

The Mysteries of Constantinople. Greek “social fiction” in the Ottoman Empire. A discourse about a Constantinopolitan Greek collective identity in the late 19th century?

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Scholars often speak of the phenomenon of “mysterymania” spreading in Europe during the nineteenth century, referring to the numerous original *City Mysteries* novels and their translations in several languages. Combining extensive information on contemporary political and social events with emotive descriptions, romantic incidents and intense action, the *City Mysteries* appealed to the broader readership of the middle and working classes of modern urban centers, referring, often from a critical perspective, to the problems of modern society and searching for the reasons that lead people to crime and immorality. Under the influence of this influx of fiction imported from abroad, a local culture of the novel started to emerge in the Ottoman capital after the mid-century. My presentation focuses on a group of Greek authors, who either originated from and lived in Constantinople or simply had a thorough knowledge of the city by living there for some time and published their *City Mysteries* novels in the second half of the nineteenth century, referring to the Constantinopolitan Greek community and the formation of its collective identity as the by-product of two competing forces of the time, namely, *Megali Idea* and *Greco-Ottomanism*. But what is the political or social purpose of each author? How does he perceive the city and its Greek population, from the perspective of the citizen of the Greek Kingdom or from a Constantinopolitan Greek perspective? How is the position of the Self in relation to the Other defined in the various texts? And thus, could these texts be seen as a corpus that claims the existence of a particular social group of people with their own conscience, that is, the Greeks of (Ottoman) Constantinople? My presentation will attempt to give answers to these questions and shed some light to the Constantinopolitan Greek literary production of the second half of the 19th century.

Bio

Zoi Georgiadou is a member of the Graduate College at the University of Hamburg (Faculty of Humanities) and has recently completed her doctoral studies at the Institute of Greek and Latin Philology of the abovementioned university. The title of her doctoral thesis is: *The Mysteries of Constantinople. Greek “social fiction” in the Ottoman Empire. A discourse about a Constantinopolitan Greek collective identity in the late 19th century?* The defence of her thesis successfully took place on December 16th, 2019 at the University of Hamburg and the final version of the study will be published within the following year. In the context of her thesis, Zoi Georgiadou studies a corpus of ten Constantinopolitan Greek novels, belonging to the *City Mysteries* literary genre and published in the second half of the 19th century in the Ottoman capital and their contribution to the formation of a Constantinopolitan Greek collective identity in the late 19th century.