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Newsletter March 2021

Dear Members

This month sees Greece preparing for the extra special national holiday on March 25th, namely the 200 year anniversary of the Greek Revolution of 1821.

Unfortunately, current quarantine restrictions are having an impact on how and where this memorable event can best be shared. Traditionally, people gather in Athens to watch the grand military parade that features thousands of armed service personnel from the Hellenic Armed Forces, with civil and military marching bands followed by a procession of military vehicles. Last year's parade was cancelled, as the country was facing the first wave of the covid-19 pandemic and this year, the parade will be held in compliance with strict safety measures. But rest assured, nothing will dampen the Greek pride in their epic struggle for independence.

As a foreigner in Greece, I have found that a street map is a great study guide to the names of the heroes of the Greek Revolution. If you then add statues, monuments, public buildings, sports grounds, parks, etc., your history lesson is almost complete. But just to be sure you know your facts, I have included a short article on the five heroes most often mentioned by my Greek friends. Finally, Mary Lou's article explains the principles of the Hellenic constitution of 1975.

However, let's remember that we celebrate today only because of the sacrifices made by the heroes of yesterday. And as we continue today's fight against Covid-19, we must honour today's heroes; the train and bus drivers, teachers, carers, the hospital staff, police, supermarket workers, etc., each one a hero putting the community before the self. If we reflect on the sacrifices made 200 years ago, we will surely find the same determination to succeed in our fight today.

Don't forget to celebrate on the St Patrick's Day! Why not lift your spirits by "the wearing of the green" on the 17th March? It's said to be the date of St. Patrick's death in the late 5th century. You might also want to try our recipe for an Irish Stew for dinner!

March is a busy month; dusk is noticeably later already, the dawn chorus in my garden starts much earlier and we will change our clocks soon. Thanks, Di, for the beautiful photos below that remind us that Spring is just around the corner!

Spring is (almost) in the air in Greece, and Greeks will soon begin preparations to welcome the new season by celebrating an ancient annual custom. The Greek tradition of "Martis" entails that everyone, regardless of age, adorns themselves with red and white bracelets made from thread, from March 1 until the last day of the month on March 31.

Stay safe and well!

Chris Grant-Bear, Editor



The Greek Red & White March Bracelet – Martis

The Greek spring tradition of 'Martis' sees many adults and children in Greece wearing small bracelets of red and white thread, throughout the month of March. The white symbolizes purity, and, the red, life and passion.

According to ancient Greek and Balkan tradition, the thread protects people from diseases and the rays of the sun, particularly strong in Greece during the month of March. The bracelet meant protection from the wearer at a time when dark skin signified impurity, and where beauty standards required fair skin and rosy cheeks

Children wear the bracelets until they break and then throw them on rose bushes for swallows to build their nests. Others tie their bracelets on trees so that these bear fruit.



Traditionally, in Greece, March is considered the first month of spring, and, hopefully, will bring lots of sunshine, nice, hot sunshine!

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<u>FIRE BRIGADE:</u>	<u>199</u>
<u>TOURIST POLICE</u>	<u>171</u>
<u>AMBULANCE</u>	<u>166</u>
<u>SOS MISSING CHILDREN:</u>	<u>1056</u>
<u>DOCTORS SOS</u>	<u>1016</u>
<u>EMERGENCY HOSPITALS</u>	<u>1535</u>
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Diary dates for March

- 4th Tsiknopempti**
- 8th International Women's Day**
- 14th Clocks move forward**
- 15th Clean Monday**
- 17th St Patrick's Day**
- 25th Greek Independence Day**



This stained glass recreation found in Junction City, Ohio, shows St. Patrick holding a shamrock. We wear a shamrock on St. Patrick's Day because, legend says the saint used its three leaves to explain the Holy Trinity in his teachings. The truth of the St. Patrick legend, however, is in question, as there is no direct record that the saint actually used the shamrock as a teaching tool.

The Greek War of Independence

- The **Greek War of Independence**, also known as the **Greek Revolution**, was waged by Greek revolutionaries against the Ottoman Empire between 1821 and 1830.
- The Greeks were later assisted by Great Britain, France and Russia, while the Ottomans were aided by their North African vassals, particularly Egypt.
- The war led to the formation of modern Greece.
- The revolution is celebrated by Greeks around the world as Independence Day on 25 March.



