

bio

Aglaiia Blioumi was born in Stuttgart, Germany, in 1972. Although she grew up and went to school in Stuttgart, she completed her academic studies in Greece, where she is currently a professor, teaching in the Department of German Philology at the Kapodistrian University of Athens. After graduating from the Department of German Philology of the Aristotelian University of Thessaloniki, she completed her PhD at the Open University of Berlin. Dr. Blioumi has also taught "Creative writing" and "Research Methodology" at the Hellenic Open University, and "Semiotics of Immigrant Literature" at the Aristotelian University of Thessaloniki.

Dr. Blioumi made her literary debut with the short story, "The Stranger within Me", written in German, and



found in the anthology "Deviations and Transitions" (1997). Moreover, her poems have been published in various German and bilingual anthologies.

"Say Farewell to Stuttgart, Astyanakta", is her first literary venture in Greek. This novel explores Greek migration in Germany through the eyes of a Greek girl growing up in Stuttgart. As readers, we observe the lives of the immigrants and the challenges they are forced to face, not only in Germany, but also back in their native country, on return. Through the pages of the novel, we see them shaping their multicultural identity and becoming part of a changing world

Dr. AGLAIA BLIOUMI

We had the pleasure of interviewing Dr. Aglaiia Blioumi for our school festival, "Voice of the Other". This year, the festival explored and raised awareness on the issues faced by women refugees and immigrants at the present time, as well as in the past. Dr. Blioumi shared her experiences of being the child of immigrant parents, who moved to Germany to earn a better livelihood. She spoke of her childhood in Germany, her dreams and her goals as a teenager, her relationship with Greece, and her current professional position in the academic community.

Below, we have an excerpt of the one-hour interview we had with Dr. Aglaiia Blioumi. It was a truly inspiring experience for all of us, both students and teachers, and we thank her very much.

During your childhood, did you experience discrimination in Germany due to your Greek background?

A.B.: Of course, I did. At that time in Germany, being Greek meant being something inferior, and, therefore, it meant dealing with the problems that come with that mentality. Also, being the child of immigrants inherently meant being the child of lower-class workers, so that caused even more issues. Later, however, when we returned to Greece, we faced even more discrimination because of our German citizenship.

What does the character and tragic fate of "Astyanax" symbolize in the title of your new book?

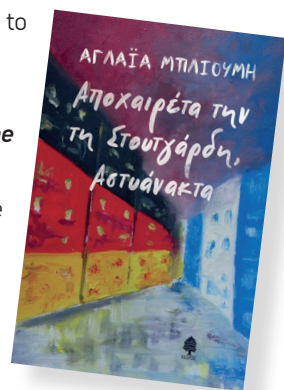
A.B.: Literature is full of mysteries. Every reader interprets and feels the novel, and Astyanakta's symbolism in their own way, and that is part of the magic.

Although you teach and convey knowledge and experience to your students, do you feel that you yourself gain, or have gained anything from them in return?

A.B.: Every day, always. The act of teaching is a constant give-and-take of knowledge and wisdom. Many of my students' questions open up new pathways, and reveal different perspectives and ways of thinking on specific subjects that I may not have previously considered.

Finally, do you think that it is important for schools to hold events and festivals, such as the "Voice of the Other"?

A.B.: First of all, I'd like to congratulate your school for holding such events, as it's not something that's generally expected of schools in Greece. Now, the truth is, migration inevitably leads to interculturality. It's a natural phenomenon that has been around for many years and across the whole of Europe. The coexistence and blending of various cultures is natural, and when there is a system of democracy in place, where everyone abides by the same laws, there is no need for xenophobia or racism of any kind. Therefore, I believe that is a very important message to pass on to the younger generation: We should always be striving for a world where everyone is empathetic towards, and accepting of one another, and I believe that through such events, that ideal shines through brightly!



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