

Andrea Demetriou

'The secret of happiness is freedom and the secret of freedom is courage!'

'The Mountains Couldn't Walk Away', by Andrea Demetriou, was launched in Melbourne at the end of March, by Christos Tsiolkas, Arnold Zable, and Tim Colebatch. In Sydney it was launched by Angelo Loukakis, Tim Colebatch and Jeannie Lewis at the end of April. The book reflects ...'nostalgia and its consequences for a world which was eclipsed by the Turkish invasion of Cyprus.....' The poetry collection has been published by La Trobe University and has been illustrated with colour photographs by the author. The book is sold by Gleebooks in Sydney and Readings books in Melbourne.

INTERVIEW: ANNA ARSENIS

Hello Tsakpina, could you tell me how you got this nickname?

From the well known coffee shop which was in Lonsdale St. Melbourne. My then partner, Comminos Zervos (poet) and I used to run it. It has obviously left a very deep impression on the people in Melbourne and the- lets say- more alternative cultural scene. When people see me on my return trips, the first thing they say is, 'I used to come to Tsakpina' and always stress that 'there has never been any other place like it since'. What made it special? I don't really know if it was Kevin's paintings on the walls inside and outside, the Rembetica / Greek political music we played, the anarchist poetry nights, the feminist theatre nights, the ethnic music we hosted, or just my sixteen year old enthusiasm and madness!

I was recently asked to write a book about it by a Melbourne publisher and I must say I was amazed!

At my book launch in Melbourne all the speakers referred to that era with so much tenderness and nostalgia that at some stage, I didn't know if this was my book launch or just an other Tsakpina night with the normal Tsakpina crowd... It was as if time had never passed for any of the 170 people in that room... who were responding to the speakers remarks...

Pappou, (Greek for grandpa), seems to have played a catalytic role in your life... Can you tell

me a few things about this relationship?

Pappou, I suppose, is the beginning and end of my life. I have learnt love and happiness from him. He created me, I am what I am because of him.

Can you describe your Pappou's personality?

He was the most adorable human being I have ever come across, just, stubborn, daring, fearless and capable of creating wonders...

If you had the chance to turn back time, would you have ever left Cyprus?

Never.

What is the last picture you have in your mind before leaving?

The olive trees and the orange trees as my father was driving away that strange August evening.

When did you write your first



Angelo Loukakis and Tim Colebatch

poem?

I wrote my first poem when I was six and a half years old. It was a letter to Pappou after he died, asking him to return, as I found life pointless and meaningless without him.

What is the best piece of advice you have heard?

'do not expect anything from human beings' my father said who was always very cynical and 'try to put yourself in other people's shoes'.



Angelo Loukakis and Andrea Demetriou



The author Andrea Demetriou performed a series of songs which approached the longing for her childhood world through a musical point of view. Sitting at the back Mr George Papadopoulos (former Chairman of the Ethnic Affairs Commission - MC for the evening). Also, Irene Vellas (bouzouki) and Nick Baltas (guitar).



Consul of Cyprus High Commission in Australia Mrs Christianna Tzikas with Andrea Demetriou

Will you be translating your poems into Greek?

Yeah.

Reading through your poems, I was impressed with "The clocks that have not been taken down". Who 'rescued' the clock from the village?

My parents drove back to the village just a few hours before the Turkish army walked in, and took a few things with them as well as that clock.

How do you feel every time you go back to Cyprus?

Like someone is sticking a knife into my heart.

Are there times in your life when the past becomes too painful to deal with?

Yes- when I am faced with the barbed wire that divides my

justice. Moral justice, material justice.'

Is there something you would like to change in your life?

Yes I wish I was more daring...

Daring to achieve felicity in an infelicitous world.. because as Thucydides said 'the secret of happiness is freedom and the secret of freedom is courage!'

What do you fear most?

We can not avoid what we fear most, I find fear a pointless feeling, so I do not fear anything anymore, apart from love, that.... we can avoid..

How do you feel about people who prefer silence?

You are obviously referring to Christos Tsiolkas comment on my book; so long as they don't condemn and marginalise us for 'refusing silence', I will not condemn them.

When I was young I used to get very angry with them and always said 'if you are not part of the solution you are part of the problem'. I have learnt to live with it now, but always feel that it is my obligation to speak up on every level, be it political or personal, no matter what the cost might be.

Tell me a few things about the title of the book.

The title of the book refers to Pentadaktylos, the five enormous mountains, now occupied. They have a huge Turkish flag emblazoned upon them, as well as the inscription 'Proud to be a Turk', which can be seen all over free Nicosia. The title is a line from a poem which says that, 'Pentadaktylos, with its wounded body hemmed in by the enemy did not have feet to run away from them'. The Greek poet, Nanos Valaoritis, who edited my book chose the title based on these lines.

country in two and when I see the Turkish soldier pointing a gun at me.

Describe your personality.

They say I am a difficult person.

How do you see the future of Cyprus?

I will simply quote Angelo Loukakis on this: 'while memory exists there is beauty. And truth. While memory exists, there is always the possibility of