

syntactic or stylistic complexity, if it is to convince. As Beaton's version proves, this is a call that should be resisted; as far as possible the text should be allowed to speak for itself. Matthias' version is in no way a radical distortion of Seferis' style, but close comparison with the original reveals how often she feels the need to enhance (often quite randomly) what is on the page. This may be no more the addition of a single extraneous word, itself enough to inject a false note ('Τα έπιπλα έμοιαζαν με βάρκες' is translated on p. 49 as 'Furniture that reminded you of ships' — the implication of the reader suggested by 'you' has no place in this context). At other times an entire 'explicatory' phrase (as in the last line of 'The First Night') is included, as though the reader cannot navigate the text alone. These interpolations occur throughout; they detract from the tautness and precision of the original. Nor are we given a consistent authorial voice; the result is a trivialization of the narrative, with which the reader engages with difficulty. Credit must go to Susan Matthias for finally producing an English version of this interesting work, which will doubtless serve as a useful aid to scholarship, but it is not a version that will convince the reader of the literary merit of the original. Beaton, however, has enabled the English reader to hear Seferis' own restrained, penetrating, melancholy voice, and for this we can be grateful.

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Vally Lytra, *Play Frames and Social Identities: Contact Encounters in a Greek Primary School*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins, 2007. Pp. xii + 300.

Vally Lytra's book deals with a small group of students attending the same class at a local state primary school in Athens. The school is located in the multi-ethnic neighbourhood of Gazi and was one of the first 'intercultural schools' ('διαπολιτισμικά σχολεία') that provided Greek language support classes and an extended afternoon programme run by teachers trained in the principles of intercultural education.¹ The peer group considered by Lytra consisted of six majority Greek-speaking and five minority Turkish-speaking students. All the children were about ten years old at the time of the research, which was carried out between January 1999 and May 1999 and in subsequent one-day visits until 2001. Tape-recordings of students' spontaneous talk, ethnographic observations inside and outside the classroom as well as semi-structured interviews with the students and their teachers provided the research data for Lytra's study, which is a revised and expanded version of the author's PhD thesis.

Lytra's emphasis is on children's playful talk, which is taken to encompass various verbal activities, such as teasing, joking, verbal play, music making and chanting. The introductory Chapter 1 provides an overview of the literature on children's playful talk and introduces the protagonists of the study: the students in the peer group under consideration. Chapter 2 gives an account of the neighbourhood of Gazi and provides some historical background about the Muslims, originally from Western Thrace, who have settled in this urban area since the 1970s. These 'minority Gaziotes' are often identified by majority Greeks as 'Muslim' or 'Turk Gypsies' ('Μουσουλμάνοι γύφτοι', 'Τουρκόγυφτοι'), although they themselves reject any affiliation with Romany-speaking Muslims (on p. 199, one of the children identifies himself and his peers as 'beggars and gypsies', jokingly acceding to this prejudice). The analytical Chapter 3 examines playful talk 'across contexts' — that is, inside and outside the classroom, in instructional and recreational contexts. Chapter 4 concentrates on the verbal acts of teasing in recreational contexts, while Chapter 5 focuses on playful talk in institutional contexts, showing how children's playful activities are delineated by the 'institutional order of the school'. Chapter 6 explores in more detail the linguistic and other semiotic processes by means of which students explore and negotiate social roles and identities.

Lytra follows a rather recent trend in childhood literacy studies that seeks to shift research interest away from the school norms to the wide variety of linguistic resources and practices employed by young people in multi-ethnic schools and classrooms.² The examination of playful talk provides a window into the processes of social identity construction that take place at school and within the wider community. Play frames not only connect the micro-level of everyday contact encounters with the macro-level of cultural practices and ideologies prevalent within a community, but also reveal aspects of the latter that remain hidden to the social actors and the researcher alike. The dominant ideology of Greek monolingualism certainly restrains the children's language choices, since in the 'intercultural' schools of Greece the students' languages are not part of the curriculum. Yet, despite the school's monolingual policy, the children studied by Lytra are shown to employ in their playful talk mixed linguistic resources, derived not only (although predominantly) from Greek,

but also from the minority Turkish language (both Standard Turkish and the local variety), as well as from English (taught at school as a foreign language). Similarly, although playful activities are considered to form an integral part of intercultural pedagogy, Lytra shows that playful talk is only tolerated as 'backstage talk' in the margins of the classroom; hardly ever is it placed on the 'front stage', in the sphere of interaction between the instructor and the students. Unaided by the school curriculum, students derive their linguistic and semiotic resources from the media (i.e., from Greek and, to a lesser extent, Turkish television, film and music) reproducing gendered stereotypes. Thus, boys often signal playful talk through football cries and snippets from rap and rock music, while girls draw mostly on the talk and conduct of popular artists. Such findings stress the 'dissonance between educational rhetoric and educational practice' — a dissonance about which Lytra warns very early in her book (p. 57).

Lytra follows a constructionist approach to identity formation, yet she wisely avoids the exaggerations that are more than obvious in some 'critical' trends of this school of thought. Her emphasis on the discursive construction of identities can be reinterpreted as a methodological maxim: identities can be reconstructed only or mainly through their discourse traits and their indexicality to cultural practices and ideologies. Lytra does not pretend to have discovered in a snippet of conversation the whole constellation of attitudes and practices characteristic of the community of Gazi, although she masterfully exemplifies such practices through her meticulous analysis of the children's playful interactions. What she is really interested in is exploring the interaction of school and societal frames in particular discursive formations.

Vally Lytra's book provides a lively description of a community in transition and, at the same time, a very well documented analysis of such speech events as teasing and joking. It is a welcome contribution both to the ethnography of minorities and to linguistics. Her book is written with clarity, and most of the repetitions seem to be intentional. Last and perhaps least, unlike many of her colleagues who write about Greece in English, Lytra proves to be meticulous in referring to works by scholars who mostly publish in Greek.

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¹ For this 'pilot project', which only lasted for three years, see Alexandra Androussou, 'Working with others: Facets of an educational experience', *Pedagogy, Culture and Society* 13 (2005) 87–107.

² For a review of the relevant literature, see Vally Lytra, 'Playful talk, learners' play frames and the construction of identities', in M. Martin-Jones, A. M. de Mejia and N. H. Hornberger (eds), *Encyclopedia of Language and Education*, 2nd edn, Vol. 3: *Discourse and Education* (London 2008) 185–97.