

## Angela Yannicopoulou

National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4680-1551>

[aggianik@ecd.uoa.gr](mailto:aggianik@ecd.uoa.gr)

# Political Dimensions of Nostalgia in Picturebooks: The Displaced Sixth Caryatid

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In picturebooks, nostalgia is connected to displacement, and both are usually treated in an apolitical and ahistorical manner. In this paper, the political aspects of nostalgia are examined, drawing on a sample of picturebooks with a clear political orientation, such as those of the nostalgic sixth Caryatid, the column-woman that used to hold up the roof of the Erechtheion on the Acropolis. In picturebooks about the abducted sixth Caryatid who feels intense nostalgia, personification, first-person narration, focalisation on the displaced victim or her lamenting relatives, moving illustration and inter pictorial references manage to create a highly emotional text that encourages readers to empathise with the nostalgic Caryatid. In addition, peritextual elements, such as appendices, provide information to adult (co)readers about the political issue, while epitextual activities actively involve young readers in supporting actions. It seems that, when nostalgia serves a political position, it aims both at engaging emotionally and informing young readers, while at the same time pursues mediated reading that enables adult (co)readers to “chaperone” the whole process.

**Keywords:** nostalgia, politics, picturebook, Parthenon Marbles, sixth Caryatid

Nostalgia, which, before becoming a psychological and aesthetic concept, was originally coined as a medical term, is usually connected to forced displacement. In picturebooks, both displacement and nostalgia are treated in an apolitical and ahistorical manner (Tomsic 2018; Vassiloudi 2019; Yannicopoulou 2023). However, there are picturebooks with a clear political orientation, where nostalgia is no longer an apolitical, “bittersweet psychological concept” (Batcho 2013).

In this paper, we explore how nostalgia is presented in books that raise a political issue. Drawing on a sample of recently published (21<sup>st</sup> century) picturebooks about

the abducted sixth Caryatid, a powerful symbol of the Greek claim for the Parthenon Marbles, we will examine the political implications of nostalgia. We will investigate the verbal and visual strategies of the text, the paratextual elements, both regarding peritext (on the book) and epitext (outside the book), as well as their readership and reading conditions.

The paper focuses on the political implications of nostalgia in children's picturebooks. But first we will explain what the sixth Caryatid and the Parthenon Marbles are, and how nostalgia is related to politics.

### **The sixth Caryatid and the Parthenon Marbles**

A Caryatid is a draped female-figure sculpture serving as a column to support the roof of a building. The best-known Caryatids are the six woman-like pillars at the porch of the Erechtheion, a temple on the Acropolis dedicated to the ancient Greek gods Athena and Poseidon. Nowadays, one Caryatid is exhibited at the British Museum in London, while the remaining five are displayed on a dais in the Acropolis Museum in Athens. A prominently empty pedestal becomes a visual hint, awaiting the return of the sixth Caryatid,<sup>1</sup> along with the Parthenon Marbles.

The Parthenon Marbles are a collection of different types of marble architectural decoration mostly from the Parthenon, the temple of Athena, Propylaea and Erechtheion on the Acropolis of Athens. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, when Greece was under Ottoman Occupation, Thomas Bruce, the 7<sup>th</sup> Earl of Elgin, removed the Marbles from the Acropolis and in so doing severely damaged the temple.<sup>2</sup> In 1816, the British Museum bought, not without objections,<sup>3</sup> his collection. Greece, having never recognised British ownership of the Marbles, always chooses to use the term "Parthenon Marbles", which indicates that the Marbles are not freestanding pieces of art, but the sculptural decoration of a building and therefore its integral part. In contrast, and for exactly the opposite reasons, the British Museum refers to them as the "Parthenon Sculptures".

<sup>1</sup> According to the testimony of Professor Nikolaos Stamboulidis, the arrangement of the Caryatids in the Acropolis Museum made the former US President Barack Obama ask, during his recent visit to the museum, why the sixth Caryatid is not included in the claim for the Parthenon Marbles (Anon 2023).

<sup>2</sup> It is interesting to see how the removal of the Marbles is described in the official site of the Acropolis Museum: "Systematic looting of the site, however, occurred at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when Britain's ambassador to Constantinople, Thomas Bruce, the 7<sup>th</sup> Earl of Elgin, managed to secure an authorization (firman) from the Ottoman Sultan for investigation of the Acropolis – but not for stripping the monuments of their sculptural decoration. Nevertheless, Elgin's team removed a large number of the sculptures until then preserved on the Parthenon, as well as one of the Caryatids from the Erechtheion, four frieze blocks from the Temple of Athena Nike and other antiquities, which were shipped off to Great Britain" (Museum History n.d.). Compare this with the description of the British Museum: "All of Elgin's collection of antiquities was then transported to Britain. His actions were thoroughly investigated by a Parliamentary Select Committee in 1816 and found to be entirely legal, prior to the sculptures entering the collection of the British Museum by Act of Parliament" (The Trustees of the British Museum 2024).

