



L A N G
Classical
Studies

Greece in British
Women's Literary
Imagination,
1913–2013

EDITED BY Eleni Papargyriou,
Semele Assinder, AND David Holton

PETER LANG

Greece in British Women's Literary Imagination, 1913–2013 offers a comprehensive overview of British female writing on Greece in the twentieth century and beyond. Contributors cover a vast array of authors: Rose Macaulay, Jane Ellen Harrison, Virginia Woolf, Ann Quin, Dorothy Una Ratcliffe, Elizabeth Taylor, Barbara Pym, Olivia Manning, Mary Stewart, Victoria Hislop, Loretta Proctor and Sofka Zinovieff formed special ties with Greece and made it the focus of their literary imagination. Moving from Bloomsbury to Mills & Boon, the book offers insight into the ways romantic literature has shaped readers' perceptions about Greece. Why have female authors of such diverse backgrounds and literary orientations been attracted by a country burdened by its past and troubled by its present? What aspects of the country do they choose to highlight? Are female perceptions of Greece different from male ones? The book examines these and many more exciting questions. Given its focus and diversity, it is addressed to audiences in English and Greek studies, Classical reception, European modernism, cultural studies and popular fiction, as well as to non-academic English-speaking readers who have an interest in Greece.

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Introduction: British Women Writing Greece

SEMELE ASSINDER AND ELENI PAPARGYRIOU

While the Greek connections of British male authors, from Byron to the Durrells and from Patrick Leigh Fermor to Louis de Bernières, have been extensively documented and studied, the country's presence in women's literary imagination remains underinvestigated. With the exception of travel writing, which has long been associated with women writers (Kolocotroni and Mitsi 2008; Mahn 2012), the connection between British female authors of fiction and Greece has not yet been examined systematically (Bassnett 2002). Yet, the twentieth century alone produced an impressive number of British female authors who wrote about Greece. They range from highly esteemed representatives of the literary establishment, such as Virginia Woolf and Jane Ellen Harrison, to more underrated cases, such as Barbara Pym, and commercial players in the literary market, such as Mary Stewart and (in the last decade) Victoria Hislop. Their number and diversity give rise to a number of questions: Why are female authors of such diverse backgrounds and literary orientations attracted by Greece, a country burdened by its past and troubled by its present? What aspects of the country do they choose to highlight? Are female perceptions of Greece different from male ones?

Recent studies of women writing about Greece have focused either on the appropriation of its classical past or on the country's appearance in a specific genre, particularly travel writing (Olveson 2009; Mahn 2012; Mitsi 2002). A survey approach such as that offered in Roessel's (2002) book *In Byron's Shadow* has updated the sourcebook for an overview of the literary landscape, although it fails to offer sufficient depth of analysis or a detailed

examination of the material. Hellenism as a concept remains attractive, but the cult of the personality has continued to dominate: figures such as Virginia Woolf and Jane Ellen Harrison have received much critical attention in recent years (Beard 2000; Fowler 1983, 1999; Kolocotroni 2012a, 2012b; Koulouris 2011), while there is a significant pool of female authors whose work has not been discussed. These studies have done much to broaden the fields of travel writing and literary biography, yet these works contain only a vague sense of literary Hellenism, often implied only by the word “Greek” and not explored further.

This collection of essays offers an overview of Greece’s presence in British female writing from 1913 to 2013. It engages in a critical dialogue with female authors’ perceptions of Greece as a symbolic birthplace of Western culture, as a dramatic stage of modern historical conflict or as an imagined locale offering the opportunity of escape from the conundrums of Western life. The volume historicizes the allure of Greece in female authors in the period 1913–2013, the century stretching from just before the outbreak of World War I until well into times of economic recession and social upheaval. Such a historicization updates our understanding of literary Hellenism: while the tendency has been to focus on Modern Greece exclusively as a faint echo of the Classical past, the essays included in this volume show that a large number of female authors have been systematically investigating Greece’s contemporary reality too. Contributors display a shift in the paradigm: while earlier female authors are fascinated by Greece as a symbolic *topos* of classical ideals, more recent ones engage directly with contemporary aspects of the country. Virginia Woolf and Jane Ellen Harrison were attracted to ancient Greek material culture at the expense of Greece’s modern face. However, as the political entanglement of Greece and Britain intensified during and after World War II, women authors of fiction, such as Olivia Manning, saw Greece as a stage of political drama with international implications, while Elizabeth Taylor refused to visit Greece during the years of military dictatorship (1967–1974), a stance which could be praised as a form of resistance. Following that thread, Victoria Hislop, and more recently Sofka Zinovieff, are contemporary authors who have been systematically raising awareness on little-known events in Greece’s recent history. Looking for the first time at popular genres of writing, the volume moves from Bloomsbury to Mills and Boon, underscoring the importance of the cultural influence romantic fiction has had in readers’ perceptions of the country.

From Hellas to Greece

In her account of her sessions with Freud in Vienna in 1933, Hilda Doolittle recalls her response to the ageing professor showing her a statue of Athena ornamenting his study: “He knew that I loved Greece. He knew that I loved Hellas” (Doolittle 1955: 104). This distinction between Hellas and Greece is telling, not least because it comes across as an empty vessel: it does not cease to mystify. Hellas amounts to a romanticized spectre of a lost civilization, it is formed on a continuum of lacunae, of gaps and absences, of faltering or even fallacious perceptions. Hellas is built on the desired relics of material culture and studied in dusty corners of libraries, but it is not experienced *al fresco*, or, when it is, it is through preconceived ideas. In this binary, Greece eventually takes the role of a geographical space that hosted the material remnants of Hellas but is deemed inferior to it.

Ottoman Greece was a dangerous place for women; only a handful have been recorded to have traveled there (Mitsi 2008). Things improved a little, but not significantly after 1830. The Dilessi murders in 1870 did nothing to alter this perception of Greece as a brutal and dangerous destination. At the turn of the century, though, the interest in brigands had started to shift to an intrigue rather more salacious than spine-chilling. A woman, Amy Yule, wrote the 1884 Murray handbook for travelers to Greece. Women published comprehensive accounts of their travels, recording not only their excursions, but also recommending hotels and the use of a dragoman, and thereby making journeys to Greece more achievable to those reading at home. The “mushroom crop of novels” about Greece (Mayo 1897: 98), romanticizing klefts fighting for independence and women taking arms, either published as short stories in women’s magazines or in fat novels, aimed to educate the audience about the Greek political situation. Women started to work on Greece in a systematic way; multiple translations of folk poetry and original texts on Greek themes, published in magazines and books, provided the British public with an outlook into Modern Greece, rather than its historic alter ego. In this period, women’s writing often focused on the explicit aim of raising public awareness of the continuing Greek fight for independence, sometimes with the hope of contributing financially direct to the Greek cause. The Greeks’ fight for liberty, as well as the popular image of Greece in Britain as “the slave Hellas” (Garnett 1885), offered women then campaigning for social and educational liberties a terrain of comparison between themselves and Ottoman-occupied Greece. Writers such as Elizabeth Edmonds, Lucy Garnett, and Isabella Mayo promulgated Greece’s plight through their writing, and were influential in the formation of Modern Greece in the British imagination. Being educated

in Greek, which combined knowledge of the classical language and of ancient Greek cultural texts and tropes, has been linked to imperial power (Goldhill 2002; Vasunia 2003). This power was conceived of as the privilege of men. Travel to Greece offered women an education in its own right, and the proliferation of Modern Greek grammars and phrasebooks at the *fin de siècle* were vital tools for self-education. The interest women recorded in fading Greek customs and the signs of modernization creeping into Greece, such as the advent of railways and decline of traditional dress, can be read as a eulogy for a Greece no longer classical nor yet truly modern. This incipient Greek modernity, though, did offer an attractive prospect to women; the development of the relatively new Greek state allowed them to move more freely—both geographically and socially—than in Britain. The stifling layers of history present for them in Britain were notably absent from Greece; women's lack of classical education proved more a help than a hindrance in this respect, removing any obstruction which might have been presented by the classical past from their engagement with the developing nation state of Greece. A distinctive female voice was then emerging in British magazines, one which presented women with the chance to produce more developed articles and extended writing than within newspaper journalism. Classics as a field may have been barred to these women, but Modern Greek and Greece were ripe for appropriation.

The emancipating effect of education and travel had found their full effect by the end of the century; by the time of the publication of Rose Macaulay's "The Empty Berth" in 1913, women travelers to Greece were no longer unusual characters, but were still easy targets for literary jest. Somewhere between 1880 and 1913, the novelty of the woman traveler had begun to wane as travel became more socially acceptable. However, the connection between women's fiction and Greece had been firmly established.

In the century examined in this volume (1913–2013) some of these tropes and trends seem to persist, while new ones are introduced. Until the middle of the twentieth century, the imperial allure of a classical education—a gendered affair—is still in full swing. "Not knowing Greek," as Virginia Woolf famously declared in an essay, meant to be excluded from a club of people possessing the intellectual credentials to influence public life, decision making, and be cultural commentators of their times. Pound and Eliot employed ancient Greek as a code intended for the informed, initiated reader. In their assemblage of a canonical textbook of modernist literature, Greek played a major role as a language of exclusion in terms of class, education, and, as would be later proven, gender. As Vassiliki Kolocotroni has written, "Woolf's writing abounds in women frustrated in their desire to enter the

‘temples of learning.’ ‘I’d give ten years of my life to know Greek,’ (44) says young Mrs. Dalloway in *The Voyage Out*” (Kolocotroni 2012: 9).

In this volume, Kolocotroni shows how this became true not only for Woolf, but also for Jane Ellen Harrison, whose contributions to the study of Greek were deemed insufficient and not scholarly enough. This lack of Greek is also evident in Rose Macaulay’s characters’ intellectual self-perception, and Greek works as a touchstone for scholarship throughout her fiction. For Olivia Manning traveling to Greece compensated for her lack of a classical education. And while Elizabeth Taylor had ancient Greek lessons at school, her knowledge of the language subsequently faded, as it was not consolidated in an academic context.

Thus, one element in the motivation of women to engage with Hellenism is still compensational; it revolves around the desire to penetrate the male world. But in this lacking, in this half-known Greek—half-known by male standards—there is a kind of discovery, a fruitful appropriation. Elizabeth Taylor writes: “*The Classical Tradition*, she [Cassandra] thought, taking the little book from a drawer. What in heaven’s name was it all about? She had never read it” (Taylor 1946: 154). It does not escape us that the encounters of women writers with Greece are primarily inquiring in nature: not only to discover and compare the ancient face to the country to its modern version, but also to come to terms with this exclusion, of not knowing enough Greek.

And yet, these women writers often follow a well-trodden path of viewing it through a classical, if not imperial lens. Hellenism as a cultural tool manning the British Empire, still meant that the country’s modern face was always found lacking. Infantilizing elements in their accounts still abound, such as those by Elizabeth Taylor and Barbara Pym, while Mary Stewart would be on close call. Their characters often express their annoyance at the country’s premodern infrastructure, its primitive transport system, its nauseatingly rich food, and the primitive character of its men.

Greece becoming a popular holiday destination in the second half of the twentieth century resulted in the development of a whole genre of romantic fiction, which has often been dubbed “escapist.” Landscape features, notably the Greek islands and sandy sun-kissed beaches, are blended with a popularized and even naïve knowledge of Greek history to offer an escapist outlet for readers in Western countries. Greek mythology in this genre was recast into a popular sensationalist toolkit intended to excite the imagination of female readers. The cultural mark left by these novels should not be underestimated. Despite their simplicity, or often because of it, they have been seminal in shaping readers’ perceptions of Greece, while, on the practical side, they have worked wonders in advertizing the country. Taking into account

their commercial success, this volume equalizes these novels to the canonical works of Woolf, Manning, and Taylor in terms of the role they have played in shaping literary Hellenism.

Greece as a mass tourist destination has inspired women authors to investigate its recent history. Victoria Hislop traces the beginning of her relation to Greece as a revelatory moment in tourist experience:

My love for Greece started as a holiday romance almost 40 years ago. I was a teenager and landed in Athens one blisteringly hot day in August with my mother and sister. It was only my second time out of England.

In spite of the dust, chaos, traffic, and signs in a language and alphabet I didn't understand, I was enchanted. Perhaps it was the brilliance of the blue sky and the dazzling pale stones of the Acropolis, or simply the sight of swallows dipping and diving in the all-embracing warmth of our first evening there. (Hislop 2015)

Hislop's account teems with recognizable cultural tropes that define a tourist's first travel to Athens: sun, heat, blue skies, and a landmark monument. There is chaos in the eyes of the Western traveler, but the charms of landscape are compensating. Hislop's novels have been marketed as beach reads and she comes across as someone who addresses a reader contenting her/himself with superficial knowledge of the country. And yet, her preoccupation with the country's recent wounds, a leper colony in *The Island*, the Greco-Turkish war of 1919–1922 in *The Thread*, familiarizes audiences with historical domains that fall outside the classical scope. In their commercial allure, Hislop's novels popularize an understanding of the country that helps collapse the Hellas/Greece divide. Sofka Zinovieff probes deeper into Greece's historical past, tracing wounds, and most importantly, offering a cultural translation of the political debate between Left and Right that dominates Greek public life. Zinovieff thematizes her own position as a British author writing on Greece. As Greece and Britain became intrinsically linked during WWII and after (Wills 2015), the role of British foreign affairs in the shaping of Greek politics becomes a fascinating, if not intricate and painful subject.

One welcome change in the last decades has been the shift in language learning. While Woolf, Harrison, and Stewart, or any of the Mills and Boon authors writing novels set in Greece, did not know Modern Greek, Victoria Hislop has taken great pains to learn the language. In a 2009 interview, she confessed that “all my money goes on Greek lessons. I have four hours of one-to-one tuition a week and I am addicted. It's like a code that I am cracking, slowly but surely” (Hislop 2009). The process of using ancient Greek as a code for the lucky few who have had a privileged education has been reversed. Code making has been transformed into code breaking (at a cost of course).

Zinovieff too displays her knowledge of Modern Greek in incorporating a vast array of Greek words and terms in her writing. Zinovieff showcases that her knowledge of twentieth-century Greek history has been based on Greek sources as well, listing them at the back of her novel *The House on Paradise Street* (2012).

If the binary Hellas/Greece was here employed to showcase the gradual shift of interest from an imaginary topos to a real space, this does not mean that Greece in these women's literary perceptions is not invested with dreams and desires, a space used to confront fears, a pretext to discover the self or hide from it. Greece can be as imaginary as Hellas. And yet, British female fiction writers today are continuing in a tradition established in the nineteenth century: gaining access to a country through lived experience and language. Whether Victoria Hislop learning Greek through language lessons in the 2000s, or the writer Elizabeth Edmonds seeking to live in Athens for "the cultivation of the modern language" back in 1880 (Edmonds 1881), Greece exerts an attraction on women writers. This volume seeks to investigate what, precisely, this attraction might be.

Structure of the Volume

Through a discussion of Rose Macaulay's short story "The Empty Berth," **Semele Assinder** in Chapter 1 reconsiders the Hellenic cruise in literature. Rose Macaulay and Classicist Jane Ellen Harrison crossed paths on the Union-Castle line's cruise in 1912, and Macaulay's satirical treatment of the voyage in fiction forces us to read the end of the boom years of organized Hellenic travel. Macaulay's interest in ruins in her later writing is well documented, but this essay suggests that Greece had been an early influence. The short story delves into the supernatural to blur the lines between past and present while marking the tentative beginnings of more romantic fiction set in Greece.

Vassiliki Kolocotroni inquires into the allegorical ways in which the Greek landscape and its ancient remnants and modern inhabitants is represented in the scholarly, literary, and travel writings of four British women, Jane Ellen Harrison, Virginia Woolf, Ann Quin, and Dorothy Una Ratcliffe. As Marina Warner has argued in her panoramic study *Monuments and Maidens: The Allegory of the Female Form* (1985), the presence and coded meaning of allegorical female figures still underpin broadly accepted human values, in both an ideological and imaginative sense. Taking its lead from this assertion, this essay considers the allegorical uses to which Greek form has been put by a selection of British women writers of the twentieth century. In their encounters with and constructions of Greece as a repository of ancient yet persistent

and prescient forms (in the shape of maidens or monuments), the classicist Jane Ellen Harrison, novelists Virginia Woolf and Ann Quin, and poet and travel writer Dorothy Una Ratcliffe create meaningful allegories not only for their literary, but also for personal and political pursuits.

In Chapter 3, **Rowena Fowler** and **Rose Little** explore the importance of Greece in the lives and writings of Elizabeth Taylor (1912–1975) and Barbara Pym (1913–1980), two novelists often thought of as quintessentially English. For the writers and their fictional characters, the experience of Greece—whether comic or poignant—casts a new light on English manners and assumptions. Fowler and Little begin with the writers’ knowledge of ancient Greece before discussing their growing awareness of the continuing existence of the modern country. Drawing on eight of Taylors’s novels and two stories, and on Pym’s novel *A Few Green Leaves* alongside her letters and unpublished travel diaries, they trace the ways they shaped their responses to Greece into narrative. Taylor assimilated patterns of Greek myth and tragedy into everyday English settings, but admitted that exposure to the contemporary Greek world could disorient and perturb. Pym, with characteristic shrewdness, exposes the ironies and pitfalls of philhellenic self-discovery. Both Taylor and Pym offer new ways of experiencing Greece and putting it into words. Just as their imagined country looked different in the stark light of the Mediterranean, their travels challenged their sense of themselves as women and as writers.

In Chapter 4, **Deirdre David** examines the several meanings of Athens as the “longed-for city” in the life of the twentieth-century novelist Olivia Manning. Athens emblemized her exilic experience. For at least a decade before she arrived in 1941 after fleeing Romania, Athens (and Greece) symbolized a seemingly unattainable cultural privilege, denied her, she felt, since she had neither gone to university nor studied the Classics. And for twenty years after she sailed on the last ship from Piraeus for Egypt as German forces advanced from the North, Athens haunted her literary imagination. In the early 1960s, she began fashioning her memories into her well-known Balkan trilogy and in so doing constructed both a tribute and an elegy for the city she loved.

In the following chapter **Laura Vivanco** argues that British women’s imaginations have both produced and been stimulated by literature ranging from the high to the low. She analyzes a selection of Mills & Boon’s popular fiction from each of the decades from 1960 to 2010 in order to identify why Greece, in particular, has been a place that their readers “dream about.” Vivanco observes that while Greece in these novels is not the authors’ primary concern, they impart a valuable pool of information about the country. She goes on to identify popular tropes in setting a plot in Greece: linking the

country's warm climate to the characters' sensual sensibilities or showcasing the role of Greek men in enticing British women to sexual pleasures.

In Chapter 6 **James Gifford** discusses Mary Stewart's Greek mystery novels from a cultural studies perspective. He compares and contrasts Edward Said's differing approaches to the institutional knowledge systems of Orientalism and Hellenism as well as their differing manifestations in cultural products. While Orientalism is a product of Occidentalism, Hellenism, as a pathology of this Occidentalism rather than a neutral cultural manifestation, is barely discussed. Gifford argues that Hellenism as a cult of Hellas at the expense of Modern Greece presents a binary similar to that promulgated by Said between East and West. He subsequently goes on to analyze three of Mary Stewart's mystery novels on the basis of this binary, paying heed to the author's infantilizing attitude toward the country's politics. His discussion is concluded with an inquiry into female emancipation expressed in these novels as a trait of neo-colonialism.

David Wills looks into the representation of World War I in general, and the Salonica Campaign in particular, two historical occurrences which have often been written off as "futile" in terms of lives lost and strategic gain, in the work of Victoria Hislop (*The Thread*, 2011) and Loretta Proctor (*The Long Shadow*, 2005). Wills compares these novels with historical sources, noting that these female novelists challenge established beliefs about the Great War and its cultural products, by taking into account fresh discoveries and ideas offered by contemporary historians and commentators.

In Chapter 8, **Keli Daskala** interprets the success of Victoria Hislop's first novel *The Island* (2005), in Greece. She argues that in the dawn of the twenty-first century, when AIDS, cancer, and depression are represented as severe modern menaces to public health, Hislop puts back on the map a forgotten disease (leprosy or Hansen's disease) and its rich symbolism (the patients' exclusion from society). At the same time, Hislop succeeds in capturing the imagination of readers all over the world, by combing a "high" literary subject with the "low" romance formula of a "beach-novel."

In the final chapter of the book **Eleni Papargyriou** reads Sofka Zinovieff's novel *The House on Paradise Street* (2012) against a backdrop of earlier novels written in English that deal with the Axis Occupation and the eruption of the civil war in Greece. While the general trend of writing about the civil war is a blatant condemnation of the Greek left, Zinovieff takes particular pains to present their point of view, explaining left dreams and aspirations to an English-speaking audience, while investigating the role of Britain. Zinovieff's novel is not a definitive account of the Greek civil war, yet it succeeds in

providing a cultural translation of debates that dominate Greek public life to this day.

The volume emerged out of an international one-day conference held at Selwyn College, Cambridge in April 2013. The conference, which was a great academic success, generated a lively discussion with questions from the audience which showed their deep interest in the subject and the academic potential it holds for further study. The editors would like to thank the A. G. Leventis Foundation, the Hellenic Foundation for Culture, the Faculty of Classics and the Faculty of Modern and Medieval Languages of the University of Cambridge and the Society for Modern Greek Studies. We are grateful to Nan Taplin, Senior Secretary in the Department of Italian and the Modern Greek Section at University of Cambridge, for all her valuable help with organizing the conference. This volume is dedicated to her. We are thankful to Roderick Beaton for providing end remarks that ignited an exciting conversation. We would also like our production editors from Peter Lang for their help and patience while preparing this volume.

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1. Beginnings and Endings in Rose Macaulay's The Empty Berth

SEMELE ASSINDER

Rose Macaulay (1881–1958) is primarily remembered as a novelist, but to categorize her as a satirist would be to undervalue her skill as a travel writer. Her comedies of manners are set against backdrops of decay, destruction, and ruin, and this has prompted recent critics to address her writing in the context of World War II. Despite this difficulty in pigeonholing Macaulay's work, the author's life has attracted considerable attention: there are no fewer than three biographies in print, and recent interest has centered on the release of a new collection of letters, which were under embargo until 2012. Between the ages of six and thirteen, she spent her childhood in Italy before the family moved to Oxford in 1894. Macaulay later studied History at Somerville College, Oxford. The family home was subsequently in Great Shelford, a village some four miles outside Cambridge. Macaulay typically attracts attention nowadays because of the literary circles in which she mixed; Rupert Brooke was a childhood friend, and she became acquainted with Virginia Woolf later in London. It is because of this focus on Macaulay's life that a Greek coincidence has surfaced. Her most recent biographer, Sarah LeFanu, writes:

In April 1912 [Rose and her father] went together on a cruise around the Greek islands [...] The Hellenic cruise was a decidedly high-minded affair: other travellers included Jane Harrison the Newnham classicist, Dr Edward Lyttelton the headmaster of Eton, the Irish judge Sir John Ross and his son Ronald Ross, at whose house in Dunmoyle Rose spent some time that summer, and Logan Pearsall Smith, who would become a friend of hers in post-war London. (LeFanu 2003: 100)

In the years preceding Macaulay's cruise in 1912, the Hellenic Travellers' Club had run cruises around the Isles of Greece, Greece and Asia Minor, Sicily and Crete. Prior to this, the travel we hear about in these circles was conducted in a more individual fashion. Writers such as Isabel Armstrong, Elizabeth Edmonds, Emily Pfeiffer, Lucy Garnett, and Agnes Lewis recorded their travels to Greece at this time, but their travel was aided by their knowledge of the Greek language, or by a contact in Greece itself. Greece and Macaulay would seem a natural partnership, as Macaulay is perhaps the best known for her fixation on the glory of vanished civilizations; her 1953 *Pleasure of Ruins*, for instance, meditates on the human fascination with the remains of the past, and is known to many who have never picked up her novels. Though most famous for her late works *The World My Wilderness* and *The Towers of Trebizond*, Macaulay's career spanned essays, criticism, poetry, and twenty-three novels. *The World My Wilderness* deals with seventeen-year-old Barbary's repatriation from France to Britain and her discovery of a blitzed London. Barbary and her younger brother find much in common between the wild landscape of the bombed city and the French countryside they have left behind.

LeFanu has suggested that after serious bereavement, Macaulay turned to ruins as a mode of expression: "[f]irst she dealt with ruins as a novelist, in *The World My Wilderness* [...] and she then began work [...] on her great discursive tract on ruins, in which she [...] refashioned ruins in celebration of their continuing hold on the human imagination" (2003: 247). One can see the attraction of a reading of this sort, and indeed LeFanu's suggestion that "the human element of ruin-contemplation" became, for Macaulay, the greatest source of inspiration has found favor with the likes of Leo Mellor (2011) and Beryl Pong (2014), who have characterized the shape of her writing as a proleptic template for thinking about war-torn modernism. Even so, in this chapter I suggest that far from ruins being merely a preoccupation of her late writing, these concerns were already at work in Macaulay's early thinking. As we will see, Macaulay's rather bleak perspective and her fascination with dis-used spaces were already well delineated in 1913, at the very beginning of her career, and that the cruise she took in 1912 was partly responsible.

The Hellenic Travellers' Club

The first of only three short stories Macaulay ever published, "The Empty Berth" appeared in *The Cornhill Magazine* in 1913.¹ LeFanu observes that a cruise Macaulay and her father took in 1912 on the Union-Castle Line's *Dunnottar Castle* was the inspiration for "The Empty Berth." With a typically

doughty title in life, the ship has become the ludicrously named *Cruising Castle*, its name indicative of the grandeur and pomposity of the cruising lifestyle, with more than a glancing nod to the social stratification on board ship.² The solidity of the Scottish castle's name doubtless sought to reassure passengers of the ship's safety. The publicity material for the 1910 April cruise speaks of the ship as "now well known as one of the most comfortable vessels devoted to pleasure cruises." The cruise was educational, with excursions ashore planned to ancient sites, complemented by onboard lectures, and the subsequent collection and publication of these lectures delivered at sea give us a flavor of the academic climate amongst the passengers.³ Even so, Macaulay's story has generally been consigned to a footnote in her catalogue, perhaps because of its early date, or perhaps because of its unusual place as a short story in a career comprised mainly of novels. The deliciously tongue-in-cheek account of a cruise around Greece takes shape as an oddly romantic ghost story. Shipley, the aptly named young schoolmaster protagonist of the tale, is told on the voyage out that his companion in the shared stateroom, H. Cottar, has died unexpectedly before the trip. This death, of course, results in the titular empty berth. The narrative follows Shipley's voyage and his interactions with the living passengers as well as the dead Cottar. Shipley is not alone in his connection to the dead Cottar, as a young female passenger, Miss Brown, is also able to sense Cottar's presence. The story follows their progress around Greece, and traces Shipley's changing relationship with H. Cottar and Miss Brown.

The omniscient narrator's voice is ungendered, giving rise to a sort of ambiguity which will become familiar to readers of Macaulay's novels. The disconnect between narrator and the protagonist comes as something of a shock in this early work, especially when we realize that we are expected to follow the narrative with Shipley, who is one of the least interesting characters.

Passing Ships: Harrison and Macaulay

Despite LeFanu seeing the cruise as a "high-minded affair," this sentiment was not shared by all of its passengers. Jane Harrison clearly considered the trip Greece-lite.⁴ Churnjeet Mahn has discussed and debunked the myths surrounding the classicist and archaeologist Jane Ellen Harrison's involvement with Greece and discussed her cultivation of her own image.⁵ With this in mind, it is worth considering Harrison's letter to Gilbert Murray from her 1912 trip to Greece on the Union-Castle Line's RMS *Dunnottar Castle* in comparison with Macaulay's short story set on *The Cruising Castle*. In this letter, Harrison writes:

The deck of this absurd ship is simply strewn with copies of the *Rise of the Greek Epic*. I pick my way warily through them and am “very jealous for” the Lady Themis.⁶

The “Lady Themis” was Harrison’s own book *Themis, A Study of the Social Origins of Greek Religion*, which she sets in competition with Murray’s 1907 *The Rise of the Greek Epic*. Her description of herself “picking through” the books on deck manages to make her sound as if she were exploring a far more treacherous terrain than the chairs on a cruise ship, which would fit Mahn’s view of Harrison’s image cultivation.

In distinguishing herself from the “Deans and Headmasters” on the ship, Harrison is quick to criticize an Oxford Classicist who provides lectures for the travelers: “Oxford is a low place—no self-respecting Cambridge Don wd [sic] lecture on the Dunnottar Castle”, she swipes cattily.⁷ However, as Mahn identifies, Harrison had worked extensively for the Oxford University Extension scheme, providing lectures for a demographic that fitted exactly the profile of deans and headmasters on the ship. Mahn reads Harrison’s snobbery as a “strategic necessity”; her journey to Greece in 1912, taking one of the most economical and commercial liners to Greece with a large party of tourists making last-minute preparations for antique Greece on the deck in their leisure time, hardly corresponded to any image with which Harrison wanted to be associated (54–55). If we imagine something along the lines of Swan Hellenic, we can see why Harrison, who traded on her reputation for adventure, was so keen to distance herself from her fellow passengers. However, there is a second clue as to Harrison’s disdain; she is torn between resenting the popularity of Murray’s work, while at the same time implying and gloating that her own work is deemed too high-brow for the voyagers on the “absurd ship.” Despite Harrison’s antipathy, the quality of the lectures delivered onboard ship appears to have been high. Collected and published in *Aegean Civilizations* by Henry Lunn, the essays appear to have been little edited since delivery. They provide an odd snapshot of life onboard ship; the speakers give accounts of battles according to various scholars as well as ancient authors, illustrate their talks with lantern slides and maps, and direct their audience to points of interest on the following day’s sites.

Martha Kironomos has commented that in the period 1880–1930, travel writing saw a “broadening base of female narrators that comprise academics and lay persons alike—archaeologists and anthropologists as well as authors, artists, and photographers, which reflected the rise of an educated class and increasing aspirations of professionalism among British women” (2008: 135–136). This increase in the variety of female narrators demonstrates that social commentary was rapidly becoming an inclusive mode. In the cases of

Harrison and Macaulay, we are effectively being granted an insight into a shared experience. One account is a simple letter, not itself free from agenda, written with the aim of describing (while distancing Harrison from) the very form of education the cruise purported to be promoting. Macaulay's account is less straightforward: a dark satire or comedy of manners with a supernatural aura, while at its heart there lies something altogether more concrete—an epitaph or memorial to a golden age of discovery.⁸ Macaulay matches her medium to the transience of “Greece”; the brisk, clipped tone matches the form of the short story in a way that would be unsustainable in a longer narrative. Both are fictions, but perhaps one more ostensibly so than the other.

Macaulay at Sea

By the turn of the new century, Hellenic travel had permeated the popular imagination so comprehensively that Rose Macaulay was able to offer her satire with very little explanation. Even the fictional ship's name—“The Cruising Castle”—has an air of seaside humor about it. The catchy alliteration verges on the cumbersome, and does little to achieve the grandeur the name seems to aspire to. Cruise ships fascinate, and perplex, as they appear to preserve the semblance of travel while maintaining the rigid social strata of the home country. A far cry from travel experiences designed to remove the tourist from his comfort zone, Shipley's hardly wavers off course, and he claims that he has “every reason to feel at home” as “there [are] three other masters” and “one gets to feel at home with other schoolmasters, when one has been one for five years or so” (2000a: 67). The easy familiarity of the company echoes that of the cruise ship itself, for a cruise offers the ideal opportunity to visit a country from the comfort and security of a floating hotel. Nor does the destination itself offer any great hope of novelty for Shipley, since he has made the trip before:

He was going again because the tour this year was rather different, and because he wanted to improve his classical knowledge, and because he was an intelligent young public-school master, and they do go to Greece, and because his headmaster and family were going, and he liked very much his headmaster's daughter, who was a nice girl. (2000a: 68)

Besides the simplicity of Shipley's reasons for visiting Greece once more, he is not an entirely sympathetic protagonist; indeed, he comes across as something of a bore. His motivation, we learn, has something to do with self-improvement as well as the courtship of his headmaster's daughter. One of the problems for the reader is identifying which character we are supposed

to take to heart. As for Shipley's fellow passengers, Macaulay opens the short story by ruthlessly describing the "Hellenic travellers" aboard the ship, having evidently observed and divided them into types. As well as the usual suspects—schoolmasters and clergy—she lists the passengers as follows:

Many intelligent ladies; some less intelligent ladies; several comfortable matrons who chaperoned daughters and believed what their husbands told them about Greece; many cheery girls who were prepared to take Greece all in the day's work, but for whom the point of the cruise was the dancing on the deck in the evenings and the cheerful social holiday life, with generous meals and cricket and deck sports to fill up the intervals. (2000a: 68)

Therefore, according to Macaulay's version, a holiday in Greece was a second-hand experience, at least for these women. The women "believed what their husbands told them about Greece" or "were prepared to take Greece all in a day's work." This was perhaps to be expected of tourists on a cruise ship. The ship limited the need to go ashore, thereby removing the possibility of interaction with the host country. Experiencing Greece could be achieved from the comfort of the traveling hotel, replete with the ship's Ladies Boudoir, Writing Room, and Smoking Lounge.

This passive form of tourism is reflected in Macaulay's description of the daughter of Shipley's headmaster's nascent interest in photography. Upon departure from France, "[s]he had her camera, and was taking Marseilles. Shipley got his out and took Marseilles too" (68–69). Macaulay slyly adapts the idiom of the time to comic effect here: the elliptical usage of "took" for "took a picture" connotes a snap-happy relation with the scene at issue, that does little to convince us that the photographers are engaged in any meaningful way with the scene they wish to preserve. There is perhaps a sense of ownership implicit in this too, as if reflecting the idea that by taking a photograph one captures something of the viewed object. This sits uneasily in this passage, because the whole point of "taking" Marseilles at a distance is to avoid traveling there in person. With dark rooms available to photographers onboard, travelers on the *Dunnottar Castle* would not even have to wait to return home to develop their pictures. Shipley and the girl enact the expected behavior of tourists, but at a safe remove. The drone-like behavior of the Hellenic travelers demonstrates the passive nature of their tourism. This compressed thought is paralleled by Macaulay's form. The simple and simplistic sentence structure suggests a logical progression from the girl taking a photograph to Shipley's copycat image-making, and this in turn betrays Macaulay's darkly cynical view of mass tourism. The world-weary narrator then assumes a jaded tone of mock-ennui: "[t]his is the worst of having brought a camera; you must use it," coyly adding in parentheses "(You may even join the Camera

Club)" (2000a: 69). As well as demonstrating the behavior of her travelers, Macaulay gives great emphasis to describing their character.

Shipley was very happy, in his civilised, moderate way. All at his table were civilised, moderate people, with a very proper appreciation of interesting sights and scenes, and enough knowledge really to care for the right things in the right way. People who go on Hellenic cruises are mostly rather civilised; but not all. Some are crude, and know little, and say things that amuse the rest; which is, after all, a function. (2000a: 69)

Macaulay's repetition of "civilised," "moderate," and "right" instills a sing-song, nursery rhyme tone in this passage, which helps to build a picture of propriety, albeit tinged with a lack of passion. The aside, "which is, after all, a function," lends an air of detachment to Macaulay's narration, as if suggesting that she does not care for her characters, but that they are required to make up numbers, forming a blank backdrop for her protagonists. This echoes a passage earlier in the story; when listing the types of passenger, Macaulay concludes: "numerous writers of books on ancient Greece, novelists, poets and such; and, in fact, many others" (68). Descriptions of both characters and sites are sparsely drawn, although Macaulay liberally deploys adjectives to ruthless effect: "Miss Steele, [...] was cheerful, pretty, fair-haired, companionable, pleasant, and neither clever nor stupid; in short, a nice girl. (This has been said above, but there is no more fitting phrase to describe her.)" (68). Macaulay treads a fine line between seemingly offering us a great deal of information about her characters and actually revealing very little. Indeed, her description of the bland but harmless Miss Steele does not immediately encourage her readers to view her as the story's protagonist:

That evening Shipley and Miss Steele, sitting on deck, found themselves close to the Brown family, who were looking for islands. (Of course, better-educated people knew that there would be no islands for a long time.) Miss Nancy Brown was obviously, in her untaught and ignorant way, an enthusiast. She seemed tremendously keen. Shipley and Miss Steele listened with some amusement to her naïve comments. (2000a: 70)

The tourists display a total lack of interest in or engagement with the modern world surrounding them. Macaulay's breathless listing ("[t]hey went to Acro-Corinth, and Athens, and Tempe, and Delos") groups together a variety of places of interest—citadel, city, valley, and island are given equal importance, which suggests sites ticked off a sight-seeing list, rather than active tourism of the kind initiated by independent travelers. This attitude is repeated over dinner, when Shipley's musings are disturbed by a question from Miss Steele, "something about Paros; or perhaps Naxos [...]" (2000a: 76). Shipley's

vagueness about the name of the island in his dazed state says something about the speed at which the cruise progresses, and something too about the quality of his schoolboy attention.