Greece came under Ottoman rule in the 15th century. For centuries, there were sporadic but unsuccessful Greek uprisings against the Ottoman rule.

In 1814, a secret organization called Filiki Eteria (Society of Friends) was founded with the aim of liberating Greece, encouraged by the revolutionary fervor gripping Europe in that period. The Filiki Eteria planned to launch revolts in the Peloponnese, the Danubian Principalities, and in Constantinople itself.

The insurrection was planned for 25 March 1821, the Orthodox Feast of the Annunciation. However, the plans of Filiki Eteria were discovered by the Ottoman authorities, forcing the revolution to start earlier.

The first revolt which began in the Danubian Principalities was soon put down by the Ottomans. The events in the north urged the Greeks in the Peloponnese into action and on 17 March 1821, the Maniots were first to declare war.

In September 1821, the Greeks under Theodoros Kolokotronis captured Tripolitsa. Revolts in Crete, Macedonia, and Central Greece broke out, but were eventually suppressed. Meanwhile, makeshift Greek fleets achieved success against the Ottoman Navy in the Aegean Sea and prevented Ottoman reinforcements from arriving by sea.

Tensions soon developed among different Greek factions, leading to two consecutive civil wars. The Ottoman Sultan called in Muhammad Ali of Egypt, who agreed to send his son Ibrahim Pasha to Greece with an army to suppress the revolt in return for territorial gains. Ibrahim landed in the Peloponnese in February 1825 and brought most of the peninsula under Egyptian control by the end of that year. The town of Missolonghi fell in April 1826 after a year-long siege by the Turks. Despite a failed invasion of Mani, Athens also fell and the revolution looked all but lost.

At that point, the three Great powers (Russia, Britain and France) decided to intervene, sending their naval squadrons to Greece in 1827. Following news that the Ottoman-Egyptian fleet was going to attack the island of Hydra, the allied European fleets intercepted the Ottoman navy at Navarino. After a tense week-long standoff, the Battle of Navarino led to the destruction of the Ottoman-Egyptian fleet and turned the tide in favor of the revolutionaries.

In 1828 the Egyptian army withdrew under pressure from a French expeditionary force. The Ottoman garrisons in the Peloponnese surrendered, and the Greek revolutionaries proceeded to retake central Greece.

Russia invaded the Ottoman Empire and forced it to accept Greek autonomy. After nine years of war, Greece was finally recognized as an independent state under the London Protocol of February 1830.

Further negotiations in 1832 led to the London Conference and the Treaty of Constantinople; these defined the final borders of the new state and established Prince Otto of Bavaria as the first king of Greece.

Four Delivery-Friendly Cafes to Order Coffee and Snacks in Athens

by *Tatiana Harkiolakis*

Caffeine is necessary for pandemic life, period. Thankfully, many fun cafes have hopped on the delivery wagon, dishing up fine coffee alongside sweets and snacks. Below are our recommendations for where to order good coffee and snacks in Athens.



Up in Kifissia, **Different Beast** (*Kassaveti 19; 2167004556*) has a delightful array of coffees, teas other drinks. Highlights include the “Military version” (one shot of espresso with cacao) and the Golden Milk with wheat milk, turmeric, and dates. Top it off with an Avocado Breakfast (avocado with Dinkel bread), a Drunk Toastie (handmade bread with Greek cheeses and chutney), or a peach crumble with salted caramel.



Want more of a classic treat to go with your coffee? Order from **Φ Bakery** (*Agias Paraskevis 101; 2106842184*) in Halandri. This adorable bakery sources coffee from an artisanal roaster and whips up their own smoothies, homemade lemonade, and breakfast dishes. Patrons particularly love their handmade sweets, including biscotti, apple cake, triple chocolate cheesecake, and a divine carrot cake.



Meanwhile in Glyfada, **Sweetleaf** (*Andrea Papandreou 125; 2121042254*) wows with its selection of fifty different flavored cappuccinos, from apple pie to maple spice to bubble gum to cardamon. They also have teas, milkshakes, sandwiches, pies, and sweets. Chocolate-lovers will also love a cuppa from their hot chocolate selection, including flavors such as chili and spices, tsoureki and praline, and Kinder Bueno.