<sup>3</sup> Lord Byron was the warmest supporter of the return of the Marbles. For a detailed discussion, see Kefallineou (1999).

Due to the strong symbolism of the Acropolis for the newly founded state, Greece, soon after gaining its independence (1830), asked for the repatriation of the Marbles (1833), uttering “the most famous and long-standing request for the restoration of cultural heritage” (Robertson 2019: 96). The efforts of the Greek state were intensified after 1982, when the Greek Minister of Culture, Melina Mercouri, launched an international campaign for their return. According to her: “For Greeks the Marbles” are their “pride”, their “sacrifices”, their “noblest symbol of excellence”, “a tribute to the democratic philosophy”, their “aspirations”, their “name”; they are “the essence of Greekness” (1986).

Although the sixth Caryatid has never been included in the Greek state’s official claim for the return of the Marbles,<sup>4</sup> in common consciousness and Greek popular culture, this Caryatid has been instrumentalised as the unique symbol of the Greek petition. The sixth Caryatid, as an iconic image of the desire for the Marbles’ repatriation, is found in folktales about her mourning sisters (Gotsi 2015), nostalgic poems,<sup>5</sup> theatrical plays,<sup>6</sup> internet campaigns,<sup>7</sup> photography exhibitions about the *Missing Sister*,<sup>8</sup> and happenings even inside the British Museum.<sup>9</sup> These bottom-up efforts can be a useful campaign tool for cultural heritage management compared to more formal ones (Stephanou 2018: 207).

The symbolisation of the sixth Caryatid, also an integral architectural element of the Erechtheion temple, for the Greek petition for the repatriation of the Parthenon Marbles, is mainly due to its anthropomorphic nature, which endows it with a nostalgic voice. Besides, the aesthetic qualities of the fine white marble and the great artistic value

<sup>4</sup> It has been argued (Beresford 2026) that the New Acropolis Museum was designed to support the Greek long-standing claim for the repatriation of the Parthenon Marbles. By contrast, because the sixth Caryatid is not included in the claim, the five Caryatids were displayed in a rather dark place out of sight of their former monumental home.

<sup>5</sup> See the poem “Βρετανικό Μουσείο (Ελγίνου Μάρμαρα)” [“Vretaniko Mouseio (Elginou Marmara)” = “British Museum (Elgin Marbles)”] by Kiki Dimoula: [...] The winter evenings / and the exquisite August nights / I see them [the statues of Caryatid and Dionysos] / coming down from their high pedestals, / shedding their daily typical expression, / and with nostalgic sighs and tears / the deprived Parthenons and the Erechtheia / in their memory passionately resurrected [my translation] (Dimoula 2005: 36–37). For a detailed discussion, see Gotsi (2016).

<sup>6</sup> See *The Sixth Caryatid* by Antonis and Konstantinos Koufalis, performed in Athens (2012), and *Our Sister Is in London: A Play in Three Acts* by Yannis Souliotis (2011).

<sup>7</sup> See the *Set Me Free Campaign*, launched by the Archdiocese of Athens on the World Day of Culture (21 May 2021), in which well-known actors were transformed into living statues asking for their return (Αποστολή [Apostoli = Mission] n.d.). See also *I Am Greek and I Wanna Go Home* by Ares Kalogeropoulos (n.d.).

<sup>8</sup> The three phases of the photography exhibition “Missing Sister – Trilogy” (2013–2015) by Amalia Sotiropoulou were: a. The sculptures in the urban landscape of Athens; b. The missing sister in the British Museum; and c. The sixth Caryatid is back to her birthplace and meets her sisters.

<sup>9</sup> In June 2015 six Greek women dressed as Caryatids and the soprano Sonia Theodoridou as “Mother Greece” walked through the streets of London and entered the British Museum protesting for the return of the Parthenon Marbles (*Η Ναυτεμπορική* [I Nautemporiki] n.d.). The event was not greeted as a successful one, and only Greek media gave it some publicity (Plantzos 2017: 3–8). Also, during a school trip to London, Greek pupils spread the Greek flag in front of the Caryatid at the British Museum, knelt down and sang a traditional song of displacement (The Toc Team 2020).

of the sculpture intensify its personification and facilitate the emotional involvement of the viewers (Hamilakis 2007: 277–285).