Similarly, Macaulay's bleak judgment of these Hellenic travelers is conveyed in their lack of involvement with the passing landscape. For Macaulay's travelers, Greece is as superficial as their own engagement with it; the travelers are removed from their locale by the cruise ship and their time on land is mediated by the carefully controlled port calls. As if to heighten the grandiose pretensions entertained by her fictional travelers, Macaulay punctuates her narrative with oddly timeless pronouncements: "[o]n Delos, if anywhere, men may find their souls. People have stayed behind on Delos, and counted the world well lost. Delos not being, it was long since known, of the earth, is presumably a projection of heaven" (2000a: 49). Yet the potency of this comment is somewhat diminished by the sentences which immediately succeed it; Macaulay captures something of the voice of a traveler, "it was long since known," which has the ring of second-hand knowledge, as though lifted from a guidebook. Delos is famously uninhabited; there, more than anywhere else, visitors have been able to experience the classical ideal undisturbed by the intrusion of Modern Greece for some time. Macaulay's travelers find the city streets are "empty," the villas "roofless" and site "silent." That the two women, Mrs. Brown and Nancy, are each negotiating a different version of Greece is evident from Macaulay's gently mocking comment that Mrs. Brown, previously weary of "old stones," is now seen "pantingly" calling to her daughter to "come and see the place where Apollo lived"; her Greece is reanimated by the imagined tangibility of myth, and she is depicted as foolish in her pursuit of it.

Macaulay would revisit this experience in *Pleasure of Ruins*, where she states that on Delos "that abandonment, that lonely desertion [...] is more complete than that of Delphi" (1953: 316). She contradicts Baedeker's pronouncement that "the excursion is interesting only to archaeologists" with her own that "Delos is, of all places, calculated to capture the imaginations of those who do not know an exedra from a metope, Doric from Corinthian, and could not care less what columns in antis are" (1953: 316).⁹ The empty site is perfectly situated for the visitors to project their fantasies of the ancient world upon it, a romantic backdrop for their journey. Shipley's change of heart occurs at Delos, where he is moved to such an extent that he believes Apollo and Artemis have been reborn: "[f]or him they had passed out of the sphere of mythology [...] and had become a living reality" (76). He breathes new life into the classical gods and goddesses in order to populate his Greece, and his experience on Delos culminates in a moment of transcendent recognition:

“he knew for the first time since early childhood the beauty and youth of the ageless world” (2000a: 75).

Aside from the more historic spirits of the island, Nancy, too, is chasing a ghost. Hers is H. Cottar, the occupant of the empty berth, who, it transpires, “wasn’t to be done out of Greece” (2000a: 77), and who has been present for the voyage in spectral form, but is condemned to leave once the ship docks. Nancy and Shipley are united by their contact with Cottar, and they claim that he has changed them each in different ways. “Greece,” by this point in the narrative, has assumed an abstract sense encompassing the whole travel experience. This is reinforced by Shipley’s meditation, on leaving the ship, that his acquaintance with Cottar has left him with “the vividness of colour, the radiance, the young exuberance, the clear, clean vision of life” (2000a: 78). Only, it is not entirely clear whether it is Cottar’s ghost, or Greece itself, which has imparted these qualities to him. Color, radiance, and a renewed sense of clarity are qualities more traditionally associated with travelers’ experiences of Greece’s landscape, yet somehow Cottar is seen to embody them himself. A ghost haunts this narrative, but we are never entirely sure whose it is. Macaulay suggests that it is of H. Cottar, but we cannot be sure if she means us to believe that it is the man himself, or a projected other, the companion Nancy Brown would rather have, or the more daring version of Shipley himself. Even before they dock, Shipley’s outlook “on Greece and on other things was somehow altered, freshened, as if by contact with a brilliant child” (74). Shipley’s character is developed through its contact with Cottar, from one who does what he thinks is proper and decorous, to a man unafraid to take risks and enjoy the moment. Cottar or Greece has enabled Shipley to embrace the experience more holistically, rather than by attending lectures and educating himself through book learning.

“Greece [...] must end”

This story can be read as an ode to the Hellenic travel boom years, for, as Macaulay reflects, “Greece, even more than most things, must end; Hellenic travellers are here today and gone tomorrow” (2000a: 76). In doing so, Macaulay reduces Greece to a series of pseudo-philosophical truisms; the momentary poignancy of her statement is undermined by the satirical tone of the second clause; by a delightful ambiguity, we cannot be entirely sure if Macaulay is referring to the travelers’ mortality, or to their presence in Greece. Macaulay pinpoints a moment in British travel to Greece before World War I. Britain was on the cusp of an expansion in tourism, but there still remained a whiff of the schoolroom about these cruises. Macaulay’s female Hellenic

travelers stand somewhere in between the explorer Lady Wortley Montagu and Willy Russell's Shirley Valentine. Nancy Brown is brought into contact with the true experience of Greece through her dead shipmate, but Macaulay is not averse to mocking her simplicity; as well as stating that Nancy "knew she liked Greece," Macaulay also tells the reader that she "want[s] to catch and keep a tortoise" (2000a: 74) until she learns of their seasickness. The story is full of phantoms, phantasms, and dead metaphors—is it the deceased H. Cottar who enables Shipley and Nancy Brown to live their myth, or Greece itself? Macaulay suggests that it is both in her use of the word "travel" when she states that "Shipley had travelled a long way from the time when he had decided to propose to Miss Steele on the homeward voyage. He no longer had the least desire to do that" (76). By 1956, Macaulay was able to hold "Hellenic cruises" as being partly responsible for placing Athens at the center of "ruin-pleasure" (1953: 164). Independent travel was still difficult for women, there were too many questions to be answered—Macaulay was too young, and Harrison too old, to travel unaccompanied. Yet despite their eagerness to distance themselves from the experience, they also tried to position themselves amongst the more discerning characters onboard ship. The first ghostly voice is that of Macaulay herself; the anonymous narrator takes a dry and detached tone throughout. Shipley's intention to propose to Miss Steele wanes, and instead he has a late night conversation with Miss Brown. Macaulay knowingly adds, "in case anyone thinks that he proposed instead to Miss Brown, I hasten to add that he did not" (2000a: 76). This modern aside has something of the air of the voiceover, and it enables Macaulay to shift tone and wrong-foot her readers once more.

Greek for [...] Serious Reading

While neither the ancient or modern Greek language finds a home in "The Empty Berth"—indeed, the visitors ashore "talk to monks on their fingers" (2000a: 75)—the Greek language was to enjoy a conspicuous afterlife in Macaulay's later fiction. It is seen as a marker of education at the beginning of *The World My Wilderness*. Helen, Richie's mother, muses that "war [...] tramples scholarship and the humanities underfoot; perhaps Richie had forgotten his Latin and his Greek" (1988: 24). Helen is herself schooled in the classics, and Richie finds her "with a miscellany of assorted amusements—Greek plays, French novels, playing cards, a chess-board, bottles and glasses". Indeed, it was Helen who had "first instructed [Richie] in the classical tongues" (1988: 23). The mixture of impractical objects suggests that Greek is as much part of the sybaritic lifestyle as are the accoutrements of drinking and game-playing.

Richie speaks to his mother of the trials he faces back in Cambridge after the war: “we returned warriors” are in competition with “callow young men fresh from their mother’s milk and the sixth form”; and Greek raises its head once more when Richie laments that the younger cohort “know more Greek than we have ever forgotten” (1988: 24). Greek is seen as a distinguishing mark of one’s right to be in Cambridge; as Richie continues, “I don’t object to them, though, if they do know some Greek; the curse of Cambridge are the ones who don’t” (1988: 24). Greek is again seen as a luxury leisure activity in *Crewe Train*, when Mrs. Chapel suggests to the protagonist, Denham (at the end of a timetable of diverting activities suitable for a lady), that it would be “rather nice” if she “were to learn a little Greek in the mornings for [her] serious reading” (2000b: 256). Mrs. Chapel continues to suggest that this would surprise Denham’s husband, Arnold, and so Macaulay adds, as though sotto voce: “It would surprise me a good deal too, Denham thought” (2000b: 256). Denham’s dark comment in the wake of this suggestion of self-improvement indicates that Greek is somehow an unwelcome, civilizing influence being forced upon her.

Conclusion

Macaulay’s 1912 cruise lasted some seventeen days, as did H. Cottar’s 1913 fictional trip. One wonders if Macaulay’s epitaph on the cruise lifestyle had something to do with the haunting of her own cruise; at sea from Monday April 8, 1912 to April 22, 1912, the news of the sinking of the *Titanic* must have resonated peculiarly on board ship.

Robert Macfarlane has stated “[o]ne of the ecosystem services that our environments provide for us is metaphor. Landscape gives us ways of figuring ourselves to ourselves.” This is certainly true of Macaulay’s Greek landscape, populated as it is by ruins, asphodel (2000a: 74), sedge (2000a: 75), and scarlet anemones and poppies (2000a: 74). These flowers, familiar from classical literature, provide a backdrop of sorts, which Macaulay uses to describe the sensory excesses of her two main characters on Delos. As the cruise progresses, Shipley realizes that he enjoys Miss Brown’s company as much as that of the dead H. Cottar, “only H. Cottar knew a good deal and Miss Brown knew nothing. But she knew she liked Greece” (2000a: 74).

Susan Bassnett, in her survey of travel writing and gender, has warned against “romanticised readings in which assumptions are made that the texts are simply autobiographical. [...] Many of the works by women travellers are self-conscious fictions, and the persona who emerges from the pages is as much a character as a woman in a novel” (Bassnett 2002: 234). While

Macaulay is not, in “The Empty Berth”, styling herself as a travel writer—and nor is she offering an autobiographical sketch of life on board ship—her intentions must be understood in relation to the coordinates of travel writing. Alice Crawford has suggested that the key to Macaulay’s fiction might lie in the first and only chapter of her unfinished novel, *Venice Besieged*. For Crawford, the floating city of Venice provides Macaulay with the perfect paradoxical marriage of impermanence and majesty. Tantalizing though it may be to speculate as to the content of the novel, Macaulay died with it incomplete, and we must rely for our evidence on her extant explorations. I suggest that “The Empty Berth” contains the hallmarks of Macaulay’s later fiction, and though not always described, the imagined backdrop of Greece, just out of sight of the narrative, provides her with the ideal setting for a haunted and haunting romance.

Notes

1. Quotations from “The Empty Berth” are from the Ash-Tree Press reprint.
2. The afterlife of the ship the *Dunnottar Castle* forms a rather bathetic postscript to the tale. Renamed the HMS *Caribbean* in 1914, the ship was requisitioned for World War I. She initially served as a troopship to bring soldiers from Canada to Europe and then later as an Armed Merchant Cruiser. However, it was discovered that she was unsuitable to carry gun mountings, so the vessel was converted into a dockyard workers’ accommodation ship on May 1915. She ended her life not engaged in active service, but sunk in poor weather off Scotland in 1915.
3. The 1912 cruise included lectures on Marathon, Thessaly and Tempe, Mount Athos, Oracles and Knossos. The tone of these seems to have been jovial, but topics ranged from Greek sculpture, site-specific talks using classical texts as sources, to the Knights of St. John.
4. The published passenger list with the promotional material published for the 1910 cruise reveals that Bertrand Russell had secured an inside stateroom.
5. Mahn discovers “Hellas at Cambridge,” taking Agnes Lewis and Jane Harrison as examples. Mahn’s discussion of Harrison’s self-representation gives several instances in which Harrison’s narrative differs from those who had accompanied her in her efforts to depict herself as a “pioneer academic lady, penetrating the depths of Greece by donkey and through scholarship” (2012: 57).
6. MS Harrison 1/1/25.
7. MS Harrison 1/1/25.
8. Some years later, Greece formed the backdrop to another supernatural tale by a renowned novelist. Daphne Du Maurier set her short story “Not After Midnight” on Crete in the town of Agios Nikolaos. Published in 1971, a year in which Du Maurier had also written an article for “Holiday” magazine on her recent trip to Crete, the story tells of a schoolmaster and his supernatural experience in connection with an ancient rhyton.

9. Macaulay revisited Mrs. Brown's excitement in *Pleasure of Ruins*, citing a "stout American lady galloping up the hillside to it [the temple where Apollo and Artemis were born], at full speed, calling to her daughter, 'Alice, Alice! Come and see the house where Apollo lived!'" (1953: 316). The Greece and Asia Minor tour on which Macaulay sailed did not visit Delos, although the previous year's cruise had.

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2. *Monuments and Maidens: The Allegory of Greek Form*

VASSILIKI KOLOCOTRONI

But one cannot go on for ever cutting these ancient inscriptions clearer with a knife.
Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (1931)

View of the temple and blue sky: disrupting.
Ann Quin, *Passages* (1969)

In April 1901, Jane Ellen Harrison, classical scholar, and lecturer at Newnham College Cambridge, was photographed at Mycenae as a member of the entourage of Wilhelm Dörpfeld, then Director of the German Archaeological Institute in Athens. “Avtos,” “most honoured master”, or “the Boss,” as he was known to Harrison and other initiates (Harrison 1925: 65; Stray 1995: 121),¹ stands on a marble slab to address the small group of expert travelers, as was his wont: “He would hold us spellbound for a six hours’ peripatetic lecture,” Harrison recalls, “only broken by an interval of ten minutes to partake of a goat’s-flesh sandwich and *etwas frisches Bier*” (1925: 65).

Accustomed to the trials of archaeological visits to Greece by then, Harrison takes a dig at some of the distinguished participants’ priorities: “Once I saw, to my sorrow, three Englishmen tailing away after the *frisches Bier*. I was more grieved than surprised. They were Oxford men—the (then) Provost of Oriel, the Principal of Brasenose and an eminent fellow of Balliol. It was worth many hardships to see forty German professors try to mount forty recalcitrant mules. My own horsemanship, as already hinted, is nothing to ‘write home about,’ but compared to those German professors I am a centaur” (1925: 65).

Harrison's jokey reference may not be entirely gratuitous: despite her reverence for Dörpfeld and German archaeology,² as a British scholar, and of a heretical disposition—she apparently described herself as “a philosophical Radical with a dash of the Bolshevik” (Stewart 1959: 83)—Harrison may be subtly settling some scores here by ridiculing her Teutonic colleagues. As a well-published, arguably pioneering member of the Cambridge Ritualists,³ the group of eminent but controversial classicists who embraced the syncretic view of Greek antiquity inflected by primitive anthropology and comparative mythology and religion that included Francis Cornford and Gilbert Murray, she had often been the target of vicious attacks. Her penchant for vitalist, irrational, and comparative approaches to the study of Greek art and religion, incurred the wrath of foes both formidable and grandiloquent: no less a figure than Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, “the highest-paid Prussian professor in his day” (Marchand 1996: 140),⁴ and erstwhile Nemesis of “aestheticizing classicist” Friedrich Nietzsche, would issue accusations of “dilettantism” and “superstition,” while, closer to home, M. R. James, Provost of King's College Cambridge, would deem one of her contributions to the *Classical Review* in 1916 as “the worst service that anyone responsible for the direction of young students can do them” (Stewart 1959: 88).⁵ After Gilbert Murray's gallant response at Harrison's request in the same journal, her colleague, William Ridgeway, Disney Professor of Archaeology at Cambridge, would write to the Provost in exasperation: “Never was such an audacious, shameless avowal of charlatanism, debauching young minds wholesale, and that too in a generation whose loose thinking has been doing immense harm to national life and international politics” (Stewart 1959: 88). Ridgeway's indignation may have been equally aimed at Murray, of course, whose very public, liberal, pacifist, and anti-imperialist views were anathema to Ridgeway, but those were shared by Harrison, who was also a vocal feminist to boot. Harrison had met Murray in 1900, a year after his retirement from the Chair of Classics at Glasgow, which he had taken up at the age of twenty-three, and despite being his senior by fifteen years, she would address him in their correspondence over many years as “Cheiron,” the wise centaur—one of the many hybrid mythological figures, which populated her beloved Greek vases and allegorical imagination.

Harrison herself is a centaur of sorts, then, by her own and others' account of what kind of creature a seriously and daringly “classicizing” woman intent on unveiling the primitive underside of ancient Greek culture and its enduring forms might be. Even when not berated for her “corybantic Hellenism” (Africa 1991: 31), or atavistic demotion of Olympian glory

to the secondary, subdued version of originary, shadowy, but for that more persistent and powerful,⁶ matrilineal order reflected in ritual and collectivity, she is seemingly a strange figure, a creature of legend, perhaps even more so in our day than hers. As contemporary scholars seek to identify and celebrate her proto-modernist and feminist pedigree, and trace her influence through the development of modern discourses of theatricality and dance (Carpentier 1998; Peters 2008), her eclectic and wayward performance as a writer on Greece takes on a tentative, but at the same time, tenacious and telling character. That is, while the relevance (or for some originality) of Harrison's findings and speculations in works such as *Mythology and Monuments of Ancient Athens* (1890), *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion* (1903), *Themis* (1912), and *Ancient Art and Ritual* (1913) may be no longer as distinctive or hotly disputed, her approach to her subject, her testimony have become emblematic. Another contemporary branding of Harrison captures this quality: one (positive) review of her *Themis* began: "Miss Harrison is the Scholar-Gypsy of Hellenic studies."⁷ The reference is to Matthew Arnold's famous 1853 poem, "The Scholar Gypsy," based on a seventeenth-century story of an impoverished Oxford student who, "tired of knocking at preferment's door," abandons his studies and joins a band of gypsies from whom he learns lessons in life and the unfettered imagination. We cannot be sure what Harrison herself would have made of the analogy, far from an anti-institutional being as she was, despite her current reputation, but the poem does speak of a "fair life" of hope and enchantment:

[...] Still nursing the unconquerable hope,
 Still clutching the inviolable shade,
 With a free, onward impulse brushing through,
 By night, the silvered branches of the glade –
 Far on the forest-skirts, where none pursue.
 On some mild pastoral slope
 Emerge, and resting on the moonlit pales
 Freshen thy flowers as in former years
 With dew, or listen with enchanted ears,
 From the dark dingles, to the nightingales!⁸

The idyll of a life spent in pursuit of encounters with shadowy forms, "inviolable shades," is reprised in much writing by British women on Greece, as is the motif of an alternative, free and thus transformative, or literally "enchanted" learning, with Greece as its paradigmatic, because privileged but also estranged and estranging, location. However, clearly not always an idyll, Harrison's pursuit of ghostly continuities in her dynamic vision of Greek form served as an "onward impulse" for writers who, like her, went to Greece to "see other." In

what follows, I sample briefly the allegorical uses to which Greece, as actual site and metaphorical/literary *topos*, is put by three twentieth-century British women writers: influenced by Harrison's vision of primitive, pre-Olympian presences still haunting the land, Virginia Woolf features here as the most consistent of literary allegorists of Greek form, claiming for it a coded and prescient mode of seeing and being "other." A modernist epigone and exponent of sixties experimental writing, Ann Quin invokes Harrison's scholarship and Woolf's concern with the representation of fluid subjectivity and the potential for overcoming gender and class strictures through a brief foray into the Greek *topos*. Finally, now forgotten, the highly popular Westmorland poet and writer Dorothy Una Ratcliffe,⁹ active in the late twenties and thirties, is cast here in the role of yet another "scholar gipsy," whose account of a visit to Greece in 1938 deploys the allegorical mode in a pursuit of poignant sightings of ancient figures still haunting the land. The licence to trace Greek form as an evocative survival of a mythical world of ancient monuments and maidens is exercised by all three women, and, as we will see, adds a particular nuance to their approach to writing.

"The unseen is always haunting me, surging up behind the visible," Harrison writes in "Alpha and Omega" (Harrison 1915: 206), her defence of atheism, or the "free idea" as expression of the belief in the sacramental, mystical vitality of human experience. As ever, she turns to Greece to illustrate her point:

I had often wondered why the Olympians—Apollo, Athena, even Zeus, always vaguely irritated me, and why the mystery gods, their shapes and ritual, Demeter, Dionysus, the cosmic Eros, drew and drew me. I see it now. It is just that these mystery gods represent the supreme golden moment achieved by the Greek, and the Greek only, in his incomparable way. The mystery gods are eikonic, caught in lovely human shapes; but they are life-spirits barely held; they shift and change. Aeschylus, arch-mystic, changes his Erinyes into Eumenides, and is charged with impiety. Dionysus is a human youth, lovely with curled hair, but in a moment he is a Wild Bull and a Burning Flame. The beauty and the thrill of it! (1915: 204–5)

As Rowena Fowler has noted in a pioneering essay on "Virginia Woolf's Greece," "The Greeks haunted Woolf" too (Fowler 1999: 217). Indeed, it may be argued that Woolf's life-long involvement with Greek amounts to a complex and consistently deployed Derridean "hauntology" (Derrida 1994: 10), or a carefully calibrated use of allegory that sets ancient shades loose from the limits of classical Greek light. Informed by her mainly autodidactic,

but still copious reading of classical texts, Woolf's engagement with Greek inflects all of her work in subtle but sure ways.¹⁰ Though not officially taught by Harrison, Woolf read and published her work, and famously monumentalized her as a shadowy figure that still haunted College grounds, in a passing valedictory reference in *A Room of One's Own*, her polemical lecture on women's writing rights, given at Cambridge in October 1928, six months after Harrison's death:

The gardens of Fernham lay before me in the spring twilight, wild and open, and in the long grass, sprinkled and carelessly flung, were daffodils and bluebells, not orderly perhaps at the best of times, and now wind-blown and waving as they tugged at their roots. The windows of the building, curved like ships' windows among generous waves of red brick, changed from lemon to silver under the flight of the quick spring clouds. Somebody was in a hammock, somebody, but in this light they were phantoms only, half guessed, half seen, raced across the grass—would no one stop her?—and then on the terrace, as if popping out to breathe the air, to glance at the garden, came a bent figure, formidable yet humble, with her great forehead and her shabby dress—could it be the famous scholar, could it be J—H—herself? All was dim, yet intense too, as if the scarf which the dusk had flung over the garden were torn asunder by star or sword—the gash of some terrible reality leaping, as its way is, out of the heart of the spring. (Woolf 1993: 15)

Not unlike one of Harrison's insatiable life spirits, a changeable yet unstoppable *daimon*, the figure is barely visible "in this light," "half guessed, half seen." The coordinating conjunctions, "formidable yet humble," "dim yet intense," carry a very Woolfian ambiguity, or rather, an oblique, ironic mock reluctance to state what to her is obvious, namely, as she put it in an early story, "figures are slippery things!" ("The Journal of Mistress Joan Martyn," 1906), or later, in *Orlando*, written in the same year as *A Room of One's Own*, "One can only believe entirely, perhaps, in what one cannot see" (Woolf 1977/1928: 123).¹¹

In *The Waves* (1931), her experiment with the choric form that owes much to Harrison's Durkheimian emphasis on the collective body in ancient Greek religion and art, Bernard expresses that impatience with vision in haunting terms: "Let them lay to rest the incessant activity of the mind's eye, the bandaged head, the men with ropes, so that I may find something unvisual beneath" (Woolf 1985: 105). Bernard, ever a seeker after the right words, is only reconciled with the visual after invoking the elegiac trope of the burnt tree, as both consolation (properly so, as he laments a friend's untimely death) and corrective:

“Like” and “like” and “like”—but what is the thing that lies beneath the semblance of the thing? Now that lightning has gashed the tree and the flowering branch has fallen and Percival, by his death, has made me this gift, let me see the thing. There is a square; there is an oblong. The players take the square and place it upon the oblong. They place it very accurately; they make a perfect dwelling-place. Very little is left outside. The structure is now visible; what is inchoate is here stated; we are not so various or so mean; we have made oblongs and stood them upon squares. This is our triumph; this is our consolation. (1985: 110)

The “thing beneath the semblance of the thing” appears as an opening of a stage curtain onto a scene, perhaps of the performance of a rite, perhaps for a sacrifice, or perhaps the recreation of a temple, abstracted to its basic form, emptied of mortal content, yet only recognisable because of death as both absence and repetition. Bernard’s epiphany aligns the vision of the present with the past dynamically, though paradoxically through the vision of a *nature morte*, or a mortification of nature — a gesture that connects it with medieval allegory as well as classical elegy. In any case, whether as an altar, ruined or de-monumentalized temple, the ancient structure remains, “placed” or “placed again” (in the transitive sense) by collective agency. Similarly, in her last work, *Between the Acts*, published shortly after her death in 1941, Woolf allegorizes a most English scene, the annual pageant that brings together the local community as spectators of a panorama of English history, by Harrisonian references to ancient Greek ritual. As Sandra D. Shattuck has noted, “the barn is likened to a Greek temple: the play is enacted on what could be the scene of a Greek theatre” (Shattuck 1987: 286). The lost link with a distant and foreign past is revived temporarily for the benefit of an uncomprehending audience, estranged from their own sense of collective purpose and unaware of the threat posed by the airplanes circling overhead. Woolf’s hint at the impending catastrophe points to the need for a renewed relationship with history for this privileged corner of England, deploying the trope of the communal body as a provisional, though ironically un-self-reflecting Greek chorus.¹²

A similar legacy of entitlement and privilege is debunked in Woolf’s *Orlando*, her fantastic extravaganza in the parodic mode. The exploits of the aristocratic and colorful protagonist, aspiring poet and heir to a grand estate, span centuries and foreign lands, undeterred by changes in fortune and, famously, gender. The very character of Orlando may embody a double identity, then, but once fixed as a “man” or “woman,” as s/he must necessarily be, s/he inhabits a space or spaces (however exotic or homely) that necessarily by virtue of (sexual) difference, (spatial) distance and (social) distinction,

enforce exclusivity. Appropriately, then, Orlando has a series of visions that always *place* him or her; as Erica L. Johnson puts it,

By substantiating the continuity in Orlando's transhistorical, transgender character through national identity, though, Woolf shows Englishness to be composed of exclusions as well as inclusions, revealing the extent to which national identity is haunted by what she might have called "invisible presences," which inhabit national space not as subjects and citizens, but as ghosts. [...] The novel is marked by tension between Woolf's suspicion of the extent to which national identity *can* be inclusive and her desire to create such a place in her writing. Indeed, the experience of Englishness is shown to be quite different depending on Orlando's gender status. (Johnson 2004: 213–14)

Tellingly for our purposes, however, of the many panoramas available to Orlando in her journey from the past to the present, of the many "hauntings" (Johnson 2004: 110) that shade her vision, there is one which reveals at least the possibility of an "other" composition, an allegorical scene, which Woolf sets in Greece. Having woken one morning in Constantinople as a woman, Orlando sheds his ambassadorial robes and flees the city in the company of a gypsy tribe. The setting for that twist in the plot has been read by many as appropriate for its evocation of "Sapphic love," as well as the licence for cross-dressing "passings" that the Orient traditionally affords the traveler,¹³ while the gypsy entourage also throws up an oblique reference to "Greek love" and the scandalous escapades of the young Vita Sackville-West, dedicatee and part-prototype of Woolf's fantastic "biography."¹⁴

Yet it is as a "scholar-gypsy" that Orlando appears in that section of the book, when, after long wanderings in the Turkish mountains, she is beset by that "English disease, a love of Nature:"

The malady is too well known, and has been, alas, too often described to need describing afresh, save very briefly. There were mountains; there were valleys; there were streams. She climbed the mountains; roamed the valleys; sat on the banks of the streams. She likened the hills to ramparts, to the breasts of doves, and the flanks of kine. She compared the flowers to enamel and the turf to Turkey rugs worn thin. Trees were withered hags, and sheep were grey boulders. Everything, in fact, was something else. She found the tarn on the mountain-top and almost threw herself in to seek the wisdom she thought lay hid there; and when, from the mountain-top, she beheld far off, across the Sea of Marmara, the plains of Greece, and made out (her eyes were admirable) the Acropolis with a white streak or two, which must, she thought, be the Parthenon, her soul expanded with her eyeballs, and she prayed that she might share the majesty of the hills, know the serenity of the plains, etc., as all such believers do. (Woolf 1977: 89–90)

Her lyrical disposition, her “hauntings” seem hackneyed here, and, though innocent of the Grand Tourist clichés themselves, the gypsies soon begin to grow weary of Orlando’s allegorical ways:

It sprang from the sense they had (and their senses are very sharp and much in advance of their vocabulary) that whatever they were doing crumbled like ashes in their hands. An old woman making a basket, a boy skinning a sheep, would be singing or crooning contentedly at their work, when Orlando would come into the camp, fling herself down by the fire and gaze into the flames. She need not even look at them, and yet they felt, here is someone who doubts; (we make a rough-and-ready translation from the gipsy language) here is someone who does not do the thing for the sake of doing; nor looks for looking’s sake; here is someone who believes neither in sheep-skin nor basket; but sees (here they looked apprehensively about the tent) something else. (1977: 91)

Though free of her ambassadorial duties and her maleness, and for all the fraternizing with free spirits, Orlando is still bound by the wrong kind of yearning, that sensibility which turns land into landscape,¹⁵ living space into a still life with figures.

A sudden transformation does occur, however, in a strange place:

“Four hundred and seventy-six bedrooms mean nothing to them,” sighed Orlando.

“She prefers a sunset to a flock of goats,” said the gypsies.

What was to be done, Orlando could not think. To leave the gypsies and become once more an Ambassador seemed to her intolerable. But it was equally impossible to remain for ever where there was neither ink nor writing paper, neither reverence for the Talbots nor respect for a multiplicity of bedrooms. So she was thinking, one fine morning on the slopes of Mount Athos, when minding her goats. And then Nature, in whom she trusted, either played her a trick or worked a miracle—again, opinions differ too much for it to be possible to say which. (1977: 93–4)

This is a magical moment, such as could only be possible in a place, which her presence (as a woman) makes impossible—that is, Mount Athos, the setting of the all-male Orthodox monastic enclave. Had she not already heard of it, Woolf would have surely registered the existence of that uncommon ground through reading Harrison’s indignant account of it in her *Reminiscences of a Student’s Life*, which Leonard and Virginia Woolf published in 1925: “Long after, I visited Mount Athos. Of course, as a woman I could not set foot on the sacred promontory. [...] We mere women were left behind on the yacht disconsolate” (Harrison 1925: 69). Years before, on April 16, 1912, Harrison had written to Gilbert Murray from Greece with another account of the experience:

Mt Athos is extraordinarily beautiful: the monasteries hang like birds' nests all-round the rocks—have you been? I got some letter-paper from a monastery with a picture of the Holy Mountain and just near the peak an apocalypse of your Holy Mother. As the legend was in Russian it had to go to Rosalind, but it has just occurred to me that it is really a survival of the *Mêtêr Oreia* (mountain mother). All these peaks had either a mother or else as on Olympos they had Zeus Helios and then the old patriarch Elias took them over, and isn't it a splendid triumph of patriarchy that though the Panaghia is still worshipped no woman may set her foot on the Holy Mountain? How things do last on. (Cited in Stewart 1959: 134)

It is appropriate, then, that Orlando, herself “otherized” (or excluded) here sees (as) other, for once at home in the space of allegory, or in another sense, a true utopia:

Orlando was gazing rather disconsolately at the steep hill-side in front of her. It was now midsummer, and if we must compare the landscape to anything, it would have been to a dry bone; to a sheep's skeleton; to a gigantic skull picked white by a thousand vultures. The heat was intense, and the little fig tree under which Orlando lay only served to print patterns of fig-leaves upon her light burnous.

Suddenly a shadow, though there was nothing to cast a shadow, appeared on the bald mountain-side opposite. It deepened quickly and soon a green hollow showed where there had been barren rock before. As she looked, the hollow deepened and widened, and a great park-like space opened in the flank of the hill. Within, she could see an undulating and grassy lawn; she could see oak trees dotted here and there; she could see the thrushes hopping among the branches. She could see the deer stepping delicately from shade to shade, and could even hear the hum of insects and the gentle sighs and shivers of a summer's day in England. After she had gazed entranced for some time, snow began falling; soon the whole landscape was covered and marked with violet shades instead of yellow sunlight. Now she saw heavy carts coming along the roads, laden with tree trunks, which they were taking, she knew, to be sawn for firewood; and then appeared the roofs and belfries and towers and courtyards of her own home. The snow was falling steadily, and she could now hear the slither and flop which it made as it slid down the roof and fell to the ground. The smoke went up from a thousand chimneys. All was so clear and minute that she could see a daw pecking for worms in the snow. Then, gradually, the violet shadows deepened and closed over the carts and the lawns and the great house itself. All was swallowed up. Now there was nothing left of the grassy hollow, and instead of the green lawns was only the blazing hill-side which a thousand vultures seemed to have picked bare. At this, she burst into a passion of tears, and striding back to the gipsies' camp, told them that she must sail for England the very next day. (Woolf 1977: 93–5)

The shadow that falls on Orlando's landscape has elements of the uncanny about it. According to Jean-Luc Nancy:

Uncanny estrangement occurs in the suspension of presence: the imminence of a departure or an arrival, neither good nor evil, only a wide space [*largeur*] and a generosity [*largesse*] that allow this suspension to be thought and to pass. For this suspension is always a question of a passage or a passing on. (Nancy 2005: 61)

Read through a utopian allegorical lens, what unfolds in front of Orlando's eyes (or her mind's eye) is both an eclipse (of the "yellow sunlight") and a transfiguration, a new coloration, or indeed, if we take it that Woolf's palette is precise, the green, white, and violet tricolor of the Suffragettes.¹⁶ According to Joel Fineman, "allegory seems regularly to surface in critical or polemical atmospheres, when for political or metaphysical reasons there is something that cannot be said" (1981: 28). Here is a polemical landscape, then, defiantly uncanny in its estrangement of/from a "home" as known or previously experienced, as well as an instructive one, at least for those who can see. In this sense, it could be seen to fit Elizabeth Helsinger's definition: "landscape is also at once an epistemology—a mode of explanation—and a practice—a mode of participation, a site of agency" (Helsinger 2008: 323). Its Greek setting adds a most important nuance to its intelligibility, as it collapses the past and the present in one mystical, though exclusive continuum, within which women are always abstracted, deducted, distinguished by their absence.

Moments in *The Waves* often crystallize into similar uncanny landscapes, which persist and interrupt the present and sense of self in painful, threatening ways, again evoking a Greek place—as in Rhoda's recurrent vision:

Pools lie on the other side of the world reflecting marble columns. The swallow dips her wing in dark pools. But here the door opens and people come; they come towards me. Throwing faint smiles to mask their cruelty, their indifference, they seize me. The swallow dips her wings; the moon rides through the blue sea alone. I must take his hand; I must answer. But what answer shall I give? I am thrust back to stand burning in this clumsy, this ill-fitting body, to receive the shafts of his indifference and his scorn, I who long for marble columns and pools on the other side of the world where the swallow dips her wings. [...] An immense pressure is on me. I cannot move without dislodging the weight of centuries. (Woolf 1985: 71)

Rhoda is one of Woolf's Greek-styled modern maidens, sacrificed to the "immense pressure" and "weight of centuries." Ultimately, the backward look and sense of an interminable past overwhelm the self to the point of

extinction. Unlike the fantasy of endless transformation and triumphant survival into the present day and future that lends *Orlando* its hopeful (though still polemical) edge, Greek form in *The Waves* augurs a different kind of change: viewed through a Greek lens, Rhoda's suicide is in a sense a death foretold.

Similarly unsettling, Ann Quin's (1969) work, *Passages*, evokes both Woolf and Harrison and follows the journey through an unnamed Mediterranean country of a woman and her lover. Quin traveled in Greece in the summer of 1964, and the novel's setting bears the traces of that visit: the characters drink "small cups of black coffee, thick, sweet. And sucked halva," (2003: 6) men play dice, go back "to their beads," (7) surrounded by "[c]lusters of white buildings, olive trees, cypresses." (11) Greek form appears in another guise too, as a marginal disjointed commentary that records the couple's primitive, mythical, and elemental clash:

"I feel as though
I'm on loan from
the underworld."
Does she expect
then for me to
play Orpheus?
The bleeding head
singing always.
Divinities of
Orphism: demons
rather than gods.
Development of
Orphism doctrine
of eternal punish-
ment.

Morbid habit of
self-examination.
Slayer of Orpheus
had a little stag
tattooed on upper
part of her right
arm.
(Quin 2003: 32)

Borrowed from Harrison's account of the Orphic cult in *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion* (Harrison 1991: 463), this fragment casts an oblique but telling light on the text's main proceedings. Elliptically and hinting at

political strife, references are made to the loss of the woman's brother, whose memory and search haunts the narrative. The narrative voices mingle in unmarked shifts and unsettling counterpoint, while the landscape presents its own riddles: "View of the temple and blue sky: disrupting. [...] The general argument: I am completely lost in this country—this climate." (Quin 2003: 30) In its dissolution of boundaries between voices, bodies, inner and outer states, and mental landscapes, Quin's narrative owes much to Woolf's kaleidoscopic representations of the self, especially in *The Waves*. Quin's "maiden" too seems prone to the kind of insular reflection that hints at a fragmented consciousness, perhaps, as in Rhoda's case, signalling a susceptibility to receiving other visions: "How she watches me. God how she watches herself watching." (2003: 31) Preceding this observation, on the margin, is the following passage from Harrison's *Prolegomena*:

On a red-figured
 Krater: The
 mad Lycurgus
 with his
 children dead
 and dying. He
 swings a double
 axe. A winged
 mad demon smites
 the king with
 her pointed goad.
 Behind the hill,
 a Maenad smites
 her timbrel in
 token of the
 presence of the
 god. On the reverse of vase
 there's Dionysus,
 who has made all
 this madness,
 looking peaceful.
 About him are
 Maenads and
 Satyrs watching
 the scene, alert and
 interested, but in
 perfect quiet. (Quin 2003: 30)¹⁷

This ekphrastic moment echoes the reference to the Orphic cult and provides an allegorical pattern, which is, however, never fully glossed. It is

possible that both slayings, of and by the ancient gods, are offered here as a backdrop for the disappearance in an ancient land of the main character's brother. According to Harrison, the story of Lycurgus is sung by the chorus that attends Antigone's last moments in the Sophocles play (1991: 368), and there may be a weak allusion here to the figure of a sister who fails to bury her brother's body, but more relevant perhaps is the doubleness of the image: while grief-stricken, enraged Lycurgus is smitten by the axe, the ancient god and his entourage observe the scene "interested, but in perfect quiet." The two sides of the krater and the simultaneity or co-presence of the scenes of madness and peace are a concrete analogue for the arcane, fragile duality of this text. In both narrative form and printed format, an ancient necessity seems evoked here which keeps both modern characters in its thrall.

