intention—on the

contrary, they could be seen (at least in the first case) as an act of mercy. The metaphysical, magic element dominates the fictional reality and obscures the closure of the novel—the reader is left with a moral dilemma and an open composition.

Paradoxically, Papadiamantis' grim view on femininity results in the creation of a 'positive androtext', which illustrates the social inequality and portrays women outside the common literary tropes such as fair maidens, old hags or damsels in distress. His writing, of course, is not completely free from patriarchal structures, such as the emphasized woman-nature relationship or lack of the 'revolutionary' concept of female friendship (Woolf, 1945, p.68). Although, the sexist content is softened by the fact that the writer clearly does not try to denigrate women in any way; and so the link between nature and a woman is a source of her, unreachable for men, strength and the women of Skiathos are intertwined in really complex bonds. Consequently, the terrifying notion that death is the dowry of each woman should not be seen as a demotion, as the author clearly recognizes the problems of his society which is visible when readers divest themselves of the paradigm of his supposed uncritical devotion to the patriarchal structures forced by the religion. It is possible that Papadiamantis describes Hadoula's story as a warning, in order to raise awareness, since, as is shown by the statistics gathered by Orfanidou (2000, p.264), infanticide was not a secluded problem in nineteenth-century Greece.

The present article should be considered as a brief overview of the potential research possibilities and not the final work, since the topic of feminist commentary is far from being fully exploited. Other arguments that could be undertaken are: the meaning of madness/hysteria in the novel, its historical reception by women—as it is known that, for example, Galateia Kazantzaki stated that «ο τύπος της Φόνισσας είναι ανύπαρκτος και απίθανος» (Stafylas, 2000, p.339)—as well as a survey regarding some less prominent female characters (such as Amersa, Maruso or an unnamed and barely mentioned suffragette-teacher).

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