The abducted Caryatid, who craves for home, makes a strong emotional plea for return in children's picturebooks (Gotsi 2015; Plantzos 2023), which openly connect nostalgia with politics.

## Nostalgia and politics

When “nostalgia” was first coined in 1688, it had no political connotations, but signified an illness experienced by those who lived far from home. Later, starting with the Romantic movement, painters and poets “reinvented nostalgia by transferring it from a medical into an aesthetic context” (Wesseling 2018: 4). Only in the mid-nineteenth century, when nostalgia was linked to the concept of nation and became institutionalised in museums and memorials, was individual longing transformed into a collective one, and the past became “heritage” (Boym 2001: 15). Since then, nostalgia, a former medical term, has gradually become a deeply political concept.

The strong connection of nostalgia with the past and the subjective manner of its remembrance are responsible for the evolution of its meaning. Nostalgia attempts its systematic idealisation at an individual and collective level. The selection of certain past events, primarily pleasant ones, and their distortion (Natali 2004: 21), contribute not to the reconstruction of the past, but rather to its construction (Schrijvers 2014: 126). Even when nostalgia refers to the past, it “is less about the past than about the present” (Hutcheon and Valdés 2000: 20) and the future, and therefore is endowed with an inherently political character (Boyer 2012: 25; Smith and Campbell 2017: 615).

Nostalgia acquires political parameters when the longing for specific periods, practices or regimes functions as an (in)direct appreciation of them; a case in point would be “colonial nostalgia”, an expressed nostalgia for a colonial past (Bissell 2005). However, nostalgia for a certain era, e.g. the Soviet one, does not necessarily presuppose a longing for a specific regime. As happens regarding so-called *ostalgie* (or *ostalgie* < *Ost* = East [German]) (Berdahl 1999), nostalgia may simply be directed towards its aesthetics, aspects of daily life, or a culture currently lost.

In addition, nostalgia may be used even as a way of covering political choices and responsibilities. It happens in “imperialist nostalgia”, that is, a mourning of imperialistic attitudes towards the victims of imperialism. After altering former forms of cultural life or destroying nature, those who committed those actions express nostalgia for primitive life and unspoiled nature. Nostalgic references to old, pure civilisations which no longer exist due to colonising policies, or to unspoiled nature that has been profoundly exploited, in fact constitute an attempt to absolve those who are responsible (Rosaldo 1989).

Since nostalgia as a concept refers to a past which, viewed through a sentimental lens, is perceived at least as better than the present, it has historically been associated with right-wing reactionary politics. As even Brexit has shown (Campanella and Dassù 2019: 104):

[...] nostalgia is a coping strategy for dealing with moments of deep uncertainty and discomfiting discontinuity. It removes people from an unpleasant present and throws them into a familiar past, reinforcing their self-esteem and the self-confidence needed to navigate stressful times.

Investing in an idealised past, nostalgia was used explicitly to bolster support for aspects of certain policies, such as those of Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher (Cashman 2006: 140). Slogans, such as “Make America Great Again” that dominated Donald Trump’s political campaign, invoke the idea of an idealised past and highlight nostalgia as an effective tool for political persuasion. By invoking the idea of a better past, politicians can provoke the social and cultural anxieties and uncertainties that make nostalgia especially attractive and effective as a tool of political persuasion (Sedikides et al. 2015), which might even lean towards propaganda (Springman 2018).

On the other hand, left-wing politicians seem not to favour nostalgia, due to its devotion to the past, considering it a sort of political crime (Natali 2004: 13) or at least a concept that arouses suspicion (Bonnett 2009). Although a decidedly anti-nostalgic spirit was central to leftist political messages, recently nostalgia has been viewed as radical, and the left has found ways to live with it (Bonnett 2010). According to Emily Robinson (2016: 385):

Radical nostalgics do not want to return to the past, but instead use it to right historical injustices, both by honouring those who would otherwise be forgotten, and by continuing their struggles.

In fact, nostalgia endows political language with sentimental power and creates various kinds of temporal and spatial dissonance in political discourse (Kenny 2017: 270).

## Picturebooks about the sixth Caryatid

Although the sixth Caryatid has never been claimed by the Greek state from the British Museum, in Greek picturebooks the issue of the Parthenon Marbles is raised through the nostalgia of the missing Caryatid.