The final writer whose Greek foray I briefly consider here is similarly concerned with ancient patterns and passages, though her approach is much less tormented, and differently visual. Dorothy Una Ratcliffe, writer of pastoral verse in the Yorkshire idiom, playwright, amateur ethnographer and botanist, and traveler to exotic destinations, "gypsied," as she puts it, with her second husband in Greece in 1938:

It was our fourth visit to Greece. In these impressions of it the reader will find little about History, Archaeology, Politics or Economics, nor will he find news of Princes or Governors. We did not go to Greece to visit any of them. We went to watch the spring arriving and because we went for that reason, the discovery of jonquil hosts in the valley of Epidaurus, or a Flower of Parnassus above Arachova, was a matter of sweeter importance than an interview with the latest Dictator. (Ratcliffe 1939: vi)

Not surprisingly for the seasoned reader of Greek travel accounts, Ratcliffe and her companion "found that, apart from its historical and literary associations, the countryside is as beautiful today as it was in the years when it was loved by the ancient gods." (1939: vi) The result is a travelogue titled *News of Persephone*, which proceeds by narrative and visual means (Ratcliffe was also a keen amateur photographer) to fail to deliver news of the presence of the gods; as she puts it in her "Envoi:"

Like all travellers to Greece, we, too, tried to find the gods. Like some, we found no traces of them by their silent altars. [...] Not even at Bassae, the most likely place in all Greece to meet a god, did we run across Apollo of the Silver Bow, but by the waters of the Neda we heard the echo of his laughter; and though I caught glimpses of Persephone several times, and spoke with her once at Tempe, I now

wonder whether it was really she and not the daughter of my dreams; for unless one is descended from the Race of Gold, how can one recognize the Olympians? (1939: 224)

And yet, in an artfully paced, lightly lyrical and often wittily and meticulously documented *in situ* account, Ratcliffe recreates the scholar-gypsy's desire to testify to the presence, if not of gods and goddesses, certainly of their distant memory. Armed with the amateur folklorist's conviction in the survival of past (shadowy) figures in the collective memory of the present as shared, or indeed performed, by "the people of the land," she manages to capture if not the full reality of her subjects, at least some of their humanity and singularity. Like Woolf, she may set out expecting that every peasant girl that she meets will answer to the name "Persephone," but, unlike her more illustrious predecessor on the same paths, she lingers for conversation, or at least a picture. Ranging from the staged bucolic scene, such as the piper at the Castalia spring at Delphi (1939: 143), to the ethnographic-cum-symbolic, such as the elderly peasant woman spinning wool like another ancient Fate (1939: 224), to the representation of real toil in the portrait of the girl-"road-mender in Arcady" (1939: 224), Ratcliffe's portraits survive the allegorical, sovereign eye of the traveler's camera and convey not the Harrisonian primitive "life force," but hardship and resilience, reciprocal curiosity and the salutary defiance, or at times mild contempt that the observed often have for those whose privilege it is to "see other."

"Confessing," genuinely or not it's hard to say, to a special affection for those girls-would-be-daughters that she might have had, thus justifying the book's conceit, Ratcliffe places *herself* in the mythological frame as a modern (though not grief-stricken) Demeter, and lays claim to a superior wisdom or sensibility to that of her "companion" (who is mostly complaining about the state of the roads). A special fondness for gypsies too (as she apparently was convinced that there was gypsy blood in her family) becomes the pretext for some mildly daring encounters, which she, however, seems to take in her stride (as an intrepid Yorkshirewoman—Harrison would have been proud), producing in the process one of the strongest images in the book, photographed by her companion, Noel McGrigor Phillips.



Figure 1. Noel McGrigor Phillips, “A Greek Gypsy”.

As the “gypsying” draws to a close, Ratcliffe avails herself of the weary traveler’s nostalgic trope, and in an Orlandian echo, she too has a mild transformative vision:

[...] I wandered down this laughing valley in the direction of the sea. Suddenly I became very homesick for my own dales. Had the snowdrops come and gone? Was I missing coltsfoot in sheltered nooks under the Nidderdale hedges? Were

any primroses showing in the copses below Reeth? I thought of Wharfe woods above the Bolton Abbey stepping-stones, where Sweet Cicely may be found; of hill-braes where the Lenten lilies flower; of fell-pastures blue with gentians where Yorkshire, Westmorland and Durham meet. (1939: 220)

In the “laughing valley” that her fancy re-landscapes into a northern English scene, Ratcliffe, still in allegorising mode, finally encounters the figure that she came to Greece to find:

So preoccupied was I that I failed to notice, until she was almost abreast of me, a girl riding a young horse which resembled those on the frontons of the Parthenon (not unlike the strong galloways bred on Yorkshire moors). I stood and stared at her. She looked like a Tanagra statuette come to life. Over her crocus-coloured chiton she wore a purple peplos of fine wool bordered with rosy stripes, which she had flung back in graceful folds over her shoulders, so as to leave her bare arms free. On her feet were yellow shoes with red soles, and round her thick curls, drawn to the back of her head, she had fastened a kerchief of germander blue and white, and tied a knot of it on the top of her head.

“At long last,” I said, as I caught hold of her horse’s wild-vine bridle. [...] “Ever since I landed at Piraeus I have been looking for you.” (1939: 220–1)

The unnamed “Persephone” talks back in a spirited but also (predictably) ageless voice:

“I suppose I ought to be off,” she said with a sigh, “but I always want to linger in every beautiful place I visit.”

“That’s how I feel,” I said, “I, too, should be back in the North Country.” [...] She laughed roguishly, and a hoopoe flew over and laughed with her. “But I shall be in the dales before you. The blackbirds won’t sing their sweetest songs until I arrive; the cuckoo won’t put in an appearance (cautious bird) until I call, and the swallows are all waiting for a message from me. So, you *must* let me go. Happy Journey!” (1939: 222)

And so, finally, for a moment Greece is animated again, cast in the role of the elusive though ubiquitous maiden. A kind of monument in her own right, Ratcliffe’s “Persephone” stands for a land and a presence in which, as this essay has attempted to show, the allegorical imagination of British women writers is meaningfully invested.

Notes

1. “Dörpfeld was my most honoured master—we always called him ‘Avtos’. He let me go with him on his *Peloponnesos Reise* and his *Insel Reise*. They were marvels of organization, and the man himself was a miracle” (Harrison 1925: 65).
2. “All her archaeology was learnt from Germans, she says, they were far ahead of us especially in the study of Vases” (Stewart 1959: 10).

3. On the matter of her “arguably pioneering” contribution, see Beard (2000).
4. According to William Calder III, “Wilamowitz met Jane Harrison at the Archaeological Congress in Athens in April 1905, a fact attested by a hurried note written to him by her there. [...] He was sceptical of her views on Greek religion” (Calder 2002: 134).
5. On the controversy, see also Fiske (2005: 138–43).
6. “Great things in literature, Greek plays for example, I most enjoy when behind their bright splendours I see moving darker and older shapes. That must be my *apologia pro vita mea*” (Harrison 1925: 86–7).
7. Cited by Robert Ackerman in his introduction to the 1991 edition of *Prolegomena* (xiv).
8. Matthew Arnold, “The Scholar Gipsy,” in Helen Gardner (ed.), *The New Oxford Book of English Verse 1250–1950*, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1972, 693.
9. For a contextualized account of Ratcliffe’s heyday as a regional writer, see Russell (2006).
10. For discussions of Woolf’s productive encounters with Greece, see Kolocotroni (2005, 2012, 2013), Koulouris (2010), and Spiropoulou (2010: 60–74).
11. For a study of Woolf’s poetics of invisibility, see Dalgarno (2001).
12. Woolf uses the trope elsewhere in her late work: in *The Years*, the final gathering of the Pargiters is interrupted by the mysterious, unintelligible recitation of Greek-sounding lines by the caretaker’s children. For a discussion of the scene in the context of Woolf’s deployment of Greek motifs, see Kolocotroni (2013).
13. David Roessel argues that Constantinople for Woolf was a “multivalent symbol encompassing three of the most significant forces in her life, Sapphic love, death, and war” (1992: 398). For Krystyna Colburn too, “Constantinople [for Woolf] conjures sapphism and domes” (1996: 252).
14. For a full account of that particular connection, see Blair (2004).
15. On the matter of landscape and ideology, see Denis E. Cosgrove’s foundational definition: “landscape represents a way of seeing—a way in which some Europeans have represented to themselves and to others the world about them and their relationships with it, and through which they have commented on social relations” (Cosgrove 2008: 20). For an analysis of the ideological construction of the Romantic landscape of Greece, see Güthenke (2008).
16. For a reading of Woolf’s colorism and an elaboration of the eclipse trope in the context of her aesthetics and politics, see Goldman (1998).
17. The passage is a close paraphrase of Harrison’s description of the vase in her chapter on Dionysos (1991: 368–9).

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3. “In a Different Light”: Imagining Greece in Elizabeth Taylor and Barbara Pym

ROWENA FOWLER AND ROSE LITTLE

Elizabeth Taylor (1912–1975) and her friend and contemporary Barbara Pym (1913–1980) are often thought of as quintessentially English novelists.¹ Their shrewdly-observed comedy of manners, unsensational plots, and domestic settings create recognisably “readerly” worlds: the everyday concerns of middle-class friends, relatives, and colleagues, narrated with a wit and irony that only half-conceal the sadness beneath the surface. Within and beyond these worlds Greece is an unsettling presence; imagined or experienced it casts a different light on English manners and assumptions. For Pym and Taylor, as for their fictional characters, expectations of Greece, ancient and modern, colored the way they encountered it in the present, and in actuality. Pym well understood the spell of Greece and the temptation it might offer an Englishwoman of a certain class and upbringing to fantasize an alternative mode of life. Taylor imagined how a woman moving permanently to Greece might adopt “an almost Greek sharpness of curiosity and detachment” (Taylor 1961b: 70).² The Mediterranean sun which illuminated some things so warmly could also dazzle and confuse, casting stark shadows and bleaching out memories. How did the two novelists put their feelings about Greece into words, and how did Greece affect their sense of themselves as women and writers?

Learning Greek was the highpoint of Taylor’s education, and she vowed (unsuccessfully) to keep up her Ancient Greek after leaving school. She weathered the inevitable objections to classical education for girls (“Will it cook her husband’s dinner?”), defending Greek in a striking image in her first novel,

At Mrs Lippincote's: "learning Greek at school is like storing honey against the winter" (Taylor 1945: 107). Her novels continued to pit philhellenism against philistinism—in *A View of the Harbour*, for instance, where Beth's husband waves her off for a day out in London: "Enjoy yourself! None of this moping about round the Elgin Marbles that seems to be your idea of a good time. Snap out of yourself a bit" (Taylor 1947: 185). The character of Betsy in *A Game of Hide-and-Seek*, is, like Beth, a version of Taylor herself, a wry portrait of the fifteen-year-old schoolgirl: "Life was quite beautiful, she thought. It unfolded wonderfully from one Greek lesson to another" (Taylor 1951:149).³ Taylor's teacher at school in Reading was the formidable Miss Sylvia Benton, the archaeologist who excavated Ithaca and who appears lightly disguised as "Miss Bell" in *A Game of Hide-and-Seek*: "Next year she hoped to go on a tour of Greece, which she scarcely apprehended as geographical; but rather as some shifting image in the air, to which the Hellenic Society would magically convey her" (Taylor 1951: 283). Betsy's disappointment "That life was so unlike Greek literature" (225) is unexpectedly assuaged when she confides her everyday troubles to Miss Bell, and finds that Greek comes to her teacher's aid: "'you felt so [...] bereft,' she [Miss Bell] concluded, a little surprised at the word, which she had used before only in translating Greek. Andromache, Hecuba; but scarcely Betsy Jephcott" (271).⁴ As well as domesticating words usually more at home in Greek, Taylor releases into English the latent meanings of Greek etymologies. Camilla in *A Wreath of Roses* stands on a hill one summer evening, outside the normal pattern of her life: "Ecstasy, she thought. She took the word to pieces and saw its true meaning. The first meanings of words go deeper, she understood, than any of their later meanings, which are fleshed-over and softened by convention and repetition. To go back to the beginnings of words is like imagining the skeletons of our friends" (Taylor 1949: 89). Different characters have their own responses to, and uses for, the Greek language; to the governess in *Palladian*, reading Sappho "The words seemed to have been brought up, glittering, dripping, from the sea, encrusted still by something crystalline, the fragments and phrases like broken but unscattered necklaces, the chipped-off pieces of coral, of porphyry, of chrysolyte" (Taylor 1946: 95). In the same novel, Margaret, a doctor, inhabits a quite different register: "'Metabolism,' she murmured to herself. The word was so Greek, so clear and sharp and so unlike the Anglo-Saxon language of the old wives [...] 'Eclampsia,' said Margaret—another Greek word" (111, 113). In Taylor's imagination not only individual Greek words but more pervasive patterns of myth and narrative might migrate to English. Unlike her friend Ivy Compton-Burnett, whose novels explicitly invoke Aeschylus and Euripides, Taylor draws her many

classical allusions and correspondences with a delicate touch, play and irony shading into melancholy or tragedy. The sprightly early novel, *Palladian*, with its very English governess heroine Cassandra, is the nearest she comes to parody and mock-epic, undermining both the structures of Gothic romance and the façades of classical scholarship. (Taylor herself had worked as a governess in the household of the classicist Dillwyn Knox.) Cassandra takes Greek lessons from the master of the house, a crumbling, shadowy Palladian pile; her pupil Sophy will be killed by a falling statue of Pomona. The novel ends with a “lop-sided hen” wandering into the house until “the dark shadows of indoors fell coldly across it like a knife” (Taylor 1946: 192). Gillette (1989) suggests that the combination in *Palladian* of an abundant allusiveness with a spare style indicates Taylor’s scepticism and mistrust of a too-literary imagination. Certainly, her keen but unsystematic response to Greek literature was proof against the dustier kinds of scholarship: “*The Classical Tradition*, she [Cassandra] thought, taking the little book from a drawer. What in heaven’s name was it all about? She had never read it” (Taylor 1946: 154).⁵

The voice of Cassandra sounds more ominously in *A Game of Hide-and-Seek*, where an anxious and haunted character (Kitty) keeps up an inconsequential conversation while feeling the premonition of calamity: “How can we forgive, she wondered, the one who cries Woe! Woe!, who initiates disaster, who reveals the first cat’s-paw across our calm?” (Taylor 1951: 127). An encounter in an English seaside resort in *The Sleeping Beauty* fleetingly invokes Odysseus and Nausicaa; in *A Game of Hide-and-Seek* a deckchair attendant shades into a figure from the Underworld: “Somehow linked with Harriet were the empty chairs. The attendant who folded and stacked them seemed a symbolic figure, shadowy, Lethean; he erased the day and all remembrance of it” (Taylor 1951: 277–8). Taylor drew on the conventions of Greek drama in her attendant figures: messengers, servants, and hangers-on: “Sometimes it was the Corporal, who would turn up unexpectedly and yet with fatalism, in the manner of a soothsayer in a Greek play, arriving with the compliments of the Wing Commander and an invitation, or cauliflower from his garden, or a note from Roddy, perhaps, to say he could not be in for lunch” (Taylor 1945: 32). Her choruses contribute a baleful undertone to the apparently sedate novel of manners; in *A Wreath of Roses*, for example, as a crowd gathers after a suicide at a country railway station: “feet running along the echoing boards, voices staccato, and the afternoon darkening with the vultures of disaster, who felt the presence of death and arrived from the village to savour it and to explain the happening to one another. ‘That chorus!’ she cried, shaken with rage. [...] ‘The ones who gathered from nowhere and stood watching and explaining’” (Taylor 1949: 4).

Though the Greek chorus plays no part in the action, it inevitably affects its course and outcome. In Taylor's *In a Summer Season* the older woman newly married to a much younger man finds when they go away together that "Removed from their watchful audience—the chorus waiting to comment on and explain their downfall—their love stood a better chance" (Taylor 1961a: 105). Though the novel is set in an English village there are throughout hints and resonances of Greece, ancient and modern. A sprig of jasmine prompts a memory of a Greek holiday: "In Athens, children bring little bunches of that stuff—jasmine—round the café tables, [...] So many flowers in that country [...] men standing up in caïques with their arms full of arum lilies, old men with carnations tucked behind their ears" (Taylor 1961a: 142). The heroine's aunt warns of the demoralising effect of a sunny climate: "In Mediterranean countries, as one knows, the sun brings girls to maturity much earlier—and I have my own theory that the Vitamin E in ripe olives has a *stimulating* effect on the sexual organs. So different here" (148). The tragedy that is to be played out here in the Home Counties is Euripides' *Hippolytus*, with Kate, the heroine, as a hot-blooded Phaedra and Aunt Ethel as the interfering nurse. The climax of the novel is a car crash, reported by a messenger. The year after writing *In a Summer Season*, Taylor was to visit Troezen (modern Τροιζήνα) in the Eastern Peloponnese, where Hippolytus died in his wrecked chariot. Taylor visited Greece six times between 1956 and 1966.⁶ Before that, her first intimation of Greece as a modern country came, unexpectedly, in the spring of 1941 when her lover, Ray Russell, found himself in Athens with the British army. A postcard of the Acropolis was followed by letters from various prisoner of war camps after Russell was captured at Kalamata ("Calamity Bay", as it was known to the troops) and underwent the forced march back to Salonica en route to Austria. A version of Russell's experience (with Crete replacing Kalamata) appears in Taylor's novel *The Sleeping Beauty*:

In the war, when he was taken prisoner in Crete, he had watched the sturdy, the hardy—bony Scots, Australians, New Zealanders—dropping out on long marches, dying of hunger, of heat, or of cold. He had always managed to endure these things and in his spare moments wrote home to his wife about Greek temples, butterflies, flowers, or wine. (Taylor 1953: 56)

Arriving in Greece for the first time, on a Mediterranean cruise in 1956, Taylor at once wrote her own postcard to Ray Russell: "Picture postcards of the Parthenon have an air of hallucination" (Beauman 2009: 316). She struggled to make sense of her impressions, which were intense but also chaotic and fragmentary. As she tried to explain:

It is more being exposed to Greece than going there. I wander about alone, with nothing said all day long but halting, vilely-pronounced words to get what I need or express my gratitude. I don't even know when I'm lost. I grow tired of smiling and feel exhausted with humility. But miracles happen and all the time I am in love with everything and hope my willingness to learn will cover some of the ineptitude. Apprehensive is what I feel, though, when the plane comes down over the sea to the edge of the blinding white city.⁷

Greece struck her as simultaneously fraught with associations and bare of meaning; having spent all her life in the Thames Valley, she could not bring the unfamiliar landscape into focus:

Sometimes I feel frightened and sometimes tired from walking on a knife's edge, and also from seeing too many beautiful things. I loved the rooms full of those white anemones at Phaestos. That alone would have lasted a week and been enough to take in and remember [...] In a café in Rhodes three Englishwomen walked in wearing the most outlandish holiday clothes and panama hats, with lots of raincoats and cameras and walking-sticks and rucksacks. They stood looking about for a waiter and one said in a loud voice: “How do we attract attention?” (Liddell 1986: 59)

The shifting of tone in this letter exemplifies the ways Taylor's writing of Greece will evolve: as moments and impressions remembered as intense vignettes and, contrastingly, as a Forsterian comedy of the English abroad. (E.M. Forster was in fact on the same cruise as Taylor, and they visited Delphi together.) The first novel she wrote after having visited Greece was the rather atypical *Angel* (1957), the story of a girl from a poor background with an extravagant self-deluding imagination who becomes a much-fêted romantic novelist. The (undifferentiated) ancient Greece and Rome of her books are depicted in overblown language, their settings based on the paintings of Lord Leighton: “a sunlit world of dazzling marble and diaphanous draperies” (Taylor 1957: 99). The real countries, as *Angel* finds on her honeymoon, fall far short:

Greece was especially disappointing. It was nothing like her novels. There was so much fallen masonry, dazzling and tiring to the eyes; [...] The food was nauseating, plates of black octopus and black olives and black liver-sausage. (Taylor 1957: 153)

Taylor both expresses and satirizes the difficulties she herself found in assimilating Greece, and in rendering it in fiction; it is certainly true, though not in the way *Angel* meant it, that “It was nothing like her novels.”

In the course of her subsequent visits Taylor visited Athens, Attica, and the Peloponnese as well as the islands of Hydra, Poros, Paros, Siphnos, and

Thasos. She saw some of the ancient sites but responded most to the landscape and climate, flowers, wine, sightseeing, and swimming. Virginia Woolf came to her mind when an excursion "To the Lighthouse" at Perachora on the Gulf of Corinth was keenly anticipated (and successfully accomplished).⁸ Vivid impressions spill over into her letters and stories but the scepticism of the English tourist, and its attendant self-mockery, is never far away: "I have just come back", she wrote on a postcard to Barbara Pym from Paros, "from an expedition to a convent where there is a piece of bone one can kiss if one feels so inclined. I went up—and indeed down, too—the mountain on the tiniest donkey. A dreadful thing to happen to an animal."⁹ Taylor's two Greek stories, "In a Different Light" and "The Voices," suggest ways, one visual, one aural, that we might bridge the gap between the experience of Greece and the English imagination. The first, written in summer 1961, immediately on her return from Paros, explores ways of seeing, both literal and metaphorical. Greece dazzles and dazes; relationships from our workaday world no longer seem to hold good:

[...] the newcomers stepped on to the broken marble of the waterfront and looked about them, shading their eyes from the sun and the fierce brightness of the white buildings. Their baggage would be seized by old men or young boys with handcarts and donkeys, and they would follow it on foot as if dazed with the suddenness of their arrival [...] His wife was miles away in a dark world underneath the clouds. He was sorry for her; he told himself he missed her; he forgot her. "Hibiscus," he murmured, looking up at a wall. (Taylor 1961b: 65, 70)

Returning home, the story's main protagonist, Barbara (perhaps so named because she speaks no Greek, or as an affectionate gesture to Pym)¹⁰ looks down through holes in the clouds as her plane lands at Heathrow and sees the slate grey roads and milky gravel pits and the Thames itself, "a very sedate-looking river" (83). Her visual memories of the Greek island remain vivid but the painting she brought back with her looks amateurish and lacklustre in its English setting. A reunion lunch with the Englishman she had met in Greece, and his wife, who prefers to holiday in Buxton, is a disaster. The photographs he took have come out distorted, blurred, and bleached for the light was too strong. After Greece home seems tame and vapid and Barbara must rediscover it for herself as "a settled, a serene place to be in," for "There could be no resurrection of those days" (93, 91). The second story, "The Voices," works through hearing, or overhearing, as the protagonist, Laura, experiences Greece at one remove through the conversations of other people. She has been ill and spends most of her time lying on the bed in her ramshackle hotel in Athens,¹¹ listening while each day the unknown Englishwomen in the next-door room talk over their adventures. Greece is therefore

relayed through a filter of Englishness, as this unseen chorus tempers foreignness with predictable enthusiasms and guidebook phrases, making "abroad" homely and approachable. When Laura accidentally sneezes there is a shocked silence; the women realize they have been overheard, and next day they have left. Laura must now confront Greece for herself:

Laura felt put to shame by their toughness. At Delphi, brooded over by towering crags, diminished, overawed, she had tried to put herself in their state of mind in the same place—happily darting from one wild flower to another, describing—as they had—the scenery as picturesquely mountainous. They had even had someone sick on the bus, as Laura had, but were led by this simply to talk of national characteristics. (Taylor 1963: 186)

Taylor never learned to be the kind of tourist, with an unshakeable conviction of national characteristics, who can experience another country and remain unaffected. Greece helped define her own "Englishness" but could also disturb her sense of self: "Everything here seemed so unreal," she reported on her return to England after her 1962 holiday (Liddell 1986: 93); over the winter she wrote a non-fiction piece about Greece, "Two Islands," which was rejected for publication.¹² By the time of her fourth visit to Greece, in 1962, she admitted "I have got to the stage where I don't want to go anywhere else, & leave it in tears" (Beauman 2009: 345). She preferred to travel alone so that the "kaleidoscope of impressions" could "shift about and form their own patterns" (Taylor 1965: 69). When she returned home she established the distance from Greece that she needed to write about it, while the distance itself, and the impossibility of bridging it, became a theme of her writing. In her last novel, *Mrs Palfrey at the Claremont*, she evokes the atmosphere of a small Greek restaurant off the Fulham Road, where Greeks behave like exaggerated parodies of themselves and self-conscious English customers work too hard at trying to seem at home:

The Plaka was in a basement throbbing with *bouzoukia* and smelling of charred lamb. In this deafening noise, Greek refugees became more Greek than ever before in their lives. English Philhellenes *Kalisperassed* about the place continually.¹³

Barbara Pym, similarly, knew that the allure of Greece could not be artificially rekindled. A "Greek" restaurant in England remains a melancholy and makeshift experience: "shall we risk the baklava?" (Pym 1980: 138). She noted the incongruities of mismatched cultures, exchanging smiles with Elizabeth Taylor when the band at an Athens taverna played "Colonel Bogey" (Pym 1984: 227). Unlike Taylor, Pym came relatively late to any personal enthusiasm for Greece. She read English at Oxford and had an educated

general knowledge of ancient Greek culture but never learned the language. Ancient Greek makes an appearance in her novels only as a comic opportunity, when Greek is used (like Latin) in describing anthropological details in a learned journal:

“It does seem an odd use of Latin,” said Miss Clovis thoughtfully, “to avoid giving offence to those who probably cannot understand it anyway. I suppose Greek could be used too.”

“Indeed, it has been. [replies Professor Mainwaring] My own study of certain unusual relationships in a primitive society had a good deal of Greek in it, and I believe it *was* Greek to a good many people.” (Pym 1955: 93)

Pym had at first no particular interest in visiting modern Greece, preferring Italy.¹⁴ She became aware of Greece through two of the people closest to her: her sister Hilary and her friend Robert Liddell. Hilary, who read Classics and had taken the postgraduate Diploma in Classical Archaeology, went in 1938 as a student to the British School at Athens, where her experience provided Pym with material for satirical letter-writing: “she is just oh so little disappointed in Athens because it is rather dusty and there are people squatting on the pavements wanting to weigh you and clean your shoes and sell you things. And the shops are not so beautiful as she had expected, but oh, one can see the Acropolis every day [...]” (BP to Robert Liddell, April 5, 1938; Pym 1984: 73). On the boat to Greece Hilary had met her future husband, the archaeologist Alexander Walton; Pym reported in 1944 that the couple “have started writing to each other in Modern Greek, as they hope to go out there after the war.”¹⁵ When the marriage failed Hilary hoped instead that she and Pym might one day live permanently in Athens,¹⁶ but the plan was not pursued and the two sisters continued to work and share a house in London. Hilary returned to Greece throughout her life, sometimes for holidays with her sister, sometimes alone for more extended visits; she worked on her Modern Greek and published an attractive small compilation of Greek folk songs (Pym, H. 1968). Liddell, the novelist, travel writer, and biographer of Cavafy, lived most of his life in Athens; he corresponded with Pym for forty-five years and arranged accommodation for both Pym and Taylor when they visited Greece. It was his gift of honey (“Miel d’Hymette”) that inspired one of Pym’s first imaginative associations of Greece with food, summer, and love affairs (Pym 1984: 192).

It was only in the last twenty years of her life that Pym herself visited Greece, and at first it left little trace in her fiction. Her penultimate novel, *Quartet in Autumn*, plays with the idea of an elderly man planning a Greek holiday:

What new aspect of Norman's life, what never before expressed longing was to be revealed? His holidays, always taken in England, were usually characterized by disaster. "They say it's the wonderful light, a special quality it has," said Letty [...] "And the wine-dark sea—isn't that how it's described?" "Oh, I don't care what colour the sea is," said Norman. "It's the swimming that would attract me." (Pym 1977: 33–34)

Pym's own four Greek holidays, between 1964 and 1976, belong to a disappointing period in her professional life when the success of her first six comic novels (what Liddell 1989 calls her "canon") was followed by rejection by her publishers and a sense that her earlier mode of social comedy was outdated. However, she continued to write, to be "rediscovered" by critics and the reading public and to publish her later, more sombre and complex novels.¹⁷ The last, *A Few Green Leaves* (1980), is a return to the spirited observation of English village life, with a new perspective gleaned from her encounter with Greece.

Pym stayed in Greece on each occasion for about three weeks, always in May or June; on her first visit she met up with Elizabeth Taylor who was in Athens at the same time (Pym 1984: 227). (The two writers had known each other since 1950.) Unlike Taylor, who refused to enter Greece during the Dictatorship, Pym continued her visits, strongly encouraged by Liddell who was afraid that Greece would be cut off from outside contacts; of her 1969 trip (when she traveled, adventurously, all the way by bus) Pym confessed that friendship had won out over conscience.¹⁸ On these holidays Pym and Hilary explored well beyond Athens, visiting islands (Hydra, Poros, Delos, Mykonos, Santorini, and Euboea) as well as the mainland (Delphi, Meteora, Pelion) and the Peloponnese. They traveled mainly by bus and stayed in small hotels and pensions. Everywhere she went Pym carried a notebook, small enough to go in her handbag, in which she wrote observations and character sketches, conversations overheard and thoughts and musings, that she might one day use in her novels. The notebooks for her Greek holidays (a total of approximately 7,000 words) cover places, bus journeys, meals, flowers, and cats and encounters with Greek people. In Kardamyli, for example, Pym records "the hotel by the sea, Taygetus, two charming brothers, (also mother and father) run it. We were given glasses of a sweet Cointreau type drink and Hilary spoke to them in Greek." At Marmari in Euboea she noted "an old woman (not so old really) ran out of her garden and gave us delicious quince jam with almonds and a glass of water, apologising for it not being cold," and in Argos "A splendid dark fat woman making souvlakia at the bus station—the best I ever tasted with barley and lemony [sic]. She spoke Italian and Spanish and was a "real character."¹⁹ Pym was dismayed that Greek towns

and villages could look shabby and squalid: Kalamata appeared “pretty dire,” rather than pretty as she had been used to in Italy.²⁰ She was struck, however, by the way places came to life after dark—“hot dusty” Lamia, for example:

In the evening such a transformation. The square where our hotel is is thronged with people, women and children too—sitting and walking about. Orange trees, (I think) with little green oranges dropping off. Dinner at Illysia [sic] restaurant tables laid up against the wall of the “cathedral,” a large church. Like a scene from an opera. Strong smell of gardenias will remind me of Lamia. And brown birds about the size of pigeons, all resting for the night in a tree opposite our window.²¹

In her notebooks, Pym experiences Greece as a series of vignettes or spectacles (“like a scene from an opera”). Sights, sounds, and smells are recorded briefly and impressionistically; people are “characters,” observed with benevolence but remaining always foreign, even picturesque. Her most incisive commentary is reserved for the English, including herself, as their attitudes and idiosyncrasies are played out in an unfamiliar setting. The Pension Penelope in Kolonaki Square in Athens, “a fine old house now somewhat in need of repair and redecoration” strikes Pym as “A rather Katherine Mansfield sort of place,” where “the inhabitants seem to be mostly elderly ladies, girl students and rather impoverished Engl. tourists”: “plastic bowls of washing soaking in the bathroom, eating in rooms and every inhabitant has his or her own little corner of chaos. Our room has a fine view of the Acropolis.”²²

Pym herself was not always happy in Greece; on a cool wet day on Pelion, which she found shut-in and oppressive, she could imagine “The English expatriate who longs for simple English dishes, like macaroni cheese and toad in the hole—even thinks longingly of a holiday at somewhere like Malvern, visiting English churches and reading Hardy.”²³ Expatriate life is a natural object for her particular style of humor: “Why are the orange trees in the garden surrounding the English church barren of fruit?”²⁴ Pym’s English-women abroad rise boldly to all challenges (“‘Satyrs’ remarks an elderly woman in a satisfied tone, when a mosaic pavement [on Delos] is described to her.”),²⁵ but may succumb to sudden and unexpected passions. Pym loved the poems of Byron, and a part of herself may inhabit the third-person account of “the English lady” overcome in the Greek museum:

In the basement of the Benaki museum the English lady feels rather faint—it may be the heat, the airlessness and the smell of mothballs (the Greek national costumes are down here). But might it not also be emotion engendered at the sight of Byron’s portable writing desk, a letter in his hand (about money), and the cap (velvet with tassell [sic]) and embroidery which belonged to the Maid of Athens?²⁶

Like the anthropologists she worked with and worked into her novels,²⁷ Pym made notes, not knowing at the time what might be usefully “written up” as fiction. On her first visit, for example, she observes: “In the beautiful Zapion [sic] gardens—the delicious fragrance of shrubs, the oranges hanging from the trees. Here a middle aged English or American lady might be picked up by a young Greek adventurer.”²⁸ There is a teasing ambiguity in the “might” as the novelist’s imagination converges with her putative character’s fearful—or hopeful—anticipation. On her second visit, in June 1966, she returns to the idea of a novel with a Greek setting; meeting up with an old flame she records:

610.783 (Henry’s telephone number in Athens). Perhaps that was how the great novel about Greece began. It seemed strange after more than thirty years to be driving with him again.

Pym then mentions that Hilary is reading James Merrill’s *The (Diblos) Notebook*, a very unPym-like “novel about Greece,” and that the sisters are toying with the idea of publishing some account of it.²⁹ Merrill’s dauntingly experimental text is a mosaic of fragments, false starts and potential plot-lines from the notebook of a fictional American writer in a quest for his half-brother on an island provisionally fictionalized (hence the brackets) as “Diblos.” (There are autobiographical correspondences to Merrill’s relationship with his lover Kimon Friar, who lived on Poros.) The “Themes” and situations which Pym jotted down in her own notebook represent, with or without conscious irony, a contrasting, female version of a “Greek” story. For example:

The woman coming to Greece for some wonderful “experience” and finding... well, the usual kind of unpleasant and disillusioning ending. But she might be expecting this and all that would happen would [be] an encounter with an old school friend “why its [sic] Barbara Pym isn’t it?”

In the same notebook entry, immediately afterward, she adds in brackets: “(Elizabeth T. a woman of 54 going alone to the island of Thasos.)”³⁰ The idea of a middle-aged woman traveling alone in Greece was to find its way into a novel, but Pym’s fictional character would be nothing like Elizabeth Taylor.

Pym especially enjoyed Poros, where she and her sister stayed at the Xenia hotel with its views of boats coming and going and of the town across the water. As she wrote, she imagined herself as a character in a story: “Here might a writer love [or “come”—the handwriting is not clear] to work, sitting on the balcony.” The situation lent itself to a range of storylines: “somebody come to recover from a sorrow perhaps accompanied by a woman friend. Or

convalesce from an illness.”³¹ Back in England Pym continued to mull over the fictional possibilities of women and islands; the notebook entry for February 1, 1967 mentions a slightly different idea for a book:

A woman might be taken to Greece (?Poros) to get over an unfortunate love affair. I am on a Greek island I have been badly treated by a man
Then—so what?³²

Another “Greek” scenario involves the disenchantment of “hoping to be on the island of Poros”, but “Instead a dire English holiday”:

On the Greek island last year they had watched from their balcony the little boat from the mainland [...] Now they stood in the window of an English hotel in the west country trying to decide whether the rain had stopped enough for them to venture out to ~~change their books at the public library~~ tea with the Methodist Minister.³³

The “great novel about Greece” which Pym mentions in the summer of 1966 must be *A Few Green Leaves*. The novel slowly evolved from a tentative title in 1968 to a first handwritten version, begun in 1977; it went through various drafts, with Pym struggling to complete the printer’s copy just before her death. (It was published posthumously.) The novel was written when Pym and her sister Hilary were living in the Oxfordshire village of Finstock and appears, on first reading, to be centred on an anthropologist with the Austenesque name Emma, and her observations of life in an old-fashioned English community. However, it is dedicated to the two philhellenes in Pym’s life (“For my sister Hilary and for Robert Liddell”), and woven through with the idea of Greece, as imagined, ridiculed or longed-for. The “leaves”³⁴ of the title rightly belong to Daphne, ironically but aptly named, who “longed to get away from the village, from the damp spring of West Oxfordshire, to live in a whitewashed cottage on the shores of the Aegean” (20). Daphne is the rector’s sister, unmarried at fifty-five, the highlight of whose life is her annual Greek holiday. Greece and England are constantly overlaid through Daphne’s memories and projections. Like the characters imagined in Pym’s notebook looking down from an English hotel as if from a Greek balcony Daphne is constantly reminded of Greece: seeing the doctor’s cat scratching in the shrubbery she recalls “an early morning in Delphi when, looking down towards Itea, she had seen in a field far below a little cat scratching in the earth” (74). As she walks in the damp English countryside in spring, “the braying of a donkey at dawn that morning had taken her back to Delphi and the patter of delicate hooves on stone, and she walked on dreaming of the Meteora, the Peloponnese and remote Greek islands as yet unidentified”

(10). Summer intensifies these feelings so that every morning "Daphne woke up thinking of how she would one day get away from the village [...] would throw up everything and go to live on a Greek island or in Delphi or even in one of those towers in the Mani" (43).