Finally, **Mon Kulur** may not seem impressive, but this franchise with 16 stores in Athens alone (visit mon-kulur.gr/επικοινωνια to find one near you) has been praised for its fine coffee and hot chocolates, as well as its vast range of *koulouria* (soft bread rings) in a variety of flavors and fillings. You can customize your koulouri with sandwich fillings or sweet spreads, including chocolate spread, butter and honey, or Bavarian cream.

We may not be able to go out and eat, but we certainly can enjoy a nice cuppa of our favorite drink wherever we are! Here’s to our resilience to keep going—and the caffeine that helps along the way!

Tatiana Harkiolakis www.facebook.com/TheAthenianSite



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Another super cooking lesson! This time Katerina's special spanakopita!



“Can you remember the names of the most important figures of the Revolution of 1821?”

When KEFIM (a non-partisan, independent, non-profit organization) posed that question in a recent survey, Greek citizens highlighted the following 5 heroes: Theodoros Kolokotronis, Giorgos Karaiskakis, Laskarina Bouboulina, Papaflessas and Athanasios Diakos. Together with countless heroes of lesser fame, their courage, bravery and love of their homeland led to the creation of modern Greece.



Theodoros Kolokotronis was a Greek general, pre-eminent leader and commander-in-chief of the Greek forces in the Peloponnese. He was born in Messenia from a powerful and respected family of klephts. His greatest success was the defeat of the Ottoman army at the Battle of Dervenakia in 1822. After the war, Kolokotronis became a supporter of Count Ioannis Kapodistrias and a proponent of an alliance with Russia. When the Count was assassinated on October 8, 1831, Kolokotronis created his own administration in support of Prince Otto of Bavaria as a King of Greece. However, he later opposed the Bavarian-dominated regency. In 1834, he was charged with treason and sentenced to death, then ultimately pardoned in 1835. Kolokotronis died in 1843 in Athens.



Giorgos Karaiskakis was a famous Greek klepht, armatolos, military commander and hero. He was born in a monastery near the village of Mavromati in the Agrafa mountains. At an early age he became a klepht in the service of Katsantonis, a famous local brigand captain. He was agile, cunning, brave and reckless, and eventually became a lieutenant. He was fatally wounded in action on his Greek name day in 1827.



Laskarina Bouboulina was a Greek naval commander and heroine of the Greek War of Independence. She originated from the Arvanite community of the island of Hydra. Following her (second) marriage to the wealthy shipowner and captain, Dimitrios Bouboulis, she took his surname. Allegedly Bouboulina joined the underground Filiki Etaireia, bought arms and ammunition at her own expense, and brought them secretly to Spetses in her ships, to fight “for the sake of my nation.” She also used her fortune to feed and organize her own armed troops of men from Spetses. On 13 March 1821 Bouboulina raised her own Greek flag and sailed with eight ships to Nafplion and began a naval blockade. Later she took part in the naval blockade and capture of Monemvasia and Pylos. She arrived at Tripolis in time to witness its fall on 11 September 1821 and to meet general Theodoros Kolokotronis. Their children Eleni Boubouli and Panos Kolokotronis later married.

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Papaflessas (born Georgios Dimitrios Flessas) was a Greek patriot, priest, and government official of the old Flessas Family. He was ordained to the highest position of priesthood, Archimandrites, in 1819. In 1823, Papaflessas was named Minister of Internal Affairs and Chief of Police: he instituted many reforms, established the mail system and built schools, and created the title of Inspector General for schools. Papaflessas was killed during the Battle of Maniaki on May 20, 1825, fighting against the forces of Ibrahim Pasha.



Athanasios Diakos was a Greek military commander during the Greek War of Independence. Diakos (born Athanasios Nikolaos Massavetas) the grandson of a local klepht, was sent to the Monastery of St. John The Baptist, near Artotina, for his education. He became a monk at the age of seventeen and was ordained a Greek Orthodox deacon not long afterward. Popular tradition states that while at the monastery, an Ottoman Pasha paid a visit with his troops and was impressed by Diakos' good looks. The young man took offense at the Turk's remarks - and subsequent proposal - and the ensuing altercation resulted in the death of the Turkish official. Diakos was forced to flee into the nearby mountains and adopted the pseudonym "Diakos", or Deacon. He served under a number of local klepht leaders in the region of Roumeli, in various encounters with the Ottomans. After the defeat at the Battle for the Bridge at Alamana, a severely wounded Diakos was taken before the Ottoman commander, Vironis. He refused the offer of freedom and a post in the Ottoman army in return for his conversion to Islam with the famous words "I was born a Greek, I shall die a Greek." The next day he was impaled and roasted alive.