In the picturebook *Γιατί δε Γελούν πια οι Καρυάτιδες* [Yati den Geloun pia i Caryatides = Why the Caryatids Do Not Laugh Anymore], written by Anastasia Christopoulou, with images by Maria Synanoglou (2020), the six Caryatids are presented as six beloved sisters, who had prayed to Zeus to keep them forever together. The god fulfilled their wish by transforming them into the columns of the Erechtheion temple. But, when one of them was abducted and transferred to England, her heavy nostalgic tears turned into rain, causing the wet and cloudy skies of London, as expressed by the last sentences of the book: “To this day the sweet Caryatid longs to return to her sisters... To this day it is always cloudy in London...” (Christopoulou and Synanoglou 2020: n.p.) The story takes the form of an aetiological narrative that explains the reasons behind the rainy weather in London; it is caused by the deep and intense painful nostalgia of the sixth Caryatid.

The picturebook *Nights without Carrie: A Story about the Sixth Caryatid*, written by Niki Dollis, with images by Eleni Oekonomopoulou (2015), provides information about two key themes: the new Acropolis Museum and the Parthenon Marbles. It also engages in purely narrative techniques that allow the statues themselves to become alive, move freely around the Museum, and tell their own story. Using the well-known narrative device of inanimate museum exhibits coming to life when the lights go off and people leave, which is not limited to picturebooks (see, for example, the popular film *The Night at the Museum* based on the 1993 picturebook by Milan Trenc), the story begins just as the last guard leaves the Museum. The five Caryatids tell the story of the looted Parthenon Marbles and the sixth Caryatid, who, as they assume, constantly longs to return home: “She must miss home terribly, and she must feel ever so lonely there without us. You know we were made to be together and were never meant to be separated” (Dollis and Oekonomopoulou 2015: 31).

In the deeply nostalgic picturebook *In the Night I Dream of Home*, written by Vangelis Iliopoulos, with images by Hariton Bekiaris (2019), addressed to a multi-aged readership, the sixth Caryatid mourns her forced displacement and longs for her country. In an analeptic monologue, “the most common narrative technique used to evoke nostalgia in literature” (Salmoise 2012: 288), the abducted Caryatid reflects on her whole life; from the time she was happy in Athens until her desperate stay in London, where her only consolation is the hope of return.

It is worth noting that both picturebooks, *Nights without Carrie* (Dollis and Oekonomopoulou 2015) and *In the Night I Dream of Home* (Iliopoulos and Bekiaris 2019), are published by Greek publishing houses (Kaleidoscope and Nomiki Vivliothiki, respectively) in two versions: one in Greek and the other in English. The English books, mainly found in museum bookshops and popular tourist places, are addressed to foreigners. The moving stories and the informative appendices about the “Issues of Returning the Parthenon Marbles to their Homeland” (Dollis and Oekonomopoulou 2015: 46) reveal a broadening of an already wide cross-aged audience towards international readers, informing them about a crucial issue for Greece.

In addition, both books are strongly connected to the Acropolis Museum: Dollis, the author of the text of *Nights without Carrie* (Dollis and Oekonomopoulou 2015), works at the Museum and writes about it (see her previous picturebook *Building the New Acropolis Museum*, with images by Elena Zournatzi published by Livanis in 2009 also in Greek and English). Besides, she feels closely attached to the sixth Caryatid due to her own experiences of immigration and repatriation.<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, Iliopoulos, the author of the text of *In the Night I Dream of Home* (Iliopoulos and Bekiaris 2019), conceived the story inside the Acropolis Museum, when he saw the empty place of the sixth Caryatid among her sister-columns, as he confesses in an interview with Maria Birbili (Iliopoulos 2019).

<sup>10</sup> Niki Dollis was born in Australia to Greek immigrants and lived there until 1999. See her dedication in *Nights without Carrie* (Dollis and Oekonomopoulou 2015): “For my mum and dad, who would never have imagined that I came back to where they come from”.

In all the analysed picturebooks about the nostalgic sixth Caryatid, she is associated with the Parthenon Marbles, either explicitly or even implicitly through visual hints. In *Why the Caryatids Do Not Laugh Anymore* (Christopoulou and Synanoglou 2020), the Earl of Elgin is depicted among the sculptures violently taken away from Acropolis. The connection of the nostalgic sixth Caryatid with the Parthenon Marbles is more explicit in the peritextual elements of the books, such as the prologues and appendices, and even in underlined phrases on the back covers, where, for example, we read: “A book on the return of the Parthenon Marbles to the New Acropolis Museum” on the back cover of *Nights without Carrie* (Dollis and Oekonomopoulou 2015). The books focus on an overtly political issue: they support the Greek state’s campaign for the return of the Marbles. These multimodal books about the invented nostalgia of the sixth Caryatid aim at communicating a political point by means of certain textual and paratextual strategies.