To herself Daphne admits that such fantasies (especially the Mani tower) are "ridiculous," and they are generally disparaged by others, in tones ranging from the jovial to the mildly cruel. In the first draft Pym explicitly connects the comments of the village with their attitude to Daphne as a woman:

"One feels Daphne need hardly have gone all the way to Greece for sunshine."

"Ah, but its [sic] more than sunshine, she needs," said Dr. G. "We know that, don't we" [...] he smiled rather mysteriously.

"Oh, of course. We all need to get away, women especially."³⁵

In the published version Daphne is still surrounded by incomprehension: laughed at by the local doctor ("Still want to get away to a Greek Island? 74)," and casually diagnosed by his younger colleague as a "frustrated lesbian," a parody of the mythological Daphne with "her weatherbeaten face and untidy mane of white hair [...] her arm was thin and dried up, either from Greek sun or approaching age" (21). Emma the anthropologist pigeonholes Daphne as "eager spinster, goes on Greek holidays with woman friend" (40) and even her own brother teases her about her most cherished dream: "Ah, the Greek island cottage, the pad in the Peloponnese, or is it a flat overlooking the Acropolis?" (123). Daphne's passion is watered down into a talk on her Greek "experiences" to the Women's Institute (121). Pym characteristically uses inverted commas to place and frame stock phrases and received ideas, opening up a distance between the "public" attitude of the community and the intuitions of individuals (Parks 2007). Daphne cannot articulate her feelings about Greece, but expresses them metonymically, especially through food and meals. A pair of carved salad servers brought back from Meteora comes to stand for everything she has enjoyed on her holidays. But English ingredients do not translate convincingly into Greek dishes: "The shepherd's pie [...] would turn up as a kind of moussaka at the rectory" (14) and the rector looks forward without enthusiasm to her Greek version of a "ploughman's"—"a hunk of stale bread, a few small hard black olives, [...] and something approaching a goats' milk cheese. No butter, of course—such a decadent refinement didn't go with an Attic luncheon" (31–2). Describing a Greek salad with chunks of tomato and cucumber and struggling to remember its name Daphne realizes "that nobody would have been interested anyway" (87). Alone in the kitchen Daphne works left-over pastry

scraps “significantly” (as the text has it, without further elaboration) into “miniature human figures that reminded her of the little Cycladic idols she had seen in the museum in Athens” (122). These miniaturized scraps mark a poignant moment of defiance by a childless and otherwise uncreative woman. Greece is significant for Daphne because it represents everything that is the antithesis of her life in England: warmth, light, and appetizing food, but more importantly a place which is her own discovery, and where she can live for the present moment. Unlike much philhellenic writing, which draws energy from the contrasts, continuities, or contradictions between past and present, the Greek passages of *A Few Green Leaves* imagine the feeling of existing (entirely, if only temporarily) in the present. Although Daphne’s memories of Greece often come to her in the form of single scenes or “vignettes” they are not frozen or timeless tableaux but always experienced as movement, sounds, and smells. Daphne has no sense of ancient Greece; for her it is England that is associated with the past, and particularly with her brother’s “delving into parish registers” (73) and dismal pursuit of “D.M.V.”—deserted medieval villages (26). Pym’s deft handling of interrupted narration juxtaposes his local history society’s coach outing with Daphne’s journey on a Greek bus: “In another bus on an equally hot day” (109). There follows an extraordinarily evocative paragraph as Daphne gives herself up to the experience of Greece: “She let the sound from the driver’s transistor radio pour over her, loud blaring music, songs with an Oriental strain. She closed her eyes, basking in noise and heat” (109). When a thought of home and of “Tom’s history ladies” intrudes, Daphne pushes it away and gives herself up to living “entirely in the present with no memory of any kind of past” (109). The passage is probably what Pym refers to in the first draft as “Daphne’s Greek bit”; it includes a visit to Meteora and an evening *volta* in a Greek provincial town (Trikala, according to the 1966 notebook), hearing frogs croaking and seeing lambs roasting on spits. In draft (not in the published novel) Pym indicates that the passage should end with an exclamatory “How different it all was. How she revelled in it.”³⁶ Daphne’s “Greek bit” is carried over from one of Pym’s own Greek bus journeys:

Sensational ride to Lamia through the mountains—pass of Thermophylae [sic]. As we get down into the straight road to Lamia after the slow grinding climbs and descents, the driver (who looks like a younger, benevolent Stalin) sounds his horn in triumphant paeans and the radio is blaring full blast.³⁷

This sharing of experience between writer and character confers on Daphne a privileged position within the text. *A Few Green Leaves* offers a range of points of view, with some use of free indirect style: “There was a good summer that

year. The mud in the lanes dried into hard ruts and the fields were burnt and bleached like an Italian or Greek landscape" (95). Only Daphne or the complicit third-person narrator would see the village through such eyes. In England Daphne becomes increasingly disenchanted with her parish duties and homesick for Greece. The village church, once so important to her, now appears in a different light as merely "ostentatious" when compared with "those miniature white-washed churches, almost like something made out of a child's bricks" (75). Snubbed by the chief flower-arranger, she automatically reaches for a Greek parallel: "yet another Greek vignette, the memory of an old man on the seashore bashing an octopus against a stone ..." (76); the ellipsis does not indicate whether Daphne is here the old man or the octopus. She hankers after a Greek village, "even a modern Greek village with a garage and hideous square white concrete dwellings" (168). The special salad servers from Meteora are damaged and "they would never be able to get another pair"—Daphne's bossy friend Heather takes this as an opportunity to let her know that there will be no more Greek holidays (168).

Daphne's idea of one day living in Greece proves, of course, "an impossible dream"; instead she moves with her friend to "the outskirts of Birmingham" (165), a fate earlier sketched out by Pym: "she is not coming back—she and Heather are to live in a flat together, not the romantic white-washed house in Greece—well, perhaps it could be whitewashed even on the outskirts of Wolverhampton/a Midland town."³⁸ Greece, from the vantage point of the Midlands, becomes increasingly unreal; invited to the neighbors' Tupperware party, Daphne wonders wistfully what the equivalent entertainment in a Greek village would have been:

Presumably not a Tupperware party, though the Greeks were by no means unaware of the advance of modern technology. All those plastic bags on the seashore and she had once seen a priest carrying a blue plastic bag, but all that seemed very far away now, as if it had never been. (207)³⁹

A persistent theme of Pym's work is that of a character (usually a woman) disappointed in pursuit of some hopeless ideal.

Her novels take entirely for granted the fact that we live in two worlds, one of extreme triviality typified by the work situation, social exchange, irritations, small comforts of eating and drinking. On the other hand we live in a world of romance, aspiration, love-longing, loneliness, despair. (Bayley 1987: 52–3)

Daphne's thwarted longing for Greece may be comic and pitiable but the passion it brings to light is heartfelt, lingering on beneath the elegiac cheerfulness of Pym's last "few green leaves."

To conclude, these two women writers of mid-twentieth-century English life reveal how exposure to Greece may both enliven and perturb, prompting us to see ourselves afresh. New plots are created and old ones rewritten. In Taylor and Pym, we discover ways of experiencing and writing about Greece, from the excitement of a schoolgirl learning ancient Greek to the exhilarating and disorienting encounters of a middle-aged woman with the modern country. Just as their imagined country looked different in the stark light of the Mediterranean their travels challenged their sense of themselves as women and as writers. Though Greece can never be brought back to England it continued to possess their imaginations and to haunt the landscapes of “home.”

Notes

1. Neither novelist has yet been translated into Greek. It might seem that their particular comedy of manners and specificity of linguistic and cultural idiom is too English to travel well, yet they have been translated into several foreign languages, including French, Italian, Spanish, and German (Taylor) and at least ten languages, including Portuguese, Japanese, and Hungarian (Pym). On the essential “untranslatability” of Pym see Parks (2007).
2. Quotations from Taylor’s novels are from the Virago reprints of the first editions; quotations from Pym’s *Less than Angels* are from the Virago reprint, from *Quartet in Autumn* from the Flamingo paperback edition, 1994, and from *A Few Green Leaves* from the Grafton paperback edition, 1981.
3. Betsy’s feeling for Greek is very like that of Taylor: see the account of Taylor’s schooling in Beauman (2009: 23–5).
4. The Greek word is perhaps ἄμφορος, used by Euripides in *Hecuba*.
5. Perhaps referring to Gilbert Murray’s *The Classical Tradition in Poetry* (1927).
6. She refused to enter Greece during the Dictatorship, which she did not live to see deposed (Liddell 1986: 108).
7. ET to William Maxwell, as later reported in a letter from Joy R. Vines to Barbara Pym (MS. Pym 173, fol. 177, March 17, 1979). The Taylor–Maxwell correspondence is in the *New Yorker* Records in the New York Public Library.
8. Taylor’s *A View of the Harbour* is in part a homage to *To the Lighthouse*; *A Wreath of Roses* has an epigraph from *The Waves*, and there are many Woolfian echoes and correspondences throughout her work. At the age of twenty, Taylor had written to Woolf to say how much she admired her writing, where “Suddenly the English language is translated into fluid music, like Greek” (Beauman 2009: 37).
9. ET to BP, May 1961: MS. Pym 162/3, fol. 2. On Taylor’s letters to Pym see Rose Little, “‘How I have loved reading your book!’ Elizabeth Taylor and Barbara Pym: A Friendship in Letters,” unpublished paper; Pym’s letters to Taylor have not survived.
10. Pym, on the other hand, enjoyed acknowledging the Greekness of her Christian name by lighting a candle in the church at Epidauros in front of an icon of St. Barbara (Pym 1984: 257).

11. Taylor had stayed in the venerable (now-demolished) Hotel Xenias Melathron, recommended by Liddell to both Taylor and Pym (Liddell 1986: 73).
12. The piece does not seem to be extant (Beauman 2009: 345). Taylor’s editor at the *New Yorker*, William Maxwell, tried to discourage her from “turning away from England in favour of foreign places” (Beauman 2009: 354).
13. Taylor 1971: 165. Taylor herself enjoyed Greek food at the elegant White Tower in Soho (Liddell 1986: 111).
14. Pym was a seasoned European traveler. She especially enjoyed her posting to Naples with the WRNS in 1944–45, drawing on it in her novel *Excellent Women* for memories of color and light to contrast with the drabness of London in the 1950s.
15. BP to Henry Harvey, May 26, 1944; Pym (1984: 166).
16. Robert Liddell to BP, June 15, 1959 (MS. Pym 156, fol. 84–5).
17. On the critical reception of Pym’s novels see Allen (1994); on the changing fortunes of her reputation, especially among writers, see Donato (2005).
18. “One felt a bit ‘guilty’ going there but Robert Liddell still lives in Athens and I’ve got to the age when I feel I must see friends rather than make protests.” BP to Philip Larkin, September 19, 1969; Pym (1984: 251). Cf. Taylor’s position, footnote 5 above.
19. Kardamyli: Notebook XXVIII, June 9, 1969 (MS. Pym 67); Marmari: Notebook XXXVI, May 13, 1976 (MS. Pym 75); Argos: Notebook XXVIII, June 7, 1969 (MS. Pym 67).
20. Notebook XXVIII, Saturday June 7, 1969 (MS. Pym 67). Although Pym found Kalamata “a dead sort of town” she enjoyed her meeting there with Sheelagh Kanelli, whose account of life as an Englishwoman living in Greece, *Earth and Water: A Mariage into Greece* (1965), Hilary owned.
21. Notebook XXIV, June 3, 1966 (MS. Pym 63).
22. Notebook XXVIII, June 3, 1969 (MS. 67).
23. Notebook XXIV, June 16, 1966 (MS. Pym 63).
24. Notebook XX, May 17, 1964 (MS. Pym 59).
25. Notebook XX, May 23–25, 1964 (MS. Pym 59).
26. Notebook XX, May 27, 1964 (MS. Pym 59).
27. Pym worked at the International African Institute as editor of the journal *Africa*: for her afterlife in the anthropological literature see Turner and White (2014: 2–3); for details of Pym’s biography see Holt (1990). Anthropologists feature particularly in her novels *Less than Angels* and *An Academic Question*.
28. Notebook XX, May 12, 1964 (MS. Pym 59).
29. Notebook XXIV, June 1966 (MS. Pym 63): “Hilary is reading a novel by an American we met at Robert’s, James Merrill, called *The (Diblos) Notebooks* [sic]. On which we might write a commentary—or even annotate it—to get something published.” The novel had been published in 1965 by Chatto & Windus.
30. Notebook XXIV, [?6] June 1966 (MS. Pym 63); Taylor did indeed visit Thasos, on her own, in 1966.
31. Notebook XXIV, June 21, 1966 (MS. Pym 63).
32. Notebook XXV (MS. Pym 64).
33. Notebook XXVI, March 29, 1968 (MS. Pym 65); the entry is among MS notes for the novel that would become *An Academic Question*, though Pym did not use the Greek island idea in the final version.

34. Pym puts the words into the mouth of one of the church flower-arrangers, eking out the last autumnal roses: "A few green leaves can make such a difference" (180). The first idea for the title was "A Few Green Ears," echoing the "few green ears" of George Herbert's "Hope," one of Pym's favourite poems: Notebook XXVI, May 8, 1968 (MS. Pym 65).
35. Notebook containing MS notes and drafts for *A Few Green Leaves* (MS. Pym 35/3), 13–14.
36. Notebook containing MS notes and drafts for *A Few Green Leaves* (MS. Pym 35/3), 8.
37. Notebook XXIV, June 3, 1966 (MS. Pym 63).
38. Typescript draft, MS. Pym 37, Book 3, fol. 41.
39. This evocative detritus was one of the earliest items in Pym's notes for the novel: "a blue plastic bag which reminded her passionately of Greece and all the plastic bags on the beach" (Manuscript draft, MS. Pym 35/2, p. 14, 1971); the bags turn up again in Notebook XXXVI, May 13, 1976 (MS. Pym 75).

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4. *Olivia Manning and the Longed-for City*

DEIRDRE DAVID

“We faced the sea,
Knowing until the day of our return, we would be exiles from a country not our own.”¹
Olivia Manning, “Written in the third year of the war.”

In August 1945, British *Vogue* published an essay by the Anglo-Irish novelist Elizabeth Bowen about the peacetime return to houses requisitioned by the Army during the war: “All over Europe, people are going home,” she begins. “Gates, or doors in walls, are being pushed back on their rusty hinges, paths hacked through overgrown courts or gardens. Shutters are being taken down, fires are lit, and rusty water begins to trickle out of the taps. As an organism, the house comes back to life slowly: like the people returning to it, it seems dazed.” These dazed house-owners, Bowen writes, will find unfamiliar smells, books displaced, or upside-down—everywhere signs of “alien occupation.” Then in an imaginative restoration of domestic harmony, she predicts that linen cupboards will be filled with freshly laundered sheets and towels, furniture will be shunted back into place, and the Aga once again will give out its comforting warmth (Bowen 2008: 131).

Bowen imagines, of course, the return home of a reasonably privileged family, one that lived in a prewar England where villages fêtes took place under striped marquees and the local gentry pronounced judgement on the best marrows and the finest rose bushes. This is not the East End of London where bomb debris was being sifted through for remnants of a lost family life, where, in fact, there were few houses to return to, let alone an “overgrown court.” Embedded in Bowen’s image of the rusty gate that will be opened by someone coming home is five years of threat of invasion, rationing,

requisitioning, evacuation, the blitz, V1 and V2 rockets, and an eventual victory that gutted the nation. In sum, the history of World War II as experienced on the home front.

At the moment when Elizabeth Bowen published her essay in *Vogue* in 1945, another woman novelist, Olivia Manning, landed in Liverpool on a crowded troop ship after having spent the entire war abroad. She entered into no such romanticized house as that imagined by Elizabeth Bowen, but proceeded directly to her parents' modest villa in Portsmouth, wrestling herself on to the St. Pancras train and crossing London to Waterloo station. It was a "desolating experience—everything looked so dingy, confined and deserted and strange."² Before her marriage in late August 1939 to Reggie Smith, a lecturer for the British Council, she had worked in London as a typist, a furniture restorer, and a general office person, all the while struggling to become a professional writer. With publication of her well-received novel about the Irish troubles in 1937 (*The Wind Changes*), she had gained some visibility in the London literary establishment, so when she married Reggie Smith three weeks before the outbreak of war, she had acquired a degree of professional identity. Almost immediately after their marriage, they traveled to Bucharest where he had been appointed a lecturer; they arrived on September 3, 1939 to find themselves official enemies of Nazi Germany, although Romania had not yet entered the war.

When Olivia arrived in Bucharest, initially enthralled by a city that called itself the Paris of the East and was famed for its boulevards, horse-drawn carriages, and very own *Arc de Triomphe*, she spent her days exploring the expensive shops and glamorous cafes, but she soon discovered she was not at home in the British colony composed mainly of businessmen making money in the oil fields, embassy officials worried about the war and sundry cynical journalists forgetting their troubles in the local cafés. With Germany pressing upon Romania, by the summer of 1940 the British legation ordered its citizens to decamp, and after the Germans formally took control of a country that had openly collaborated with them for at least three years in the suppression of undesirable Jews and gypsies, Olivia and Reggie Smith escaped to Athens (the city she had long yearned to visit), where she stayed for six months. She was exhausted by witnessing a year of escalating violence—by the roars of green shirted Iron Guards marching around the main square, by the sight of Jews being brutally beaten by the police, by the diminished supplies of sugar, meat, and eggs that pretty much demolished Bucharest's reputation as one of the great food capitals of Europe.

However, after her six months in Athens, when the Germans invaded Greece from Albania in the spring of 1941, she barely made it out of Piraeus

harbor on a leaky old cargo ship, to arrive in Egypt as Montgomery's Eighth Army and Rommel's Afrika Corps were about to embark on their prolonged desert warfare. She recalls that after having subsisted on an orange a day for the three-day trip from Athens to Alexandria, when British soldiers on the dock threw bananas up to the ship, she had never in her entire life tasted anything quite so delicious—green outside, pink inside, and smelling of honey. She stayed in the Middle East for the duration of the war and when she landed in Liverpool in 1945 at the time Elizabeth Bowen published her essay in *Vogue*, she was, of course, glad to be home. But interestingly enough, during her five years away from home (officially England) the place where she had actually felt most at home was the city where she had spent the least amount of time: Athens. Quite simply, she adored Athens before she even arrived there and she pined for it ever thereafter.

An anticipation of Romanian winter, those chilly October winds that blew down from the Transylvanian mountains and almost overnight stripped the trees in the parks where Olivia had walked and lingered in the lakeside cafés, was replaced on her arrival in Athens with balmy breezes wafting from the Aegean. Where in Bucharest the British colony had huddled in the garden of the Athénée Palace hotel, desperate for news from the embassy about when and how they were going to escape before the Germans arrived, in Athens the British exiles lounged happily in cafés, the autumn sun and the excellent ouzo lulling anxiety about the war. And where the British in Romania had essentially constituted an insulated colony—oil company officials, bankers, journalists, many of whom were indifferent to Balkan history and culture—in Athens Olivia discovered a group of expatriate Hellenophiles, many of them happy prewar exiles from England's gloomy climate and delighted not to be working to meet newspaper deadlines or reporting to a managing director.

Olivia's relief at landing safely after leaving Romania (she had flown on Lufthansa entirely without incident) was followed almost immediately by recognition of a significant difference between the British in Bucharest and the British in Athens: in the former city, they were there primarily to work, and in the latter, most seemed to have come to escape such a contingency, or, perhaps, to work at their own pace, like the novelist and poet Robert Liddell who lectured for the British Council in 1940 and who became Olivia's close friend during her time in Greece. In her novel *Friends and Heroes* (1965) she modeled the friend and ally of her principal female character, Harriet Pringle, on Liddell; she characterizes Alan Frewen through his love of Greece and its culture. A sensitive and intelligent official in the British Information Office and the devoted owner of an aging dog named Diocletian, "a Grecophil" like himself, he proudly declares that he loves the country and that he loves the

people. When Harriet's husband, Guy Pringle, with a good deal of pompous self-righteousness, accuses him of wishing to keep the peasants living in picturesque poverty while he enjoys the privileges of an education in Greek culture, Alan responds coolly that he wishes them to remain as they are—"courteous, honourable, and courageous" (737).

Like her fictional character Alan Frewen, Olivia admired the gracious and brave nature of the Greek people and it was in Athens that she felt almost immediately at home, a feeling she evokes pervasively in her well-known Balkan trilogy, three novels published between 1960 and 1965 (*The Great Fortune*, *The Spoilt City*, and *Friends and Heroes*) and based upon her war-time experiences. For Anthony Burgess, the Balkan trilogy was "the most important long work of fiction to have been written by an English woman novelist since the war [...] one of the finest records we have of the impact of that war on Europe." Burgess was astonished by the variety of gifts to be discovered in the trilogy since, as he put it, it is rare that a contemporary woman writer "possesses humour, poetry, the power of the exact image, the ability to be both hard and compassionate, a sense of place [...] all the tricks of impersonation and finally a historical eye" (Burgess 1967: 5; 94). The principal characters are transparently autobiographical: Harriet and Guy Pringle—barely disguised surrogates for Olivia Manning and her husband Reggie Smith. Harriet has worked in a London art gallery before her marriage (as Olivia worked as a struggling writer) and Guy is a lecturer in English literature for the British Council (as was Reggie in Bucharest and Athens). And the risky experiences of Harriet and Guy as they find themselves one step ahead of German aggression almost exactly mirror those of Olivia and her husband. Throughout the war years, she was essentially a refugee on the run from the Germans, and in this regard she was unlike some of the figures discussed in *Women Writing Greece*: not a privileged traveler, expatriate writer, or foreign wife (to name a few) (Kolokotroni and Mitsi 2008). When she was asked in 1964 by a sceptical interviewer for *The Times* how she had managed to ferret out so much extraordinary material for her novels, she replied tartly that she had experienced it all first hand, and that she was happiest when writing about what she knew best: her own life.

In the third volume of the Balkan trilogy, *Friends and Heroes*, Harriet Pringle walks out into the "fluid heat of the autumn afternoon" and thinks to herself, "Athens [...] The longed-for city." Since Reggie Smith was better read in classical literature than Olivia Manning (he had gone to Birmingham University and read Homer aloud in a Brummy accent to his tutor Louis MacNeice; she had left school at sixteen to work in a solicitor's office) in all likelihood it was he who suggested she use one translation of Aeneas' words

as he speaks of his desire to build “the longed-for city” in Crete in a desire to repair the wounds of Troy. Athens haunted Olivia’s actual and literary imagination and when she returned home to England, it was from Athens that she felt herself an exile. In *Friends and Heroes*, she transforms the realization of her dreams to visit Athens (however, dangerously it came about) into a deeply felt elegy for Greece itself.

A World Elsewhere

In the life and work of Olivia Manning, Athens as “the longed-for city” has a freighted meaning: it emblemized her exilic experience, both at home and abroad. For at least a decade before she arrived there, the city (and Greece) symbolized a seemingly unattainable cultural privilege. And for twenty years after she sailed from Piraeus for Egypt, Athens haunted her imagination. When I was writing about Manning’s life and work, I found the greatest challenge was navigating that tricky territory between autobiography and fictional narrative: how does one read the life from the fiction and simultaneously do justice to the literary imagination? In a sense, though, I was guided and encouraged by Manning’s own declaration that she intended her Balkan and Levant trilogies to work both as history and autobiography, by her ease in discussing the weaving of historical event, personal memory, and imaginative fiction that characterizes her writing. In what follows, I want first to elucidate the symbolic nature of Athens and Greece for Manning before the war, when she was a young woman in Portsmouth and London. And, second, I shall discuss the manner in which she mined her memories of the place where she felt most at home during the war years, that “longed-for city,” Athens. It was in *Friends and Heroes* that she paid tribute to Athens and expressed her longing for her lost home. She always insisted that although most critics and readers seemed to consider the two Romanian books of the trilogy better than the third, she believed “the Greek one, as a summing-up, is a better book.” *Friends and Heroes* elegizes Athens and Greece after Axis forces took complete control and Olivia Manning and Reggie Smith sailed for Egypt in a beaten-up old troop ship.

Olivia Manning was born in Portsmouth—for her, a place of seedy desolation and cramped provincialism. Depressed by the sight of a polluted harbor and dull stony beaches littered with paper bags, banana-skins, and broken bottles left by day-trippers, she found her primary comfort in the Portsmouth public library with the air smelling of mackintoshes and “the desolate glimmer of wet, foggy evening touching ten thousand books, all stoutly bound against assault” (Manning 1961). Her father was a retired Lieutenant Commander in

the British navy and supporting his wife and two children on a paltry pension; her mother was the permanently disgruntled daughter of a Northern Irish pub-owner. As Olivia put it, “we were very, very poor, in the way that only a naval officer’s family can be. There was never a farthing to spare.” It was in the Portsmouth public library that she found a world elsewhere, sensing “that somewhere there, if one could find it, was the answer to the mystifying boredom of existence” (Manning 1975: 116–24). And find it she did—in the plays of Bernard Shaw, in the short stories of Katherine Mansfield, and in the novels of D.H. Lawrence and Virginia Woolf. Having left school at sixteen to work as a shorthand-typist (university was out of the question given the family finances—she needed to contribute to the household budget), she created her own higher education through reading and dedicated note-taking, determined one day to become a writer. From her devoted reading of the *Times Literary Supplement* and her familiarity with the life and work of Virginia Woolf, Olivia became enamored of Bloomsbury: up on all the doings of the Stephens sisters, their brothers, and their pals such as Lytton Strachey and Ottoline Morrell, and enthralled by a shimmering world so different from her own. She longed for Bloomsbury and so identified with the Ugly Duckling of fairy tales that she believed she had only to reach Fitzroy Square for those beautiful swans Virginia Woolf and her sister Vanessa Bell to come sailing to welcome her and caress her with their beaks. When she finally managed to get a job in London and began an affair with an editor at Jonathan Cape, Hamish Miles, she confided to him her fantasy of meeting Woolf. A stern intellectual mentor, Miles dismissed her naïve fantasies: Woolf, he said, would “eat her alive” and she’d be better off writing like James Joyce. But she didn’t want to write like Joyce: it was Woolf who represented most fully a cultural world elsewhere and it was Woolf who for Olivia was one of the greatest women novelists in the world.

For Manning’s first published writing—short adventure stories that appeared in the *Portsmouth News* in 1929—she called herself “Jacob Morrow, taking Jacob from Woolf’s *Jacob’s Room*, and she knew, of course, that Jacob visits Athens and stands on the Acropolis on the spot of Athena’s statue (Woolf 1922: 148). She longed to follow his footsteps, and some twelve years later, she did, ecstatic that she had finally arrived in her longed-for city. She knew that Virginia Woolf had begun Greek lessons in 1897, that she visited Athens in 1906 and that in 1932, Virginia and Leonard had traveled to Greece with Roger Fry and his sister. She also knew, and took heart from the fact, that even if Woolf had not gone to university and had felt herself excluded from a world she describes in *Three Guineas* as one where “brothers who have been educated at public schools and universities” ascend pulpits, teach,

administer justice, practice medicine, transact business, and make money, she had become a brilliantly gifted writer. Although Olivia felt herself to be triply exiled by virtue of her social class, her dismal upbringing, and her gender, back in Portsmouth she had vowed to attain some of Woolf's cultural power, and to work as hard as she could to become a professional writer, always knowing, to her credit, that she could never become as great a novelist as Woolf.

When Olivia and Reggie first arrived in Athens, they were understandably disoriented, adrift, and unable to do anything but wonder whether and where they would find a home in a disordered world. Reggie was out of work and Olivia had abandoned her writing, up to this point in her career mostly short stories. But in the weeks after October 28, 1940, their spirits were lifted, together with those of every Greek citizen, by the resounding defeat of an invading Italian army by Greek forces in battles at Elaia-Kalamas and in the Pindus Mountains. Bulgaria having failed to attack Greece, as the Italians had hoped, the Greek High Command was able to transfer the mobilized divisions intended for the garrisoning of Macedonia to the Albanian frontier in the North and to repel an Italian incursion. For the moment, it seemed as if Greece would be safe and Olivia exulted in the feeling.

With the valiant entry of Greece into the war against the Axis powers, Britain began establishing bases on Greek soil, and *The Times* reported on October 31 that excited crowds in Athens were snatching newspapers to read bulletins about British air and naval forces taking action against the Italians. News that the British navy was laying mines off the Greek coast spread like wildfire and newspapers reported that almost every large shop window in the city's center mounted celebratory displays in honor of the British navy. For Olivia, this was an uplifting contrast to the march of swastika posters across Bucharest shop windows. She never forgot the despicable eager collaboration of the Romanians with their German invaders. And neither did she forget that while the Italians were mired in mud in the mountains she was picking scarlet cyclamens in her beloved Athens. On November 14, jubilant Greek forces crossed the border into Albania and took city after city despite a harsh winter, lack of adequate supplies, and Italian military superiority.

By mid-January 1941, Greece had occupied a fourth of that country and from their hotel window Olivia and Reggie heard the joyful noise of brass bands, church bells, cheers, and motor horns well into the balmy night as the people of Athens celebrated this advance. In a further thrilling victory, on November 22, Koritza, the principal Italian military base in Albania, fell to Greek forces and after appropriating abandoned Italian tanks, the victors drove the Italians northward: this stunning move was celebrated by processions of

civilians, among them Olivia and Reggie, through the Athens streets bearing flowers and decorated pictures of King George II and the Prime Minister, General Metaxas. As *The Times* noted on November 22, “there were sufficient Union Jacks in evidence to make it clear that the Greeks in the moment of celebration had not forgotten the share played in the victory by their Allies.” Mussolini, having failed to overcome his disappointment in Greek resistance to Italian occupation, ordered a wholesale dismissal of all his naval and military commanders and staff officers. But the exhilaration in Athens did not last long since everyone knew that despite their defeat, the Italians had behind them the weight of the Axis forces. There was a lingering and well-founded fear that the Greek line would break suddenly and the enemy arrive overnight. And, of course, eventually that line did break in April 1941 with the fall of Kalamata in the Peloponnese and the complete occupation of the Greek mainland by Axis forces. Remembering anxiously the wait in Bucharest to hear from the British Legation as to how she and Reggie were to get out of Romania, Olivia now began to wonder how they would manage to escape her longed-for city.

Early in January 1941, the times became leaner, the weather colder, and the warm lazy days of the previous October when she had sat outside in cafes with Reggie and Robert Liddell enjoying pastitsio and retsina seemed far in the past. Just as food shortages in Bucharest had become more severe with every day of the encroaching German invasion, so now Athens restaurants began serving tired-looking tripe rather than gleaming fish fresh from the Piraeus harbor. In *Friends and Heroes*, Olivia records these lean times through her descriptions of food and what it means to various characters: she writes that even the spectacle of Italian prisoners being paraded through the streets did little to distract people in a hard winter when it was as cold indoors as out and food was disappearing from the shops. Bystanders smiled ironically as prisoners tramped by on their way to Piraeus and shipment to camps in the Western Desert since they would eat better than the Greeks: “a camp in the sun was more comfortable than the Albanian mountains where men bivouacked waist deep in snow” (785). In her manuscript notes for these scenes, Olivia records newspaper accounts of thousands of amputations for frost bite in the Athens hospitals and harrowing stories of peasant women toiling up the icy and rocky mountains with supplies for their men. And she writes in her novel of people eating intestines from unidentified animals: “Grey, slippery and bound up like shoelaces.” In their final weeks in Athens, she and Reggie subsisted almost entirely on wine and potatoes.

As she traces the experiences of Harriet and Guy Pringle, hanging on as long as they can but knowing they must leave for who knows where, in *Friends*

and *Heroes* Olivia adopted a meticulous timeline of the events in Greece from January to April 1941. Following this carefully plotted sequence and calling upon her own searing recollection of terrifying air-raid sirens and the sight of lorries full of wounded troops (Greek, British, Australian) being brought back to Athens from the North, she devotes the last chapters of her novel to a vivid unfolding of Greek resistance and eventual collapse in the face of Axis forces, sketching details of the battle of the Pindus gorges, for example, where the Third Alpine Division of 14,000 fully equipped Italian mountaineers were met and routed by 8,000 Greeks. Had she not been writing fiction, these chapters could well have functioned as a brilliant long essay about her “longed-for,” suffering city.

When Prime Minister Metaxas died at the end of January 1941, he was succeeded by Alexandros Koryzis; Koryzis immediately accepted Britain’s offer of military aid and British and Commonwealth Expeditionary forces soon began landing on Greek soil. Seeking to reinforce the newly forged Anglo–Greek military alliance, Anthony Eden promptly flew to Athens for discussions with Koryzis; their meeting and subsequent commitment to defeat at all costs the Axis forces was hailed by the Greek newspaper *Proia*, “No new difficulty that may arrive can find us spiritually unprepared or take us by surprise [...] we have on our side a powerful ally with common ideals.”³ Affirming these sentiments, Eden announced that along with all British people, he had applauded the heroic resistance of the Greek fighters and civilians and that now, standing in Athens with Alexandros Koryzis, he was moved and encouraged by the fierce spirit and resolution he saw before him. Olivia represents these momentous historical moments in *Friends and Heroes* in a telling instance of how successfully (here and in all the novels in her Balkan and Levant trilogies) she navigates between registering historical actuality and transforming that actuality into novelistic form.

But by early April, German forces were threatening on three fronts—Greek, Yugoslavian, and Turkish—and when Belgrade surrendered to the Germans in mid-April the Greek and British forces fell back to the Mount Olympus line in Greece. When the Germans attacked the new front line, the Greek army withdrew, which allowed Axis forces to move south and to break through British positions at Thermopylae. Fierce dogfights over Athens between British Hurricane planes and the Luftwaffe continued until late April but by the 30th Axis forces had occupied the entire Greek mainland. Commonwealth Expeditionary Forces began evacuation, a withdrawal described by the German News Agency in this way: “The remnants of the fleeing British troops are now trying to escape from Greece in barges, fishing boats, and all sorts of vessels, leaving behind arms, war material, and equipment of all

kinds.”⁴ German troops entered Olivia’s beloved city just days after she and Reggie managed to get on a boat for Cairo—the last civilian ship to leave the Piraeus harbor.

On Good Friday morning, they were ordered to leave their house and proceed to the harbor with one suitcase each and enough food to last for three days. Packed into a coal lorry with other fleeing refugees, they were driven down a hot road, away from the little bungalow where they had left most of their belongings, out of the main part of the city and into the bombed area. The buildings around the harbor were burnt to the ground, the water was thick with oil and charred wreckage, and one of the few vessels standing upright in a sodden wasteland littered with the masts and funnels of sunken ships was a rusty old boat: the *Erebus*. The fear and tension that accompanied embarkation was exacerbated by a barrage of insulting remarks directed at the refugees by an unfeeling English businessman who had chartered the ship for the exclusive use of his own commercial company and friends. He was not happy to see a bedraggled line of displaced persons coming up the gangway. When the *Erebus* set creaky and overloaded sail, the passengers watched the Peloponnese sunset and the Acropolis glimmering white and then slowly fading from sight. Describing this scene in *Friends and Heroes*, Olivia writes that Piraeus appeared like “an ancient ruin, reaching again towards the desolation that covered it for eighteen hundred years after the Peloponnesian Wars” (1023). In a further instance of how she integrates in the Balkan trilogy her own private recollections with the published record, she relied upon a first-person account that appeared in *The Times* on May 1, 1941 of an Australian reporter’s escape from Greece under circumstances very similar to her own. He wrote that he boarded a steamer with no proper passenger accommodations and that it was dangerously overloaded with civilian refugees, all of them clutching bedrolls, blankets, and small suitcases.

Escaping the Barbarians

Conditions on the *Erebus*, which had previously been deployed in taking Italian prisoners to the Middle East were appalling: the cabins were filthy, the machinery rusting, and the crew surly and suspicious. Olivia and Reggie were assigned to the lowest deck, where they shared a cabin with six friends, including Robert Liddell who quickly retreated to another part of the ship. When the ship lumbered out of Piraeus, an air-raid warning sounded and bombs began falling on the harbor; Olivia’s last sight of her beloved Greece was the final razing of the site of her escape. She thought to herself that it was not so much the danger of being dive-bombed that pained her so much (the

troop-ship following the *Erebus* was the main target) as the fact that she was abandoning the country she loved and was bidding farewell to her longed-for city. She felt convinced she would never see it again; and she was correct. During the frantic embarkation, Reggie had recited, repeatedly and doggedly, lines from the opening of Cavafy's poem "Waiting for the Barbarians": "What are we waiting for, assembled in the forum?/The barbarians are due here today." In early May, Axis forces completely occupied the country whose abandonment Olivia felt so strongly, and Athenian residents who had suffered through months of bombing, food shortages, and threats of invasion, were forced to witness a "victory parade" laid on by the barbarians.