His dying words, "Look at the time Charon chose to take me, now that the branches are flowering, and the earth sends forth grass." are the perfect metaphor for the independence and freedom of Greece.

A Special supper for St Patrick's Day

This hearty **Irish stew** is rich, flavorful, and comforting. The secret weapon? A cup of Guinness stout adds a deeper, more complex flavor. You can't taste the beer in the finished dish because it melds into the sauce. Try serving with a big chunk of buttered [Irish soda bread](#)!

INGREDIENTS FOR 6 – 8 SERVINGS

2 pounds lean beef stew or chuck, in 2-inch chunks
1 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon pepper
flour for dredging
2 tablespoons bacon drippings or vegetable oil
2 large yellow onions, chopped
1 garlic clove, finely minced (optional)
6 to 8 medium carrots, scraped and sliced
2 to 3 large potatoes, and 2 to 3 turnips peeled and cut into cubes (optional)
1 cup Guinness stout
1 cup beef broth



INSTRUCTIONS

Season beef with salt and pepper, then toss beef chunks in flour until well coated. In a Dutch oven over medium-high heat, warm drippings then brown beef in two batches. When all pieces are browned, remove beef from pan and set aside.

Add onions and garlic to the covered Dutch oven and turn heat down to medium. Cook until onions are translucent. Return beef to the Dutch oven and add carrots, potatoes, turnips, stout, and broth. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to a simmer. Cover and cook for 2 hours, or until beef is tender.

Irish Soda Bread

INGREDIENTS FOR 1 LOAF

1 cup golden raisins
3 Tbsp plus 1 tsp Irish whiskey or any dark liquor
4 cups all-purpose flour
1/4 cup sugar
1 teaspoon baking soda
1 teaspoon baking powder
1 teaspoon salt
2 eggs
2 cups buttermilk
1 tablespoon melted butter
1 to 2 tablespoons caraway seeds (optional)



INSTRUCTIONS

Preheat oven to 350°F. Grease and lightly flour a loaf or cake pan.

In a bowl, combine raisins and liquor, set aside to soak, and stir occasionally.

In another bowl, mix together flour, sugar, baking soda, baking powder, and salt.

In a separate bowl, beat together eggs and buttermilk. Add to flour mixture and stir to blend.

Add butter, raisins and whiskey, and caraway seeds (if using) and stir.

Pour into prepared pan, smooth to level dough, and bury raisins as much as possible.

Bake for 1 hour and 15 minutes to 1 hour and 30 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean. Or tap bread: Hollow sound indicates bread is done.

More About Water by Pauline Leyden Zoulias

'Water, water everywhere and not a drop to spare'

The first line from the 'Ancient Mariner' by the English poet Coleridge could not be more true in today's world. Some of us may have had frozen pipes and the water turned off for some time during the recent snowstorm which gave us an understanding of what it is like to be without water. Our life depends on it and having to pour buckets of water down the toilet is no fun!



Last month I wrote about the facts about water. 70% of the earth's surface is covered with water but of that only 1% is available for humans to use. In fact 97% of the earth's water contains salt and minerals and so cannot be used as drinking water. As I have continued to research water, conservation and the environment, I am beginning to understand those facts more.

This month, I'm writing some more water facts. Water is a difficult subject to write about when we have this precious resource at the turn of a tap. What is the point of saving water when it is so abundant? Why should we? Researching this topic has helped me understand how much water is wasted and how easily 'water security' can be taken away. With all efforts to protect our environment, we have to commit to being less wasteful in all areas of our life even though we may not be suffering ourselves at the moment. Everything is interconnected. Furthermore, water resources are finite. The water goes back to the earth via the water cycle but it does not return to the same spot nor is it necessarily of the same quality. For example, some of our precious water is polluted by fertilisers and by various industries. If we put fertilisers on our garden some of it is washed into the water supply. Water cleaning systems will take some of the pollutants out of the water but not all of them. Where does that leave us? With a rising world population, there is more need for clean water. As we know, some areas of the world do not have access to clean drinking water. As members of the global community, with good access to clean water it is our duty to look after our water supply and do what we can to preserve it for future generations. We are guardians for our children, grandchildren and so on - because we have access 'today', it does not mean that there will be the same access 'tomorrow'. The world changes and it is important to protect and conserve what we have today.

