

Sweden of the 1960s through the eyes of Theodor Kallifatides' Characters fifty years apart

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Abstract

In the 1960s, Sweden witnessed accelerated social and demographic change when its ruling political party expanded the workforce through gender equality reforms and the recruitment of migrant workers. Theodor Kallifatides, a Greek who migrated to work in Sweden in the 1960s, explores aspects of Swedish society of the late 1960s through the gaze of migrant characters as part of their attempted integration process in the new society. Through the lenses of mythology studies, Nordic studies, and migrant studies, this essay explores depictions of the 1960s Swedish work ethic and what is known as the Swedish sin or abandon as perceived through the eyes of the characters in *Kärlek och Främlingskap* [Love and Alienation] (2020) and *Utlänningar* [Foreigners] (1970). The two novels share similarities in plot and setting though they are colored by the interval of Kallifatides' fifty-year experience in Sweden. While the characters' perceptions of the Swedish society of the late 1960s seem to change over fifty years, their emotional orientations seem to remain constant. The characters in both novels attempt to understand the new society, even deconstructing social dichotomies that stereotypically separate Swedish and Greek cultures. Yet, despite the author's long stay in Sweden, his characters' emotional orientations do not favor the new society over their ingrained countries of origin.

Keywords: Theodor Kallifatides - Swedish work ethic - Swedish abandon - Sweden through foreign eyes - *Kärlek och Främlingskap* - *Utlänningar* - Migrant Experience

Introduction

When does a migrant “land” in his or her new country? Is it when this person first sets foot in this country? Is it when he or she better understands the new country's culture? Does a migrant ever feel that he or she has “landed”? Theodor Kallifatides (1938 -) explores these questions in his two novels *Kärlek och Främlingskap* [Love and Alienation] (2020) and *Utlänningar* [Foreigners] (1970). The

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two novels are separated by half a decade of the author's life experience and his immersion into Swedish society. Beyond this difference in year of publication, the novels share several similarities in plot, setting, and characters. Both novels follow male protagonists in their early twenties who have recently left their homes, parents, and ancestral country Greece, and moved to the "small" (Kallifatides, 2020, p.35) Nordic country Sweden as part of the Swedish "labor recruitment schemes" of the 1960s (Wulff, 2022, p.217). The action of both novels takes place in apartments, cafes, and streets but has as its primary setting the Swedish job market in its food and beverage industry and its healthcare; *Kärlek och Främlingskap* (2020) has an additional main setting: Stockholm University. In addition to moving about on Stockholm's familiar streets where they initially arrive, the two protagonists also accomplish a journey within Sweden that serves as a quest for growth (or in this case an attempted embracement of Swedishness); the protagonists move from Stockholm to "windy" Helsingborg then back to Stockholm to accept a kind of grounding point to their continuous questioning on identity and belonging. While both novels are marketed as fiction rather than autobiographies, the protagonists share similarities with the author Theodor Kallifatides who in 1964 arrived from Greece to Sweden as a young man seeking labor and who in his first few jobs washed dishes and distributed newspapers (Wulff, 2022, p.223).

This essay explores whether migrants feel more integrated in their new societies when they better understand the new country's culture. In particular, the essay focuses on how the protagonists in two of Kallifatides's novels, *Kärlek och Främlingskap* (2020) and *Utlänningar* (1970), perceive depictions of two cultural representations or "myths" of Swedishness that were prominent in the 1960s: the Swedish work ethic and what is known as the Swedish sin or abandon. The question of whether the characters' understanding of the dynamic nature of certain Swedish "myths" aids in their "landing" process in their new societies is paralleled to Kallifatides's commentary on his own integration process in Sweden.

Literature Review

Given his long and prolific literary career that began in 1969 and is continuous with the latest novel published in 2020, few scholars have explored Kallifatides's literary texts, first written and published in Swedish, then translated into several other languages. The scholars who do, however, disagree on how to categorize Kallifatides's literary production. Monika Kallan (2003) suggests that Kallifatides should be read in an international context outside the small context of the national. In her book chapter "Leaving, Losing, Letting Go: Some Steps in Bilingual Transformations in the Work of Theodor Kallifatides", Kallan positions Kallifatides as an expatriated Greek and in this context explores his use of the second language Swedish across time and in relation to perceptions of identity. Kallan comments that "learning Swedish has made him aware that Greek reflects a way of life in Greece, just as the Swedish language reflects a Swedish way of life" (p.134). Kallan traces what she terms as

migrants' "los[ing] first their past, then their future" (p.133), through Kallifatides' use of narrative structure, narrative voice, and choice of story. Thus for Kallan, the characters' "integration" in the new home country is a negative experience.

