



Nightmare

for Efstratios Alogdellis*

At dawn
hounds of racism prowled
into the home of the invalid.

Without an apology
without shame, they dragged him
half-naked out of his sick bed
and put on the handcuffs.

Terror and humiliation
– rewards
for his ruined health
and for the crumbs of charity.

In his blurred eyes
flutter nightmares
– ordeals in cold cells
the identity, a placard
hanging around his neck
ink on his fingertips
smudging his pride.

A bitter drop your tear, Efstratio
wrung from your ulcerated innards.
Lumps of bitterness choke your throat
and the gravity of the pit draws your step.

*Victim of "the Social Security Scandal", Sydney 1978

people's success stories – the failures are not mentioned.

Why did you choose to write a play and not a novel or some other kind of literature?

In essence I did not choose anything; I was not even a writer, at the time I was perceived as an activist. I think I chose the theatrical structure intuitively, due to the fact that all people involved communicated through dialogue. I have to add that I re-edited the play during these past decades, as well as prior to its publication.

What do you aspire to achieve with it?

My initial aim was to bring justice for the people who were victims of this scandal. Since the play was never produced at the time, it failed to achieve its goal. What I wish today is for my work to be acknowledged and your paper's interest is heartening. Having said that, I believe that

books are like children: if they have merit, they advance.

Why did you write it in both English and Greek?

Simply because Hellenism in Australia lives in a bilingual society, in a bilingual reality. I am a firm believer in bilinguality and I try to write in both languages.

What do the characters of the play represent?

The characters are creations of my imagination. The play is mostly based on the interview I had done with this woman that was a victim. The character is mostly fictional, but I'd say that all characters are a reflection of the Australian society at the time. On one side, we have the police that represents power and tries to protect its interests, and on the other side, the citizens, falling victim to a short-sighted, biased scheme of racist undertones.

Christina herself is the embodiment of Greek values, as a whole; what is your perception of these values?

For me, the role of Christina represents human values that are also Greek. In the unexpected meeting between Christina and Emer (who is also a victim of different circumstances), the prevailing sentiments are those of compassion, empathy and understanding; the two women identify with each other, relating through their challenging situation. Christina is facing an authority that shredded her to pieces and made her feel annihilated. She resists, as much as she can under the circumstances, defending her dignity, honesty and reputation. I think that these human values are eternal. They were strong then and they remain strong today.

Time passes, life's conditions change, human behaviour may change as well, but in my humble opinion, human values and human emotions remain the same. I don't think that people's frame of mind has changed since ancient times.

What about the Australian society? How has it progressed since 1978?

Unfortunately, this case marks a negative side of Australian society and the Australian state. We had a brutal violation of human rights with Greek migrants as victims. As for how much the Australian society has progressed in the meantime, I think that this is reflected upon the treatment of refugees who are imprisoned in offshore detention centres.

Who would Christina be today?

Unfortunately, there are lots of women who are tortured and humiliated around the world today, in conditions rather different than the ones Christina faced. There are more than 60 million refugees around the world and women

are suffering in refugee camps. They are victims of slavery, something that was abolished in the 19th century and it has now revived.

For more information on Yota Krili and her work, visit www.yotakrili.com



Yota Krili