I would recommend a short video online:

[Preventing a water crisis in Greece - National Geographic](#)

www.nationalgeographic.com

This short video produced by the National Geographic tells us that Portugal, Spain, Italy and Greece and the Mediterranean generally are getting warmer and that drought is becoming more frequent. 2017 was one of the driest years on record. According to Wikipedia Greece has seen droughts in 1993 and 2007.

So what can we do?

Household water usage in Greece accounts for 14% of water consumption. Greece is one of the highest water users in the E.U. using 177litres per day per person compared to the E.U. average of 144litres per person per day.

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Greece has abundant water resources but they are far from Attica and Athens where more than one third of the total population live and where most water is needed. Our water is piped in from a number of reservoirs, the furthest being from the Mornos Reservoir which is almost 200km to the west. Conserving water at home puts less stress on the system.

Last month, I wrote about what you can do to save water at home. Perhaps more understanding of the amount of water used in common everyday tasks use will help us to gain more understanding of amounts and where we can save water.

- A bath uses roughly between 120litres and 160litres.
- Each time a toilet is flushed, it uses approximately 20litres of water.
- A shower uses approximately 80 - 160litres per time.
- A washing machine uses about 100litres per load.
- The kitchen sink takes about 80litres per day for preparing food and washing dishes.
- The bathroom sink is estimated to take about 60litres a day for shaving, washing hands and cleaning teeth.
- If we look into how much water it takes to produce our food, for example, it takes roughly 480litres of water to produce one egg!

And so on and so on.... everything takes water. If we each try to conserve water in our homes, we will not only create less pressure on the water resources but we will also save ourselves money in lower household water bills. Together we could save a lot of our world's most precious resource.

One of our members asked me to look into washing produce in the time of COVID-19. This is a whole other topic, but I have researched it and you can check at: <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-021-00251-4> The article is entitled: COVID-19 Rarely Spreads Through Surfaces. So why are we still deep cleaning?

If like me, you were horrified to read that COVID-19 could survive on a number of surfaces for days, you might have started disinfecting everything that came into the house! According to these articles, knowledge about the virus has moved on and scientists know a lot more about how it's transmitted than they did a year ago and whilst it is not impossible to pick up the virus from your shopping, it is, according to these articles, improbable. The virus is more likely to spread from person to person. They recommend you to **wash your hands** thoroughly **before** and **after** unpacking your shopping and to avoid touching your face. I know some people have a 'quarantine' cupboard where they put their produce for two days before using it - the advice remains to wash hands before and after handling your shopping even if you quarantine it. I suppose washing produce with copious amounts of water could be deemed as wasteful and spraying fresh produce with harsh chemicals, harmful to the environment and the individual if ingested. However, each of us must make choices to do what we want to feel safe in this time of COVID-19. It is up to each individual to decide what to do and I respect that and do not recommend that people stop doing what they need to do to feel safe.

If you are interested in finding out some more water saving tips during the time of COVID-19, you can check out:

<https://www.waterwise.org.uk/top-tips-for-saving-water-during-the-covid-19-pandemic/>

I wish you all a safe month. If you would like to share anything about the environment or comment on anything in this article, please email me at paulinemleyden@yahoo.com

The Hellenic Constitution (“To Syntagma tis Ellados”)

by Marylou Andriakopoulou

The article this month, in step with the celebrations for the 200th anniversary of the Greek Revolution, will focus on the Constitution of Greece.

A **constitution**, in this sense, is an aggregate of the fundamental principles that constitute the legal basis of a sovereign state and determine how that state is to be governed.

The constitution defines the principles upon which the state is based, the political system, how the state is governed and by whom, the procedure in which laws are made and by whom, as well as the limits of the power of the state, as embodied in the fundamental rights and freedoms that the inhabitants of the state can enjoy.