In contrast to Kallan (2003), Ingeborg Kongslie (2022), a Norwegian scholar, approaches Kallifatides's texts from a Scandinavian perspective to subsequently connect them to international migration narratives. In her book chapter " 'An Inky Life Line of Survival': Identity and Rewriting in Scandinavian Migration Narratives", Kongslie categorizes Kallifatides among the Scandinavian translingual writers who "take ownership of the linguistic and cultural references of their new nations and make themselves legitimate parts. They rewrite what it means to be Scandinavian, or depict new ways of being Scandinavian" (p.181). Accordingly, Kongslie does not position translinguals' texts in a rigid Scandinavian cultural landscape but in a landscape open to transformations. However, the question of whether migrants integrate into their new settings remains unanswered. Kongslie identifies in one of Kallifatides's novels a three-step pattern to belonging that begins with the characters mingling with their own countrymen and ends "in the 'in-between' of two countries, cultures, languages" (p.168). The "in-between" state suggests loss more than belonging to the new home country regardless of whether or not its culture is transformed.

Luca Gendolavigna (2021) reads Kallifatides's literary productions in the context of "immigrants' literature" where he differentiates between Kallifatides, as a first-generation author, and second-generation voices. In his article "Swedish Suburbs as Heterotopias: Towards a multicultural literature of Places", Gendolavigna explores the depiction of space in one of Kallifatides's novels and investigates how "the frame of action can be a factor that helps to shape the self vis-à-vis Swedishness" (p.186). Referencing Anna Heith, Gendolavigna argues that "immigrant writers try through their accounts to provide a different narration of the surrounding cultural, social, and linguistic environments" (p.191). On one hand, writers of non-Swedish backgrounds maintain the label of immigrants; on the other, these writers transform surrounding environments. In both cases, it does not suggest that writers come to better understand and integrate into their surroundings.

While a number of researchers explore aspects of identity and integration in Kallifatides's novels, few touch upon the positionality of Kallifatides's texts in relation to Swedish literature. Moreover, I did not come across any study that investigates depictions of the Swedish work ethic or the Swedish abandon as myths of Swedishness through the perspectives of Kallifatides's migrant characters.

Theoretical Framework

The analysis in this essay relies on several theories derived from mythology studies, Nordic studies, and migrant studies. First, Roland Barthes discusses myth making in his seminal critical work *Mythologies* (1957, 1972) where he explains that "myth" is a force that naturalizes and legitimizes a certain worldview. Barthes (1972) argues that "myth is a semiological system which has the

pretension of transcending itself into a factual system” (p.133); he further clarifies that the principle of myth is that “it transforms history into nature” (p.128). Moreover, Barthes differentiates between what he terms as myth on the left and myth on the right. Barthes (1972) explains that the myth on the left “is as a myth suited to a convenience, not to a necessity” (p.148) while the myth on the right “is essential” (p.150). As for their language use, Barthes (1972) clarifies that the language of the myth on the left is not rich in nature and its use, which stems from revolutionary thought, “aims at transforming” (p.150). On the other hand, the language of the myth on the right is “rich, multiform, supple” and “tend[s] towards proverbs” (p.155); it aims to “eternalizing” by divesting the myth of its history (p.150). Among the bourgeois who use the myth on the right, Barthes (1972) singles out the “petit-bourgeois” who is “unable to imagine the Other” (p.152) except as an “exoticed” (p.152) object in which form the Other no longer threatens the stability of the myth.

Second, Sylvain Briens (2022) in his work in progress entitled “Borealism. An Aesthetic Approach to Study the North” outlines a broad theoretical framework of the North with an umbrella name of Borealism that “seeks to understand a discursive creative process, more particularly literary, of the North” (p.2). Linking his critical ideas to Barthes’s discussion on myth-making, Briens (2022) explains that “Borealism is constructed as a metaphor that allows us to think about the relationship of the North with they (*sic*) who define it” (p.8) further explaining that the process of defining is multifocal and involves “variation and appropriation” (p.8). When “heterogeneous social representations” (Briens, 2022, p.10) contribute to the dialogue on the North, they stem from diverse “cultural production context[s]” (p.10) that gives further meaning to the North.

