

Abstract Submission:
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The Ethnic-Other in Greek Historical Fiction of the Twenty-First Century

This presentation will examine three facades of the contemporary, Greek, historical fiction: it will explore the representation of the ethnic-Other, the formation of ethnic identity as it is informed by the ethnic-Other, and the narrativization of the past in order to make history accessible to young readers. Two novels will be discussed extensively. Mary Savva-Roumbati's *Ta Krimmena Sentoukia tou Ali Pasa* [*Ali Pasha's Treasure Box*] (2013) and Yiannis Kalpouzos' *Imaret* (2016) problematize the image of the ethnic-Other and present history as a multivalent object that involves more than one reading of the past. In Mary Savva-Roumbati's *Ali Pasha's Treasure Box*, three children are on a quest to discover Ali Pasha's hidden treasure only to realize that the knowledge they gain about the history of their city is the treasure they were looking for. Ali was a Turkish pasha who ruled over Ioannina for forty-four years in the late eighteenth century. Like true detectives, the children construct the image of the Other by gathering information from various sources such as museums, history books, or oral tradition. *Imaret* narrates the story of a Turkish and a Greek boy, Netzip and Leontis, growing up under Ottoman rule. The story begins with the boys' birth—born on the same night by a Christian and a Muslim mother respectively—and follows their friendship for twenty-eight years. Each chapter is narrated successively from the point of view of the two main characters. In *Imaret*, the image of the Other is a complex constellation of “us” versus “them,” consciously abandoning simplified ideas of enemies and heroes. Both novels acknowledge the heterogeneity of the national self by embracing the image of the ethnic-Other as an integral part of that identity. Moreover, both novels question historical assumptions that render the past monolithic. My study will draw from theories that discuss the narrativization of history and the nation, such as George Lucas *The*

Historical Novel, Benedict Anderson *Imagined Communities*, and Hayden White *The Content of the Form*. I will also look at more recent philosophical discussions on identity formation, such as the two books by Kwame Anthony Appiah *The Ethics of Identity* and *Cosmopolitanism*.

Lissi Athanasiou-Krikelis is Assistant Professor of English at New York Institute of Technology where she teaches writing and literature, including a course on Children's Literature. Her areas of interest include postmodern metafiction, narrative theory, and contemporary Greek literature in both adult and children's fiction. Her most recent articles appear in *The Lion and the Unicorn*, *Bookbird*, and *The Children's Literature Quarterly*. She holds a PhD from The Graduate Center, City University of New York, and an MA from Teachers College, Columbia University.