The constitution that is now in force in Greece was voted by the Fifth Revisionary Parliament in 1975, which, following a popular mandate as manifested in the election of 8th December 1974, chose as the form of government that of a parliamentary republic. Considering the fact that the constitution was voted for after restitution of democracy which followed the collapse of a 7-year- long dictatorship, it is normal that great emphasis is placed on the protection of individual rights and the safeguarding of the democratic system of government.

Our constitution is divided into four main parts:

Part One, “Basic Provisions” establishes the form of Government of Greece as a parliamentary republic, based on public sovereignty. It also establishes that “All powers derive from the People and exist for the People and the Nation” and shall be exercised as specified by the Constitution. In this section, there is also another important declaration about the value of the human being, the respect and protection of which constitute the primary obligations of the State. Finally in this part, there is also an outline of the relationship between Church and State and the prevailing religion in Greece, which is the Eastern Orthodox.

Part Two, “Individual and Social Rights”, starts with the sentence: “All Greeks are equal before the law”, directly followed by “Greek men and women have equal rights and equal obligations”.

These two very important proclamations are followed by other well-established principles of modern democracies and I shall try to briefly mention some of the most important, such as that there can be no crime or punishment, unless specified by a law in force prior to the perpetration of the act and that torture or use of psychological maltreatment are prohibited and punished as

provided by law. There are articles pertaining to the right to assembly and to protest peacefully and without the use of guns, as well as to petition the authorities in writing.

Freedom of expression is mentioned extensively, and the home of each individual is declared to be their “sanctuary”, which should not be violated by anyone. The constitution states that freedom of religious conscience is inviolable, that no discrimination may be made because of an individual’s religious beliefs and that all known religions are free and may perform their rites of worship under the protection of the law. There are also many other provisions about individual rights that we may take for granted, such as the right of education and research and the obligation of the state to provide free education, as well as the right to work and to own property.

Part Three describes extensively the “Form of Government”, the authority, election process and liability deriving from the acts of the President of the Republic, the election process and the legislative functions of the Parliament, the relationship between Government and Parliament, the Judicial sector, the organisation and competence of the courts and the organisation of the Administration.

However crucially important all the above are, it is in **Part Four**, “Special, Final and Transitory Provisions” that some of the lines of the Hellenic Constitution that touch me most and express its spirit of freedom and its direct connection with the principles that guided the Greek revolution and gave our country its freedom. In its very last paragraph, our Constitution states: “Observance of the constitution is entrusted to the patriotism of the Greeks who shall have the right and the duty to resist by all possible means against anyone who attempts the violent abolition of the Constitution”.

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The word better left unwritten.

by Martina in Tunisia



Two hundred years

Such a long period of time but also so short.

Is it six generations?

How bad I am with numbers. The mere thought of calculating them gets me nervous and quickly confusion sets in only to create a kind of obsessive numerical chaos in the process, and I end up going around and around in my head culminating in utter exhaustion and a completely inaccurate result, upon which, ironically enough I have complete and utterly flawed confidence.

Twenty years?

I can think of this number with hardly any arithmetic angst.

How hard it is for us individuals to understand the ramifications of history in a pragmatic manner when we can only understand the past as an abstract summary, fed to us by unreliable, nationalistically driven educational protocols, and colored by our own experience of time which is, at its very base, inevitably subjective.

My father was born in 1931, this I know for sure.

31/03/1931

He would have turned 90 this month had he been alive. How old was my paternal grandmother when she had him? When was my *nona* even born? Why did I call her *nona* and not *giagia*? I remember her vividly. A tiny robust woman with a crown of short radiant white hair, which fantastically turned lavender and looked like cotton candy when she returned from the hairdressers only on important occasions like *25th Martiou*.

An extremely frugal woman as a result of hardship, she wore heavy thick soled 3 inch heels and walked back and forth to *odos Athinas* for her chores without a second thought. I remember all the myths *nona* and my *babas* recounted about their lives in pre and post World War II Athens. They all revolved around our family house in *Kipseli*. She was the queen bee there until my father married my mother. I think I am sure that *nona* immigrated to Athens from Alexandria in her early twenties, it must have been in the late 1920s. See how easily one can get confused with numbers? She ended up bed ridden in a *therapeutirion* on *Drosopoulou Street* and resigned to looking intensely at a corner of the ceiling for the last 4 years of her life.