This essay is also inspired by Helena Wulff’s (2022) discussion on the integration process and emotional orientation of migrants in Sweden. Wulff (2022) in her literary anthropological study, “Ambiguous arrival: emotions and dislocations in the migrant encounter with Sweden”, explores three migrant writers’ emotional orientations toward Sweden and their countries of origin through the frameworks of “emotions”, “dislocations” and “migrant encounters”. Wulff (2022) concludes that the studied writers’ emotional orientations towards their new country “[is] bound to change over time” (p.231) as the individuals acquire “a sense of some kind of belonging” (p.232). Wulff (2022) however links this sense of belonging to two concepts. First, Wulff (2022) refers to Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of “embodied habitus” (cited in Reed-Danahay, 2019, p.132) which argues that people seek other individuals and physical locations where they “feel an affinity, a sense of ‘home’” (as cited in Reed-Danahay, 2019, p.132). Wulff (2022) also refers to Deborah Reed-Danahay’s (2019) discussion on emplacement (p.132) which is a process in which migrants claim a social space in the new country while simultaneously retaining their original “dispositions and worldviews” that includes “ideas about presentation of self, understandings of neighborly reciprocity,...a set of know-how, social

connections, and skills (linguistic, social, educational) that may or may not be highly valued in the host setting” (p.132).

Hence, this essay will proceed through critical textual analysis of Theodor Kallifatides’ two novels *Kärlek och Främlingskap* (2020) and *Utlänningar* (1970) in the light of the above-specified theories to explore depictions of the myths of the Swedish work ethic and Swedish abandon of the 1960s as well as characters’ understanding of these myths as a possible step in their integration process into Swedish society.

Analysis

Since both novels take Sweden in the 1960s as setting, it is fitting to elaborate briefly on the economic and political situation in Sweden at the time. Fredrik Carlgren (2015) explains that since Sweden did not participate in any of the world wars, “the rebuilding of war-torn Europe favoured the Swedish industry, because the Swedish labour force was intact and Swedish production facilities were undamaged”. According to Lisa Pelling (2020), Sweden’s economic boom in the 1940s and 1950s created “a high demand for foreign labor”. During this period, Sweden “attracted over 200,000 foreign workers” (Pelling, 2020). This trend continued in the 1960s and the two protagonists in the novels, like the author, arrive in Sweden as laborers. On a political level, while structuring the modern welfare state in the early 20th century, the ruling party, the Social Democratic Workers’ Party, transformed Lutheran Sweden’s work ethic, which regards work as “good in and of itself” (Milner, 1989, p.53), to serve its political and economic needs. Henry Milner (1989) notes that “the Social Democrats were careful to stress the value of personal responsibility, taking pains to preserve and strengthen the work ethic” (p.58). Lindqvist and Marklund (1995) further explain that the “firm obligation to work”, which characterized traditional Swedish society, was replaced at the time by an “active labor market policy” which was “geared to stimulate work efforts” (p.235). With an “optimistic view on the virtues of work” (Lindqvist & Marklund, 1995, p.235), being productive was further branded as a highly positive defining aspect of Swedish identity even while financial regulations and welfare networks discouraged unemployment; Milner (1989) quotes a 1970 commentator who states that ““One hardly has an identity in Sweden without an occupation”” (p.53). The work ethic of the Swedish labor force is to a large extent described similarly in Kallifatides’ two novels; these individuals, for the most part, highly value order and productivity and they invest much of their lives in it. The constancy in how this myth is represented in the studied novels makes the depiction of the myth of Swedish work ethic align with Roland Barthes’s (1972) “myth on the right” where myth “[transforms] history into nature” (p.128). This remains true even while Kallifatides incorporates one reference in *Utlänningar* (1970) to the repressive/controlling role played by labor regulating bodies; the narrator comments that workers’ syndicates are controlled by restaurant and hotel owners thus workers would find it difficult to be rehired if they lose their current job due to

