

A tribute to Antonis Samarakis

on the occasion of his birth Centenary

Wednesday, 20 November 2019, 19.00

The Hellenic Centre, Friends & Members Room, London

PROGRAMME

Addresses

Mrs **Sissy Papathanassiou**

Director of Letters, Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports

Dr **Vassilis Sabatakakis**

President of the European Society of Modern Greek Studies

Talks by

Professor **Dimitris Tziovas**, University of Birmingham

Samarakis and the Greek 1960s

Professor **Gonda van Steen**, King's College London

Antonis Samarakis: I am only human after all

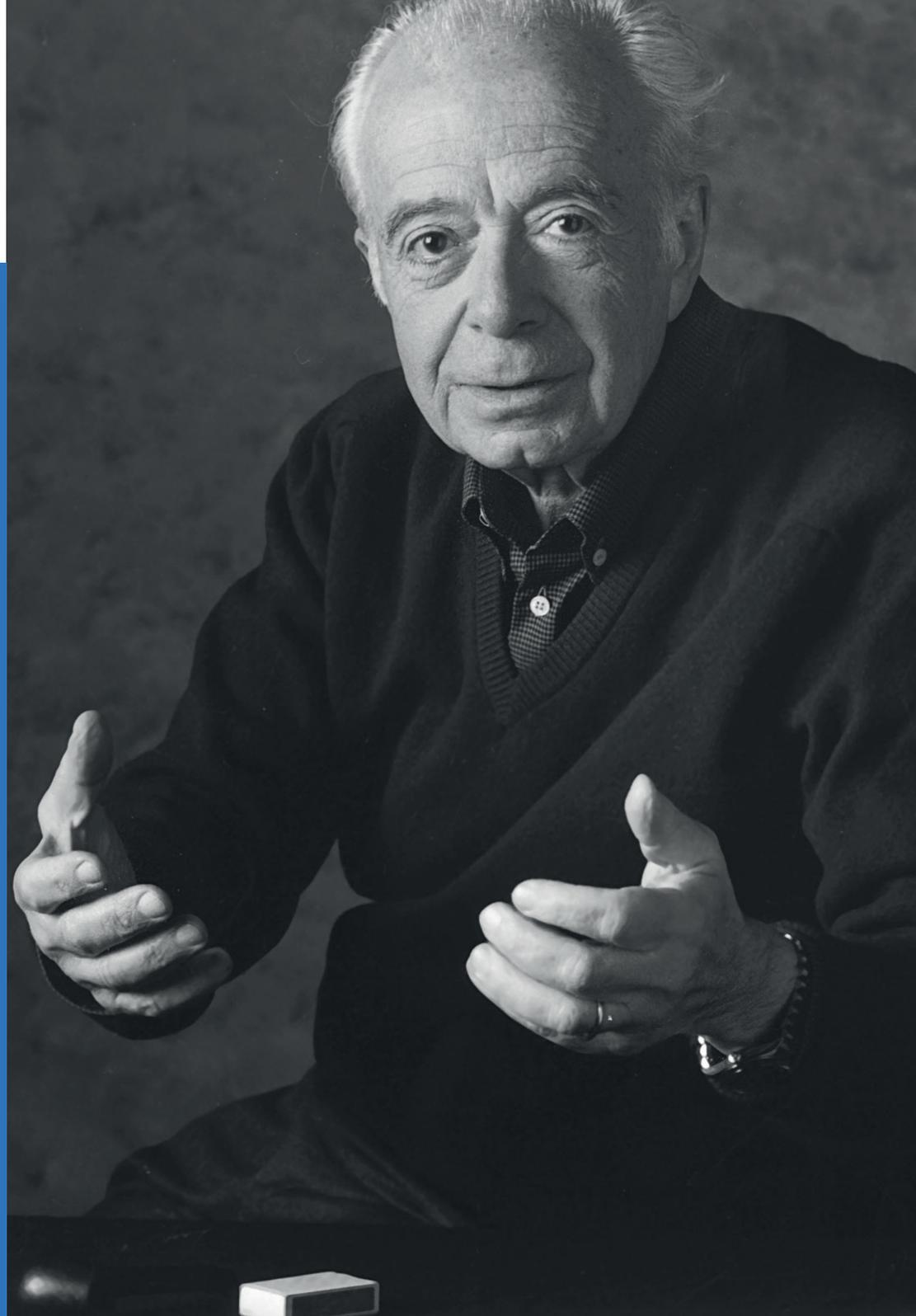
Reading from the landmark novel *The Flaw*
by Polly Wiseman –actress, playwright and Matthew Wade–actor,
accompanied by a video projection created from archived images
of the exhibition "Antonis Samarakis, forever young"
(Zografeion Lyceum Greek School, Istanbul, April 2019).