The Germans dismissed large numbers of Greek soldiers and sent them home but, as a correspondent for a Stockholm newspaper reported on May 7, "There is no organisation to help them and each must journey as he can. Their footwear is often tattered, but they wander past in old uniforms with an overcoat strapped on the back to serve them as a pillow during the night, which is generally spent in the open air."⁵ Thousands of Commonwealth forces were evacuated from Greece and hundreds of British servicemen died during the evacuation. As the *Erebus* neared Egypt Olivia went on deck and took stock of her perilous condition. She was a refugee without money, with few possessions, and with no guarantee she would ever return to England. And most woundingly of all, she was sure she would never again see the parks of Athens massed with cyclamens and anemones; she remembered that even while the city was being hit by bombs, in the olive groves flowers had stood as high as her waist.

At the beginning of her Levant trilogy (the three novels dealing with her time in the Middle East—(*The Danger Tree*, *The Battle Lost and Won*, and *The Sum of Things*, published between 1977 and 1980), she writes of Greek refugees weeping as they heard the final broadcast from the Greek radio station—"Closing down for the last time, hoping for happier days. God be with you and for you." She felt that the silence that followed these final words signaled the silence of the civilized world: for her symbolized most fully in the city for which she longed when a young woman back in England desperate to attain some of the intellectual and cultural heritage that belonged to a privileged and educated social class, and the city which she had come to love almost immediately she arrived there in October 1940.

After a few months in Cairo and Alexandria, Olivia and Reggie eventually settled in Jerusalem and soon after arriving in that city she wrote a poem that celebrated the struggle of the Greek fighters, spoken by an exiled citizen of Athens (as she had already begun to think of herself). The poem's elegiac evocation of exile resonates with her own continuing dislocation (a fragment

from this poem is the epigraph for this essay). Perhaps not a great poem, it encapsulates Olivia's imagination of Athens as a longed-for city in multiple ways. I also find it interesting that as a writer so thoroughly committed to narrative prose she resorts to verse to express her sorrow:

The creeping sun for the last time lit for us
The Acropolis and its tokens of ancient wars.
Others were driven out before this; we had held ourselves an unbiddable people.
When the brilliance of the Peloponnese went down in darkness, when the night
came between us,
Our friends returned to Athens excited, a little more afraid.
We faced the sea,
Knowing until the day of our return, we would be exiles from a country not our
own."⁶

Then, on a chilly night in a hotel dining room in Jerusalem in mid-November 1942, she sat down with the Greek poet George Seferis and half a dozen other writers. Montgomery had just defeated Rommel at the second battle of El Alamein and the writers were celebrating this victory by reading aloud. In her account of this occasion, published as an essay titled "Poets in Exile" in *Horizon* in 1944, Olivia describes Seferis sitting in a dark corner of the dining room and suddenly saying, "Think of it! Exiles reading poetry to each other!" Olivia added that for her, and of course for many others, Seferis was "the best of the younger Greek poets [...] a man of unusual intellectual power and sympathetic personality." She goes on to say that he was haunted by the conviction that he should have remained in Greece with his friends: "This sense of a missed experience, that no alternative experience can dispel, haunts most of us. Seferis should have suffered in Athens; we should have gone through the London blitz."⁷ She feels guilty for having "missed" the London blitz, for not having huddled in an air-raid shelter listening for the all-clear, and for not having endured the relentless bombing of Portsmouth (where her parents lived throughout the war). And most profoundly, I think, she understood Seferis' harrowing regret that he had not endured with his friends the jubilation and despair felt by all citizens of Athens when the Greeks miraculously defeated the Italians and then inevitably, given the power of the Axis forces, succumbed to German tyranny. She had witnessed all this.

I like to think also that she might have read her elegiac poem to Seferis and the other writers in that dimly-lit Jerusalem hotel dining room. As she writes in her essay "Poets in Exile," "Exile, nostalgia and uncertainty produced in poets a variety of responses." Hers was to write her two magnificent trilogies, the Balkan and the Levant, and, of course, the poem she read in Jerusalem. Affiliating herself with the Greek exiles, who saw for the last time

the Acropolis with “its tokens of ancient wars,” lit by the creeping sun, who watched the brilliance of the Peloponnese go down in darkness, she felt herself an exile from a country not her own. Yet, in so many ways, she made it her own: longing to get to Athens, to walk on the Acropolis like Virginia Woolf’s character Jacob and to attain a touch of the privilege accorded young women like Woolf, she finally reached her longed-for city. And then exiled from it by war, she longed for what seemed the impossibility of return. Yet in my view, she did return: in her fiction that pays tribute to the heroic Greek people and to Athens itself.

Notes

1. Manning wrote this elegiac poem soon after arriving in Alexandria in April 1941. It evokes the heroic yet ultimately futile struggle of Greek resistance fighters. Quoted in Jonathan Bolton, *Personal Landscapes: British Poets in Egypt during the Second World War*. New York, NY: St. Martin’s Press, 1997, 48.
2. Olivia Manning Collection/Correspondence, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas, Austin, July 23, 1945.
3. Quoted in *The Times*, March 5, 1941.
4. Quoted in *The Times*, April 30, 1941.
5. Quoted in *The Times*, May 7, 1941.
6. Olivia Manning, typescript, “Cairo in those days,” Olivia Manning Collection, Harry Ransom Center, University of Austin, Texas.
7. “Poets in Exile,” *Horizon*, October 1944, 275. Roderick Beaton kindly pointed out to me that Olivia may have confused her dates in placing Seferis in Jerusalem in mid-November 1942 since according to his records, Seferis was not in that city on that date. It seems to me, however, that even if she did get the dates wrong, the account of exiled writers reading to each other remains moving and historically significant.

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5. *A Place “We All Dream About”: Greece in Mills & Boon Romances*

LAURA VIVANCO

In theory, popular romantic fiction can be set anywhere; in practice certain locations have been more favored than others. As Mills & Boon author Mary Wibberley once observed, although “love does bloom in the canteen of a gas-works, just as it does in offices, factories, supermarkets and everywhere else[,] [...] in romantic novels the reader is seeking escapism, and that can be more easily found in the places we all dream about” (1993: 56). Greece is evidently one of those “places we all dream about” since a significant number of Mills & Boon romances have been set wholly or partially in Greece. Although I refer to only a very small number of them here, my corpus includes novels from each of the decades from 1960 to 2010, giving it a wide enough chronological spread to permit the identification and analysis of certain elements which, though not present in all the novels, recur down the decades and help to explain why Greece, in particular, has been a place that Mills & Boon readers “dream about.”

A variety of factors can affect the popularity of a particular location and Janet Batsleer *et al* suggest

It is likely that some of the shifts in the formulas of romantic fiction can be related quite closely to historical and social change. Where would doctor-and-nurse romances be without the National Health Service [...] or the exotic international settings of some recent romances without the transnationalization of capital and the advent of the package holiday? (1985: 91)

In the early 1950s, the majority of Mills & Boon novels appear to have been “thoroughly domestic” (Dixon 1999: 6) in terms of both their settings and their heroines’ occupations. This situation was not to last long, however,

for “A distinctive change in the Mills & Boon heroines in the 1950s is evident in the new emphasis on leaving home and family for a ‘career,’ often in a foreign setting” (McAleer 1999: 200) and many heroines had, “By the end of the 1950s [...] moved out of the home, out of England altogether, and were situated once again abroad” (Dixon 1999: 7). This change in the novels was presumably motivated, at least in part, by the fact that, “With foreign travel expanding in the 1950s, interest in foreign locations also increased—with the exception of Germany” (McAleer 1999: 202). Certain other locations had to be handled with care given that, in general, Mills & Boon “avoided ‘hot button’ topics such as religion and politics, venturing into public affairs only during WWII (when heroines, fiercely patriotic, joined the fight)” (McAleer 1999: 5). For example, in 1967 concerns about the UK’s relationship with Spain led editor Alan Boon to write to one author, stating that

In view of the situation at Gibraltar, we would like to change the title of *The Spanish Doctor*. I feel confident that the Spanish Government does not want any serious trouble, but just in case something went wrong, we would prefer to take precautions in advance. It’s the “Spanish” bit, of course, that we would like changed. Can you think of a way round, retaining the suggestion of the sunshine and the medicine? (1999: 261)

Despite the fact that Greece was ruled by a military junta from April 1967 to July 1974, some Mills & Boon romances were set in Greece during this period. In *The Pagan Island* (1972) and *Olive Island* (1972) Violet Winspear and Kay Thorpe avoid all mention of the political situation and a reader of Anne Hampson’s *Eternal Summer* (1969) would never guess that anything at all was amiss beneath Greece’s “dazzling blue sky” (1969: 88) as a Greek secondary character blithely states “Poor, we are, but [...] we are always happy because of the sun!” (1969: 88). Rachel Lindsay’s *Cage of Gold* (1973), however, addresses the realities of life under a dictatorship with surprising candor for a Mills & Boon. When the heroine’s traveling companion is arrested by the Greek police for supporting a march organized by a group of teachers who “believe the University should be run for the benefit of the *students*, not the Government” (1973: 10), she is informed that “If you have to deal with the police in this country [...] it’s best to have every possible aid you can get. A lawyer mightn’t help Tony if he were Greek, but as he’s British ...” (1973: 19–20) and “with chilly foreboding she remembered what Tony had said to her a few days ago when they had been talking about dictatorships; in a military country, might is right” (1973: 20).

Surveying the Scene

According to one 1960s guide to writing romantic fiction, "The reading trend nowadays is towards facts and reality, for people realise that even while reading for pleasure they can glean a little more information" (Britton & Collin 1960: 86–7). In the three 1960s Mills & Boons in my sample the heroines do tend to observe their surroundings closely, and also receive additional information from those they meet. Thus even Jenni Crane, who is only in Greece briefly in order to "model [...] clothes that would be sold in department stores all over the world in the spring" (Grimstead 1965: 167), has the opportunity to see famous landmarks including "the Parthenon, whose mellow-toned marble columns and exquisite grace surpassed all her expectations" (1965: 170) and "Constitution Square with its flowers and bushes. 'The centre of immortal Athens,' as the porter told Jenni proudly" (1965: 169) and she "soon decided she had surrendered to the spell of Athens. Its vitality appealed to her, the mixture of the new and the old, the handsome skyscrapers and the ancient pillars and stones and statues that had been standing for thousands of years" (1965: 169). Nan Asquith, author of *The Garden of Persephone* (1967), literally provides the reader with an overview of Greece as the pilot of a light aircraft asks the heroine:

"Enjoying the view?"

[...] "It's wonderful. So many islands. And so much sea!"

"You know what they say—the sea is Greece. The people live by and on it. It's their lifeline. The mountains make communications difficult, so in the winter the islanders stay put and hibernate, but all through the summer they sail, fishing and trading and visiting one another. [...] Even on the mainland it's often easier and quicker to get to somewhere by sea. Those mountains back there extend from the Balkans, beyond Corinth and the Peloponnese to drop finally into the sea. Where they break surface the peaks form the islands. If you could view it all in one glance you'd see a distinct pattern." (1976: 13–14)

Readers in subsequent decades would appear to have been equally keen to receive instruction on the landscape and architecture of the countries in which romances were set. In the 1980s, Janice A. Radway observed that

romantic authors often squander lavish amounts of space on the descriptions of foreign environments [...] that are very likely not already known except in the most skeletal way by the reader. Furthermore, [...] the readers themselves "frame" or type these descriptive passages as valuable "information" and "instructional" material that can be stored as "knowledge" for use at a later date. (1991: 195)

The hero of Annabel Murray's *Black Lion of Skiapelos* (1989) takes his heroine, and thus indirectly the reader, on a tour of sites in and around Athens and she, like Jenni Crane before her, spends some time in

Syntagma, or Constitution Square [...]. One side of the square faced the Parliament building where the *Evzones*, or Presidential guards, in their long white socks and shoes, kept guard, their pleated *fustanellas* swirling as they wheeled in front of the simple but impressive War Memorial.

The other three sides of the square were given over to cafés, office blocks, banks and stately hotels. (1989: 20)

The impetus to include “‘instructional’ material” about Greece may have waned in more recent years, but one can still find some descriptions tinged with didacticism. In Lucy Gordon's *The Greek Tycoon's Achilles Heel* (2010), for instance, reference is made to “the Parthenon, the great classical temple built more than two thousand years before, high on the Acropolis” (2010: 16) and a passing mention of the fact that the hero's mother was frequently taken to the Achilleion Palace on Corfu by her mother prompts a three-paragraph synopsis of the life of the Empress Sisi, who had “begun to transform the Palace into a tribute to Achilles” (2010: 57).

The urge to impart “valuable ‘information’” has not, however, prevented authors from inventing additional Greek islands. According to Asquith's *The Garden of Persephone*, the island of Melaenus “belongs to the Northern Sporades. Melaenus is one of the most beautiful of them all” (1976: 14), but I have been unable to find any trace of it, or of Karios, the island which appears in Margaret Rome's *Second-Best Bride* (1981). The latter, along with Lefkis, recently added to the “property portfolio” (Stephens 2007: 8) of the hero of Susan Stephens' *Bought: One Island, One Bride* (2007), are owned by the heroes of these novels, as are many other islands in Greek-set romances.

The frequency with which fictitious islands appear in Mills & Boon novels suggests that they can serve a number of functions. When, as in Charlotte Lamb's *Deadly Rivals* (1995), the island is small enough to be “the perfect hideaway for the man who has everything except perfect privacy” (1995: 92), it can force the protagonists into such close proximity that they are obliged to confront their feelings for one another. A private island would also appear to be a status symbol which is particularly appealing to Greek tycoons: “I've heard it said that a Greek shipowner without an island is like a king without his clothes” (Murray 1989: 50). It seems likely that this association between islands and wealthy Greeks is due to Aristotle Onassis, to whose yacht *Win-spear* refers (1972: 159) and whose marriage to “a foreign woman” (Lindsay 1973: 48) sets a precedent for Lindsay's heroine: although “Onassis was not the first man to own a personal, private island, [...] he gained worldwide

attention for it” (Nowell 2004: 204). However, while ownership of an island can serve as a marker of financial success, in a Mills & Boon novel life on one may, paradoxically, encourage the shedding of many of the trappings of wealth. In Sarah Morgan’s *Bought: The Greek’s Innocent Virgin* (2008), for instance, the relative isolation of the island enables a low-paid worker in the hospitality industry to find a kind of equality with her rich lover: “Closeted on his secluded island, she’d barely thought of his billionaire status. They’d been a man and a woman, nothing more” (2008: 160).

Romantic Adventures

The “wealth of British literary, philosophical and filmic references to the island as the setting for utopia” (Matthews & Travers 2012: 2) suggests that islands have a special appeal for British authors and readers and one of the minor characters in Penny Jordan’s *Island of the Dawn* (1982) perhaps expresses the feelings of many of them when he admits to envying

“[...] these Greek millionaires who buy themselves one of these tiny islands. There’s something about owning one’s own island that’s very dear to the heart of most men—especially Britons. It comes from being an island race, I suppose.” Chloe agreed with him. She could still remember her own girlhood envy of Enid Blyton’s tomboy heroine with her own small island domain. (1982: 17)

The isolation, and the at times menacing atmosphere, of the island homes depicted in Asquith’s and Winspear’s novels are, however, more reminiscent of a different type of fiction: modern Gothics, most of which are set in “a large, lonely, usually brooding House” (Russ 1973: 667) and feature “a handsome, magnetic suitor or husband who may or may not be a lunatic and/or murderer” (Russ 1973: 667). In Asquith’s novel there is “something menacing” (1976: 176) about the heroine’s father-in-law, who at the very least “stood there watching” (1976: 181) while his ward fell down some steps, and may even have pushed her. In Winspear’s *The Pagan Island* the hero “had a wife, but they say he killed her” (1972: 28).

Norrey Ford’s *The Love Goddess* (1976), although also set on a Greek island, has more in common with romantic suspense fiction of the kind written by Mary Stewart, who “has inspired generations of novelists” (Haddon & Pearson 2010: 172). Three of Stewart’s novels, first published in the UK between 1960 and 1964, were set in Greece.¹ Her

typical protagonist is English, between twenty-two and twenty-eight years old, off on vacation in an exciting part of the world, attractive, bright, willing [...] to become involved in the rescue of someone younger or less fortunate than she.

She does not seek conflict but because of her adventurous and compassionate nature finds herself in the middle of it. Since she is honest and trusting, she does not always recognize the villain, but neither does anyone else [...]. The villain of Stewart's stories is not easily recognizable, for he is often charming, handsome, and, on the surface, reliable. (Friedman 1990: 116)

Though a little younger than Stewart's protagonists, Ford's heroine, Jacqui, is English, twenty years old, "single, attractive, and full of life" (1976: 37). As "a secretary, in a comprehensive school" (1976: 14) she has the time to travel to the island of Zaros in her summer holidays to retrieve £500 which the hero's half-brother had borrowed from her father, "a not very successful schoolmaster with a family, [to whom] it represents a great deal" (1976: 12). Since the money cannot be repaid immediately, she stays on Zaros to "do clerical work" (1976: 25) related to the archaeological dive organized by Professor Bart Ransom, the hero, but soon becomes involved in trying to foil the villains, who are intent on stealing the most valuable artefacts. One of them, Luigi, fits the Stewart pattern, for he seems "a good-natured soul" (1976: 39) and has "winning ways that charm birds off trees" (1976: 154).

The changeable Aegean sea also provides challenges for Jacqui and Bart to overcome. Jacqui knows that conditions in the Aegean can rapidly be altered by "one of those swift Mediterranean storms" (1976: 5) and at one point while she observes "the peaceful scene; white ship, the sunlit water. 'The cruel sea,' she murmured. 'Even when it's smiling there's cruelty down there. [...]" (1976: 143). By this stage in the novel Jacqui has experienced the terror of being pulled under the waves by the "cold, powerful limb" of an octopus which "wrapped itself round her ankle" (1976: 101) and almost drowned her. Toward the end of the romance it is Bart who faces death, this time as a result of decompression sickness after diving to recover a priceless treasure before the arrival of a storm. His decision to risk the dive prompts Jacqui to declare her love; he hinted at his for her in the aftermath of her encounter with the octopus. Ford's novel demonstrates that Mills & Boon authors had already been using "the environment and the settings that [...] characters are in to [...] illuminate their feelings" (Walker 2008: 33) long before Kate Walker, a British author of over fifty Mills & Boon romances, advised this in her 2008 guide to writing romance. Walker adds that in moments such as these, "when everything seems to be lost, the reader wants to feel your characters' fear—to actually doubt, just for a moment, that the happy ending is possible, even though she knows it will happen" (2008: 20).

The dangers posed by Greece's mountainous countryside and "cruel sea" facilitate the creation of scenes which are intensely emotional for both

characters and readers and may, therefore, have increased the appeal of Greece as a setting for romantic fiction. It is certainly the case that, even in the novels which lack a suspense sub-plot or Gothic undertones, an element of adventure may be provided by Greece's seas, mountains, and storms. In Thorpe's *Olive Island*, for example, a storm in which "The rain came, sweeping down from the mountains in a solid sheet of water [...] thunder rolled, and lightning flashed overhead" (1973: 144) causes a landslide on a cliff-top path and the heroine finds herself clinging "to what felt like a tree root [...] as the earth fell away all around her" (1973: 148). In Lamb's novel a storm at sea sets the deck of a luxury yacht "awash with water" and as her heroine "fell overboard she screamed, but the gale caught her voice and tore it away soundlessly" (1995: 108). Luckily the hero, who had been watching from his island, reaches her just as she is "going down for the last time" (1995: 110) and tows her back to shore. The protagonists of Susan Stephens' *Bought: One Island, One Bride* also come close to drowning at sea. This time, however, it is the heroine who sets out to rescue the hero, from "partially submerged rocks [...] and currents that changed course every few minutes" (2007: 151).

Dramatic though these scenes are, the most important adventure to be found in a romance, and the one which provides most of the "emotional punch" (Walker 2008: 20), is always that of falling in love and in Mills & Boons Greece is both "a place that provides the ideal setting for romantic dates" (Grimstead 1965: 169) and one which is filled with hot-blooded males.

Hot-Blooded Romance

Kate Walker has explained that when deciding on where to locate the action of a romance "The truth is that any setting will work. But as with the 'tall dark and handsome' shorthand, a warm, sunny and exotic place is easier to make sensual and exciting" (2008: 75). In Mills & Boon romances, Greece is generally a land of heat and sunlight: the heroine of Hettie Grimstead's *Once Upon a Kiss* (1965), who works as a model, comments that even though "it's December tomorrow" (1965: 168) she will have to make an effort to avoid gaining a tan that would spoil her look. Jane Donnelly's *Sleeping Beauty* (1995) is unusual inasmuch as it depicts a cold Cretan winter: when the heroine arrives in an isolated village in the White Mountains "the chill in the air struck her, making her glad of her warm zipped-up coat. She wrapped a long fleecy red scarf around her ears and dug her gloved hands deep into her pockets" (1995: 8). As the hero later observes, the cold inhibits sexual activity:

“It’s as well we’re in deep freeze up here,” he said, and she knew he was feeling, as she was, an incredible surge of physical awareness.

She nodded, agreeing that there was safety of a sort in being swaddled from neck to toes. (1995: 78)

In contrast, a hot climate and seaside settings often encourage the wearing of only minimal quantities of clothing and therefore enhance “physical awareness.” Yan Diamakis, for instance, in Rosalie Ash’s *Apollo’s Legend* (1994) is

darkly tanned and radiating good health, and, in brief but well-cut black swimming-trunks, no detail of his physical perfection went unnoticed. He possessed the enviable pectorals, the sloping well-honed shoulders, the washboard abdomen and long, muscled thighs of Adonis himself. (1994: 11)

Eleanor, who finds him “sexually compelling” and “meltingly gorgeous” (1994: 11), is certainly not the only Mills & Boon protagonist to be impressed by, and attracted to, the flesh exposed to view during a hot Greek summer. When the sun’s strength necessitates the use of protective cream, this can encourage further intimacies: as Leon Stephanides “gently massaged the cream” (Jordan 1982: 130) onto his estranged wife’s back, she found that “The slow, rhythmic caress of his hands [...] soon became unwittingly erotic” (1982: 130). Matters progress yet further in Nan Asquith’s *The Garden of Persephone*, in which the hero and heroine find themselves alone outdoors:

The fiery heat had gone from the sun, but it warmed us in its rays, our skins and swim-suits drying as we sat in the shelter of the cliff, completely out of sight of any passing boat. [...] Paul’s hand moved from my hair to my shoulder and slowly, gently he pushed me back until I was lying down and he was leaning over me. (1976: 125)

The action is then described obliquely: “It was like plunging into pounding surf, feeling powerful tides and currents sweep one away,” and the scene concludes as the protagonists “lay, spent swimmers, our arms about one another, while the sun moved slowly down the sky” (1976: 125). Writing almost exactly forty years later, Sarah Morgan provides no veil of similes and metaphors for her protagonists as they engage in outdoor sex, this time in a pool, and although the water is “cool” (2008: 87), within a short time of leaving it the heroine’s “costume had almost dried in the heat” (2008: 100–1).

While there are, therefore, obvious reasons for hot summer days to be linked with sexuality, the description of the Greeks as “a hot-blooded, unpredictable race” (Hampson 1969: 19), which appears in Hampson’s *Eternal*

Summer, and the statement by a secondary character in Lindsay's *Cage of Gold* that "Greek men are pretty hot-blooded" (1973: 59), suggest that the association between Greece, heat and sexuality perhaps owes something to now-discredited scientific theories. It is, of course, highly unlikely that either Hampson or Lindsay intended to invoke the medical ideas of Hippocrates and Galen, but

The physiological theory of "the humors," first developed by the Greeks and taken by the great schools of Arabian medicine to Europe in the 11th and 12th centuries, left a great deposit in the English language, for example, such words as *sanguine*, *phlegmatic*, *choleric*, *melancholy* [...] and such phrases as [...] *cold* or *hot-blooded*. (Scarlett 1968: 468)

According to this theory the sanguine and choleric personalities were hot, with the sanguine particularly associated with amorousness (Vivanco 2003). In subsequent centuries the theory was further extended to encompass the influence of geography and so in "early modern medical discourse and English drama" (Neely 2004: 55–6),

because the epistemology of heat drives humoral theory, climatological theory, and the discourse of lovesickness, the effects of their combination provide the grounds for projecting the most pernicious extremes of physiology, hence anatomy, hence practices away from English bodies and onto Mediterranean ones. Under pressure of this theory, in conjunction with political, cultural, and religious differences, the Mediterranean becomes constructed as a hotbed of love-sickness. (Neely 2004: 56)

With modifications, the "moral discourse of climate" (Livingstone 1991: 414) was still very much an accepted part of scientific thinking in the nineteenth century and "the underlying assumption was that the ties between race and place were tight, very tight indeed, either because climate *produced* race, or because 'Nature' had created different races and *placed* them in appropriate geographical régimes" (1991: 416). Nor were "instances of [...] moralizing about climatic realms [...] confined to the Victorian era. Until well into the twentieth century—perhaps even up to the present day—the self-same alignments are to be found" (1991: 418). They appear, albeit only to be dismissed as prejudice, in Alison Fraser's *Coming Home* (1984), in which the English heroine informs the Greek hero that

"your countrymen are just living up to their reputation for amorousness. Without much finesse, I might add."

"Really?" he responded coldly.

"Yes, *really*. The hot weather, I suppose," she trotted out the silly prejudice with a condescending air. (1984: 27)

Nowadays it would generally be considered a “silly prejudice” but the association between hot blood, an ardent nature and a hot climate could nonetheless have played a part in giving Greek heroes an edge over foreign heroes from more northerly areas of Europe.

Travel and True Love

Deborah Philips has stated that “The fantasy of true love has always involved a measure of international travel, and Mills & Boon heroines have found their heroes across the world” (2011: 114). The impulse to set romances abroad may owe something to the sense that, “If love is itself a journey, into entirely new life, then the value of foreign lands, experienced together, is doubled by it” (Bloch 1986: 371). Applying this insight to romantic fiction, Lynne Pearce suggests that

One of the features uniting popular romantic fiction [...] is its unerring recourse to exotic/strange/“other” locations [...] While there are clearly a good many ways of theorizing this investment in exotic locations in romance [...] Bloch’s theory returns us to deep structure by suggesting that these “foreign lands” are one of the strategic means by which the subject thinks or wills herself into an alternative future. A quick checklist of anyone’s romance reading should support this speculation: how many romances *do not*, for example, involve some element of relocation before the subject/s can either “fall in love” or realize their love? (2004: 531)

In the popular romance novels in which the heroine’s relocation to Greece and her fall into love occur in conjunction with one another, the country may function as a symbol of the transformation which will occur in her emotional landscape. This is made quite explicit in *The Garden of Persephone*. At the beginning of the novel Stacey, the heroine, has “felt as if it had been winter for three years. Ever since Alexis had been killed. A winter-time of spirit as well as of season” (Asquith 1976: 5). Asquith draws on the myth concerning the goddess whose annual return from the land of the dead marks the beginning of spring: the eponymous Greek garden to which Stacey travels is the place where “I came back to spring, and where I began to love again” (1976: 187).

This heroine leaves Greece behind her once it has served its purpose in uniting her with a new love and, metaphorically, bringing her to life. In other Mills & Boon romances, however, the heroine’s marriage will transform her into a permanent resident of Greece and in some of these novels the Greek hero is explicitly identified either with Greece as a whole or with specific areas of it.² In Winspear’s *The Pagan Island*, for example, Hebe thinks that

"He was like Greece itself, [...] harshly beautiful, elemental and rather cruel" (1972: 102). Rosalie Ash's *Apollo's Legend* concludes with an extended comparison of this type:

"Did you know that Apollo's temple at Delphi, surrounded by sheer mountains, was considered by the Greeks to be the centre of the earth? [...] First, [...] with [...] your aloof moods and your unreadable expressions you seemed as inaccessible as sheer mountains [...] And second, you're the centre of my universe. (1994: 187–8)

On a symbolic level, the exclusivity of the relationship between a foreign heroine and a hero identified with Greece may be threatened by the presence of tourists. In the post-war period the country became an increasingly popular destination:

Before World War II tourist arrivals in the country consisted of a few thousand high-spending western tourists. [...] In 1950 the total number of foreign tourists arriving in Greece was 37,464 [...]. In 1960 about 371,330 foreign tourists arrived in Greece, increasing to 1,454,629 by 1970 [...]. In 1980 [...] arrivals totalled 5,271,115. (Papadopoulos & Mirza 1985: 127–8)

The heroines of some Mills & Boon romances, although themselves visitors to Greece, either wish to experience the country and its sites in the absence of these tourists, or are encouraged by their hero to do so. Lena Thomas, for instance, has "vowed, she would make the tourist's obligatory pilgrimage to the 'Ancient City on the Hill,' which was what 'Acropolis' meant" (Murray 1989: 19) but Marcos Mavroleon informs her that "you do not want to see this for the first time by day, with a thousand others. The time to see it is at night. [...] I will take you there tonight. [...] It will be my pleasure" (1989: 44). That there is a parallel between his offer to act as her guide and his later proposal to take her as his wife is hinted at when Lena, who at this point believes that Marcos will marry another woman, thinks that

There was no reason now why she should not move on and do the rest of her sightseeing as she'd planned. [...] There were still so many places she'd always wanted to visit, and yet somehow the thought of exploring them alone had lost its appeal. Seeing Athens and its environs with Marcos had spoiled her.

Well, you can't have Marcos for a guide, she told herself firmly. Face it, you can't *have* Marcos—for anything, she added with gloomy humour. (1989: 86)

Anne Hampson's heroine, Marika, is equally reluctant to see Delphi in the company of "one of the guides" (1969: 27) rather than that of Nickolas, her Greek hero: "Oh, no, I don't want to find out about it like that! [...] I would like to learn about it from you, when we're alone—without all those tourists,

I mean" (1969: 27). This preference may have a sexual symbolism given that the sight of Mount Parnassus caused her to experience "sheer ecstasy" (1969: 26). It seems possible that the virginal Marika's wish to be initiated into the mysteries of Delphi by the man she will later marry reflects her inclination toward sexual and romantic exclusivity. Earlier in the novel she was amazed by the suggestion that she should "have dozens of boys before you settle for one" (1969: 12); now she prefers to avoid a crowd of tourists and will only accept the companionship of the man who, by driving her along the road to Parnassus, "one of the most romantic roads in all Greece" (1969: 48), "had brought her [...] to the very brink of Paradise" (1969: 26). It seems no coincidence that, although she has yet to identify the precise nature of the emotion which causes "her heart to race and her mind to fumble with some strange intangible yearning" (1969: 58), when they do visit the Temple of Apollo, she is aware that her hero exerts a "magnetism [...] upon her" (1969: 58).

It is the sounds and smells of Greece, rather than its sights, which seem to appeal most to Hebe Lawnay at the beginning of *The Pagan Island* but she, too, is disinclined to mingle with tourists:

she knew with her deepest instincts that the island would be unspoiled by tourism, by towering hotels and beaches packed with sunbathers. She wanted with all her heart to hear the shepherd pipes, the pealing of old sanctuary bells, and to smell the wild thyme and mint. (Winspear 1972: 9)

Later the hero states that "I don't concern myself with the tourist trade [...] except to rule that my house is out of bounds to sightseers" (1972: 55). The suggestion that Hebe is a tourist leaves her feeling that he is "cruel. He had said those things to deliberately hurt her, knowing she wasn't here as a pleasure-seeker" (1972: 55). Tourists are presumably "pleasure-seeker[s]" because they travel to Greece in search of transitory, superficial pleasures; one secondary character implies that female tourists are drawn to the country by "tales of how handsome the men are" (1972: 47).

It is a fact that "kamaki [...] the act of a Greek man pursuing a foreign woman with the intention of having sex [...] has developed [...] since tourists began to arrive in significant numbers" (Zinovieff 1991: 203). This type of relationship between Greek men and female tourists is referred to by name in Angela Wells' *Still Temptation* (1988) when the Greek hero employing a British heroine demands her

"[...] abstinence from erotic encounters during your visit. [...] And that means you [...] ignore the *kamaki* who prowl up and down the beach."
 "Kamaki?" [...]

"*Kamaki*—it's the long trident you see on the fishing-boats. Here, when a man goes looking for a woman, we say he 'makes *kamaki*'—you understand?" (1989: 21–2)

The *kamaki* target foreign women on the grounds that "they are 'easy' (*efkoles*) and 'free' (*eleftheres*) sexually" and "will not demand a serious relationship" (Zinovieff 1991: 212) and a

kamaki will rarely establish a real relationship with a tourist woman, and in extreme cases he may reject her after the first night. "How can I have respect for a woman if I screw her?" [...]. Once conquered sexually, she has become equal to a prostitute, and therefore worthless and without challenge. (1991: 210)

This is the antithesis of the happy ending required in a Mills & Boon; the motivations and behavior of this romance's heroine are therefore sharply distinguished from those of the "easy" women.

In Mills & Boon novels the general run of tourists are set apart from the heroine because they fail to be profoundly moved by either an individual Greek man or by any of the sites they visit. In *Black Lion of Skiapelos* Marcos Mavroleon states that: "To the insensitive, the Acropolis is little more than a pile of ruins. To a romantic, it is a memorial to all that is fine about Greece and her people" (Murray 1989: 44). Marcos' heroine, Lena, is clearly both sensitive and romantic and to her the Acropolis will always recall "Marcos and all that he meant to her" (1989: 174). Choosing the permanence of marriage to a Greek definitively sets the heroines of these novels apart from the transient, pleasure-seeking tourists. Like Lena, who will henceforth live in Athens, "the city she had come to love, not just for its own sake, but for its associations with the man she loved even more" (1989: 173), these heroines will make their homes where their hearts are: in Greece, with their Greek heroes.

A variation on the more common identification of the hero with Greece appears in Susan Stephens' *Bought: One Island, One Bride*. Here the heroine, Ellie Mendoras, is half Greek and already at home in Greece before her first meeting with Alexander Kosta, her hero; it is he who has traveled to the new location where he will find love. The title of the novel creates an equivalence between Ellie and that location but, as she tells Alexander, unlike the island of Lefkis, "Whatever you think, *I* can't be bought" (2007: 170). Ellie, who smells of "soap, sea and engine oil" (2007: 34) because she lives and works on a "simple fishing boat" (2007: 28), would seem to resemble the Greek waters on which she earns her living as a marine tour guide and which "no one knew [...] better than she did" (2007: 150): as Alexander observes, she

is “unpredictable, just like the ocean she loved” (2007: 126) and, unlike his ex-wife who was “shallow water, [...] she was deep” (2007: 125).³

A Land Fit for Heroes

Romance authors, in common with twentieth- and early twenty-first-century travel writers such as Lawrence Durrell (Wills 2007: 90; 113–14), have “found resemblances between Greek individuals [...] and [...] mythical figures from antiquity” (Wills 2007: 90). The hero of a Mills & Boon romance is frequently a high mimetic one, “superior in degree to other men [...]”. He has authority, passions, and powers of expression far greater than ours” (Frye 2000: 33–4) and he is often so “superior in degree to other men” that he seems akin to the heroes of myths and legends (Vivanco 2011: 34–7). In Anne Hampson’s *Eternal Summer*, for example, Nickolas, who compels Marika to leave her home in England in order to pose as his fiancée, has a “lowering brow, adding to the impression of intensity and power. A god himself! [...] Hades, perhaps, Hades who had dragged Persephone into the blackness of the Underworld [...] to be his bride” (1969: 57). Allusions to Greek mythology would seem to be facilitated when a novel is set in Greece or when one or more of the protagonists is Greek, although few Mills & Boon authors would go as far as to suggest that Greeks are direct descendants of these gods, as Margaret Rome did when she described them as a

people whose pride and passion were inherited from legendary ancestors—from Zeus, Lord of Heaven and Prince of Light; from Apollo, the sun-god who could destroy as well as give life; from Ares, the god who loved to go to war, and from Eros, the handsome, blindfolded god of desire and passion. (1981: 23)

While comparisons between the protagonists of ancient Greek myths and legends and those of Mills & Boon romances can certainly be found in novels featuring heroes and heroines of other nationalities and set outside Greece, in 2010 when Harlequin Mills & Boon published a series of four romances inspired, respectively, by the legends of Achilles, Perseus, Odysseus, and Hippolytus, they chose to feature heroes who were

Greek Tycoons
Modern day magnates
As gorgeous and god-like
as their mythological ancestors. (Gordon 2010: 2)

It is not entirely clear whether the company was merely laying claim to a literary ancestry for their heroes: in New Zealander Robyn Donald’s novel

in the series the hero's father "believes he is a direct descendant of Theseus" (2010: 110).