misconduct (Kallifatides, 1970, p.42). Nevertheless, the governmental regulating body, the immigration commission, is called the face of Sweden (Kallifatides, 1970, p.53) and as such, it embodies the society's desire for regulations and order; thus, a lost place in the queue for assistance at their offices cannot be regained (Kallifatides, 1970, p.53). Individual laborers also act in accord with this work ethic. The employers at the restaurant "Flyttfågarna" immediately put the protagonist to task when he presents himself in *Utlänningar* (1970); as they do not share a common language, a senior coworker demonstrates what the newly employed needs to accomplish (p.29). Further, the janitor Kerstin, a thirty-year-old, beautiful, but seldom sober woman, fulfills her tasks perfectly at work and this mindset is evident in her exemplary house, - everything shone, everything was in its place (Kallifatides, 1970, p.112); this prompts the narrator to highlight a negative aspect of her work ethic calling this glistening exemplarity an occupational disease (Kallifatides, 1970, p.112).

In *Kärlek och Främlingskap* (2020), Swedish individuals of different generations are similarly portrayed as practical, goal-oriented, and hard-working; these being qualities that align the Swedish work ethic with Barthes' (1972) myth on the right, that is, a myth "essential" (p.150) for society. The employers at the restaurant "La Vie s'en va", at the nursing home, and at the old harbor cafe in Helsingborg all value productivity and therefore hire Christo immediately when he asks for work. The twenty-year-old co-owner of the restaurant "La Vie s'en va", Emilie, demonstrates the importance of work when she puts aside her emotional turmoil in order to prepare for the next day's meal. She says: It is as it is and I have to peel onions and you have to peel potatoes (Kallifatides, 2020, p.70). Emilie's father Ove stands in for the older generation of Swedish laborers. In line with Barthes's (1972) argument that the language of the right presents myth through proverbs, Ove's wife, employing the metonymy of a wrench, says: He is Swedish. His hands know what they are doing and he has a wrench in his heart (Kallifatides, 2020, p.45). The Stockholm night bus driver is also an older generation laborer who had spent thirty years working in the mines in Grängesberg before his lungs could not take any further at which point he moved to Stockholm to become a bus driver. Even Maria-Pia, Christo's adviser at the university who had invested her time and interest in him, demonstrates her work ethic when she tells Christo "We don't act like this" (p.126) as he informs her that he is dropping out and leaving Stockholm.

Though most Swedish individuals are depicted as fair and ethical at work, the narrator in *Utlänningar* (1970) does not shy from critiquing the Swedish work ethic by narrating examples where the employer's economic drive is more important than individuals' concerns, especially when these individuals are foreigners therefore easily disposable/replaceable. As such, Kallifatides gives shape to Barthes's (1972) right-wing "petit-bourgeois" (p.152) who exoticizes the Other so he no longer threatens the stability of the myth. The protagonist in *Utlänningar* (1970) dresses up in his best clothes when he goes job hunting as he does not expect to be immediately put to task. When he is immediately

employed, he dirties his clothes when mopping the damp basement floor. While the protagonist does not find the task in itself degrading, though he was offered the job as a dishwasher, not a janitor, he does find it degrading that the restaurant owner did not look at him enough to notice that he was not dressed for the job. The narrator says: Humiliating, on the other hand, was their way of putting me to work as soon as I showed up, if I had been observed at all, because while I spoke to the manager in broken German, he kept looking away (Kallifatides, 1970, p.29). This same employer would later not accept sick leave, unjustly accuse the protagonist of theft, fire him, and file a police report against him. Even in *Kärlek och Främlingskap* (2020), Kallifatides refers to abusive employers who ask for sexual favors; Penelope, a Greek with a precarious job as a maid at Saltsjöbaden, is asked to massage her employer for he had pain in his back and also elsewhere (Kallifatides, 2020, p.43).

While the Swedish work ethic, as depicted in Kallifatides' two novels, seems stable over the years, the myth of the Swedish sin or abandon is approached (comes across) differently. It should be primarily noted that *Utlänningar* (1970) was written at the zenith of circulating myths around Swedish sexuality which was promoted in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s by some segments of society both domestically and internationally. The recently written *Kärlek och Främlingskap* (2020) sees the light in a Swedish society described by Eva Lenneman, a curator at Stockholm's Museum of Spirits, as showing early signs of "fear of nudity" (Swahn).

