

## Obituary

### MANTO ARANTOVANOU (1930-1998)

Manto Aravantinou will be remembered by generations to come as a pioneer woman-writer who, with a flair of unrestrained responsibility and unparalleled modesty, opened Greek literature to innovative and unexpected heights. Restless in her mind, she craved "austerity" and "perfection" in both her life and work. To the youngers, she taught a precious lesson of Cavafian youthfulness. Courteous and honest in her dealings with others, she was most cherished by all close friends and fellows from whom she won an unmeasured respect.

Manto Aravantinou dedicated her life to the enigmas and complexities of writing. Her *Writings* represent a vibrant, all encompassing work in progress where writing is converged with contemporary history, and history is converged with both the personal and collective myth. Manto introduced a new line of storytelling; her poetry was a composition of multiple layers, where anthropological origins were entangled with recognitions of probabilities. The concept of time, for her, was a mythic one transposed to us as with a touch of an alien guest.

Aravantinou's work was marked by her splendid renditions of James Joyce's writings into Greek which ably recreated a genuine Dublin atmosphere. She remained a lifetime admirer of James Joyce, Samuel Beckett, T.S. Eliot (*The Desert Land*), and Dylan Thomas (*Under Milkwood*).

I always remember her as an open-hearted woman. She wanted to play the lead in our company, which included Nanos Valaoritis, Andreas Pagoulatos, Dimitris Rikakis, and Alexander Schinas. Born

in Volos, Greece, she was often asking me questions about the city where she was born and raised. The last time I saw her was in 1994, while her Alzheimer's had already heavily progressed. However, she was still able to read us her latest work, *Writing Z'*, which was later published in the magazine *Syntelia*.

Nanos Valaoritis was her closest friend throughout her life. It was Valaoritis who first published her in the magazine, *Pali*. As there is no utopia in life, Manto was diagnosed as suffering from Alzheimer's in her most productive years, in a very critical moment in her life, when her collected works were being published again and at a time when several articles and special issues on her work were under way for publication in various magazines.

Manto Aravantinou consistently fought for human rights and freedom for all people. She was committed to the cause of social justice and to the idea of that a society could be free from the effects of discrimination, whether it be based on race, religious or gender preference. We will remember her as having not only earned a much-deserved place in the history of Greek poetry, but also as an activist for political freedom and social justice. Her presence in the world will be missed.

May her memory be eternal!

September 1998  
Panayiotis Bosnakis

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