VENUE

THE HELLENIC CENTRE

16-18 Paddington Street, Marylebone, London, W1U 5AS

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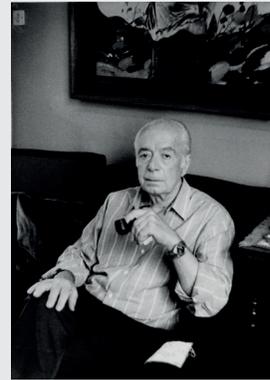


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What the Chief said –a milestone in my life– when we eight trainee interrogators saw him in turn to take our oaths, is engraved in my consciousness: ‘You are obliged to recognise that for the Special Branch and for those who serve it, a completely different philosophy applies. People, according to this philosophy, are not divided into good and bad, honourable and dishonourable and other such pointless and useless divisions left over from the past. An interrogator for the Special Branch recognises one and only one division: for the Regime and not for the Regime. This simplification is very valuable both for the Special Branch and for each of you individually. The secret, the key to success and inner peace, both for the Regime and for the individual, is this simplification: the less your thinking operates, the happier you will be and the more useful to the Regime. The number one danger is thinking. Don’t make lots of distinctions; no inner dialogues with yourself. The one and only distinction, I emphasise, permitted to an interrogator in the Special Branch is the following: with the Regime or not with the Regime.’ Such was my emotion when I heard the Chief –it was in the afternoon, June, June the 11th– that even the stomach ache I had from stuffing myself with a kilo of cherries at lunchtime, even that stomach ache, couldn’t mar my enthusiasm. Tears came to my eyes and at once I took off the dark glasses I’d bought in the morning specially for my career. If I’d left them on, the Chief would certainly have been unable to see my tears.

Antonis Samarakis, *The Flaw*

Translation: Simon Darragh, Aiora Press, 2018



ANTONIS SAMARAKIS

Writer, born August 16, 1919; died August 8, 2003

Samarakis was born in Athens and studied law at Athens University. A civil servant in the labour ministry, he resigned in 1936, when General Metaxas imposed a fascist-style dictatorship on Greece, but resumed his post in 1945. During the German occupation, he joined National Solidarity, a precursor of the main leftwing resistance organisation, the National Liberation Front.

In 1944, he was sentenced to death for his resistance activities, but managed to escape and go into

hiding. From an early age, he wrote poetry for literary magazines and anthologies. But in the 1950s, he made the decisive turn to prose fiction, publishing his first collection of short stories, *Ziteitai Elpis (Hope Wanted)* in 1954.

The masterpiece of the Greek writer Antonis Samarakis, *To Lathos (The Flaw, 1965)*, was eerily prophetic of the military dictatorship that was shortly to be established in his native land. The novel was awarded the coveted prize of the Twelve in Greece in 1966 and the Grand Prix de la Littérature Policière in France in 1970. It was also turned into a successful film by Peter Fleischmann in 1974.

Samarakis's first novel, *Sima Kindunou (Alarm Signal, 1959)*, and second collection of short stories, *Arnoumai (I Refuse, 1961)*, which won the state literary prize for short stories, developed the same themes and further established his reputation, enabling him to resign from the civil service in 1963 and devote himself to fulltime writing.

Translations of his works into more than 30 languages, as well as the stage and screen adaptations, attest to his ability to address issues of common humanity.

In much of Samarakis's work the characters are anonymous, the style fragmented and plain, sparing in description, but racy, with unexpected twists and an often caustic humor. His protagonists' agonised states of mind are depicted with frequent repetitions of words and phrases, often tending to stream of consciousness.

Samarakis represented Greece at conferences of Unesco and the International Labour Organisation, whose missions he also took part in. He was a goodwill ambassador for Unicef, organised an annual youth parliament in Greece, and, in 1991, was designated as his country's cultural ambassador for *Mèdecins sans Frontières*. He is survived by his wife Eleni.

Extracts from an obituary by David Holton in *The Guardian* (August 16, 2003)

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To be without hope seemed a terrible thing. He had the feeling that the others in the café were looking at him, that people on the street were thinking and whispering among themselves, “That fellow is without hope!” It seemed a crime. He seemed to have a mark upon him that gave him away. He seemed naked among people with clothes.

Antonis Samarakis, *Wanted hope*
Translation: Gavin Betts
Oxford University Press (1st ed.: 1986)



HELLENIC REPUBLIC

Ministry of Culture and Sports

Minister: Lina Mendoni

General Secretary of Contemporary Culture: Nicholas Yatromanolakis

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Scientific Committee

Christos Chomenidis, *Author*

Kostas Karavidas, *Department of Philology, University of Ioannina*

Sissy Papathanassiou, *Director, Directorate of Letters*

Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports,
substituted by Georgios Perrakis, *Head of the Department*
of Books and Letters, Directorate of Letters

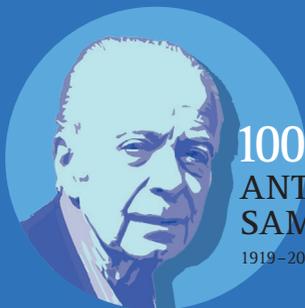
Vassilios Sabatakakis, *President, European Society*
of Modern Greek Studies

Maria Vlassopoulou, *Benakeios Library,*
The Library of the Hellenic Parliament

Sofia Mara, *Committee Secretary, Directorate of Letters*
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100 *years*
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SAMARAKIS**
1919–2003

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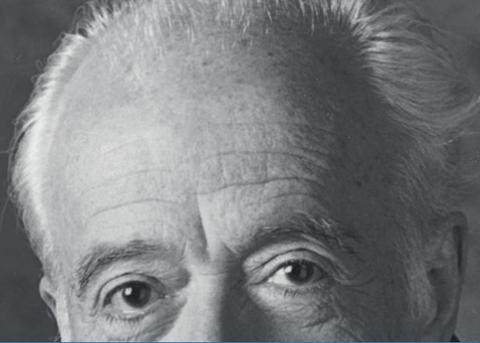
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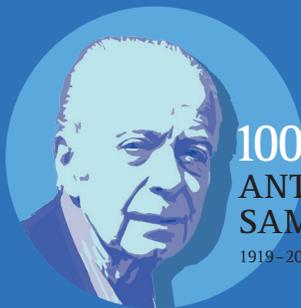
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