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**Kemal, Bahriye *Writing Cyprus. Postcolonial and Partitioned Literatures of Place and Space*. New York: Routledge, 2020. 304 pp.**

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**Jacqueline Jondot**, retired Professor of English literature (Toulouse 2 University (France), doctor in English literature, wrote a 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle thesis on *Orlando* by Virginia Woolf and a PhD thesis on Middle Eastern Arab anglophone author; she wrote articles on Ahdaf Soueif, Edward Atiyah, Carl Gibeily, Yasmin Zahran, Jamal Mahjoub, Fadia Faqir, Susan Abulhawa... as well as on British women writers (Virginia Woolf, Penelope Lively, Mary Shelley). She has also translated *Outremer* by Nabil Saleh. She has coordinated an issue of *Horizons Maghrébins* on the 2011 Revolution in Egypt, including her photos of those street graffiti on which she has written a number of articles.



Little has been written on Cyprus within a comparative nationalist framework to bring out the layers of interaction between Cypriots, Greeks, Turks, and the British, and of cross-relationships during colonial, postcolonial, partition periods. Bahriye Kemal – in her own words, a “cypriotbritish daughter to diasporic parents” – undertakes a ground-breaking analysis of the specificity of Cyprus in postcolonial studies and initiates a comparative ethnic-nationalist literary examination within a gendered spatial framework, based on the theories of place and space of Lefevre and Tuan and other postcolonial critics, through a representative selection of poets.

She proposes the first study of the Anglophone, Hellenophone and Turkophone literatures of Cyprus from the 1920s to the present, from a postcolonial and partition perspective, highlighting the originality of Cyprus while suggesting an innovative model for understanding other sites of conflict and division.

She first gives a framework to explore the overlapping dynamics of space and place in postcolonial and partition theories and devotes a great part of the first chapter to the meaning of being Cypriot with a documented survey of the evolution of the name given themselves or by the others to the different components of the Cypriot society, based on competing narratives which she replaces in their historical context. She explores the hyphen/non-hyphen/un-hyphen-ation of the Cypriots, moving on to Cyprus-centered Cypriotism, devoid of binary opposition, and the “Linobambakoi”, a cross ethno-religious community, “the true postcolonial Cypriots”.

She then shows the impact of literature pedagogy on shaping the ideologies that determine official identification of colonial, postcolonial and partitioned Cyprus, from religious to ethno-religious to ethno-national groups, through a detailed historical survey of the curricula since the Ottoman rule, showing how both communities in Cyprus have responded to them, either as divided communities related to the mainlands or to Cyprus. She pinpoints an emergent Cypriot position, freed from Greece or Turkey, and the literary dialogue and dialectics across the divide.

In the next chapters, she analyses the works of a number of poets and how they have given shape to Cyprus(es).

Over the 1955–1974 decolonial period, Ethnic-Motherland Nationalists on both sides drew competitive gendered pictures of Cyprus shifting from female (Mother) to male (Martyred fighter-hero), in close relation to the “motherlands”, Greece or Turkey, which is strikingly different from other decolonized nations that see themselves as motherlands. In a process of invention/“un-invention” of the colonial construct, both Greek- and Turkish-Cypriots “pre-invented” themselves by referring to ancient times and heroes. Eventually, they constructed a hermaphrodite Cyprus.

The British tried to offset the anticolonial ethnic nationalisms and to “cypriotise” the Cypriots through Cypriot-centred pro-British constructions, rallying Lawrence Durrell to their cause, so as to replace Greekness and Turkishness with British-Cypriotness, a Colonialist-Cypriotism (1930–1960). Communist-Cypriotism (1920–1974) was as an attempt to create a Communist-Cypriotist patriotism towards an all-inclusive Cypriot-centred unification, in a wider united Middle Eastern communist power against the West. Post-1964/74 Partition Cypriotism was a cultural rather than political movement that used translation in order to unearth historical, cultural and social roots, common to all Cypriots, bringing out the palimpsestic hybridity of a pre-partitioned, inclusive homeland, within a fixed gendered frame, that of the island as

Mother and the Cypriot her child. This Cypriot-centred identification, based on concrete shared experiences and practices, stands against previous ethnic, exclusive constructs.

But this Cypriotist construct does not include the Cypriot Hellenophone, Turkophone, Anglophone diaspora who produce a heterogeneous transnational Cyprus across boundaries. B Kemal attempts to define a very complex shifting network of cross-relationships between Cyprus, the mainlands and Britain, with interacting multiple histories, cultures and languages, that are hybridized to create multiple Cypruses, not exclusive of one another. Translation is at the core of this production that fosters counter-narratives through hybrid inter-generic experimentation mirroring the mobility that best defines the diaspora.

In spite of repetitions and a rather rambling last chapter, B Kemal's essay gives a seminal insight into the Cyprus literary scene.