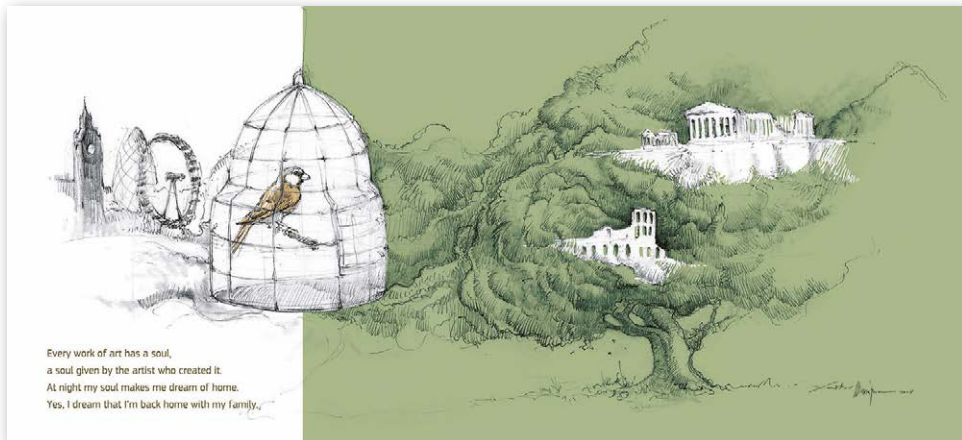
### **Affective entanglement of the reader**

Since it does not seem easy for a human being to empathise with a statue that was removed from its pedestal, all the picturebooks about the sixth Caryatid anthropomorphise the sculptures and emphasise the sibling relationship amongst them. The six statues are not presented just as six marble columns that support the roof of a temple, but as six beloved sisters who had lived happily together for many centuries. As the narratives do not focus on a stolen statue, but on an abducted sister reproducing the popular, longstanding metaphor of her lamenting sisters (Gotsi 2015) – see the title *Why the Caryatids Do Not Laugh Anymore* – the readers become emotionally involved with them and empathise with their misfortune. The conception of sculptures as “the nation’s lost daughters of sorts, anxiously awaiting their return to a homeland they left behind and they so desperately feel nostalgic about” (Plantzos 2023: 110), bears an anthropomorphic bias which reinforces the Caryatid’s aptness as a powerful symbol for “repatriation”; a word that also alludes to human beings, as it derives from the Greek word “πατρίδα” [patrida = ‘country’].

However, although nostalgia as a concept is rather utopian because it is a yearning for a different time (Boym 2001: xv), with its alluring object “notoriously elusive” (xiv), the Caryatid, a marble sculpture that lives outside time, longs for a place. Her nostalgia is only spatial, just like that of Ulysses who longs for home, and not temporal, like Marcel Proust’s in search of lost time (Phillips 1985: 65). And, since the only fair solution to her drama is her repatriation, picturebooks about the nostalgic sixth Caryatid are optimistic that in the end she will be back: “We’ve been together for many more years than we’ve been separated, and surely one day we’ll be reunited once again! We know this is what’s right as do many others” (Dollis and Oekonomopoulou 2015: 34). Besides, the final image of the picturebook *Why the Caryatids Do Not Laugh Anymore* (Christopoulou and Synanoglou 2020) presents the six reunited Caryatids dancing together.

In the picturebooks about the sixth Caryatid, the story combines real facts, such as her forced removal to London, with fictitious elements, such as her personification as a nostalgic sister. The tragic story of the abducted Caryatid emotionally engages readers and captures their hearts and minds. In the illustration of the picturebooks, the abducted sister is presented in the British Museum, entirely shattered and utterly desperate. By appealing to the readers' emotions, the books present the return of the sculptures as fair, and, therefore, the plea for their return becomes more convincing.

The most touching picturebook is *In the Night I Dream of Home* (Iliopoulos and Bekiaris 2019). The brief and highly emotional text echoes the mournful monologue of someone who is forced to live far away from home and family. In poetic style, the previous happiness of living at home is contrasted with the unbearable pain of displacement and the hard life in a foreign place – see for example: “I had never thought of being far from my home and family” (Iliopoulos and Bekiaris 2019: n.p.). A red thread in almost every picture, like a bleeding umbilical cord, symbolises the bonds that unite those who are forcibly kept apart.