Several "heterogeneous social representations" (Briens, 2022, p.10) over a period of three decades contributed to the creation of the myth of sin or abandon in Sweden in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s. The myth first gained social visibility within the Swedish artistic circles and spread to large segments of society; it was then augmented by the world's creation of an image of Sweden as "sinful" and then remolded to denote "progressive thinking" by the ruling party's political narrative and legislations. These diverse "cultural production context[s]" (Briens, 2022, p.10) contributed to the creation of the myth of Swedish abandon.

Swedish artists, such as Ingmar Bergman (*Summer with Monica* (1953)), initiated the myth of Swedish sin or abandon when they featured in their movies naked characters enjoying "romantic and erotic adventures" (Björklund & Larsson, 2016, pp.6-7). The international audience was surprised by this image and the US-based *Time Magazine* in the 1950s labeled Sweden as "sinful" (Björklund & Larsson, 2016, p.9). The Swedish cinema, however, quickly embraced this exported exoticized myth of themselves, with one director even adding a subtitle stating "for export" to a scene of nude swimming (Björklund & Larsson, 2016, p.7). The 1960s and 70s also witnessed the growth of a strong porn industry in Sweden (which was legalized in 1971) which would export magazines such as *Spank Sweden* and thus further fuel the myth of Swedish sin / abandon.

During the same period, a domestic dialogue was crafting a social revolution. The official Social Democratic rhetoric of the civilized welfare state and its politics of gender equality would evolve

with this dialogue and progressively legislate to provide housing, jobs for all, sexual education at school, birth control pills, and free abortion. In his study on the Swedish Revolution in the 1960s and 70s, Mikael Svanberg (2013) gives an idea of how some Swedish media embraced the Swedish abandon; Svanberg (2013) reports that half of the advertising material in the studied Stockholm editions of the prominent Swedish newspapers *Aftonbladet* and *Expressen* marketed erotically related goods and services, largely though not exclusively of a pornographic nature (p.20). Svanberg (2013) also exemplifies the diverse opposing voices in Sweden quoting a male physician who wrote in 1974 that women's liberation was causing male anxiety: Women's liberation may have proceeded a little too quickly, Dr Mellgren believes. The liberation in this first phase is creating anxiety for the men. It's biased now. But the years will perhaps remove this inconvenience (Svanberg, 2013, p.20). The male protagonists in the studied novels also express similar opinions of being demasculinized in Sweden but align this perception with a South European patriarchal hegemony.

Utlänningar (1970) gives voice to the multifocally constructed myth of the Swedish sin or abandon. The protagonist depicts Swedish women as individualists and decision-makers in what concerns their bodies and lives. The women are comfortable in their bodies and comfortable with fleeting sexual encounters; they perceive themselves as desirable and strive to be sexually satisfied while confirming this attitude with loud laughter. To illustrate, a young woman at a party uses what Barthes (1972) would term as left side "revolutionary language" (p.149) while pursuing the protagonist; she calls: Damn coward, you want it easy too. Just open your legs, huh? I bet you have a bottle opener in your pocket. Listen, I'm not a disposable bottle (Kallifatides, 1970, p.65). Women at the bar where the protagonist works as a porter also seek sex with the exotic thin foreign man who in turn acts as the "savage" lover (Kallifatides, 1970, p.92).

The only criticism of this myth of Swedish sin or abandon is articulated by the Greek migrant Maria who herself seeks to be liberated from the oppression of her husband in Greece who harrasses her with his letters. Maria fleetingly seeks an alternative relationship with a Swedish coworker. When she notices that this man does not attempt to understand her story or her desires she concludes that the negative situation for women in Sweden and Greece is similar; Swedish men however are slightly different: Men [in Sweden] are more hypocritical, evasive...a chewing gum that tastes less and less (Kallifatides, 1970, p.75). Overall, almost all Swedish women in *Utlänningar* (1970) are presented as having the same opinions about sexuality. The only exception to this myth is the landlady in Helsingborg who is described as a wife once and for all (Kallifatides, 1970, p.93).

