

Free Press Houston

Greek Coffee: An Interview with the Author George Molho

Interview by Andrea Afra

In each of us there is a story. George Molho, a Greek Houstonian, was bold and brave and patient enough to discover his story and share it in his new book, *Greek Coffee*. The sad thing in reading his story is knowing that he is not alone in his sufferings. The beautiful thing is that in reading his story others will know that they are not alone in theirs. *Greek Coffee* holds a power that will transmit to a wide audience as they experience his life unfolding with each page.

Through the eyes of a terrified little boy, we see the inner conflict a child feels when it comes to love and loyalty of an abusive father. His strong and devoutly loving mother and her Greek family were enough to ease the pain of being kidnapped and tortured by a man he could not help but love. But in order to heal he had to go it alone.

In writing he found solace and the answers he needed to be free. Following is an interview with him; we sat down at Byzantio a couple of weeks ago.

You say at first it all started out as a letter to your wife; what pushed you into turning it into a book?

I think I wanted to share the experiences with other people, in a brutally honest way, to be able to empower them in a way that I was empowered...it was more of a cleansing experience. I knew if I put it out there, once it was in my mind that it was going to be put into a book, I couldn't lie to myself...people will read this and they can go find out (the truth). So you have to say it all. I find that in people who write diaries. They can still embellish since they're writing for themselves.

There were some things I read that you wrote and I thought, "Whoa, this is Confession!"

It was a confession, also. It was like a cleansing. And, if you're going to do a confessional, or a cleansing, or heal yourself—whatever word you want to use—if you're not honest with yourself...Jesus. You're lying to the rest of the world; you lie to the rest of the world, eventually you lie to yourself and then you're lost. There's no worse narcotic than lying because you're creating and sustaining the illusion.

Why did you decide to stop and turn around and look at it all—your past—and just let it wash over you?

There was one reason: It was on the eve of my divorce. I thought, why does it seem like everything I have attained in my life, everything, like I described in the book. In some ways I feel very lucky. Very few people get a shot at any of their dreams. But every one I had ever tried for I had gotten, but I kept losing them. So I'm like 'This is weird.' Usually when you've got your dream you hold on to it...but every one I had gone after I kept

losing. There's a pattern, what the hell is it trying to tell me. And I wanted to discover what that was.

What was your focus in the book as to classifying it as memoir? You seem to cover most of your life up until now, things that were happening in your childhood and things that you experienced recently.

That's one of the key things that I was discovering. If you write just about the present it's like just dealing with the present, where you disconnect it from the past. You have to link everything together. Everything is linked together. I think of it like this. When you come out of high school or go to college you have these new ideas. But what do you know that is really yours? Did it come from your mother; did it come from your English teacher; did it come from your band director? You're young; you're being molded at that time. How much of your thoughts are really your own? Are you a Republican or a Democrat because you want to be or is it because of a favorite uncle? The whole reasoning behind the writing was that I wanted to know where everything that I thought and how I had lived had come from. What was mine and what did I learn. And then I could choose...What thoughts are actually mine? Some people are afraid of looking at that. Even what political party you're affiliated with...you're casting a vote, you're changing lives, changing culture, political policy...it's all about owning yourself. What do you own and how much does everybody else own of you...

Have you had a lot of people share how their lives relate to yours after reading *Greek Coffee*?

I have. I've had a lot of people come up to me and what I hear the most is that, I'll get anywhere from 38-55 year olds, who the common thread seems to be, whether their financially successful or not: I don't own myself, I'm unhappy, and I don't know why. I have a home, I have a car, I go on vacations—I think I'm fulfilled, I feel fulfilled, but I'm unhappy. It's like I told a friend of mine, he's a friend now, he wasn't before, but he read the book and emailed me. And he told me, "I'm miserable, and I don't know why...I have a wife, a home...I have no idea. I'm miserable and I'm making people miserable around me."

I told him to take a recorder and everyday when you wake up record whatever the first feeling that comes to you, crud or wow, or yippee, just record it and keep it in your pocket and throughout the day record different feelings. Then at the end of two weeks play it back, take out a pen and paper. Write down every moment that you felt great, joyous, excited and then all the negative things and compare and see how they lay out. And then when you look at what makes you happy, start once a day repeating the one thing that makes you happy...and then see how many of the negative things you can remove. Maybe it's a person, or the clothes you wear.

I get a lot of people who seem to be sharing their lives with me. I get people who tell me they've been abused as a kid, or have a bad relationship with their wife. Actually, I have a lot of men come up to me and one of the things they tell me is that they haven't read a

lot of books from men explaining how they feel in a relationship, emotionally. There's a lot of books for women, but where's the one for the guys? (*Greek Coffee*) doesn't fit the image, the male machismo. But to me the greatest strength is being open. I mean you can do anything when you're open...

If more people were able to face their past and not use it as a crutch or as a Kevlar vest to get them through life then the world would be a better place. If everyone got a chance to sit down and write their story...

That was a blessing. If everybody could that would be the best thing but that was my blessing that I was allowed to do it. But I think that's one of the things that I addressed in the book, using your past as Kevlar, a lot of people think, "Oh this happened to me in my past so I'm not responsible for it." No. I say your past may not have been your fault when you were younger but it's your problem today. You have to deal with it.

I think it's good that people like you are putting the pen to the paper at such a young age because I am going to relate more to you than I would to Henry David Thoreau, even though he is timeless. But you and I are living at the same time. No pressure of course, but do you have any future ventures in mind?

I will tell you that the next book will be in the same style, as memoir, but it's going to be my grandmother's, a continuation moving forward by moving back. It's starting with her as a young girl until she goes to the concentration camps...to me she's living history and I want to capture as much as I can...I've noticed so many works of fiction that are series based. Has anyone every captured an entire family? I'm going to do it.

How has your approach towards challenges changed since writing the book?

I'd say it in one phrase: If you knew you couldn't fail at anything what would you attempt...I realized that I could start my life over and live it brand new, exactly the way I wanted it.

And is it?

It is.

When did you realize that you were where you wanted to be?

When I wrote the last line.

It takes a great writer to captivate an audience with a work of non-fiction for the lives involved are real. George Molho has liberated the memoir genre with his new literary style, opening the minds of readers and writers alike. *Greek Coffee* is as real as you and I.

Greek Coffee is now available online at barnesandnoble.com and amazonbooks.com. Or you can request it at your favorite bookstore. Book signing is May 25th from 6 – 9 p.m. at Byzantio Café: 403 W. Gray