Although the high mimetic hero does not, like the protagonists of myths and legends, inhabit "a world in which the ordinary laws of nature are slightly suspended" (Frye 2000: 33), he can come extremely close to doing so, for in these romances Greece usually seems very far from ordinary. Aeroplanes permit an "almost magically swift transit from" (Murray 1989: 14), for instance, "the foggy damp of Liverpool" (Asquith 1976: 5) to "this other world" (1976: 5) in which, "everywhere one goes[,] there is this beauty and grandeur. It's another world from England" (1976: 86). Greece is, moreover, a "world" capable of evoking intense physical and emotional sensations in the visitor: "The unusual beauty of it all ran through her veins like wine" (Winspear 1972: 13); "the view was spectacular, an assault on the senses" (Fraser 1984: 59); "the air was a heady blend of pine from the hills, ozone from the sea, jasmine from a thousand balconies and courtyards" (Murray 1989: 45); "Flowers dazzled the eye in every direction [...] the houses had a blinding chalk-white symmetry against the impossible blue of the sky" (Ash 1994: 6–7) and the scents of "Resin and juniper needles, and wild thyme" (Ash 1994: 7) mingle in the breezes of Skiathos creating "A warm, sensual mixture which stirred and lifted the spirits" (Ash 1994: 7). As for Mount Parnassus, it leaves Marika, Anne Hampson's heroine, feeling

numbed, stupefied by the devastating beauty of the scene. Here was a place remote from man—and even nature; this was the mysterious realm of the gods, though the gods all slumbered now. An ache gripped her throat, the ache that comes when the burden of sheer ecstasy no longer can be borne. (1969: 26)

Conclusion

Although there are exceptions, such as the four paragraphs Charlotte Lamb devotes to a discussion of smog and congestion in Athens and London (1995: 96), Greece, as it appears in this corpus of Mills & Boon romances, seems to be almost another "world" from the UK. It can frequently be said of the Greece in these novels that "Without the presence of the gods Greece would not be Greece. In our landscapes, in our mountains, they seem still to walk, the legendary heroes at their sides" (Asquith 1976: 103). This is a Greece where, although danger lurks in the seas and mountains, the sun generally shines down on delightful vistas, islands are inhabited by fascinating tycoons, and enchanting scents perfume the air. Having traveled there, a British heroine is likely to find herself transported into a romantic adventure with a hot-blooded hero and her journey may parallel, and serve as metaphor for, her

journey toward romantic fulfilment. The reader who accompanies her on her journey is, therefore, likely to be transported to a Greece which, even with a sprinkling of “facts and reality,” is a place to “dream about.”

Notes

1. On Stewart and Greece see Gifford, this volume.
2. In cases in which one of the protagonists is Greek and the other British, Mills & Boon authors have tended to pair Greek heroes with British heroines, rather than Greek heroines with British heroes. This would seem to reflect reality, since when Greeks resident in Greece have married foreigners “The most common form of marriage has been between Greek men and foreign women, predominantly those from northern Europe, with the Germans, Dutch and British in the majority” (Mestheneos 2002: 190).
3. Stephens appears to use the words “ocean” and “sea” interchangeably.

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6. *Mary Stewart's Greek Novels: Hellenism, Orientalism and the Cultural Politics of Pulp Presentation*

JAMES GIFFORD

This chapter makes two critical interventions: one to redirect attention to women's writing on Greece from a century that was dominated by either a masculine homosocial modernity or Byron's long shadow in David Roessel's sense (2002); and two, revising the critical scotoma that surrounds Hellenism as a process of power and style of thought in the shadow of Edward Said's critical study *Orientalism* (1995[1978]). For the former, even Virginia Woolf's Jacob orients himself around a self-discovery that takes place amidst male heteronormativity. For the latter, Said's work shaped a generation of scholars by extending the 1950–1960 Marxist discourses of decolonization beyond the materialism of Albert Memmi and Frantz Fanon to include Foucauldian approaches to institutions like the university, the operations of power on styles of knowledge, and the biopolitics of colonialism. However, Said did so while opening Orientalist Studies as a disciplinary field, a discourse, and a participant in institutions to an ideological critique while in the same breath excusing Hellenic Studies as an acceptable, naturalized, and neutral exercise of power-knowledge. Likewise, the rise of a critical discourse of decolonization developed into postcolonial theory during a literary moment when the notional understanding of Greece from the perspective of the former centers of global power was moving from a politicized Romanticism to a personalized modernism. Roessel sets the shift in images of Greece to the 1950s, the same moment as the rapid decolonization of Africa and the development of decolonization theory. The modernists and particularly late modernists reconceptualized English literature's relationship with Greece to shift it away from a

recuperation of the ancient world through political revolution—they instead focused on the modernist inward turn that attends to the transformation of the individual. Yet, the renovation of Philhellenism through this inward turn enacted by Lawrence Durrell and Henry Miller (Roessel 2002: 332) does not adequately account for gender, and at the same time the institutional critique of Orientalism as a disciplinary expression of power-knowledge does not sufficiently account for the persistence of Hellenism long after Area Studies displaced schools of Orientalist Studies in the modern university. That is to say, the ongoing racist tropes of the mad, beastly, and childish Greek with paws and premodern tribalism persist without the systematic critique of kindred operations of power in depictions of the Levant, Egypt, and decolonizing North Africa that now permeates literary studies. Mary Stewart, as a popular author writing about Greece across the late 1950s and early 1960s in the midst of these movements, draws together these challenges.

In her series of Greek romantic mystery novels from 1959–1964, Stewart expresses a female emancipation through personal experiences in Greece. It is much as readers might expect to follow from Miller's and Durrell's impact on philhellenic writing. She knew their works well,¹ and despite her clearly mass appeal and attention to romance writing's stylistic and structural demands, she positions her novels in relation to a literary tradition. As with Miller and Durrell, Stewart's works are a step toward the less overtly political and more emotionally sensuous understanding of Greece that makes uncomfortable bedfellows out of the popular British revival musical-cum-film *Mamma Mia!* set on a Greek island and the political depictions of childish Greeks amidst the European financial crisis in need of neo-imperialist parental supervision. In other words, the reading of her works here positions her as part of wider representations of Greece, the biases of which reflect and support real political conflicts. Concurrently, Stewart bridges female emancipation and Western domination in popular pulp novels by figuring Greece as a space outside of hegemonic norms. The "Greece" of her novels is then less a real place with real people than it is an English attempt in a moment of cultural rupture to understand itself through Greece, and this image of Greece is then torn between the politicized Hellenism of the Romantics and the personal exploration articulated by the late modernists. More specifically, we have early intimations of a third wave sense of feminist emancipation for British women discovering more complex subject positions through travel, but this occurs through encounters with the unequal relations among other subject positions based on race or placement in the Orient/Occident divide. The confluence makes visible the operations of colonial power and thought in depictions of Greece and Greeks despite the inward turn away from politics while also

outlining the importance of gender's various formulations to the experiences and locations of colonialism in a moment prior to Feminism's third wave and intersectional theory. This is to say, Stewart's novels act as a nexus of varying forms of gender, race, class, and ethnicity as they emerge from the institutional discourses of Philhellenism and colonial representations of the process of decolonization, and this provokes readers to reconsider Said's insistence that Hellenism and Orientalism are incomparable discourses with unrelated influences on the political world.

Hellenism/Orientalism

Postcolonial theory is an established part of academic work on literature representing Greece, but no companion volume to Said's *Orientalism* has yet taken up the polemical title *Hellenism*. It is intimated. It is gestured to. It has no great book. Katerina Zacharia's *Hellenisms* takes the title and gesture, while Roessel intimates but does not articulate this kind of radically new way of conceiving of the field; however, apart from three very brief references to Said (two of which are in the notes alone), such a connection is not overt in his breakthrough study *In Byron's Shadow* (2002), and *Hellenisms* is not primarily interested in the sweeping cultural critique or foucauldian project that Said undertook. Its closest moment is Zacharia's own chapter on Greek cinema that distinguishes a modernist "Hellenic Hellenism" from the external "European Hellenism and Philhellenism" (2008: 321–2). A more capacious approach to literary and popular depictions of Greece from Britain and America seems difficult to imagine, and Roessel's shadow in criticism will surely impress over time. Nonetheless, the long-simmering dispute between Classics scholars and Said's polemic does not boil over the surface of Roessel's prose. And this surprises. Both Roessel and Said take on representations of "Hellas" or "the Orient," respectively, in writings from abroad, and both do so by setting these representations in conjunction with their political import, periods of change, occasionally or often infantilizing tone, and gendered modes of representation. In short, representing the Other (whether Oriental or Greek) is embedded with political operations, popular consciousness, and the mass media's or pulp literature's role in engineering consent—the pulp of genre fiction and the erudition of a university education are both, in this sense, vehicles of manufacturing cultural affect. In a particular sense, Roessel notes that

the Romantic age [broadly] constructed an image of a politicised, female, modern Greece fit for the temple of Apollo. This image dominated representations of Greece into the twentieth century and was eventually transmuted by

writers affiliated with modernism into an apolitical, male Greece in a Dionysian frenzy. (Roessel 2002: 7)

How these modes of representation relate to the “Western imagination” (Roessel 2002: 4) seems very much in harmony with Said’s parallel contention “that European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self” (Said 1995: 3), although the strong temptation in this moment is to replace “the Orient” with “the Hellenic.” After all, in recalling Greek conflicts against Persia as a dividing moment between East and West, the service rendered to national culture in the West is for Britain, not Greece itself. In the same sense that Said points to depictions of the Orient as stabilizing notions of the Occident, Nahum Tate’s and John Dryden’s seventeenth-century uses of Virgil in the Restoration signal the rise of a new imperial world power: London as the new Rome in their translations of Virgil’s *Aeneid*. Indeed, while imaginatively distinguishing itself from the “Orient,” Said’s Occident in large part did so by formulating its own image from its studies in Hellenism without including Modern Greeks in this new self-reflection or by setting them as poor cousins to their ancient predecessors. By adopting the mantle of empire, such philhellenic traditions displaced the Modern Greeks.

In this sense, and methodologically in a perfect echo of Said, for Roessel if Greece is “a literary tradition” (2002: 3), then despite its beauties, Hellenism (or in a gestural sense Classics) is a parallel inscribing and defining tradition to Said’s description of Orientalism. Of course, Said is also short on his considerations of Hellenism, mentioning it only a handful of times in *Orientalism*, and even then almost exclusively in order to distinguish between scholars: the good and the bad, respectively. For Said, the reader must recognize Orientalism as a discipline and body of scholarship that contributes to an empire-shaping discourse via institutions of power understood through Foucault, which distinguishes his work from the earlier decolonization literatures that focused on Marxist theories of class, such as Frantz Fanon (1952) or Albert Memmi (1952). Where these overtly Marxist studies presented race and decolonization through discourses of class conflict or the accumulation of capital via imperialism, Said’s project turns attention to the manufacture of knowledge and the education of future agents of empire through universities as institutions serving national culture. However, the same sense of productive power-knowledge and institutions does not lead Said to take up the parallel readings in Classics. Surprisingly, little dispute has been made over the matter, even as arguments about Classics have been leveraged to critique Said’s project.

Bernard Lewis critiqued and mocked *Orientalism* (1982) by ironically castigating Classicists as vicious imperialists defaming ancient Greece, meaning that the ridiculousness of the image disproved in full Said's study (1995). Said responded by invoking elements of the distinction between modes of thought built from social activity versus political action in the world. He only does so, however, in his Afterword to *Orientalism*, which he added nineteen years later in 1995 (his response in the *New York Review of Books* is more spirited but less specific). The crux of his analysis is that "Orientalism and Hellenism are radically incomparable" (1995: 342) insofar as the former is based on colonial conquest and antipathy while the latter is unrelated to imperialism and is sympathetic to its subject of study: Hellas. The difficulty, however, is that both Orientalism and Hellenism generate comparable modes of representation that contradict Said's immediate follow-on comment that Orientalism relates to contemporary racism and stereotypes against Muslims whereas Hellenism makes "no attacks on classical Greece" (1991: 342). The rebuttal to Lewis appears entirely accurate even while the elision of Modern Greeks is just as entirely inapt—the point would be sound and the fields "radically incomparable" only insofar as depictions of Modern Greece would be devoid of racism and stereotypes, which they assuredly are not. In other words, to be plain, Lewis is right in critiquing Hellenism even though his intentions were ironical, and Said's debate with an entire discipline certainly stands, even if he is mistaken in defending it against the sincere irony. But these are scholarly giants on whose shoulders the author would tremble to stand, and the core argument to this chapter is about popular pulp romance novels with a sleuthing plot as a hook for holiday sun-seeking readers. Bridging those two is the challenge. The aim is, then, to show that Stewart's novels prove this "radically incomparable" situation is *not* the case, and even further, that a great many of the tropes Said rightly critiques as problematic at best or part of a systematic process of domination at worst also recur precisely in depictions of the Modern Greek in novels that are quite clearly intended to be philhellenic entertainments for popular and widespread consumption by audiences unlikely to have direct deep experience of the Greek world. And moreover, such depictions carry genuine weight in the popular consciousness that not only permits but comes to expect forms of political domination, such as the trope of thieving or childish Greeks trotted out to media during the Greek government debt crisis in the aftermath of the American financial crisis of 2007–2008 that led to the subsequent European crisis.

A key part of the challenge is the extraordinary erudition and weight of history in any discussion of Classics. Postcolonial theory is young—reading in Classics is very old. The literary studies of decolonization (and the

accompanying literatures of domination) struggle under an Oedipal burden. Yet, the institutional inheritance of Classics is enormous even as the capacity for popular culture to shape popular consciousness and consent for forms of domination at home (and abroad) exceeds it. As Phiroze Vasunia contends for Hellenists and postcolonial theory, “few classicists or Hellenists have directly engaged this body of work with an eye to the shaping of their discipline... [through] the politics of knowledge” (2003: 88). While Vasunia’s central aim is to consider how such questions might provoke a reconsideration of ancient Greek texts, he does recognize that the study of Classics shaped British imperialism, which in turn set it to new purposes. Specifically, he recalls that

approximately 20% of [Oxford] graduates went on to work in the British Empire outside of the UK. Most of these men read Classics at colleges such as Balliol, Keble, St John’s, and Corpus Christi College. Their influence on such institutions as the Indian Civil Service is staggering to behold. (Vasunia 2003: 94)

Based on this, he then outlines how scholars such as Benjamin Jowett shaped their students’ opportunities to serve the empire abroad and provided a framework for doing so through the study of Classics. Vasunia extends this in his work with Susan A. Stephens in which they both argue the study of Classics was also leveraged to variously promote nationalist culture, or as they pointedly phrase it, “Classics had a discernible role to play in endorsing, repudiating, or qualifying the antiquity that many people appropriated in joining the worldwide community of nations” (Stephens & Vasunia 2010: 3). However, what does not appear in their discussion is the operation of Hellenism as a way of knowing the Hellenic in parallel with Orientalism as a way of knowing the Oriental—crucially, for Said that matter was not merely the academic history of a discipline but the more viscerally pressing operations of political power in the contemporary world. Where Said would see the critical distinction residing in the political power exerted over the Orient, it is difficult not to see a nearly identical form of discourse in his articulation of the matter at hand. The reader can all too easily set “Hellenic Studies” to displace Said’s terms while still making perfect sense:

Orientalism is not a mere political subject matter or field that is reflected passively by culture, scholarship, or institutions; nor is it a large and diffuse collection of texts about the Orient; nor is it representative and expressive of some nefarious “Western” imperialist plot to hold down the “Oriental” world. It is rather a distribution of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical, and philological texts. (Said 1995: 12)

A more generalized Philhellenism may better suit the diffuse “distribution” Said turns to here. However, his sense of the entanglement of Orientalism is

wide. In the university as an institution in service to national culture (Readings 1996: 14), Orientalism's discourse continued through imperial offices and government dossiers and out into the public awareness of such places built from popular as much as curricular and governmental bodies of work. Power is always productive, and chief among its products is knowledge, all as aspects of cultural hegemony with the activities and products of a people knotted tightly to economic demands and political will. Vasunia's attention to Jowett, when set beside Said's shift, via Foucault, to discourse and power-knowledge, makes it difficult to avoid asking more pressing questions about how Hellenism likewise operates between curricular and nationalist policy, and not only in relation to Greece, since after all it is Aeschylus and Euripides from whom Said draws his instantiation of the Orientalist tradition in relation to biases against modern Muslims.

Said continues the same passage by turning to a sense of cultural hegemony and foucauldian power-knowledge that is largely taken for granted in postcolonial studies, particularly those projects that emphasize the politics of representation and the intersection of colonialism and cultural studies. Said stresses that Orientalism (and we may again read the passage well with the same entanglement of Classics, Hellenism, and Philhellenism in mind) is,

above all, a discourse that is by no means in direct, corresponding relationship with political power in the raw, but rather is produced and exists in uneven exchange with various kinds of power, shaped to a degree by the exchange with power political (as with a colonial or imperial establishment), power intellectual (as with reigning sciences like comparative linguistics or anatomy, or any of the modern policy sciences), power cultural (as with orthodoxies and canons of taste, text, values), power moral (as with ideas about what "we" do and what "they" cannot do or understand as "we" do). (Said 1995: 12)

The uneven exchange implies a negotiated choice as in cultural hegemony, and the understanding of colonial discourse here describes the generalized Orientalism of his project just as aptly as it could apply to the more widespread expansion from a study of Hellenism and the academic disciplinary units that house it to popular media and public consciousness. They operate as ways to define Europe and to conceive its various Others—its discourses in various spheres express European concerns even as those discourses are amenable to a history and analysis.

This is the crux. Depictions of Greece impact the operations of power over Greece. The ready images of childish animality in the popular pulp for British and American readers are the same images that recur today in media reports on Greece's financial crisis in the European Union, and again with real effects on real people. In the Romantic forms of Hellenism, the construction of

Europe and Britain in particular as the inheritor of the Classical world while eliding *Modern* Greeks from the British construct is not without material affects, even amidst love for the same Modern Greece. If London is the new Rome, and Rome was the new Troy, of what use is Modern Greece and how do Modern Greeks relate to these inheritors? In tandem, depictions of Greece are a part of the cultural network, and tropes from colonial literatures may infiltrate contact zones that are not subject to European colonization, while the discourses of Hellenism provide contents for other fields as well. Although the extreme form of hateful biases to which Said draws attention does not generally appear in relation to Greeks as it has for Muslim communities in popular representations (as with nearly any decolonizing region subject to racist ideologies, from Africa to Ireland), or as Said stresses Hellenic studies is rooted in a Philhellenism, the extreme forms of prejudice are not necessarily the most important for widespread social affects. The insinuations of paternal control over an infantilized Other breeds contempt for fiscal independence, self-reporting, and national sovereignty just as surely, and the conceptual privileging of the Ancient world can render a *terra nullius* in Modern Greece or elide Modern Greeks from the celebration of Greek history and culture—while of a different continent, the trope of *terra nullius* or the “disappearing Indian” in North American indigenous studies has weight. The legal doctrine of discovery does not apply, but the empty land carries a longstanding interpretive figuration (Coulthard 2014: 60).

The nearest approach to rethinking Orientalism and Hellenism with a recognition of the politics of representation comes from Vassiliki Kolocotroni and Efterpi Mitsi’s *Women Writing Greece* in which they also present Greece as a liminal space between the two polarities of the Orient and Occident (2008: 6). Importantly, they do so while again signaling gender’s role in clarifying the contrast as well as the possibilities for expanded agency in liminal space. Distinct from Vasunia and Kolocotroni and Mitsi, Roessel’s emphasis lies in the shift from a Romantic conceptualization of Greece in Byron’s shadow versus the late modernist revision enacted by Henry Miller and Lawrence Durrell in the 1940s and after—and this shift is vital. As opposed to the political emancipation of Greece that plays quite well into Said’s narrative of an Orient-Occident division from Aeschylus’ *Persians* and Euripides’ *Bacchae* to the modern world, Roessel’s project stresses how through cultural products Miller and Durrell

reinvested modern Greece with meaning by stripping it of all political significance; ironically, in the late 1930s, when both Italy and Spain were engulfed by contemporary political questions, Greece offered “the discovery of yourself,” to borrow the words of Lawrence Durrell. (Roessel 2002: 32)

The shift is from a liberation movement based on a Romantic dissociation of the Modern Greek from the Classical world as its inferior inheritor (Durrell 2015: 107–21) to what Roessel suggests is a modernist inward turn in a process of self-discovery. He puts it more figuratively and dramatically later in the book to say “Miller’s *Colossus of Maroussi* and Lawrence Durrell’s *Prospero’s Cell* (1945), along with the Greek poems in Durrell’s volume *A Private Country* (1943), invented a new Modern Greece, as Edmund Keeley has shown” (Roessel 2002: 276). This re-emergence of Dionysus in Miller and Durrell’s late modernism differs from the figuration of Greece in the high modernists, such as Virginia Woolf’s *Jacob’s Room* (1922) and Hemingway’s *in our time* (1924). Miller’s and Durrell’s invention of “a new modern Greece” comes through the shaping sensuous self-discovery that followed distinct from their high-modernist predecessors, yet in their works this happens even as the Greek himself or herself pressingly plays little role in that sensual experience even while embodying and exemplifying it—sensual experience is not bound up with exploring or colonizing the Greek body in a way akin to other writers on the Orient, and crucially for Miller and Durrell, the Modern Greek is celebrated rather than elided, though not without extensive “distribution of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical, and philological texts” (Said 1995: 12).

The disruptions to stable identities and norms at the same time also permit the exploration to occur for the Western interlocutor who is different from the Greek and therefore outside of traditional internal systems of domination. Furthermore, the discovery of oneself is itself very much a political activity for Durrell and Miller. While their contemporaries went to Spain to serve in the Civil War, most obviously George Orwell while wearing Henry Miller’s coat, Durrell instead went to Greece, and Miller later followed not to serve in a war but to avoid one. Durrell even opens his 1937 novel *Panic Spring* with repeated references to “revolution” across the first sentence and first page (2008: 1) as if to signal the difference—it would be a word and a difference unmistakable to his contemporaries. Miller’s anarchism shaped his politics of the unpolitical (in Herbert Read’s sense of the concept (1943: 17, 25)) including his advice to Orwell before proceeding to Spain, and in this sense his turn to self-discovery amidst political turmoil and World War II is rich in “political significance” rather than stripped of it. Durrell’s editorial work on the journal *Personal Landscape* in Egypt during the war likewise avoids depictions or even discussions of the military conflict or world of politics to instead enact a highly political introspection as is implied in its title (Gifford 2014: 96)—that several of his poems appeared in anarchist periodicals at the time and he sent the anarchist Albert Cossery’s work from Egypt to be

published in California by the anarchist Circle editions only further suggests that we would do well to avoid labeling the personal as apolitical (Gifford 2014: 120). While the nuances of this distinction are not the matter at hand here, they do point to the continuing political importance of Greece in their writing, including after their influence on subsequent authors, among whom was Stewart, and with whom they share a careful attention to geopolitics even if they do not discuss it overtly.

Much as with Durrell and Miller, Stewart's sense of Greece and Greekness is one that is modern and severed from the Classical ideals yet at the same time not fully integrated into modernity, thereby offering the pastoral idyll: a far from apolitical theme. For her protagonist Nicola in *The Moon-Spinners*,

it was left to me to discover, if possible, some quiet place in southwest Crete which combined the simple peace and beauty of "the real Greece" with some of the standards of comfort and cleanliness which the new tourist age is forcing on it. An almost impossible mixture of virtues—but I believed I had found it. (Stewart 1962: 7)

This "reality" is of course also a projection of the desires of the Same. That is, "the real Greece" operates as a screen for the censored contents of the English imagination, and hence what follows is a space of murderous violence, blood feuds, and sexual desire. The sequence of such expressions in the novel is fascinating in that it thrives around matters of landscape more than people or customs, calling up the colonizing trope of *terra nullius* and land as metonym for censored emotional excess finding its sublimated projection in space. As Nicola climbs the hill near the rustic village of "real Greece," she sees "No sign of man's hand anywhere in the world, except the road where I stood, the track before me, and a white vapor-trail, high in the brilliant sky" (Stewart 1962: 10). The "real" *terra nullius* contrasts strikingly against the modern vapor trail, as if to signal the conflict that will emerge as the modern woman enters the uninhabited land to claim it for her own and consequently encounter the violent premodern indigene. The immediately subsequent depiction of landscape makes a part of this role clear:

Behind me, inland, the land rose sharply, the rocky foothills soaring silver-green, silver-tawny, silver-violet, gashed by ravines, and moving with the scudding shadows of high cirrus which seemed to smoke down from the ghostly ridges beyond. Below the road, toward the sea, the land was greener. The track to Agios Georgios wound its way between high banks of maquis, the scented maquis of Greece. I could smell verbena, and lavender, and a kind of sage. Over the hot white rock and the deep green of the maquis, the judas-trees lifted their clouds of scented flowers the color of purple daphne, their branches reaching landwards, away from the African winds. (Stewart, 1962: 10)

With the landscape standing in for the inhabitants, almost as a synecdoche, what does the shift from a violent to a lavish, fecund landscape imply about desire in this projection? The reader moves from the “sharp,” “rocky,” metallic “silver,” and “gashed” island to one of scents and flora—if we do not notice it in these first two instances, it recurs (Stewart 1962: 14). The suggestion is that the “real Greece” for Cretans will be one of violence while the appropriate space for the English visitors is lush and sensual, but both are projections of the English imagination. The mark is very much in the spirit of Miller and Durrell, and her self-discovery by navigating landscapes of her own imagination presses the point home.

Likewise, as she encounters Greeks, the narrative naturalizes animalistic violence as their key trait. Lambis, who is ultimately in a helper role to the English, first appears as “rather like a dog defending a bone. He still had that wary look; no longer dangerous, perhaps, but he was fingering his knife” (Stewart 1962: 19), which recurs as “He went warily, like a nocturnal beast” (1962: 27) because “these are wild parts” with blood-feuds tied to the mountains themselves (1962: 30), and in mountain villages “it is a wild country” (1962: 30) with “primitives” (1962: 103). The men, of course, have “paws” while the women have “claws” (1962: 88, 96). If the reader might turn to Lewis and Said to say this mode of representation is fundamentally different from the popular tropes depicting Muslims, the passages featuring Hamid in Stewart’s *The Gabriel Hounds*, set in Lebanon, could be altered to read Theodoros without much disruption. Likewise, the oddity follows with the division of the Modern Greek from his ancient history such that the epigraphs to chapters from Classical sources, such as Alexander Pope’s translation of Homer’s *Iliad* (1962: 48) suggests that the Englishman Mark is the Homeric hero, not the indigenous Greeks who are too savage as they seek out “a kind of interminable and painful patience, a striving for mindlessness” (1962: 80). In this, the explosion of activity translating and recasting Homer and Virgil as expressions of the new English nationalist identity after the Restoration in 1660, of which Pope’s work is a later part, make more sense—the use of the Classical is very much an expression of Englishness, but more importantly, so too is the construction of the brutal, mindless Greeks unattached to their ancient world. If the reader is inclined to distance the Restoration and early eighteenth-century use of Homer and Virgil to express London as the new Athens and new Rome, the imperial legacy appears in the background as well, operating like the landscape in a tableau: “A seawall, and a little curved pier, held the water clear and still as a tear in the flower-cup. Someone had scrawled CYPRUS FOR GREECE along the harbour wall, and someone else had tried to scratch it out. A man was beating an octopus”

(Stewart 1962: 94). The weeping “tear” contrasts to the “scrawl” that is then “scratched” out, finally closing with the beating. Each image makes sense on its own and has its function, such as the tenderizing of the octopus for a meal, but the set piece together reflects contemporary discomforts over Cyprus for the British while also implying (suspiciously) that Greeks would not support or even want Enosis. While Lawrence Durrell’s *Bitter Lemons* could ironically claim not to be “a political book” (1957: ix), his comments on revised graffiti make clear the conflicted interests of the Turkish and Greek populations (Durrell 1954: 392, 395)—it would be unreasonable in 1962 to see Stewart’s similar graffiti, unshed tears, and broken calm as apolitical either. If anything, it is *more* bound to a political loyalty even if less strikingly so.

The simplistic depiction of Greeks, lest the reader think it is based only on Crete or Athens in *My Brother Michael*, returns in *This Rough Magic* set on Corfu. In this later novel the reader finds “There were passion and grief in her face, as if she were reproaching the Saint for his negligence. There was nothing irreverent in such a thought: the Greek’s religion is based on such simplicities” (Stewart 1964: 44). The diminution of a complex society troubles, and parallels of the Greeks to animals again repeat (Stewart 1964: 184). The same Greeks also show a natural subservience to the British and equate Britishness with value: “‘Antiquities? Oh, you mean statues, like the ones on the Esplanade, the fine English ones’” (Stewart 1964: 181). Likewise, for empire, Stewart shows herself sensitive to the nuances of language in colonial discourse, dwelling on a single coordinating conjunction through her protagonist Lucy’s voice:

An Ancient Baedeker I found on Phyl’s shelves. It was my grandfather’s—date 1909. It’s really rather sweet. Listen to the bit at the beginning about the history of the island. He says “it came into the possession of” the Romans, then “fell to the share of” the Venetians, then “was occupied by” the French, then “was under Turkish, then Russian sway,” but—notice the but—from 1815 to 1863 it “came under the protection of” the British. Rule Britannia. Those were the days. (Stewart, 1964: 168)

The nostalgic and only quasi-ironical closing is echoed by her love interest in the novel, and in it her and his implicit national pride easily fits into the long colonial history of Corfu, both giving the lie to Said’s contention that Greece had never experienced such colonialism from Europe and explicitly opening Hellas as colonial space with a rich set of colonial tropes and an established discourse. Both books as well point specifically to the complexities of the Cold War context of these political conflicts, the Cretan book looking to Cyprus and the Corfiot to Albania’s post-Cominform relations with China, and *My Brother Michael* to ELAS and the Greek civil war. The

persistent anticommunist stance repeated in each book is explicit and more carefully nuanced than the genre needs or even realistically permits.

Finally, as a signal to Stewart's awareness of her position in a long history of Western writing about Greece, she adds notice of the very authors Roessel takes up with such care—D. H. Lawrence and Henry Miller—with both as a contrast against her own project and with their works in the hands of disreputable antagonists against the British protagonists: “I [...] went on, even prodding the mattress and feeling under the piled blankets, but all that came to light was a paperback copy of *Tropic of Cancer*, which I pushed back” (Stewart, 1964: 199) and “Tony was there, sitting behind the table, with his feet up, reading *Lady Chatterley's Lover*” (Stewart, 1962: 90). Both scenes depict the antagonist reading sexually explicit materials that also reveal her familiarity with the series of modernist and late modernist authors writing on Greece (as do her several allusions to Durrell), and the latter in *The Moon-Spinners* contrasts her own writing (in a postcard) directly against these precursors.

Greek Romance, Thalassa, and Feminism's Waves

From the start, this section must emphasize its interest in *Romance* distinct from the Romantic. Stewart offers her readers romance novels threaded through a mystery plot structure, and hence the concern here is with this as a break from the Romanticist figuration of Greece retraced so persuasively by Roessel in *In Byron's Shadow*. The concern is less the revolutionary Greek struggle for independence that could fire the imagination of Byron or Shelley, and indeed these tropes are largely set aside by Stewart to accomplish the same kind of revision already made by Miller and Durrell. Instead, Stewart's romances negotiate the troubled mid-century position of English women in relation to patriarchal norms, particularly those without access to a radicalism that is perhaps best articulated through Kate Millet, Gloria Steinem, Germaine Greer—indeed, not only would it be difficult for the commercial enterprise in the popular pulp to overtly call up second wave feminisms in a positive light (especially so in a Cold War context), but Stewart's Greek romance-mystery novels were published between 1959 and 1964, all but one of them a full decade before the founding of *Spare Rib* and *Ms.* magazines.

Nonetheless, as many scholars have shown, gendered subject positions are negotiated differently in colonial space (Ouzgane & Coleman, 1998: para. 1), and while Stewart's novels present a colonial discourse around Greekness, they also articulate the emergence of a female agency made possible by occupying a different space outside of the normative hegemony of late empire. Preceding third wave feminist paradigms, Stewart's novels depict not

only a woman in a patriarchal society but an English woman in a “decolonizing” patriarchal society distinct from imperial space yet overlapping with its tropes. The differences among the subject positions available to women in this context are vital to the construction of Stewart’s narratives: the threshold of adventure comes outside of patriarchal supervision; intimations of female desire and agency drive the form; and ethnic identity operates in a manner that refines gendered identities. Intersectionality makes forms of difference multiple without privileging one over the others in the reading here. Drawing from Gothic tropes, the young female becomes an active agent for change but no longer confined to domestic space despite a Nancy Drew-ish prudery to expressions of desire. In essence, her freedoms grow insofar as she adopts a colonial position of authority over the indigenous Greeks as a quasi-colonized Other.

The combination of a politics of representation with tropes of gendered and colonial identities presses for a reading of Stewart that is in advance of the period of her novels’ publication. The intersectionality of third wave feminist paradigms of the subsequent decade would draw the reader’s attention to the complex subject position of her protagonists in their hotel heterotopias (Ross 2013: 149). That is, such a reader would attend to the protagonists’ unique capacity for new forms of reflection and observations based on occupying liminal spaces of difference outside of their home cultures. While an American context would reflect on the intersections of gender, sexuality, and race for third wave interpretive ventures, for Stewart the in-betweenness of Greece produces in her protagonists a subject position in which being a woman in a patriarchal society overlaps with being a neo-colonial in formerly colonized space, temporarily free from oversight and exercising a scopophilic gaze enjoying the Other. Her protagonists occupy liminal vacation space between East and West but also between domination and dominating. By being outside of their own patriarchal social space during the liminality of a period spent as a *xenos* in a Cold War NATO state in *frisson* with the non-aligned, they reflect on patriarchal domination of Greek women. They also articulate veiled critiques of colonial discourses while remaining distinct from former masculine colonizers. And finally, they experience forms of difference that are temporary yet prompt self-reflection. As the mystery and romance genres necessitate, these spaces and moments in the interstices of social norms must eventually close with the reassertion of traditional roles and the re-establishment of normative hierarchies, typically through incarceration or marriage (respectively).

In all three of Stewart’s novels, *My Brother Michael* (1959), *The Moon-Spinners* (1962), and *This Rough Magic* (1964), the English female

protagonist travels to Greece and solves crimes while falling in love. The first novel of her Greek sequence, *My Brother Michael*, makes clear the liberating element of the environment for her female, first-person, cigarette-smoking, engagement-breaking, car-speeding protagonist Camilla: “there’s another side to this Great Emancipation. Things do seem a trifle dull occasionally, after so many years spent being swept along in Philip’s—you must admit—magnificent wake” (Stewart, 1959: 11–12). The enactment of the marriage plot demonstrates the three novels’ forms of entanglement in patriarchal systems of control while at the same time giving indirect voice to female agency, permitting the protagonists to feel and pursue desire while traveling alone in foreign lands. In this respect, the reader encounters the discomfiting combination of active female protagonists who possess a seemingly real agency (good) with such (troubling) comments as “I’m sorry, but we’ll have to accept our female limitations and wait till morning” (Stewart 1962: 115). This self-limitation stands in conflict with the tacit condemnation of male domination in Greece, as in the “bitterly” spoken “I was told this was a man’s country. It’s true.” (Stewart 1959: 30). The feeling recurs in the two subsequent novels as well: “The Greek mind again: if a man chose to get drunk now and again, what did it matter except to himself? His women would accept it as they accept all else. Life here had its shining simplicities” (Stewart 1964: 160) and “‘Good girl.’ I must be far gone, I thought, when this casual accolade from an obviously preoccupied man could make me glow all through” (Stewart 1962: 222). The combination is telling—Greece provides a space for increased female emancipation and from which the abuses of patriarchy may be observed in Greeks to make the English or American readers aware of how such systems of domination function, yet at the same time this emancipation is clearly limited to the liminal location in Greece (in the sense in which Kolocotroni and Mitsi describe it), and its observations are clouded when turned back to British contexts. Where Kolocotroni and Mitsi have presented the entirely persuasive argument that the various women discussed in their *Women Writing Greece* “bring a sense of imperial entitlement countered by eccentric vision, a recognition of the difference and specificity of gender across cultural and ideological boundaries, and equal amounts of conformity and daring” (2008: 15), I would only add that the conformity is toward home and the daring is toward hosts in Stewart’s case, albeit with the very genuine advantage of broaching topics at a safe enough distance to avoid censure and to effectively leverage mass market media for disseminating a milder form of women’s liberation across Britain and America.