The myth of abandon is approached differently in *Kärlek och Främlingskap* (2020). There are abundant representations of women who are comfortable in their bodies and in passing copulations. However, this abandon takes on a fleeting characteristic and is instead engulfed by a social morality that emphasizes the importance of family. The Swedish women Rania, Paola, Emilie, and Mona all

settle down in relatively stable family units with established or new partners despite periods of sexual freedom. The abandon is curtailed by a number of reasons including parental guilt (Rania), the comfort of stability (Paola), and the mentality of moving on (Emilie and Rolf). Though he felt exoticized, as though he had a tail (Kallifatides, 2020, p.96), Thanasis, Christo's friend, announces that the myth of the death of the family was in fact just a myth (Kallifatides, 2020, p.96) when he meets up with his girlfriend Mona's extended family at their summerhouse. For her part, Rania tells Christo: I'm not as liberated as you think (Kallifatides, 2020, p.103). Further, Rolf forgives his girlfriend's escapades by declaring: tomorrow is another day (Kallifatides, 2020, p.28).

Kallifatides' twenty-first-century depiction of the 1960s Swedish sin or abandon frames the myth with a conservative outlook proving that the original myth on the left was "suited to a convenience, not to a necessity" (Barthes, 1972, p.148); the Swedish bourgeoisie society weathers the revolutionary storm of the Swedish abandon to reestablish order in a new society that embraces socially independent women but holds on to the family unit, that feels no shame of the past and no fear of the future. Deriving from the fact that the Swedish welfare model combines both right and left-side ideologies, its mantra stands strong: let us abandon the one-sidedness of memory, and learn to see the positive in the new face (Åsbrink, 2018, p.171). Unsurprisingly, to emphasize the self-sufficiency of women as a stable social depiction, the narrator in *Kärlek och Främlingskap* (2020), uses the language of myth on the right; Emilie is compared through a simile to a source of water: Emilie is self-sufficient as a spring in the forest (Kallifatides, 2020, p.34).

To sum up, using Roland Barthes's (1972) terminology, the Swedish work ethic is a stable myth on the right that is borrowed from its religious sources and augmented by the official narrative as "a necessity" and an "essential" part of its economic agenda of continuous growth, then reverberated in cultural productions, such as Kallifatides's novels, as a core within Swedish identity. On the other hand, the myth of Swedish sin or abandon is multifocally constructed and remolded to suit the convenience of the diverse domestic and international "cultural production context[s]" (Briens, 2022, p.10) exploiting it across time.

While presenting an image of Swedish society, Kallifatides's main purpose in his novels is to explore migrants' diverse perceptions of Swedish society as part of their integration process. Christo in *Kärlek och Främlingskap* (2020) perfectly captures a major dichotomy foreigners assume of Swedish society; Christo believes he and Rania live in different worlds: duty and loyalty in one, freedom and desire in the other (Kallifatides, 2020, p.17). In parallel, the protagonist in *Utlänningar* (1970) has difficulty deconstructing this dichotomy and assumes that when he improves his Swedish language skills he might better approach this problem. Although toward the end of the novel the protagonist announces "I have landed" (Kallifatides, 1970, p.116) after he had a dream where he felt more foreign in Athens than in Slussen (an area in central Stockholm), the reader is encouraged to challenge this

“landing” when few lines later, the protagonist grumbles to his mirror reflection that he is not really happy but immediately silences himself sharply and suddenly is in a good mood again at which point the novel ends.

Christo in *Kärlek och Främlingskap* (2020) approaches his situation differently. He seeks to understand Swedish society better; through the narrator’s voice, he announces: “Perhaps he was a stranger in Sweden, but Sweden and the Swedes would not remain strangers to him” (Kallifatides, 2020, p.48). While comparing Sweden to Greece through narratives of his past and present, Christo deconstructs the dichotomy between duty/loyalty and freedom/desire by engaging with the myth of sexual expression. Christo comes to realize that, within Swedish society, duty, loyalty, freedom, and desire can coexist as part of a socio-political dialogue as well as in personal beliefs. The deconstruction aims to indirectly shed light on the similarities between the Swedish and the Greek societies, as well as depict the Swedish society as complex, with multiple contesting self-images.

At this point, we can return to the questions in the introduction and ask whether acquired knowledge of Swedish society aids the foreign protagonists’ integration and guides their emotional orientations as depicted in Kallifatides’ novels.