**Fig. 1.** *In the Night I Dream of Home* (Iliopoulos and Bekiaris 2019). A caged sparrow living in a colourless London looks constantly towards beloved Athens.

**Sl. 1.** *In the Night I Dream of Home* [Noću sanjam o domu] (Iliopoulos and Bekiaris 2019). U kavezu zarobljeni vrabac u bezbojnom Londonu iz kaveza neprekidno gleda prema voljenoj Ateni.

In the verbal text, the focalisation through the main character, which is revealed as a deeply nostalgic voice craving for return (Busi Rizzi 2021: 650), does not disclose the gender, the age or the location of the focalising voice. These ambiguities are clarified only in the images. Thus, on the first double spread, between the branches of an olive tree, the sacred plant of both the goddess Athena and the city of Athens, the Acropolis with the Parthenon stands out, while on the opposite page the famous landmarks of London are depicted: Big Ben, the London Eye, and the Gherkin skyscraper. It becomes evident from the image that the sad nostalgic monologue implies two cities: Athens,

as home, and London, as exile. Between the two cities, in a liminal space, right on the vertical line that separates here from there, in a non-place, a caged sparrow faces a tree (Fig. 1). The background divided into two, a motif that recurs in nearly every picture, symbolically refers to a life split between a green past in Athens and a bland present in London.

The second riddle, imposed by the verbal text and solved again only in the illustration, is the identity of the homodiegetic narrator. A little bird, in fact a sparrow, becomes the symbol of forced displacement and nostalgia. A non-migratory, vulnerable and defenceless bird serves as the perfect visual symbol for something violently abducted from its country. Additionally, since people do not keep sparrows in cages, the image of the caged bird reveals how unnatural and unbearable its imprisonment is! (Fig. 1).



**Fig. 2.** The hybrid figure of the bird-woman *In the Night I Dream of Home* (Iliopoulos and Bekiaris 2019). The image by Chariton Bekiaris becomes a visual allusion to Loplop Bird Superior by Max Ernst, the famous *Praying Hands* of Albrecht Dürer (c. 1508) and to praying angels on graves.

**Sl. 2.** Hibridna figura žene-ptice u slikovnici *In the Night I Dream of Home* [Noću sanjam o domu] (Iliopoulos and Bekiaris 2019). Slika Chariton Bekiaris vizualna je aluzija na Loplopa, nadmoćnu pticu Maxa Ernsta, te na poznati crtež Albrechta Dürera *Betende Hände* [Ruke koje mole] (cca 1508) i na sklopljene ruke anđela na grobnim skulpturama.

However, from page to page, progressive alteration takes place, and the sparrow is transformed into a marble girl. Thus, the bird gradually acquires hands and body, hair, and a tunic, and ends up in the image of a Caryatid. The hybrid figures of the bird-woman (Fig. 2) become, for an adult reader of this crossover book, a visual allusion

to the Freudian alter ego of Max Ernst, the well-known Loplop, the Bird Superior (see especially the collages of *A Week of Kindness*, 1934) that highlights the immersion into the darkness of the unconscious. It hints at how deep the Caryatid's nostalgia is, which, as a constant point of reference, sustains the disappointing present with memories of past happiness. The hybrid image of the bird-woman, which recalls grave angels, as well as the famous painting *Praying Hands* of Albrecht Dürer – a hymn to brotherly love – imbues the text with cemeterial sadness, as well as awe for strong sibling bonds. The nostalgia of the sixth Caryatid who constantly “dreams of home” is underlined visually by those interpictureorial references (visual intertexts) that create a visual pastiche, which infuses a sense of a fragmented past and prompts nostalgic feelings in readers (Busi Rizzi 2021: 656).

The picturebook focuses on the nostalgia of the displaced in two ways: the visual allegory of the bird in the visual text and the first-person narration in the verbal text help the reader identify with the verbal narrator and with the nostalgia the narrator feels. On the other hand, through the bird's transformation into the sixth Caryatid, the reader of the book empathises with her pain and loneliness, and mainly with her nostalgia for her country and people. Both identification and empathy maximise the emotional involvement of the reader. The more the readers participate in the Caryatid's sorrow and nostalgia, the more positively they become disposed in favour of the return of the Marbles.