Four years.

Was it really four? Such a long period of time to be bed ridden. My father was bed ridden for a year and I remember this as an eternity. Is it genetic? Will I be bed ridden as well? Does not this, however numerically and psychologically complicated, constitute an important history of sorts for us insignificant individuals?

When the idea of Greece is personified into an individual, is it indeed a *she*? And does she wear a turban on her dark long luscious hair while she rises triumphantly out of the debris with a perfectly shaped exposed décolletage as in Delacroix's 1926 *Greece on the ruins of Missolonghi*? Or does she have a cotton candy lavender halo of hair with pointed Dame Edna glasses while she marches to *Odos Athinas* in her woollen *tailleur* and heavy thick 3 inch heels at the end of her bow legs?

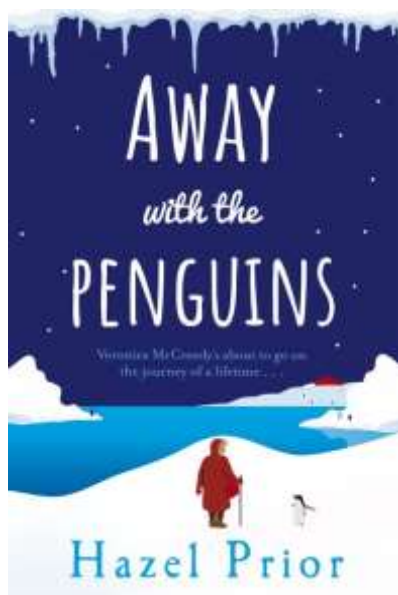
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Tunis, January 31st 2021, 14:30., Martina Anagnostou www.martinanagnostou.com

Book Reviews by Di Drymoussis

Away With the Penguins

by Hazel Prior



Veronica McCreedy lives in a mansion by the sea. She loves a nice cup of Darjeeling tea whilst watching a good wildlife documentary. And she's never seen without her ruby-red lipstick - although these days Veronica is rarely seen by anyone because, at 85, her days are spent mostly at home - alone. She can be found either collecting litter from the beach ('people who litter the countryside should be shot'), trying to locate her glasses ('someone must have moved them') or shouting instructions to her assistant, Eileen ('Eileen, door!'). Veronica doesn't have family or friends nearby. Not that she knows about, anyway . . . And she has no idea where she's going to leave her considerable wealth when she dies. But today . . . today Veronica is going to make a decision that will change all of this.....

This is a deliciously satisfying, charming and heart-warming novel. It's a 'can't-put-down', feel-good book, the perfect antidote to lockdown! It has strong characters that will resonate with many, whilst simultaneously expanding on their individual personalities. As well as illustrating environmental and animal welfare issues, it shows how actions result in consequences, good and bad, and how those consequences may affect others. It is a delightful tale of it never being too late to change your life.

I was totally captivated by the central character of Mrs Veronica McCreedy (British eccentricity at

its best) and her memories of events both past and present and, her determination to make a difference, especially towards the penguins on Locket Island in the Antarctic. Veronica seems to be losing touch with the world but her assistant Eileen helps her, via the internet, to discover and reach out to a long lost grandson that she didn't know she had. And she turns up on his doorstep unexpectedly. Poor, weed-smoking Patrick is going through his own issues; his girlfriend has just left him, he's had to move out and he realises that he's struggling financially. Veronica and Patrick's first meeting is a disappointment – a disaster even.

On her return home, after watching a TV documentary about researching and protecting Adelie penguins in Antarctica, she decides to visit the project to see the penguins for herself and leave her money to the project. So, at the grand old age of 86 Veronica packs her favourite tea and her favourite handbags and she is on her merry way. You can imagine that this doesn't go down well with the scientists but they haven't reckoned with the force that is Veronica. She is one of those old ladies who likes things to be 'just so' and isn't afraid to speak her mind. On her arrival at the Locket Island facility, they are dumbfounded and have no idea what to do with her... all except for Terry, who takes a shine to this feisty old lady and makes her as comfortable as she possibly can. After all, it's only three weeks until the next boat arrives to take her back to her life in Scotland. What could go wrong?

