

M. Iordanidou, *In the age of cement and apartment buildings*

We live in the age of cement and apartment buildings. And I now live in an apartment building. I have an interior two-room apartment on the third floor. Interior is what they call now the apartments that do not face the street but the yard. But the yard is not called a yard anymore but an uncovered space. In most of these apartment buildings, which are built one after another, you will rarely see a window. They are all balcony doors and they open to a balcony that surrounds the apartment building in a circle and resembles a ship's deck. So, balcony door and room, and each room looks like a corridor. How to furnish, how to inhabit this space, you do not need to think about it yourself. The architect decided it in advance. He put the socket for the TV where you have to place it, he put the wall lamps where the "living room" will be, that is, the sofa, the low table and the two huge armchairs of fashion. There is no suitable corner for the housewife to install her "nest". Where she will sit quietly, drink her coffee, take the cat in her arms, and listen to the breath of her house.

People change with the times. In apartment buildings people became anglophile. You see someone on the stairs or in the elevator and he does not greet you. He stands in front of you like an ice column, you are afraid to greet him too. You do not know well if he is a co-tenant or a stranger. The Greeks lost their Greekness.

I do not know the faces of my co-tenants. But I know their voice, their cough. I know my neighbor's sigh and groan. She groans in the evenings when she falls into her bed, she groans at night too. It seems that she has salts in her joints and she hurts. Every morning at six I hear her alarm clock. All this is heard because her bed is next to mine and a wall separates us.

From the shower cabin I border with the apartment whose door is opposite to my apartment's door.

There again you hear piercing child's voices. Every morning her mother tries to dress her, she, half-awake, resists, and it seems that she beats her.

Madam, I shout from the bathroom window, leave the child alone to calm down. She is at an age where she needs to learn to dress herself.

What are you saying, madam? she shouts furiously from inside the mother. I have to be at work at eight o'clock. The school car came to pick her up, don't you hear it on the street honking?

Indeed, from the street you can hear the beep-beep of the car. I did not speak. I knew from Panagiota the cleaner that both mother and father were bank employees.

A few hours of peace, and at noon again child's voices. The school car arrived, but the mother was late, and the driver cannot leave the child on the sidewalk. He takes her with him and starts off. The child screams from inside.

For a month I calmed down when the couple took their summer vacation. They left with their car for abroad and left their little girl with her grandmother who lived in Haidari. One day, from the child's and mother's voices, I realized that their vacation was over. They came back. I hear one night piercing child's voices, voices of pain.

Eat it! eat it I said! Don't you eat it?

After a while the piercing voice again.

Open your mouth! I'll slap you!

And again the voice.

I could not stand it. I jumped out, Nelli grabbed me, she pulled me back.

I'm going to kick their door with my feet. Let me go.

Yes, I really went crazy. I think who to turn to. To the Police? To some association? I call Panagiota and ask her what is going on.

The child since they came back does not eat anything. She became skin and bones. Her grandmother spoiled her apparently.

The French say: Les enfants, quand ils sont petits, ils nous aiment¹. Quand ils grandissent, ils nous jugent, et parfois ils nous pardonnent (Children, when they are small they love us². When they grow up they judge us, and sometimes they forgive us).

This little one seems to have grown up before her time, judged her mother and did not forgive her neither for beating nor for abandoning her. She avenges herself on her how else can she avenge herself on her? Children have their dignity too.

My life in this apartment building had become unbearable. Fortunately though the family bought their own apartment and moved out. The apartment was rented again very quickly. A bachelor took it and we calmed down.

M. Iordanidou, Our yard