**Fig. 3.** A child's drawing for the drawing competition of the publishing house Nomiki Vivliothiki inspired by *In the Night I Dream of Home* (Iliopoulos and Bekiaris 2019). The crying sixth Caryatid asks for her return.

**Sl. 3.** Dječji crtež s natjecanja koje je organizirala nakladnička kuća Nomiki Vivliothiki inspiriran slikovnicom *In the Night I Dream of Home* [Noću sanjam o domu] (Iliopoulos and Bekiaris 2019). Uplakana Karijatida moli za svoj povratak.

For this, a drawing competition for pupils was announced on the publishing house's (Nomiki Vivliothiki) website, inviting young readers to draw the dream of the sixth Caryatid. The aim was to collect 3191 works, a number equal to "the number of kilometres between the British Museum and the New Museum of the Acropolis" (Anon n.d.). Although the number of entries has reached half of the initial target, participants often draw a weeping Caryatid who begs for return (Fig. 3). The children's drawings show that they are truly moved by the nostalgia of the sixth Caryatid and ask for her repatriation, supporting the Greek campaign for the return of the Marbles.

### Information for the (co)reader

To convince readers to promote the national campaign for reclaiming the Marbles, the picturebooks about the sixth Caryatid not only aim at their readers' affective entanglement, but also at providing them with relevant information. The picturebooks emphasise the real kernel of the narratives regarding the forced displacement of the Marbles and the sixth Caryatid as well as their present status as exhibits at the British Museum. Even in the illustrations, though photographs are not used, the Acropolis, the ancient citadel, its buildings and sculptures are easily recognised. Even the picture of the Earl of Elgin in *Why the Caryatids Do Not Laugh Anymore* (Christopoulou and Synanoglou 2020) is a likeness of his portrait made by Anton Graff around 1788 with the same posture, attire, and hat.

Picturebooks about the sixth Caryatid may be classified as "literary nonfiction" (Anderson 1989) or "creative nonfiction" (Bradway and Hesse 2009) because they blend real events with a fictional narrative, which can powerfully engage and move readers. In *Nights without Carrie* (Dollis and Oekonomopoulou 2015), which combines an informative text with a moving story, the information presented in the text is also clarified, confirmed, and enriched in the peritext. The argument for and against the return of the Marbles, which is communicated to the child reader in the text by the talking Caryatid (Dollis and Oekonomopoulou 2015: 32–35), is repeated and embellished in a two-page appendix for parents and teachers. However, this strategy, which makes the reader aware of the multiple different interpretations and positions regarding the information, more than illuminating the opposite point of view, gives arguments to (co)readers to support the claim that the unification of the Marbles is both ethical and necessary.

Similarly, in the crossover picturebook *In the Night I Dream of Home* (Iliopoulos and Bekiaris 2019), the highly poetical and moving text is also followed by an informational appendix titled "To parents and educators", which links the Caryatid's highly emotional nostalgic monologue to the Greek request for the return of the Parthenon Marbles. The Note is signed by Irini Stamatoudi, Professor at the University of Nicosia in Cyprus and member of the committees for antiquity issues and the Parthenon Marbles. The authority of her expertise adds prestige to a text about the argument for the return of the Marbles. The appendices that accommodate the argument about the Greek plea for the return of the Marbles combine a subtly political textual message with a

blatant paratextual political position. The intense nostalgia of the story becomes in the appendix a historically rooted issue that presents information which fully justifies the Greek request. The purpose of the informational appendices is to make the readers, who have already empathised with the abducted Caryatid, aware of a crucial political issue. As nostalgia is placed within a historical and political framework, readers are not restricted to merely sentimental reactions (such as “poor little thing!!!”), but they become informed and probably persuaded to support the Greek petition for the return of the Marbles.

Furthermore, in the appendices – for example in the appendix entitled “Parents and educators” (Iliopoulos and Bekiaris 2019: n.p.) – it is absolutely clear that the intended audience of the book also includes adults; the books openly ask for a mediated reading. Parents and/or educators are expected to read the book with/to their pupils and make sure that they will interpret it in a certain way; children will be informed about the real facts and join their voices to the Greek petition for the repatriation of the Marbles. Book-reading mediated by adults, and perhaps follow-up activities<sup>11</sup> inspired by educators or parents, will further enforce the political connotations of an otherwise purely sentimental nostalgic voice.