Likewise, while sexuality is not openly described in the genre, at least in this form and time, female desire is regularly implicit and allusive in Stewart’s

Greek series. It is as if to signal the possibility for altering patriarchal norms through relocations to quasi-colonial liminal space. For instance, intimacy adopts language that makes the sexual subtext difficult to miss. The reader discovers in *The Moon-Spinners* that the protagonist “was sitting up, with Mark’s sound arm around me, feeling the warmth of his body comforting my own, and clutching his coat to my nakedness with numbed and flaccid fingers” (Stewart 1962: 217) or the sublimation of sexuality and desire in other sensuous experiences and the landscape:

The first shock of it was cold to my overheated body, but then the silky water slid over the flesh with the inevitable shiver of pure pleasure. The filmy nylon I was wearing seemed hardly to be there. I thrust away from the rock into the smooth, deep water, shook the hair back from my eyes, and turned out to sea. I swam steadily and strongly, making as little splash as I could. From this angle, the cliffs stood up even more massively against the night sky. (Stewart, 1962: 210)

In both instances, amidst the perpetuation of gender inequalities, the difference of quasi-colonial space and of other subject positions distinguished by nationality and race intimates new freedoms for the protagonist. She may “thrust” and feel power while at the same time combining fleshly, quasi-orgasmic pleasure with strength and independence, even as she is flaccid after intense experience aside the massive vertical cliffs. The substitutions and sublimations remain quite near the surface. As with Ouzgane and Coleman’s work on masculinities and colonial space, Stewart’s readers may rightly ask: “if genders and sexualities are the products of cultural practices and institutions [...], then what modified forms of sexualities and genders are produced or maintained in the hybrid societies of postcolonial places?” (Ouzgane & Coleman 1998: para. 1). Clearly they are forms with greater agency and self-possession, at least while “abroad.” The telling distinction, however, is that while Coleman and Ouzgane mean North Africa and locations decolonizing from French and British rule, for Stewart this query comes in a critical vacuum. An argument via Said’s critique in *Orientalism* would need to set aside Hellenism and her frequent recourse to Classics in her epigraphs and allusions in order to contend that the imperial styles of thought are unburdened here with ties to colonial privilege—clearly this is not the case. Stewart’s depictions of Greece and its reception among her audiences are troubled by Greece’s very different understanding of its prior partial colonizer (but geopolitical big brother) and the general acceptance of modes of depicting Greece and Modern Greeks constructed through Hellenism and Philhellenism.

One of the contrasts afforded by the setting of *The Moon-Spinners* in “primitive” and “wild” Crete is between the men who possess women. On the Greek side of the image, much in line with the beastliness outlined in the

previous section, there is the Greek Stavros, who implicitly has beaten his wife, in juxtaposition to the Englishman Mark, who instead offers a suitable love interest to the protagonist, Nicola. The scenes depicting them, however, differ more in tone and attitude than in content or potential for violence and patriarchal domination:

I pushed the empty mug back into the cabin, and shut the door. I half expected to be told to go in after it, but nobody even noticed me. Lambis and Mark were both leaning out, watching the dim rocks of the shore rush to meet us. Colin, on the prow, held the boathook at the ready. The caique heeled more sharply still, then drove in. (Stewart 1962: 223)

The expectation of being ordered about by dominant males and their readiness for physical violence as a trait of masculinity that turns her back to the role of nurse and maid shows that the differences between the men are far more about affiliation or affinity for the first-person narrative voice (for Englishness and against Greekness) rather than actual differences between the characters—both are capable of violence and naturalize dominance over women. In the conclusion, while she excoriates Mark for diminishing her role in saving the day, she ultimately accedes to his dominance as a “g-girl” reduced to tears who accepts his description of her work as housekeeping (1962: 171). We accept the narrator’s domination by a man so long as he is English, and we abhor Maria’s domination by her husband precisely because he is Greek. While the critique of patriarchy is welcome, it remains entangled in other forms of difference and privilege most readily understood through the tropes of colonialism.

Conclusion

As already noted, a key element of Said’s analysis of Orientalism is that rather than being merely a scholarly discipline housed in institutional structures that produce bodies of knowledge from a position of power, “it is rather a distribution of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical, and philological texts” (Said 1995: 12). This distribution is more troubling than any part of the field on its own, and as Stewart’s novels illustrate, it is also a trait of Hellenism. It is, finally, a closing point for all three novels amidst the tensions of the Cold War and conflicts around Greece from 1959–1964, with *My Brother Michael* centered around the legacies of the Communists in the Greek civil war, the Cypriot struggle for Enosis in *The Moon-Spinners* in a post-Suez world, and most tellingly the potential to spark heat into the Cold War through Albania, Yugoslavia, and Bulgaria in *This*

Rough Magic. This third book closes with the foiling of a mystery wrapped in international espionage and yet further frontiers from Greece. For the protagonist Lucy speaking of Albania,

“I know it’s Communist, of course, and at daggers drawn with Tito’s Yugoslavia [...]. I gather that it’s a poor country, without much workable land and no industries, just peasant villages perched on the edge of starvation [...]. I gather that they are still pretty Stone Age at the end of the war, but trying hard and looking round for help. That was when the U.S.S.R. stepped in.” (Stewart 1964: 134)

To this her male love interest responds and expands “‘Yes. She supplied Albania with tools and tractors and seeds, and so forth [...] [A] few years ago Albania quarrelled with Russia, and broke with the Cominform, but because it still badly needed help (and possible support against Russia) it applied to Communist China’” (1964: 134). The matter being set up is clear with Greece now a susceptible or unreliable ally in anticommunist Cold War politics. The foiled plot is then “‘Communist China sitting pretty in Albania, with a nice little base in Europe, the sort of foothold that Big Brother over there’d give his eye teeth to have. And if the present pro-Chinese government fell, there’d be a nice almighty Balkan blowup, and the Chinese would be out and the Russians in. And maybe into Greece as well. Get it now?’” (Stewart 1964: 216). The most telling element here is the issue of Big Brother, which opens the image of the animalistic Greek up to foreign intervention and paternal “protection” while entangling the novel in wider ideological conflicts. The point, however, is the error over George Orwell. The American CIA famously supported Orwell’s *Animal Farm* (1944) and sponsored the film production of the novel (Leab 2007), and editions of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) have stressed Orwell’s opposition to totalitarianism while eliding his democratic socialism. Most tellingly, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was completed in 1948 and published in 1949 months before the Soviets acquired atomic weapons, yet in the novel Big Brother is the face of an invader of Britain who uses dollars and deploys atomic bombs. In short, Big Brother is Uncle Sam, and the shift of the image to China is an ideological operation of the time period’s conflicts that infuse Stewart’s novels—we are back to Orwell in Spain, but with POUM rather than the communists, wearing Henry Miller’s coat, and Durrell’s chirping “Revolution!” about Greece while his generation went to Barcelona. Where Roessel has described how they “reinvested modern Greece with meaning by stripping it of all political significance” (2002: 32), the personal self-discovery reminds that the personal is always political. From the complexities of subject positions based on competing spaces and roles for gender, class, race, and ethnicity that give a proto-third wave hunger for independence to Stewart’s

novels, the Philhellenic movement between a self-discovering in Greece yet infantilizing presentation of Modern Greeks, to the anticommunist tropes in each book, the reader finds these three novels very much “a distribution of geopolitical awareness” into popular consciousness akin to Said’s critique (1995: 12). That kinship then troubles Said’s own division of his project from Hellenism and insistence that the two disciplinary fields and bodies of scholarship are incomparable. We cannot leave these novels without a deepening sense of the cultural politics of classical pulp, and a part of Stewart’s richness as a writer is that she provokes the need for a *Hellenism* to accompany *Orientalism* while writing to a mainstream audience made to feel dissatisfied with the world it has even while unsure of what another might be.

Note

1. In personal correspondence with the author, Stewart said she was not influenced by either, but went on to show deep familiarity with their works.

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7. Fire and Futility: Contemporary Women Novelists and WWI in Greece

DAVID WILLS

The Greek Front really is, as one book title describes it, a *Forgotten Battlefield* of World War I (WWI) (Marix Evans 2003). Lyn Macdonald's otherwise magisterial *1915: The Death of Innocence* covers the expected Loos, Gallipoli, and Neuve Chapelle, but there is only one brief mention of the Salonica Campaign, which began in October of that year (Macdonald 1997: 567). Within a conflict dominated in the popular imagination by the horrors of trench warfare, "the Mediterranean theatre of operations is still regarded—as indeed it was then—as a mere sideshow to the main event in north-west Europe" (Gough 2006: 64). Yet this battle zone offered brutality comparable to the more famous massacres of France and Belgium. Northern Greece was put to the sword through a combination of combat in terrible conditions, internal divisions, and a devastating fire which destroyed much of old Thessaloniki in 1917.

It has been argued that the presence of British troops in Greece was, in both World Wars, more sentimental than strategic. A British sergeant in a 1941-set novel is made to remark bitterly "We're here because those chaps in the High Command all studied Greek at Eton and Harrow" (Gale 2012: 30). Certainly, many contemporaneous accounts confirm that foreign participants were unprepared not merely for the practical and military realities of Greece, but also for the social and cultural. The disappointments and subsequent necessary adjustments for these early twentieth-century visitors are well reflected in two novels published almost 100 years later. Victoria Hislop and Loretta Proctor, writers with an intimate knowledge of Greece, engage with British perceptions of the Greek people, towns, and countryside, and with the point (or pointlessness) of the WWI in that region. Their writings accurately record

the frustrations which can be found in memoirs and letters produced by those who took part. But they also include some very twenty-first century concerns about multiculturalism, respect for sacrifices made, and seeing Modern Greece as it “really” is.

British Perceptions of the Salonica Front

The campaign in northern Greece saw the British army and government become bogged down by politics, mud, and malaria. With the country still officially neutral in 1915, the arrival of the British and French military was not greeted with widespread enthusiasm, many Greeks feeling that they were being forced into the war against their will (Mazower 2004: 307). Greek politicians were divided between the pro-British Eleftherios Venizelos and the German-linked King Constantine, a situation resolved only in 1917 when the latter was forced into exile. Greek civilians and troops were habitually regarded with suspicion, as is exemplified by an account penned and published at the time. G. Ward Price found that, prior to Greece’s formal entry into the war; Allied soldiers were united in “detesting the Greek.” He railed against Constantine who “acted unconstitutionally, deceitfully, treacherously” (Ward Price 1918: 99, 207). Described as “the official correspondent with the Allied forces in the Balkans,” Ward Price characterizes the Greek race in terms which tip markedly over into an Orientalizing discourse of perfidy. Greeks and Jews used an “Oriental method of bargaining” (Ward Price 1918: 77) in order to dupe naïve British army officers seeking accommodation in Thessaloniki. Floca’s café in the city was accused of inflating prices for both food and drink, and the local dishes are described with a breathtaking condescension toward local culture: prewar patrons would have apparently expected “mézé—a sort of *hors-d’oeuvre*, consisting of scraps of salt fish, olives and slices of sausage (thrown in free before the war)” (Ward Price 1918: 78). In comments which reproduce an unpleasant racial stereotype, Ward Price accuses the Jews of having sympathy with the enemy, because the “money-lenders of Salonica held mortgages on estates in Hungary and Austria.” More generally, the local people “have certainly always been against fighting anybody, for the Germans or against them” (Ward Price 1918: 87, 4). Intelligence officer Stanley Casson, writing with the benefit of hindsight, adopted a more measured approach. He found desertions from the Greek army understandable: “we had bullied their country out of its neutrality, infringed its sovereign rights, exiled their king, and now we had put them into uniform—for which the Greek people paid—and thrust them into trenches” (Casson 2010: 197).

British battle casualties for the whole campaign of 1915–1918 totaled 23,762, small in comparison to the rather more mass slaughter known from the Western Front (Marix Evans 2003: 247). The nature of combat was recently characterized by Martin Marix Evans as a “usual state of boredom and occasional lethal activity” (2003: 227). Winters were shockingly ruinous. British artilleryman Alexander Thorburn was appalled to discover that sixteen of his unit’s horses had frozen to death overnight (Ronayne 2014: 36). In summer, the army was decimated by endemic malaria, with almost 30,000 struck down in 1916 alone (Marix Evans 2003: 216). In his memoirs, Casson scoffed at inflexible commanders who insisted on their troops marching in buttoned-up tunics during the heat of the day (Casson 2010: 114). Other perils included poisonous snakes skulking in tents and feral dogs bold enough to attack mules and horses (Wakefield and Moody 2011: 139). Commanders were ignorant at first about the primitive condition of roads and bridges along which troops and supplies would be forced to move. Road improvement, as witnessed by Alexander Thorburn, consisted of locals “tipping lumps of rock from small carts” (Ronayne 2014: 35).

The city of Thessaloniki, occupied and heavily defended by the Allies, did not generate wholly favorable impressions among its military guests, as Ward Price’s comments have already illustrated. Casson offered a decidedly backhanded compliment for his initial view of the city: “one of the really lovely places of the world, as long as it is seen from afar” (Casson 2010: 96–7). Thorburn was upbeat upon arrival—“the port is most beautiful from the bay”—but he was to discover that the town had not, in fact, emerged all that far from the soil, in that it remained “muddier than a ploughed field” (Ronayne 2014: 115–16). In his external viewing of Thessaloniki, Ward Price likewise refers to the civilized urban as being close to, and integral with, the surrounding rural landscape:

[...] for a time the rolling slopes around hid all sight of the town, and then quite suddenly, as you came over a rise, there rose up before you the long line of the mediæval wall, with bastion, tower and battlement, each standing in silhouette against the sky. The empty countryside reached to its very foot. (Ward Price 1918: 256)

H. Collinson Owen found greater interest in primitive rural scenes than the urban landscape, even though he recognized the poverty and desperation of the population: “they cannot help looking picturesque in their many-coloured garments” (quoted in Marix Evans 2003: 217). Ward Price was, predictably, more damning: “When you step out of Salonica you step into a virtual desert, roadless, treeless, uncultivated, populated only by scattered

villages of the most primitive kind, inhabited by a low-grade peasantry” (Ward Price 1918: 2). The rootedness of the Greeks in their land apparently extended to those who had emigrated to America, to Ward Price’s condescending incomprehension:

[...] he will leave the new-found civilisation of street-cars and telephones and soda-fountains and cinemas as soon as he has saved a little money, and return all the way again to his remote, squalid, muddy, tumble-down village where nothing but the dreary monotony of a peasant’s life on the reluctant soil awaits him. (Ward Price 1918: 101)

Thorburn’s experience of the locals was mediated through his education and upbringing. He noted that oxen were encouraged to proceed by the wielding of “the goad of the classics” and he supplied his men with additional comforts and food through communicating with traders “in classical Greek” (Ronayne 2014: 35, 36). However, it was not only those in possession of an extensive formal education who persisted in viewing Greece through the lens of its past. Ward Price purported to have overheard this exchange near the site of ancient Amphipolis, “which Cleon attacked in the Peloponnesian war”:

“Cleon, the demagogue, don’t you know,” explains a subaltern, who was on the Modern side at school three years ago, speaking with the authoritative air of a Regius Professor of History, “and of course, Brassidas, the Spartan fellow, was killed here, too—just about down there by those mule-lines we think it would be.” (Ward Price 1918: 282)

In penning his memoir published in 1938–1939, an anonymous British soldier chose the title “I saw the Futile Massacre at Doiran” (Gough 2006: 91, note 53). As if to emphasize this futility, many British soldiers suffered without actively contributing to the defeat of the enemy. The level of attrition to the army caused by disease—malaria each summer and then Spanish flu in 1918—was extraordinary: the ratio was twenty non-battle casualties for every one sustained in battle (Wakefield and Moody 2011: 182). Wakefield and Moody have set out the eventual shape of the medical system that the British were forced to develop:

For front line casualties, preliminary care was administered by medical officers at Regimental Aid Posts, from where the wounded would be moved to Advanced Dressing Stations. For those requiring more treatment the next step would take them to a Field Ambulance and then back to a Casualty Clearing Station, some miles behind the line. More seriously wounded or sick men were assessed and transported back to Stationary and General Hospitals, which in Macedonia were located around Salonika itself and on the Hortiach Plateau east of the city. (Wakefield and Moody 2011: 166–7)

By the end of 1917, the total number of British hospital beds was 50,000 (Wakefield and Moody 2011: 168).

A recent official history of the Indian contribution to WWI is dismissive of the gains against the cost: “The Salonica Front proved entirely immobile, locking up a large body of Allied troops, so much so that it was joked that Salonica was the largest voluntary prisoner of war camp in history” (Chhina 2014: 114). The French premier of the time, Georges Clemenceau, derisively nicknamed those involved as diggers rather than warriors: the “Gardeners of Salonika.” However, the art historian Paul Gough has noted a recent change in the interpretation and understanding of what was previously dismissed as “a waste of resources”: “the campaign brought about the defeat in the field of the Bulgarian army, liberation of Serbia and the protection of Greece, and the strategic exposure of both Austria and Turkey” (Gough 2006: 89). Of course, many of those who had been involved sought to justify their efforts and the lives expended. Casson notes that “British and French alike thought it was a troublesome side-show.” He, however, argued that it was the turning of the German flank in the Balkans, which led directly to an overall Allied victory (Casson 2010: 8). Much contemporary rhetoric was expended on the argument that the British were bringing order and civilization to a backward part of the globe. Ward Price made the grandiose claim that “We have tamed the wilderness and civilised the waste, reclaimed the barren and opened up the inaccessible” (Ward Price 1918: 62). Certainly, for Greece, as for so many other countries, the war brought about important changes, not the least of which was the formation by Venizelos of a breakaway government in the summer of 1916, paving the way for the departure of King Constantine the following year.

For Thessaloniki itself, the war years were transformative. The fire of August 1917 consumed 9,500 buildings, or 32% of the city, leaving 79,000 people homeless, about 45% of the population. The destruction encompassed twelve mosques, sixteen synagogues, and several churches, as well as hotels, over 4,000 shops, and cafés including Flocas’s (Papastathis 2005: 267–8). From the ancient walls, Casson looked down upon “the heart of a glowing volcano.” In his estimation, no one in authority acquitted themselves well in the face of the fire: the Italians left town, the Russians looted, the French transported the homeless (for a fee), the Greeks milled around aimlessly, and the British took charge of a single fire-engine (Casson 2010: 185–6). A recent scholar has scoffed at conspiracy theories that the fire was deliberately started by the Allies, but concludes that French efforts to create fire-breaks and British actions to make water available were half-hearted (Papastathis 2005: 263–5). For Charalambos Papastathis, the causes of the fire can be analyzed

as strong winds, high temperature, the density and construction of buildings, lack of an effective fire service, and want of water (Papastathis 2005: 263–4). Ward Price was more colorful in his verdict of the moment, arguing that ineffective planning prior to the disaster and inactivity once the fire broke out meant that “the town can only be said to have brought the disaster on itself” (Ward Price 1918: 81). For those observers desensitized by war, the fire did not seem at all shocking: “I was as unmoved by the spectacle of this perishing city as if it were a mere display of fireworks” (Casson 2010: 188). Ward Price concluded that, in the light of his portrayal of the inhabitants as profiteers disloyal to the Allied cause, this was “a judgment upon the greed of Salonica.” For him, the veneer of culture had been stripped away, and the city returned to its elemental form: “Salonica, formerly the solitary outpost of civilisation in Macedonia, now stands as desolate as any muddy village of the Balkans” (Ward Price 1918: 80–1).

Certainly, the old town was largely destroyed, making way for a modernist vision of wide boulevards, parks, and Westernized architecture, fit for Salonica’s status as the second city of the European Greek nation (Mazower 2004: 321ff). Less positively, as Papastathis has pointed out, “the fire was also the event which marked the gradual erosion of the city’s cosmopolitan character, as its Jewish, Frankish, Turkish, and other Balkan inhabitants began to migrate to their ethnic homelands” (Papastathis 2005: 271). If the diversity of before did not return to the center of the reconstructed city, Mark Mazower argues that this was not so much an ethnic as a social cleansing: it was only the wealthy who could afford to rebuild (Mazower 2004: 326–7).

Two Women Novelists and “Apollo’s Sunny Realm”¹

Loretta Proctor describes herself as conflicted: “two diverse and unique nations blended with effort into one personality and living under one English name” (Proctor 2014: 155). Her parents met on the eve of the Nazi occupation of Greece, giving Proctor personal experience of how war can have positive outcomes:

My father was an Englishman serving in the Royal Air Force, my mother a beautiful Greek actress whom he met in the streets of Athens, fell in love with at first sight, and pursued diligently, marrying her just in time for them both to escape. (Proctor 2015: 76)

As they afterward forged a new life together in Britain, Proctor’s Greek mother “filled my eager imaginative young mind with *mythistorima*, tales of ancient Greece, grand philosophies, stories of warriors and heroes both

ancient and modern” (Proctor 2014: 155). *The Long Shadow*, Proctor’s first novel, explicitly reflects this personal background: “a story about a young man born from a Greek father and an English mother, a mirror image as it were of my own internal dilemma” (Proctor 2014: 168). This enables her to “explore the question of ‘Who am I?’ through my character, Andrew Cassimatis” (Proctor 2015: 81), who is represented as traveling to Greece in search of his identity and finds himself transformed as a result. Proctor’s own journeys of self-discovery took place in the 1960s. Visiting her relatives in Athens and Thessaloniki, she found “the Greeks had not yet recovered from the long years of Ottoman rule or managed to become truly European and ‘modern’”. Despite this, her “Athenian cousins were elegant, cultured and had a beautiful home.” They looked down upon the peasant culture in other parts of Greece: “all those superstitious, half-pagan attitudes to life.” Relatives in Thessaloniki, in contrast, lived in a quarter populated by Asia Minor refugees, where they had at first worked “for poor wages, exploited and unwelcome.” But Proctor could appreciate what had become by the time of her 1960s visit there the “genuine community life with its friendliness, kindness and generosity” (Proctor 2014: 158, 159, 160, 162).

It appears that change in contemporary Greece has been a disappointment for her. In Thessaloniki, “simple whitewashed one-storey houses and little gardens” have been replaced by “huge blocks of flats from which issue the cacophonous blare of radios and televisions” (Proctor 2014: 169). The “real” Greece, which for her can be captured in a soundscape comprising “the crowing of the cockerel at dawn, the wind in the trees, the sing-song cries of the village vendors passing by in the early morning selling their goods” (2014: 170), has been lost. She argues “Tourism has been the ruin of Greece in so many ways” (Proctor 2015: 80). If something of the essential nature of Greece remains, it is in the countryside not the modernized towns: “it feels as if the gods still walk beside me” (Proctor 2014: 170). However, Proctor’s understanding of Greece does not originate merely from her personal background and experiences. According to her novel’s acknowledgments page, she was diligent in unearthing original letters, diaries, and photographs, including from the British Red Cross Archives and the Imperial War Museum, as well as reading Wakefield and Moody’s (2011) account (Proctor 2005: 7).

Victoria Hislop gained international recognition with her first novel, *The Island* (2006), which became a major television series in Greece as well as being a bestseller in both English and Greek. In an appendix to a more recent book, a collection of short stories published as *The Last Dance*, Hislop reveals her “Ideas and Inspiration” (dated specifically March 2013), presumably for the benefit of readers’ book club discussions. Hislop responds to the charge

leveled by Greeks that she has hitherto viewed their country through “rose-tinted lenses.” As a result, she took the decision that in future she would make her fictional Greece “authentic and perhaps more gritty” (Hislop 2013: 151). Rather than focusing on tourist locations, she characterizes the backdrops for her post-*The Island* work as “towns and villages which are either agricultural or semi-industrial” (Hislop 2013: 152). While her comment is primarily about making a distinction between “real life” and more touristic inauthentic experiences, it also implies a view that many towns in Greece remain close to their rural roots. As with the vast majority of contemporary writers (see Wills 2015), Hislop has chosen not to make the economic crisis a focus of any of her work so far, arguing that the essence of Greece is unchanged despite tremendous pressures: “I think the nature of the country and its people remain the same” (Hislop 2013: 158). Hislop is serious about her research, listing on her website forty (largely non-fiction) titles which she consulted during the writing of *The Thread*. These range from general histories of Greece to memoirs of life in twentieth-century Thessaloniki and Athens, though nothing which has WWI as its sole focus.² Hislop’s publisher has promoted her more recent writing as providing tourists with a window onto the “true” nature of their destination. A poster for *The Sunrise* (2014) asserts, over contrasting photos of a sunny beach and a tangle of barbed wire framing abandoned Cypriot hotels, “This summer you could visit a beautiful island or you can truly understand one.”³

Victoria Hislop’s The Thread (2011)

Hislop’s opening statement, prior to commencing the narrative of *The Thread* (2011), foregrounds the idea that her characters and their city are buffeted by “a sequence of political and human catastrophes.” One result for Thessaloniki is that diversity became homogeneity: “only Christians remained.” Although the title refers to the skill of her central character—Katerina—in embroidery, it also refers to “the thread” of Greece’s twentieth-century history which runs through the story: the Asia Minor Catastrophe, exchange of populations, Nazi occupation, Holocaust (losing one fifth of the city’s population), civil war, and colonels’ dictatorship. The original cover for the British edition shows a narrow, isolated pier occupied by a single woman who is perhaps bidding farewell to those in a small rowing boat on the water. This seems to relate to no specific event in the narrative, but suitably foregrounds a female protagonist and reflects themes of longing, loss, and separation. This is a twentieth-century parable in which unleashing the forces of intolerance,

nationalism, and greed devastates potentially harmonious communities through war and genocide.⁴

On the arrival of Allied troops in 1915, with the country split between supporters of Venizelos and the King, Hislop describes the daily sights, sounds, and smells of everyday life in Thessaloniki (2011: 17), routines that it is clear will shortly be swept away. Only recently becoming an official Greek city, there had already been “the laying down of some broad boulevards, which contrasted with the ancient pattern of winding lanes” (2011: 16). But the essence of Thessaloniki had not yet been affected: “a place of dazzling cultural variety, where an almost evenly balanced population of Christians, Muslims and Jews coexisted and complemented each other like the interwoven threads of an oriental rug” (2011: 15). Hislop follows modern scholars in judging that there was purpose behind WWI in Greece. “The Greek divisions fighting on the Macedonian front had helped break German and Bulgarian resistance and the general collapse of Germany had followed” (2011: 66). Leonidas, fighting in his country’s army, is contrasted positively with his businessman brother Konstantinos, who appears to care more for making money than for his own wife and son. This difference is expressed through a heroic name and classical comparison. “Leonidas, tall, with fair hair and blue eyes, was Apollo to his brother’s Hephaestus” (2011: 40). Later shown to be amoral in his business dealings—including collaboration with Nazi occupiers—Konstantinos profits from WWI rather than taking part in it:

[...] he was the sole supplier of wool cloth for most of the army regiments that had been mobilised in northern Greece at a time when, with thousands of Allied forces camped outside the city, the price of everything on the commodities market, from wheat to wool, had gone up. (2011: 39)

The fire of 1917 is regarded by Hislop as the catalyst for the city’s transformation. The causes and spread of the fire are accidental and natural—a spark from a kitchen fire and dry summer conditions. But this is exacerbated by lack of preparation and the demands of war. “The city had a few fire engines, but they were old and inefficient and, in any case, much of the local water supply had been diverted to the vast encampments of Allied troops outside Thessaloniki” (2011: 37). Hislop emphasizes that, at this point, everyone was pulling together. “The Greek army was using a few fire engines to try to hose down some of the flames, but it was futile, like throwing a bucket of water at a forest fire” (2011: 48). Meanwhile, Allied soldiers destroy buildings in order to make a firebreak (2011: 45). But the result was the destruction of “thousands upon thousands” of homes, and this chapter concludes with a lurid newspaper headline: “Death of a City” (2011: 50, 53).

The fire results in starkly contrasting lifestyles among Thessalonians: “Never more so than at this time, this was a city of extreme wealth and extreme poverty” (Hislop 2011:170). In the short term, even the wealthy have to compromise. The Greek businessman Konstantinos is forced to move his family to a house where they have Jews as neighbors on one side and Muslims on the other. Hislop establishes this as a positive situation which will soon be torn apart: for Konstantinos’ wife Olga and baby son Dimitri, “Living cheek by jowl with each other made everyone more tolerant rather than less so” (2011: 61). But Konstantinos himself moves out, as he finds the proximity of undesirables intolerable: “dwelling in an area where you rubbed shoulders, quite literally, with the poorest of Muslims and Jews was slightly abhorrent” (2011: 55). Hislop emphasizes this community’s honest, genuine nature by describing it as linked to the land, in contrast with the modern and artificial metropolitan manners which predominated elsewhere in Thessaloniki: Konstantinos “could not feel at home in a street where the animals seemed to outnumber the humans” (2011: 60). The novel has the fire as ultimately beneficial for Konstantinos’ business. Reconstructing his quayside factory with a footprint much increased from before, Konstantinos found “the prolonged period of mobilisation of the army, and the continuing conflict in Asia Minor, had provided him with unparalleled commercial opportunity” (2011: 92). This is an echo of the allegation I have identified in contemporaneous British accounts, that (some) grasping, exploitative city Greeks profited from the war and misery of others.

Meanwhile, the old town loses its Muslims and prepares to receive 100,000 refugee Greeks. Upon her arrival from Smyrna, young Katerina, Hislop’s main protagonist for the remainder of the novel, sees a panoply of buildings: the “churches, mosques and synagogues” (2011: 105) represent the diversity about to be altered. Previously, as a Muslim mother makes plain, “we all lived happily together with our separate religions” (2011: 64). But even before the official exchange of populations with Turkey of 1923, the fire has caused marginalization:

[...] the area of twisted lanes south of Egnatia Street where many Jews had lived was not going to be rebuilt along the old model and most of the Jewish community was to be pushed towards the outer edge of the city. It was the same for the areas of the city where many Muslims had lived. They were being shunted away from the centre too. (2011: 65)

There is certainly truth to Hislop’s portrayal of displacement, although she does not follow the interpretation of Mark Mazower, whose account she used during her research.⁵ Mazower maintains, as we have seen, that it was more to

do with wealth than ethnic background. Hislop's fire, then, is but a first step along a road which leads to the city's transformation, from polyglot melting pot to smart northern capital. In the process, there is both suffering and comradeship. Hislop inscribes these historical developments as part of a continuum of minority exclusion, encompassing the fire, exchange of populations, and Nazi Holocaust.

Hislop's more recent book, *The Sunrise*, set in Cyprus during the 1974 Turkish invasion, picks up the theme of a clash of cultures between traditional ways of life and aspirations of modernism. Simplicity and tradition are viewed as beneficial, and those who moved to the city of Famagusta for work "replicated in miniature everything they had enjoyed when they lived in the countryside" (Hislop 2014: 24), such as the cultivation of vines, tomatoes, and chickens. As in *The Thread*, it is the influence of international politics, which is shown to bring unwelcome change. The tranquility of village life is shattered when the previously harmonious Turkish and Greek populations are turned against one another. Meanwhile, sunbathing tourists "remained entirely oblivious" (2014: 78) to the ferment which the arrival of a wider world conflict could bring to Greek soil, a parallel to Thessaloniki in WWI.

Loretta Proctor's *The Long Shadow* (2005)

Proctor's protagonist is, in common with Hislop's, a foreign observer arriving in the midst of WWI. However, whereas Katerina of *The Thread* was an immigrant of Greek extraction, Dorothy is a young Englishwoman voluntarily serving with the British military at the front. *The Long Shadow* opens in the England of 1932, when fourteen-year-old Andrew visits his grandmother at the old, rural family home, Downlands. He knows that his mother Dorothy's present husband is not his biological father, and discovers her diary, which reveals her time as a nurse near the fictional village of Mistres. After illicitly reading the diary, the content of which occupies the first half of the novel, Andrew leaves for Greece aged eighteen, in 1936, to find his roots. The cover of the 2014 Greek edition, which was not chosen by the author,⁶ makes obvious references to the historical period and location of the story through featuring the White Tower of Thessaloniki with a fly-past of two biplanes. In the foreground, a young blonde woman in Western clothes brushes her hand through long grass, establishing a romantically rural link to the story rather than an urban feel.

The novelist is keen to establish both the importance of the Allied mission and the hardships it entailed. On leave with her family in England, Dorothy

is dismayed to learn of the prevalent attitude that servicemen in Thessaloniki “are just enjoying themselves” (Proctor 2005: 233). Certainly, much of the work while cooped up in “the Birdcage” is described in Dorothy’s diary as being monotonous: “the men are getting sick to death of digging roads and putting up miles of barbed wire” (2005: 67). However, as I have shown from contemporaneous memoirs, the soldiers suffer extensively from having the wrong clothing and equipment, and, of course, from malaria: “a pall of disease seems to hang everywhere” (2005: 104). The fiancé of Dorothy’s best friend is killed “in the front line near that terrible Jumeaux Ravine from which the enemy hurl down their fire upon our soldiers struggling up the rocky, treacherous terrain” (2005: 178). In a factual article written for an historical association’s newsletter, she has written of the conditions suffered by nurses: insects in summer, inadequate clothing, and shelter in winter. “In the morning you might wake to find your hair frozen to the pillow and have to bathe your head in lukewarm water till it thaws and frees you” (Proctor 2012: 17). Her fictional diarist confides that “Nothing feels dry, our clothes, our blankets, all permeated with the soggy damp of the relentless rains” (Proctor 2005: 118).

Prior to her departure for the front in 1916, Dorothy has gained the impression that this is “just a sideshow to keep the Greeks from falling to the Huns” (Proctor 2005: 44). However, Andrew’s stepfather, a surgeon, whom Dorothy worked with in Greece, denies that the war there was futile. Ethan acknowledges that there were extensive Allied casualties suffered during the offensive of 1918, but the strategic goal was achieved: “the enemy was at last in retreat, abandoning those stony heights they had held for so long” (2005: 252). As argued in recent specialist histories of the conflict, this was not a mere sideshow: “the Salonika Campaign was the keystone to the war [...] knock out the Bulgarians and all the German Allies would fall and only that way would Germany itself surrender” (2005: 250). But Proctor has another NCO reflect the bitter view of the time, which I have shown is still prevalent in scholarship and public awareness today, that the British in northern Greece are the “forgotten army” (2005: 86).

Proctor has written elsewhere that, when on leave, nurses might visit the market in Thessaloniki, take trips on a yacht, or witness “entertainments devised by the soldiers, pantomimes and theatricals” (Proctor 2012: 18). These would have included what Ward Price calls “the highly successful revues, ‘Hullo, Salonica,’ and ‘Bonjour, Salonique,’ at the Ordnance Base Depot” (Ward Price 1918: 264). In Proctor’s novel, the countryside affords opportunities for the nurses to bathe and picnic (Proctor 2005: 62). It also offers more profound diversions. As recorded in Dorothy’s diary, witnessing

the sunrise over the sea seems to lift the veil of the ephemeral present: “for some strange, inexplicable moment all the ancient heroes of Homer are still alive” (2005: 80). The country, if not the people, is “redolent with an ancient past” (2005: 86). But Andrew, visiting in the 1930s, recognizes “the mistake everyone made about Greece,” namely “they refused to let it grow or change” (2005: 284). Thessaloniki offers Great War servicemen and women a greater variety of pleasures, from Floca’s café to prostitutes. The Western visitor experienced in the city a “glorious confusion of races, sounds, religions and costumes” (2005: 74). Arriving by sea, Dorothy’s first glimpse is a fairy-tale vision: “The white domes of the Greek churches glistened in the fresh morning sunshine and the whole scene was entrancing” (2005: 51). But, as I have shown is likewise the case in accounts written at the time, the Thessaloniki of the novel is represented as not far in nature from the countryside which surrounds it. “In the dirty, dusty roads, oxen with loaded carts filled with anything from water melons to barrels of wine” (2005: 74). The “true” Greece of the novel lies in the land. Significantly, Andrew’s first glimpse of his mother from WWI is a photo of her against a wilderness backdrop (2005: 33).

In her later factual piece, Proctor has characterized the inhabitants of northern Greece as understandably unfriendly:

[...] they were deeply suspicious, apathetic and weary. They’d had their fill of invaders, fighting, occupation and turmoil in the Balkans and now they had this invasion of Allied forces to contend with. (Proctor 2012: 17)

In the novel, the attitude shown by the British toward the Greeks is commonly shown to be condescension. They are, allegedly, not to be trusted: Dorothy is warned by her nursing matron: “They are a wily lot, changeful” (Proctor 2005: 223). Proctor has Dorothy’s fellow nurse, Sister Moira, effectively echoing Ward Price in regarding the 1917 fire as an unexpected but not unwelcome judgment on the city’s inhabitants: “The extortionate prices those greedy people have charged our officers just to billet in some seedy dirty hotel! Everything has trebled in price and they have become rich with Allies gold” (2005: 216). The British have been regularly fleeced because they “have no understanding at all about the Oriental love of bargaining and take everything at face value” (2005: 67). Ethan complains that Floca’s regularly charges “ridiculous prices,” and he regards the Constantine/Venizelos political strife as exacerbating natural Greek untrustworthiness: “We can never be sure if they are friends or enemies ready to stab us in the back” (2005: 119, 142). But more enlightened British visitors can learn from the Greeks. For

a while, pregnant Dorothy “had even taken to sitting about in my dressing gown, Oriental style!” (2005: 207).

As was reported in a number of eyewitness accounts of the fire, not all Allied troops acquitted themselves well in the face of this disaster. French and Italian soldiers are described by Proctor as looters, although British efforts to create a firebreak and to transport the stricken out of the burning city are shown as commendable (Proctor 2005: 213–14). At first, the British attitude is complacent and unsympathetic: “opinion seemed to be that the fire would burn up all the native quarters, which was no great loss” (2005: 211). The fire cleanses the city, not merely of its sin, but also its diverse community. In a symbolic moment, Proctor singles out one set of buildings: “Out of that red blaze the long, white minarets stood out for a while till they too fell into the flames” (2005: 212). From the perspective of the 1930s, Andrew observes that “the fire had cleansed and purified it from the ancient dirt, squalor and ethnic confusion” (2005: 367). The post-war redevelopers had seized this opportunity “to remove all traces of Orientalism and make it purely Greek, modern and European” (2005: 321).