Insights from the author and depictions of other foreign characters in the novels might aid in finding an answer to this question. Theodor Kallifatides links his sense of belonging in a new country and consequently his emotional orientation towards this country to the gradual erasure/fading of his country of origin. After residing fifty years in Sweden, Kallifatides told Helena Wulff in an interview: “You have not really arrived until you are rid of memories from home. As long as memories from home are still a part of everyday life you have not arrived. For me, it took twelve years. It happened when my first child was born” (Wulff, 2022, p.222). Kallifatides’s hindsight criteria for integration, however, does not lessen the complexity of the journey that newly arrived take towards “landing” in the new country. In *Utlänningar* (1970), the narrator spells out what he believes is the natural process for “arriving” or for people’s social integration in new settings. Echoing Bourdieu’s concept of “embodied habitus” (cited in Reed-Danahay, 2019, p.132), the narrator explains that when in a new setting, a person first seeks others with a similar background starting with those with whom the person shares nationality; some remain at this stage and form small colonies but if one fails to build such a community then the person next seeks the company of other foreigners of different nationalities where their common ground is complaining about the new setting (Kallifatides, 1970).

Given the setting and circumstances depicted in the two studied novels, and despite the half a century that separates them, the reader notices that none of the other migrant characters truly succeed in becoming a part of Swedish society. None of the protagonist’s friends in *Utlänningar* (1970) succeed in the mission of “landing”: Tomas dies because he is pushed (by the migrant work conditions in 1960s Sweden) to favor work over health; Maria commits suicide as she feels she cannot escape

patriarchy no matter where she is; Kostas ends up in jail for drug sale and Dimitris, the one-legged, returns to Greece. Further, in his first year in Stockholm, the protagonist and his friends only rarely mingle with Swedish nationals and when they do, it often results in social failure. Exemplifying Bourdieu's notion of "embodied habitus" (cited in Reed-Danahay, 2019, p.132), the narrator and his friends congregate in a familiar Greek setting as they share a flat in Stockholm.

Similarly, Christo's friends in *Kärlek och Främlingskap* (2020) do not "land" either. Sara and Thanasis return to their home countries though Thanasis regrets it; Penelope, Jean Jaques, and Spyro, though they remain in Sweden, do so in a state of "emplacement" where they retain most of their original "dispositions and worldviews" (Reed-Danahay, 2019, p.132); despite decades in Sweden, the way they present themselves as well as their accented language use and emotional orientations seem to favor that of their home countries, Greece and France. That the host setting accepts this state of emplacement, I suggest, has to do with the historical prestige that French and Greek cultures (unlike other European and world cultures) hold in Swedish society. As for Christo, the novel leaves him (four years into his stay in Sweden) in relatively stable circumstances as he finds personal acknowledgment in Paola and her infant; Christo and Paola look each other in the eyes. She sees him and he sees her. They both get approved (Kallifatides, 2020, p.150). However, if language use is of any indication, the reader is left to question if Christo's emotional orientation will ever favor Sweden over his country of origin. Reading the text statistically, the word 'Sweden' "Sverige" and its derivative words, such as "svensk" and "svenska", are repeated 106 times while the word 'Greece' "Grekland" and its derivatives, such as "grek" and "grekiska", are repeated 167 times in *Kärlek och Främlingskap* (2020).

Conclusion

This essay explores depictions of the Swedish myths of work ethic and abandon through the perspectives of Theodor Kallifatides's characters in his two novels *Kärlek och Främlingskap* (2020) and *Utlänningar* (1970). Kallifatides's perception of Swedishness of the 1960s, particularly in what relates to the myths of work ethic and abandon, is shown to have developed over the span of fifty years that separates the publication of the two studied novels. Even though the depictions of the Swedish work ethic remain stable in the two novels, the depictions of the myth of Swedish abandon evolve with contemporary popular beliefs pertinent to the publication year of each text. These depictions may also be attributed to the characters' further integration into, thus understanding of, Swedish society. Nevertheless, regardless of the degree to which Kallifatides's migrant characters integrate into Swedish society, a common characteristic among them is that their emotional orientation remains in favor of their countries of origin. That his characters' emotional orientation does not favor their Swedish setting might be a contributing point to the ongoing debate: whether

Kallifatides's literary texts are to be studied as Swedish literature, Greek literature, migrant literature, or translinguistic and transnational literature, taking into consideration the author's long stay in Sweden and his publication of over 40 titles written in Swedish.

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