### **Final remarks: nostalgia as a means of persuasion**

In picturebooks, displacement is usually presented as a humanitarian issue (Tomsic 2018; Vassiloudi 2019; Yannicopoulou 2023), while nostalgia “seems to be an emotional antidote to politics” (Boym 2001: 58). In contrast, when picturebooks about displacement are placed in a historical context, connected with political campaigns, such as the petition for the return of the Parthenon Marbles, they reveal how deeply political the concept of nostalgia can be. In this context, nostalgia deliberately directs readers to object to what is seen as continued colonial appropriation. Greek picturebooks on the nostalgia of the sixth Caryatid once again (Panaou and Yannicopoulou 2021) transform a statue into a myth, “a second-order semiotic symbol” according to Roland Barthes’ terminology (1972), synonymous to the Greeks’ petition for the repatriation of the Parthenon Marbles.

Picturebooks on the displaced Caryatid attempt to maximise nostalgic feelings through several channels: thematic, such as motifs that resonate with the idea of longing for the past; stylistic that help convey a feeling of pastness; structural, with the extensive presence of gaps to encourage the reader’s identification; and intertextual references (Busi Rizzi 2021: 650). In picturebooks about the abducted sixth Caryatid who feels intense nostalgia for her homeland and family, personification, first-person narration, focalisation on those who are displaced or on her lamenting relatives, touching images and inter pictorial references manage to create a highly emotional text that makes the child reader and adult (co)reader empathise deeply with the nostalgic Caryatid.

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<sup>11</sup> See the performance of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Primary School of Messolonghi (Greece) inspired by the picturebook *In the Night I Dream of Home* (2ο Δημοτικό Σχολείο Μεσολογγίου n.d.).

After all, affective entanglement is the point that differentiates nostalgic longings from the “memories of bygone [times],” where the relationship with the past is one of dissociation rather than affective continuity (Lankauskas 2015: 53). The nostalgia of the forcibly displaced Caryatid, graver than the nostalgia of voluntary migrants such as travellers, adventurers, or emigrants (Salmoose 2012: 133), aims at emotionally involving readers, through identification and/or empathy. The deeply nostalgic figure of the displaced Caryatid evokes readers’ emotional reactions, both when they read the book and when they deal with the suggested follow-up activities (e.g. drawing).

Besides, the true core of the stories and the appendices provide information about the facts concerning the removal of the sculptures and the request for their return. Thus, the readers go beyond the simple distress caused by a sad event to the awareness of a political issue. Nostalgia is contextualised in a historical framework that explains the causes of the forced displacement and shows what ought to be done in the future. In these books, nostalgia, which is usually presented simply as an emotion, takes on historical significance and political weight.

Furthermore, it becomes obvious, mainly from the peritexts, that parents and teachers are among the intended audience of picturebooks about nostalgia. Paratexts addressed to adults also reveal that the narrative is meant to be mediated to children by adults. Adults, parents and/or educators, “chaperone” (Sanders 2013) the narratives, ensuring that child readers will get the “right” message. It seems that within the realm of children’s picturebooks, when nostalgia is directly connected to politics, it comes under adult supervision.

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## Angela Yannicopoulou

Atensko narodno sveučilište Kapodistrij, Atena, Grčka

### Političke dimenzije nostalgije u slikovnicama: otuđena šesta karijatida

U slikovnicama je nostalgija povezana s progonstvom, a obje se pojave obično tretira na apolitičan i ahistorijski način. U ovom se radu istražuju politički aspekti nostalgije na uzorku slikovnica s jasnom političkom orijentacijom, kao što su one o nostalgичnoj šestoj karijatidi, kipu u obličju žene koji je nekoć držao krov Erehteja na Akropoli. Slikovnice o otuđenoj šestoj karijatidi, koja osjeća snažnu nostalgiju, služe se personifikacijom, pripovijedanjem u prvom licu, fokalizacijom kroz žrtvu u progonstvu i njezine rođake koji ju oplakuju, emotivnom ilustracijom i intervizualnom aluzijom kako bi se stvorio iznimno emotivan tekst koji potiče čitatelja na suosjećanje s nostalgичnom karijatidom. Osim toga, peritekstualni elementi pružaju informacije odraslim sučitateljima o političkim implikacijama, dok epitekstualne aktivnosti uključuju mlade čitatelje. Čini se da nostalgija, kada služi političkoj poziciji, cilja na emocionalno angažiranje i informiranje mladih čitatelja, dok ujedno nastoji omogućiti odraslim sučitateljima „nadzor“ nad cijelim procesom putem posredovanoga čitanja.

**Ključne riječi:** nostalgija, politika, slikovnica, partenonske skulpture, šesta karijatida