

# Athens Plus

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ATHENS PLUS • FRIDAY MARCH 19 2010

BOOKS & IDEAS  
BY VIVIANNE MUIR

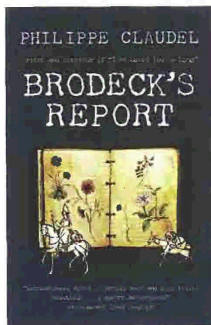
## 'Brodeck's Report' by Philippe Claudel

A novel of arresting beauty probes guilt, memory and responsibility

The denial in the opening sentence of Philippe Claudel's novel "Brodeck's Report" telegraphs a theme at the core of this unsettling book. "My name is Brodeck and I had nothing to do with it," states the narrator, in the first and most truthful of the book's many disclaimers. The truth, drip-fed, seeps through to layers of willed forgetfulness, uncovering individual and collective betrayals and cruelties, and the desire to expunge memory of them.

When a flamboyant stranger arrives unannounced and unexplained in a remote mountain village somewhere in northern Europe his outlandish ways affront the locals, who call him the Anderer, or "the Other." When they can no longer tolerate his difference, they order Brodeck to report on his fate at their hands.

Himself an outsider brought



**Long-listed**  
'Brodeck's Report,' originally published in French, is on the long list for the 2010 Independent Foreign Fiction Prize

to the village as a young orphan, Brodeck is lately returned from a death camp, an experience his fellow villagers rarely acknowledge, though the stonemason has erased his name from a plaque listing the war dead. The stonemason's desire for accuracy is at odds with the prevailing will to expunge records, memory and, with them, responsibility.

The villagers have much to forget. Soldiers invading from Germany during the most recent war imposed ethnic cleansing on the village, terrorizing the locals into giving up their "outsiders," including Brodeck, whose incarceration exceeds the horrors of the pogrom he fled as a child. He is back in the village, but not of it, while dependent on the authorities for his work, filing reports on the countryside. He lives quietly with his wife, obscurely damaged in his ab-

sence, their child, and Feodorine, who saved him as a child.

He had tasted joy as a student in the city, when he met his wife to be, and had his first warning of the coming storm when he escaped a racist attack that showed him how violence can make even the innocent complicit.

Alongside the official report, he secretly writes another account of events in the village, the splendor of the natural surroundings and his own experiences. Scenes of arresting beauty sit beside moments of unspeakable horror in a book that shows the folly of trying to blank out memory. As one searing experience taught Brodeck, "the dead never abandon the living."

"Brodeck's Report," which has been long-listed for the 2010 Independent Foreign Fiction Prize, was translated from French by John Cullen for MacLehose Press.

## Literature in schools and the future of reading

Registrations have begun for a conference on teaching literature in high schools and the future of reading. A joint effort by Metaichmio publishing house and Nea Paideia periodical, the conference is at Athens Municipality's Cultural Center on April 17.

Teacher and author Costas Akrivos will introduce the morning session, "Rusty Lesson, New Pupils," with a talk on problems, proposals and visions concerning teaching literature in schools today. His talk, like all the others, will be followed by brief contributions from speakers in related fields.

Konstantinos Angelakos, professor emeritus of the Ionian University, will assess the evaluation of literature in examinations, in what he calls the "anato-



Youngsters are enthusiastic about events like the Thessaloniki Book Fair (photo) but reading needs encouragement from schools.

my of a pedagogical crime." Author and critic Demosthenes Kourtovik will pose the blunt question: "Who cares about literature?"

The afternoon session starts at 12.45 p.m. with novelist and academic Sofia Nikolaidou on the teaching of literature and new technologies. Next up will be teacher-librarian Maria Technopoulou on school libraries as an aid to teaching literature, followed by school adviser Agathi Georgiadou on the "ritual of reading and the pupil's right to dream."

Admission is free but bookings are essential as seating is limited. E-mail [pr@metaichmio.gr](mailto:pr@metaichmio.gr) for details.

City of Athens Cultural Center, 50 Academias

## LIT-BITS

### Poetry night at Metaichmio

Celebrate International Poetry Day with readings and songs at Metaichmio publishing house. Come and read your favorite poem and listen to Kaiti Zaravela sing poems set to music, with Vassilis Saltayiannis on guitar and Georgia Marini on violin. Literary critic and academic professor Evripidis Garantoudis of Athens University will preside over the festivities, starting 8 p.m. on Monday, March 22.

Metaichmio, 118 Ippokratou, tel 211.300.3580

### Good-times guide

How did the descendants of the glorious Greeks of old deteriorate into today's unworthy specimens? Floral is hosting a humorous discussion with Giorgos Papanagiotou, author of "Oh, aderfe... Odigos kaloperasis sti hora tou frappe" (Oh, Brother... Guide to a Good Time in the Land of Frappe), published by Empiria, and Panagiotis Menegos and Stavros Dioskouridis, presenters of Skai Radio's popular "Latentive" program. Join in the fun at 7.30 p.m. on Monday, March 22.

Floral, 80 Themistocleous, Exarchia Sq, tel 210.380.0070

### Poetic voices of the world

The Hellenic Society of Authors is marking International Poetry Day at 7.30 p.m on Friday, March 19, at the Stoa tou Vivliou book arcade, featuring poets from abroad who have made their home in Greece and their translators as well as verse by other foreign writers. "Poetic Voices of the World" will feature poems from Egypt, Albania, Armenia, Bulgaria, Hungary, Iran, Israel, Morocco, Palestine, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Turkey, the United States and other countries, read in the original and in translation.

Stoa tou Vivliou, 5 Pasmazoglou & Stadiou, tel 210.325.3989

### Book launch in Volos

The Volos branch of Public and Kedros Publications invite readers to a presentation of Christos Terzidis's novel about neo-conservatism, racism and people trafficking, "... ke to telos panta konta" (... and the End Always Nigh). Composer and musician Andreas Katsigiannis will join lawyer Nikos Moschos to introduce the book in a discussion moderated by journalist Sotiris Polyzos, on Tuesday, March 23, at 7 p.m.

Public, 28 Oul & 9 I. Kontaratau, Volos, tel 24210.22904

## New releases

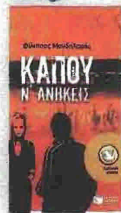
### Novels

#### Me thea tin zoi (With a View of Life)



**By Ismini Kapantzi**  
*Kastanotis*  
Sofia has led life as a spectator, stoically facing up to whatever life deals out. Here she writes the story of her family's rise and fall as she witnessed it from behind the glass wall she herself created. (232 pages)

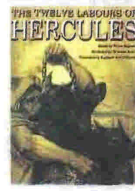
#### Kapou n'anikis (Somewhere to Belong)



**By Filippos Mandilaras**  
*Patakis*  
Soccer and music are the twin passions of Yiannis, a 15-year-old who goes to extremes to work out where he belongs in this lively first-person narrative told to Anthi, who fills in the rest of the story. (168 pages)

### For children

#### Greek Mythology The Twelve Labours of Hercules



**Diaplati**  
Retold by Sirmo Kapoutsis, illustrated by Nestoras Xouris and translated by Kathleen Ann O'Donnell, the exciting adventures of Hercules come to life again in this version for children. (45 pages)



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