Without giving too much away, the other characters she encounters change her - as she changes them - and a penguin chick played his part. The penguins are definitely the other main players in this book and through one of the scientists' blog, we learn a lot about Adelie penguins in particular.

Do I believe for a moment that a lady of her age could just turn up at an Antarctic research station and force herself on the scientists? Not at all. But I didn't care if this was realistic or not. Whilst some might have thought Veronica was 'away with the fairies', it soon turns out that being 'away with the penguins' is altogether much more fun and satisfying.

Away With the Penguins is a joy to read and exactly the kind of uplifting read I think we all need to take us away from reality right now.

The Great Alone

by Kristin Hannah



"Thirteen-year-old Leni is coming of age in a tumultuous time. Caught in the riptide of her parents' passionate, stormy relationship, she dares to hope that Alaska will lead to a better future for her family, and a place to belong. Her mother, Cora, will do anything and go anywhere for the man she loves, even if it means following him into the unknown. As Leni grows up in the shadow of her parents' increasingly volatile marriage, she meets Matthew. And Matthew – thoughtful, kind, brave – makes her believe in the possibility of a better life."

The Great Alone spans a course of more than ten years through which we see the trials and tribulations of the Allbright family and is set in the unforgiving but beautiful landscape of Alaska with powerful themes of love, friendship, family and community running throughout. I am not usually a fan of over long descriptions but Kristin Hannah did make the place come alive. It felt like a character in its own right - *"Alaska... There's nothing up there is there? Just bears and Eskimos.... It's a tough environment ...In Alaska you can make one mistake. One. The second one will kill you."* She depicts it so well. I was totally fascinated by rural Alaska and the detail of life in such an unforgiving landscape where there is great beauty to be found there as well as severe harshness. I liked how we were able to experience Alaska during each season, even winter. (There are so many ways the cold was described). I learned a lot about Alaska, its

people, its history and its traditions. I found myself constantly thinking how tough one has to be to live there – I know I couldn't!

As well as the setting coming alive on the pages, the same is true of the characters. I could feel the pain, the love, the cold, the misery and the hardship endured by the people in Alaska. There is a depth, complexity and tension to each character and I became emotionally invested in them from the start. Leni's dad, Ernt, a Vietnam POW fleeing his PTSD demons, needs a new beginning and drags his ill prepared family with him in his pursuit of 'the great adventure'. Moving to Alaska was supposed to be a fresh start. However, Ernt's demons travel to Alaska with him, with his wife, Cora and daughter, Leni bearing the brunt of it. The book makes for hard reading at times, not only because of the domestic violence, but also because of actions and events that occur due to Ernt's paranoid state of mind. Because domestic violence is a strong and recurring theme throughout, there was always a sense of menace; and it turned out that the danger was not so much from wolves or bears, but from Ernt himself. This made it hard to feel kindly towards him during much of the story.

I enjoyed the entire community of Kaneq, liking not only the dynamics of the town but also the individuality of the characters found there. Large Marge was probably my favourite. She is a shopkeeper in the Alaskan town the family settle into and someone who very quickly befriends and tries to protect the females of the Allbright family.

It is a book that, for one reason or another, will stick with me for a long time and, though the ending seemed somewhat 'convenient' it covered so much more than I had expected: the detail about life in Alaska was fascinating, showing how humanity can survive in such a harsh part of the world. The additional thread of domestic violence caused by what was experienced in wartime highlighted how some people's lives are so completely affected. I was engrossed throughout.

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Clean Monday begins the season of Great Lent in Eastern Orthodox Churches. It is called "Clean Monday" because Christians should begin the holy season with "clean hearts and good intentions." It is also because the season of Lent is regarded as a time for when Christians should clean up their spiritual house, coming to terms with their lives and rededicating themselves to a more holy and righteous way of living.

Clean Monday is a day of strict fasting. Christians are not allowed to eat from midnight to noon and can have no meat at all. Because Clean Monday is also considered to mark the first day of spring, Greeks tend to celebrate it with outdoor activities and picnics rather than fasting and prayer. Traditional foods include olives, octopus, and shrimp. A special kind of unleavened bread called "lagana" is baked only on Clean Monday.