Within the novel, the British regard themselves, rather than the present “Oriental” Greeks, as having taken on the mantle of the ancient world. It is Andrew’s (purebred British) cousin, Reginald, who appears as “a fair Apollo,” whereas Andrew himself is the son of a Greek man, “from a country of brigands,” as his aunt Agnes says (Proctor 2005: 16). As recorded in her diary, Dorothy’s first impressions of Greece were difficult to reconcile with her historical knowledge. “Were the glorious Ancient Greeks of my imagination anything to do with these lice ridden, poverty stricken people who stare at us sullenly from their doors?” The “Oriental sounding language” is impenetrable and the rural setting equally perplexing:

Are these rough villages with their open sewers buzzing with flies, with their oxen and goats lumbering through the swirling clouds of dust, their chickens and fierce, yapping dogs, any relation to the fine, paved marble streets of old Athens? (2005: 63)

Dorothy initially despairs of progress: “We cannot expect to teach these ignorant people our ways” (2005: 64). Yet she finds hope in that it is “the landscape and its past that shaped those who came and settled there” (2005: 49). It is a region which has been ground down at times due to repeated conquests and changes of regime: “all they have ever known is a life of turmoil and constant warfare and reprisals” (2005: 56).

Symbolic of their desire to transform Greece into modernity, but also of their failure to do so more than superficially, the British have taken the White

Tower in Salonica, in former times a brutal prison, and whitewashed it (Proctor 2005: 59). The British congratulate themselves that—in the face of the allegedly ignorant, lazy peasants who populate the countryside—they have brought peace, prosperity, and roads (2005: 56). The Greeks have also lost their ancient credentials as champions of liberty as is shown when Dorothy pleads on behalf of a local girl who has been falsely imprisoned and mistreated for her alleged allegiance to the monarchy: “I think the love of freedom still burns in them but personal freedoms are daily swallowed up in the present climate of acquisitive greed on the part of the statesmen” (2005: 113). The fictional Dorothy here shares the view of many British observers of the time that, in spite of their debased state, the Greeks preserved beneath the surface the essential elements of their classical character. Compton Mackenzie, for example, was a WWI intelligence officer in Athens and an avowed Philhellene. In one of his many volumes of Greek memoirs, he records an evzone with a “face and profile which might have made Praxiteles stare at their perfection” (Mackenzie 1931: 156). A passionately declaiming young woman was “Pallas Athene herself pleading before Zeus the cause of her beloved Greeks” (Mackenzie 1931: 50). For the Great War generation, remnants of the ancient past, physical and cultural, were to be found among the countryside and people of Greece. But higher civilization resided in the British and could be restored by them to Greece during the war and afterward, even if only on the practical level of usable roads.

Conclusion

For Victoria Hislop, the disruptions and tragic events of the twentieth century are not shied away from in her fiction—with atrocities committed by various sides—but have a positive conclusion. In her 2011 novel, the young British-born and educated grandson of the main protagonist realizes that his destiny lies in twenty-first century Thessaloniki, “the thread” of his family’s history there, which Hislop has recounted from 1917 onward, pulling him in. A British magazine has recently emphasized that Thessaloniki, following the fire, “had to be born again.” As with Hislop’s young returning émigré, this is about second chances. Thessaloniki “revels in this re-emergence, like a man walking away from a car-crash determined to make the most of his redemption.” But, again like Hislop’s account, “this is not to say that you cannot look back” (Leadbeater 2015: 87). Thessaloniki in 2007, as Hislop’s Katerina tells her grandson, possesses both “history and timelessness” (Hislop 2011: 8).

Both Hislop's and Proctor's novels portray women as forging new identities from adversity in a city thought to be, appropriately enough, a cultural melting pot. Thessaloniki is a place experiencing its own crises. It emerges phoenix-like from the flames, transformed as well as traumatized, providing a parallel to the individual experiences of the female protagonists. Greece in the period 1915–1918 was a contested space, militarily, and culturally. Vasiliki Kolocotroni and Efterpi Mitsi have argued that women in particular have been attracted to the theme of the alleged Western/Oriental ambiguity of Greece (Kolocotroni and Mitsi 2008: 5). Though this is most apparent among travelers of the nineteenth century and before, it continues to echo in writings of the twenty-first. Greece has become a full member of Western nations through its independence from the Ottoman Empire and its membership of (and recent dependence on) the European Union. But writers have continued to identify an alleged “impure modernity” (Kolocotroni and Mitsi 2008: 13).

In their books, Hislop and Proctor faithfully reproduce early twentieth-century views of Thessaloniki and the consequences of the war which swirled around its region: Greece as a sideshow to the main world conflict, the debased locals, the primitive countryside, the fleecing of the British, the Oriental as well as classical vestiges, and the transformation wrought by fire. But these two contemporary novelists use their female protagonists to challenge these motifs, instead offering interpretations from present day historians and commentators. These include lamenting Salonica's lost diversity, and the understanding that northern Greece had suffered generations of occupation and poverty which explained its alleged lack of European sophistication at the beginning of the twentieth century. Above all, Hislop's and Proctor's women promote the idea that Greece has to be understood on its own terms rather than filtered through the aspects of its past so beloved of Western education.

Notes

1. A phrase Loretta Proctor has used in describing Greece (2015: 80).
2. <https://www.victoriahislop.com/the-thread/>, accessed August 1, 2016.
3. As seen at London's Waterloo Station, June 2015.
4. My analysis here focuses only on the section of the novel set during WWI and its immediate aftermath.
5. <https://www.victoriahislop.com/the-thread/>, accessed August 1, 2016.
6. Personal correspondence with Loretta Proctor, November 2014.

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8. Victoria Hislop's *The Island* (2005): The Reception and Impact of a Publishing Phenomenon in Greece

KELI DASKALA

Victoria Hislop's first novel *The Island*, published in 2005, rocked the boat in the world book market. British critics hailed it as “the new *Captain Corelli's Mandolin*” (*The Sunday Express*) or “a beach book with a heart” (*The Observer*).¹ It has been translated into more than twenty languages; it was selected for the Richard and Judy Summer Read in 2006 and won the “New-comer of the Year” Award at the Galaxy British Book Awards 2007.

In Greece the impact was no less huge. In 2007, the Greek edition topped the best-seller list for months. It was followed by translations of other novels about leprosy (Jean-Yves Masson, *The Isolation*); reissues of books written by Greek writers that deal with the life of lepers in the first half of the twentieth century—*The Sick City* [*I arrosti politeia*] by Galatia Kazantzaki and *Spinalonga: ad vitam* by Themis Kornaros; writing attempts by contemporary Greek writers (Pratsinis 2010); two academic works: a PhD by sociologist Manos Savakis *The Lepers of Spinalonga. Medicine, Internment, Life Experiences (1903–1957)* [*Oi leproi tis Spinalongas. Iatriki, engleismos, viomenes empeiries. 1903–1957*] in 2008 and my study on the cultural interpretation of leprosy during the past centuries (Daskala 2010). Significantly, at least three books were published with archival material and statements about the life of lepers in Crete and in the leper colony of Spinalonga—the island in the novel's title (Psilomanousaki-Pilataki 2010; Papadakis 2011; Giakoumaki 2012). It is difficult to determine the exact number of articles, television, and radio shows, discussions or extensive tributes to Hansen's disease (the scientific term for leprosy) in Greece and elsewhere from 2007 until today.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, thanks to Hislop's novel, readers as well as writers, critics, and journalists in Greece discovered "the island of the lepers," as Spinalonga is often called—a small island in the beautiful Mirabello Bay near Agios Nikolaos, which had been a leper colony from 1903 to 1957. Tourism in the area is growing. According to 2009 data, Spinalonga had approximately 1,000 visitors everyday during the summer months and became the most visited site in Crete after the famous Knossos (the largest Bronze Age archaeological site on the island).

It was only a matter of time before a movie or television programme based on the book would appear. *The Island* was adapted as the twenty-six-part drama *To Nisi* which was broadcast in 2010–2011. It is worth mentioning that the writer decided to spurn Hollywood and grant the rights to a Greek channel (Mega): "Keen to preserve the integrity of the book and to give something back to the Mediterranean island on which it is based, Hislop has instead allowed one of Greece's main television channels to dramatise her story for a fraction of the fee" (Brooks 2010). In the same year, the archaeological site of Spinalonga became a tourist destination even during winter. Days of glory arrived for the wider area of Agios Nikolaos. The hotels and the little boats that cross the sea from the village of Plaka to Spinalonga have been doing a roaring trade.

The Island by Victoria Hislop belongs to a genre that has been customized as "beach reads": the action takes place on an island or an idyllic beach usually in summer. The theme is the struggle to find love, in a world where social differences, family commitments, or historical events hold the lovers back from finding happiness. The title of such books usually contains the words "island," "beach," or "summer" and the cover has a picture of the sea, the sun, a sandy shore, or a house at the beach. The plot is simple: a great amount of descriptions of an island, a study of manners, a haunting secret, a fateful meeting, lovers who suffer from existential worries and a happy ending that the summer demands. The reader knows what to expect. A "beach novel" is easy to read, and commercial success is more or less guaranteed.

At first impression *The Island* fully meets the above criteria. The cover of the Greek translation (2007) shows a woman whose face is barely seen standing in a boat in calm water; in the background the blue haze over the line of mountains. When you start reading the picture becomes clearer. We are in Plaka (a small village of Crete), in 1953. A young woman is sent to Spinalonga to live with the other lepers. Then, back to the present, in 2001. Alexis is leaving Britain for Crete, the homeland of her mother Sofia, hoping to ferret out her hidden past. She discovers her roots and the family secret: leprosy had once affected members of her family. Alexis' great-grandmother,

Eleni Petrakis, was a leper. Eleni had two daughters: the possessive, immoral, devilish Anna, Sofia's mother who doesn't hesitate to have a love affair and a child with her husband's cousin, and Maria, a generous, kind-hearted person who also suffers from leprosy. She is the melancholic figure on the front cover.

The two heroines who are touched by Hansen's disease show self-control and determination. These are the two major values explored in the novel. Furthermore, Eleni and Maria Petrakis are optimistic. Despite the gravity of the disease and the enormous pain caused by the obligatory isolation, these women make a stand. When Eleni, the mother, arrives at Spinalonga, she takes care of a former elementary-school pupil of hers who had also become ill. Her daughter Maria will follow her example. With her kindness and positive thinking she will contribute to the improvement of life in the leper colony.

Readers discover in the pages of *The Island* a Paradise on Earth where Good fights Evil and wins. A typical example is the description of the arrival of springtime at the beginning of chapter 6:

After its best winter in years came Spinalonga's most glorious spring. It was not just the carpets of wild flowers that spread across the slopes of the island's north side and peeped out of every crack in the rocks that made it so, but also the sense of new life that had been breathed into the community.

Spinalonga's main street, only a few months earlier a series of dilapidated buildings, was now a smart row of shops with shutters and doors freshly painted in deep blues and greens.

[...] The *kafenion* was flourishing too and a new taverna opened which specialised in *kakavia*, fish soup, freshly made each day. One of the busiest places in the main street was barber. Stelios Vandis had been the top hair stylist in Rethimnon, Crete's second city, but had abandoned his trade when he had been exiled to Spinalonga. When Papadimitriou learned that they had such man in their midst, he insisted Vandis resume his work. [...]

"Stelios," Papadimitriou would say, "give me your best Venizelos." Venizelos, the Cretan lawyer who had become prime minister of Greece, was thought to have had the most handsome moustache in the Christian world, and it was appropriate, the menfolk joked, that Papadimitriou should emulate him, since he clearly aspired to a position of leadership on the island. (Hislop 2007: 112–13)

Hislop takes the opportunity to adorn life in Crete, and Greek people feel flattered by the way Hislop writes about them; they feel she has managed to see the greatness of their race. The comment of a Greek reader is indicative: "The book is a hymn and a praise to Cretan pride, to Cretan "filotimo" (sense of honor), the Cretan hospitality, the resistance, Cretan tradition, the Cretan diet, the history and the culture, our habits and customs" (Mavrikakis 2007).

In *The Island* life in the Greek countryside, which is lost in time, is the only authentic expression of life. The islanders are poor and honest, almost

spotless (in soul and body), wise people who don't question their destiny. For example, Giorgis, Eleni's husband:

Life for Giorgis had rarely been anything but tough. He was a fisherman like his father and grandfather before him, and like them he had become hardened to long stretches spent at sea. These would usually be whiled away in tedious hours of chilly inactivity, but sometimes the long, dark nights would be spent battling against the wild waves, and at times like those there was a distinct danger that the sea might have its way and consume him once and for all. It was a life spent crouched low in the hull of a wooden caique, but a Cretan fisherman never questioned his lot. For him it was fate, not choice. (85)

The farewell scene is characteristic. Spring has—once more—transformed the Cretan landscape. During this divine moment, Eleni is obliged to leave her family and village. However, the eternal beauty of nature softens the pain, showing the heroine's strength of character. It also conveys a hopeful message; as winter is always followed by spring so sorrow is followed by happiness and illness by healing:

Early May brings Crete its most perfect and heaven-sent days. On one such day, when the trees were heavy with blossom and the very last of the mountain snows had melted into crystal streams, Eleni left the mainland for Spinalonga. In cruel contrast to this blackest of events, the sky was brilliant, a cloudless blue. A crowd had gathered to watch, to weep, to wave a final goodbye. [...] No one would have missed the chance to wave goodbye to their beloved "Kyria Petrakis." Eleni Petrakis was loved in Plaka and the surrounding villages. She had a magnetism that attracted children and adults alike to her and was admired and respected by them all. (57)

Eleni holds little Dimitri's hand and calls Spinalonga "our new home" before they even get there. The chapter dedicated to the farewell scene ends like this: Eleni feels happy because she will take care of her little student "as though he was her own son" (64) while her friend Savina will be taking care of her girls and the good neighbors will bring them food.

The depiction of the local community, in the late interwar years, is not even close to the historical truth, the harsh reality in the Cretan countryside or in Spinalonga (Savakis 2008: 106–110). In the novel, there is no hunger, no misery and most of all no discrimination. Furthermore, World War II is described as an unfortunate temporary situation in the life of the leper colony. Life in Spinalonga in peacetime is better than life in the Cretan countryside or in Athens. In wartime it is even better. Hislop's Spinalonga is a free and prosperous island during the German occupation.

It is worth mentioning how the writer uses the metaphor of leprosy to describe Spinalonga as a protected place, "clean" from the disease, while

healthy people consider it to be “infected.” At the same time the Germans carry the “stigma,” they transmit their dreadful “leprosy” in the free world: “Throughout the war, the only place that really remained immune from the Germans was Spinalonga, where the lepers were protected from the worst disease of all: the occupation. Leprosy might have disrupted families and friends but the Germans made an even more effective job of destroying everything they touched” (161).² In addition, all’s well that ends well since the cure is found, Maria is healed, she gets married to her sweetheart and raises the child of the evil sister, who dies in the meanwhile.

In the same way, in the television series Eleni, just like another Virgin Mary, is shown sitting on a donkey as her husband Giorgis (as the biblical Joseph), covered in sweat, takes her to the doctor in Iraklion before she finally goes to the leper colony. This scene is lit with a wonderful morning light over the glimmering sea. Eleni is sceptical, she worries about her future, but in the background idyllic Spinalonga seems to promise a peaceful life. In addition, in another scene, before they get into the boat, Giorgis carries his wife’s trunk like Jesus carried his Cross and the villagers silently wave for the last time to their beloved teacher, showing respect and sorrow and—probably—asking themselves why good people have a bad life.³

What Hislop does not show is the despair of a person who suffers from a terrible, for centuries incurable, disease like leprosy—perhaps the most stigmatized disease in human history. The writer’s intention is to compose a novel which, from the very first to the last page, conveys the liberating message of the Resurrection that follows Calvary and the Crucifixion. Just as Jesus sacrificed himself for the salvation of sinners, so the good people go through the most painful situations. However, this sacrifice (according to Christian belief) is not in vain. These “martyrs” set an example for the less strong who have lost their way. Eleni Petrakis and her daughter remind us of Pollyanna. In 1913, Eleanor Porter’s character managed, thanks to her patience, optimism, and goodwill, to change the life of people in her family and her neighborhood. Almost a century later, Hislop’s leper characters use the same method to transform their world into an Eden.

The Island, as we mentioned at the beginning, is very often compared to *Captain Corelli’s Mandolin* by Louis de Bernières (an Italian captain arrives at another Greek island, Kefalonia, during the German Occupation in 1942 and falls in love with a young beautiful woman). Critics suggest that Hislop adds another ingredient to the love “formula” of “beach novels” which really makes the difference. It is all about the reality of leprosy and the courage some patients like Eleni and Maria show in dealing with it. Thus, *The Island* is a love novel which tackles the subject of prejudice against an incurable

disease. It is obvious that nowadays the same thing happens with cancer or AIDS. Times change, and so do people and diseases. However, they are still stigmatized. At the dawn of the twenty-first century, when AIDS, cancer, or depression are the modern severe menaces of public health, Hislop puts back on the map a forgotten disease and its rich symbolism (the isolation/exclusion of the patients from society). At the same time, she succeeds in captivating readers all over the world, by combining a “high” literary subject with the “low” love formula of a “beach novel.”

The good characters in Hislop’s novel survive, despite the difficulties, because they believe in Good. At the same time, they break the stereotype of the exiled, miserable leper in the Bible (Leviticus chapters 13–14). In Jesus’ time, the leper is synonymous with the sinner, who is paying for his sins, a living dead person who has lost all his civil, religious, and social rights (Lewis 1987). In the Middle Ages, the leper was hooded, he carried a little bell and cried out “unclean, unclean” to alert those who were near him. Ever since biblical times, the image of the impure leper has resulted in sufferers being marginalized, confined to leper colonies on the outskirts of cities or institutions. For centuries, art has also been inspired by the deformed leper trying to fight against the stigma and give a message of solidarity (Daskala 2010: 137–83).

Writers denounce the exclusion, the marginalization and discrimination against lepers. They suggest the revaluation of the boundaries between the healthy and the sick, the “normal” people and the others. The interest, however, does not lie in the message of solidarity itself, but—mostly—in the way these two opposing views meet. At the beginning of the twentieth century, for example, the image of a leper conveys a message of social or political rebellion. A typical example is Jack London’s “Koolau, the Leper” (1909), one of his most controversial short stories, where the protagonist, a charismatic, visionary leper, incites his companions to revolt so that they can fight together for decent living conditions and health care. The writer uses Hansen’s disease in order to critique the imperialist expansion in Hawaii. “Koolau, the Leper” has been read as an allegory of the conflict between Western civilization and the paradise of the natives.⁴ From our perspective, it is significant that the reality of the disease is not idealized. On the contrary, the frightening aspect of the leper’s body is highlighted. London’s short story opens with the statement of Koolau: “Because we are sick they take away our liberty. We have obeyed the law. We have done no wrong. And yet they would put us in prison.” Only a few lines below, there is a realistic description of him and the other lepers:

He raised one hand, and with gnarled and twisted fingers lifted up the blazing wreath of hibiscus that crowned his black hair. The moonlight bathed the scene

in silver. It was a night of peace, though those who sat about him and listened had all the seeming of battle-wrecks. Their faces were leonine. Here a space yawned in a face where should have been a nose, and there an arm-stump showed where a hand had rotted off. They were men and women beyond the pale, the thirty of them, for upon them had been placed the mark of the beast. (London 1993: 1441)

Significantly, it appears that healthy people (white) and lepers (natives) cannot bridge the gap separating them.⁵ The rebellion of Koolau is praised while at the same time his fight is destined to fail.

Half a century after the discovery of a remedy for leprosy in 1947, and the closing of the leper colony in Spinalonga in 1957, neither writers nor readers are fascinated by the rebellious and hideous image of the “fighter-leper.” Hislop’s characters don’t fight the disease. The writer also embellishes reality. She does not describe affected bodies in detail. For example, in Spinalonga Eleni Petrakis finds out that “what was always been rumoured is true. Most of the lepers looked as she did: ostensibly unblemished” (67).⁶ When she glimpses a woman whose face is “deformed by lumps the size of walnuts” (67), she is more concerned about her young protégé Dimitri’s response and—above all—she is interested in creating a home for them (68). Later, when the “unsightly lumps” spread to her body and face, she remains cheerful for the sake of her husband (163). At the end, when her body is “a mass of ulcers,” Hislop describes in detail the doctor’s efforts to control the symptoms and minimize the pain.⁷ Even when the symptoms are described, the author softens the difficulties. At the end, the bad characters get punished. The good characters, despite their disease, overcome the prejudice, the discrimination, and the social exclusion and above all, embody patience, kindness, and hope. In addition, Victoria Hislop’s bestseller sends the politically correct message of resurrection and solidarity between the stoical lepers and the merciful healthy people.

Today, *The Island* has disappeared from the bestsellers list. The *Fifty Shades of Grey* trilogy by E. L. James is the new world publishing phenomenon. Almost five years after the adaptation of *The Island* on TV, most of the Greek viewers who were fascinated by the artistic quality of the television series *To Nisi* now enjoy Turkish or Greek soap operas. Publishing and television success is ephemeral because it only follows the “recipe,” as has already been described: sexual drama, mystery, secret relationships or extramarital affairs, emotional and moral conflicts, sudden conversions, last-minute rescues and revelations, *deus ex machina* endings, where Good defeats Evil, the weak get revenge, the poor become rich, against all the odds. It has been proved that in the case of *The Island* the majority of the readers prefer an

embellished representation of what a fatal disease is, sprinkled with optimism, celebration of an idyllic life in nature, and a naïve lyrical drama which fails to stimulate not only the spirit but also the senses. I wonder how many of the hundreds of thousands of readers, television viewers or even visitors to the leper colony in Spinalonga from around the world have really seen the “lepers” of the past, or indeed the new “lepers” of the twenty-first century: the marginalized immigrants in the large cities or the HIV-infected people.

Notes

1. The references to Hislop’s novel follow the HarperCollins e-books edition (Hislop 2007) and are incorporated into the main body of the text. The above and more reviews can be found on Victoria Hislop’s webpage, <http://www.victoriahislop.com/the-island/>.
2. See also the outburst of another hero, Pavlos, who lives in Plaka: “You call this freedom? Our country taken over the bloody Germans, our young men brutalised and the old people burnt to death in their beds? *They’re* the ones who are free!” he said, stabbing his finger in the direction of Spinalonga” (162), and the narrator’s comment: “On Spinalonga, candles were lit daily for those suffering on the mainland. The islanders were well aware that the Cretans were living in fear of German cruelty, and prayed for a swift end to the occupation” (169).
3. Scenes from the first episode, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uytgfl-3x34> (39:59–40:29 and 47:59–54:32).
4. See Eperjesi (2005): “Critics have fixated in this story because it appears to be an explicit critique of the devastating effects of imperialism expansion in Hawaii, thus providing an important counterweight to the fantasies of Anglo–Saxon superiority that appears elsewhere in the London canon” (117).
5. Rod Edmond rightly argues: “In this story the leper is a figure of the tragic but inevitable extinction of the culture of the colonized” (Edmond 2006: 232).
6. One of the doctors in Spinalonga, Dr. Kyritsis, expresses the same idea as well: “[Spinalonga] looked like any normal village, albeit less run-down than many in that part of Crete. Except for the occasional inhabitant he spotted with an enlarged earlobe or perhaps a crippled foot—signs which might not have been noticed by most—the people living there could have been ordinary folk going about their business” (134).
7. See also how Maria Petrakis describes the lepers “whose faces were deformed beyond recognition”: “They matched the biblical image of the leper and were as far along the hellish road to disfigurement as anyone could be while still being perceptibly human. Maria shopped and cooked for these end-stage cases. She hardly even noticed their deformities any more, as she served them lunch and, in some cases, helped to feed them” (345–46).

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9. ***“Perfidious Albion”*: Axis Occupation and Civil War in Sofka Zinovieff’s The House on Paradise Street**

ELENI PAPARGYRIOU

A recent edition of Anne Michaels’ *Fugitive Pieces* (first published in 1997) is appended with topics for discussion, intended, presumably, for college students reading the book as part of a syllabus on literary representations of the Holocaust, or for members of book clubs. One such topic reads:

From pages 62–73, Michaels weaves Jacob’s memories through Kostas’ and Daphne’s stories of the German occupation of Athens and the violence orchestrated by the Communist partisans which erupted after their departure. Why do you think that Michaels chose to write the passage in this way? (Michaels 2007: n.p.)

As a seven-year-old boy Jacob Beer was saved by the geologist Athos from a destroyed village in German-occupied Poland and brought over to Axis-occupied Greece. While he was hiding in a cupboard in their home, his parents were killed, and his sister Bella vanished never to be traced again. Jacob’s early memories from Poland are all the more poignant as they are related as fragmentary sensory experiences: smells, touches, and reminiscences of sights manifest a child’s incomplete perception of the world. Jacob recalls not being able to tell his father had been pushed from his chair by the way he fell into the ground or that the fingers of a certain neighbor who made wigs always smelled of hand lotion. These memories are percolated with a similarly fragmentary narrative of the German occupation in Athens by Kostas and Daphne, Athos’ Greek friends: the tanks on Vasilissis Sofias Avenue, the swastikas hanging from the Acropolis, the suicide of Prime Minister Koryzis, the falling of British bombs hailed by the Greeks as acts of resistance against

the Germans, the funeral of Palamas in 1943, and Sikelianos' triumphant chanting of his poem "Let the Trumpets Sound," written for the occasion. And after the retreat of the Germans in October 1944, the eruption of civil war, which the two characters unproblematically attribute to the communist partisans.¹

Kostas and Daphne's narrative is supposed to fill Athos' gaps: working in Poland, where he found Jacob, and then spending the rest of the war in Zakynthos hiding him, Athos could not have experienced the events in the Greek capital. However, the larger question looming, the question which, essentially, those college students or book club members are expected to answer concerns, more than anything else, the connection of local—in this case Greek—history to its European context. In Michaels' novel the notion of nation collapses, as Jacob, born and raised in Poland until the age of seven, becomes first a Greek, then a Canadian citizen. Greeks and Jews are united in their tempestuous past and their suffering, and love seems to be an antidote to the randomness of violence.

In Michaels' text the turbulent history of Greece in the 1940s plays a significant but nevertheless secondary role; Sofka Zinovieff's first novel *The House on Paradise Street* (2012) pushes it to center-stage. Maud's husband Nikitas dies suddenly in a mysterious car accident and she is challenged to discover his past, in the hope of entangling the reasons that might have caused the accident. This leads her to Nikitas' mother Antigone, a staunch communist forced to leave her three-year-old son in the care of her sister and her husband in order to flee for the Soviet Union, after the defeat of the Democratic Army in 1949. Antigone lived in Moscow, until the death of her only son in 2008 called for her return to Greece. Her repatriation prompts a revisitation of her personal archive; Antigone writes her family history starting from her English grandmother's arrival in Greece from Smyrna in 1922, her bourgeois upbringing in the interwar years, her indoctrination into communist beliefs and her active role in the National Resistance.

Both *Fugitive Pieces* and *The House on Paradise Street* showcase the growing interest of authors writing in English in fictionalizing the Axis occupation and the beginning of the civil war in Greece.² Earlier examples in the USA include Glenway Wescott's *Apartment in Athens* (1945), a novel about the enforced cohabitation of an Athenian couple with a Nazi officer, widely praised by the likes of Eudora Welty and Susan Sontag, and Stratis Haviaras' *When the Tree Sings* (1979), relating a growing child's experiences from the occupation in a village in mainland Greece. The final part of Olivia Manning's Balkan Trilogy entitled *Friends and Heroes*, set in Greece, ends in 1941, with the main protagonists' escape to Alexandria just ahead

of the Germans’ advent to Greece.³ While the logistics of representing the Axis occupation have been more or less uniform, with tropes of oppression, resistance, famine, and devastation circulating widely, coverage of the civil war, an issue that still haunts and divides Greek public life, is far more contested. As observed by James Gifford in this volume, Mary Stewart shows anti-communist feelings in two of her novels, *My Brother Michael* (1959) and *The Moon-Spinners* (1962). In 1983, Nicolas Gage’s *Eleni*, a fictionalized account of the author’s mother’s killing by the Democratic Army, caused a stir in Greece, still traumatized by Left persecution in the post-civil war years. Both in the USA and Britain *Eleni* was widely praised for its anti-communist stance. Ten years later, Louis de Bernières’ bestseller *Captain Corelli’s Mandolin* (1994), covering the Italian and German occupation of the Ionian islands,⁴ was also highly critical of the Left portion of the National Resistance, presenting the guerilla fighters of ELAS (National Liberation Army) in dark colors. This comes into stark contrast with Greek literary representations of the civil war, which tend to morally condone the Left or, in the more measured examples, to challenge Left certainties and balance the two sides by showcasing the complexities in their competition.⁵ Also, studies on the civil war which emerged in the 1990s and beyond in the Anglophone world demonstrate the multiplicity of nuances in an unavoidable conflict (Close 1993; Close 1995; Carabott and Sfikas 2004). However, the picture that emerges in literature written in English is one of a power-thirsty, brutal, relentless Left that lost the moral high ground.

Zinovieff’s novel paints a different portrait of ELAS as a catalyst in the National Resistance, detailing the dreams and aspirations of its members as well as their persecution in the years following the end of World War II (WWII). At the same time she investigates the British involvement in Greece in the eruption of the civil war, a subject which has not been widely acknowledged or discussed in fiction.⁶ Zinovieff attempts a revision of a common Western literary perception which sees the civil war as having been orchestrated solely by the Left.⁷ More than that, her novel takes on a cultural translation of vernacular perceptions of and discourses on the civil war, as felt in Greece, as well as their legacies, for the benefit of a non-Greek audience. Her inquiry into Greek politics does not follow the pattern of other female authors discussed in this volume, whose dealings with the country retain the imperial luster of a latent, but ever-present divide between Orient and Occident, with Greece being considered part of the former. Her text does not display her main character, Maud, as a superior Westerner, whose cultural and intellectual privileges entitle her to patronize her Greek characters’ politics through her own political convictions. Quite the opposite, it is she who is often humbled

and patronized by them. Thus, Zinovieff displays a desire to promulgate a kind of philhellenism expressed in Hellenic, rather than European, terms. My discussion of Zinovieff's novel will be informed by questions of gender: I will investigate to what extent her account of historical events conforms to recent findings on women's attitudes toward memory and narration. In the final part of the chapter I will inquire into the legacies of the civil war and the ways in which they have defined subsequent generations of Left activism.

"The war they helped provoke"

After the collapse of the Albanian front and the German conquest of Greece in April 1941 young Antigone and her brother Markos found themselves doing jobs for an underground resistance movement led by British agents. Antigone's interest in joining the resistance may have been kindled by Johnny Fell, an Englishman toward whom she had developed a romantic interest in the years before the war, while he stayed with the family and taught young Antigone and her siblings English. But soon she discovered that the British were not to be trusted: Antigone's uncle Diamantis, a member of EAM (National Liberation Movement), warned her and Markos:

This young man is a good person. I know he gave you culture and education when you were young. But he must tell his people that the time has come to let us Greeks make our own future without interference. We don't want any more of their kings and we don't want to be an English colony. He's a good man, but he and his people must let us run our country (177).

Diamantis' call for self-determination echoes an anti-colonial, anti-imperialist argument often quoted by left supporters against the British in the 1940s.⁸ For his part, Fell disputes Antigone's and Markos' affiliation to communist EAM, saying that "they backed the wrong horse." But his argumentation shows that his own understanding of Greece is too antiquated to really know what is best for it in the present state:

Johnny looked ill-at-ease, nodding and half agreeing. "We'll soon be off," he said, managing a short laugh. Then he changed the subject, turning to mythology. Here we were up on Mount Iti, which was not only Achilles's patch but the place where Hercules died, he said. After all his struggles, the strong man of myth had submitted, gathering trees and building his own funeral pyre. When he was ready, he had placed his lion's skin over his body, laid his head on his club and commanded Philoctetes to light the fire. (177)

Fell's diversion of the discussion toward mythology is tainted with just a hint of a colonial motive, typical of an imperial subject who sees Greece as merely

the modern setting of a glorious ancient past. In spite of his keen feelings for the people, Fell loves Hellas more than he loves Greece.

Hurt by what she saw as Fell’s betrayal, Antigone’s written account of the civil strife focuses on the wrongdoings in the British handling of the communist problem in Greece and the violence committed against communist partisans. She recalls the British firing against the crowds demonstrating in Athens in December 1944 and the British planes dropping bombs to suppress them, after the liberation from the Germans. Tipped off by members of the Security Battalions, British troops invaded the hiding place of Antigone’s EAM group in Kaisariani, killing most members, including her brother Markos, and taking others hostage. Trying to recover Markos’ body to bury, Antigone was arrested and sentenced to death for high treason. It was the discovery that she was pregnant that spared her life.

While Antigone quickly became disillusioned with the British, her sister Alexandra remained a dedicated Anglophile for the rest of her life; in fact, it was this love for all things English that made her invite Maud to her house, where she met Nikitas. Alexandra believed that the British helped the Greeks escape communist hell. To back up her argument in a conversation with Maud she tellingly recalled Takis Lazarides’ book *Comrades, We Were Fortunately Defeated* [*Etychos ittithikame syntrofoi*], a book written by a member of the Greek Communist Party, who was sentenced to death alongside Nikos Beloyannis in 1952, but was acquitted in the last minute due to his young age. Published in 1988 Lazarides’ book is critical of communist strategies actions during the civil war. Its mentioning by Alexandra showcases the fact that while it was meant as a revisionist account of the Left, the book was also appropriated by the Right as proof of vindication (Karkayannis 2008). Alexandra’s position is tainted by ignorance. She is unaware of her husband’s deadly deeds as a member of the Security Battalions. She is unaware of the fact that Spiros was part of a death squad, or that he raped Antigone. The fact that her husband is the father of Nikitas purely escaped her, as her family concealed it from her until her death.

As a child deeply affected by the civil war, Nikitas naturally had a strong interest in Britain’s involvement in Greece during and after WWII. This manifested in his TV series *Britain and Greece*. Also, he “had been researching for a book about the relationship between the British and the Greeks through history, with a particular focus on the Civil War and its aftermath. [...] He didn’t have a title yet, but my nickname for his book was *Perfidious Albion*. He was annoyed that the British remained so ignorant about the Greek Civil War that they helped provoke” (Zinovieff 2012: 80). Being British herself, Maud is faced with the challenge of acknowledging British responsibility in

the bloodshed. At the same time, she cannot understand why she is reminded of it all the time, if it was committed by previous generations.

As said earlier, Zinovieff's book disrupts a tradition of commercially successful literary texts written in English, in which the Greek civil war is almost uniformly depicted as a thing instigated by the Left and ELAS as a group of merciless killers. Nicolas Gage's *Eleni*, relating the brutal reprisal of ELAS when his mother succeeded in helping her children flee the communist roundup into countries of the Iron Curtain, is perhaps legitimized as a testimony to a traumatic experience.⁹ But while vile atrocities such as those described in the book were certainly committed on the left side as well, it is overly simplistic to present them out of the context of a generalized propensity for violence, or removed from the backdrop of oppression against the Left in the prewar years.

De Bernières takes an unapologetically negative stance toward ELAS, whose fighters, even in 1943, are presented as opportunistic thugs, who shied away from taking part in any substantial act of resistance. In a chapter ironically titled "Liberating the masses" de Bernières writes:

There was one group, however, called ELAS, which was the military wing of an organisation called the EAM, which in turn was controlled by a committee in Athens whose members belonged to the KKE. Intelligent people realised immediately that any group with such credentials must have been Communist, and that the purpose of having such attenuated chains of control was to disguise from ordinary citizens the fact that they were a Communist organisation. Initially their recruits came from all walks of life, and included Venizelist republicans and Royalists, as well as moderate socialists, Liberals and Communists, all of whom were easily duped into believing that they were part of the national liberation struggle, and not part of some convoluted hidden agenda which was more to do with seizing power after the war than beating the Axis. The British armed them, because no one believed the assertion of the British officers on the ground that this was merely storing up trouble for later, and no one believed that swarthy foreigners could make much trouble for the British anyway. (de Bernières 1995: 229)

The initiation of Mandras into ELAS happened through beating an old man until his skin fell off. He and his comrades are later depicted stealing cattle from poor peasants (in contrast to the members of the right-wing resistance group EDES and the British, who were both prepared to pay one gold sovereign apiece). ELAS members also appear to be plundering villages, raping women and generally engaging in such acts of atrocity that "Hitler would have been proud of such assiduous pupils" (de Bernières 1995: 442). Despite the fact that in the Greek translation of the book passages such as the above comparing ELAS fighters to Nazis were strategically left out so as not to cause

a stir (Margomenou 2000), the book was poorly received in Greece, with Cephallonians hurling angry responses against the author.¹⁰

Although her stance toward the left resistance fighters is not quite so harsh, Michaels also seems to have decided that they were the ones who prompted the civil war:

On the day the last German left the city, the streets were jammed, Syntagma was packed, the bells rang. Then, right in the middle of the celebrations, the communists began to shout slogans. I swear to you, Athos, the crowd went silent. Everyone sobered up in a second. [...] The American boys brought food and clothing, but the communists stole the crates from the warehouses in Piraeus. [...] They hunted down bourgeoisie in their beds and shot them. They took away the shoes of democrats and marched them barefoot into the hills until they died. (Michaels 2007: 71)

Michaels quotes Mazower’s citation of Theotokas: “It only needs a match for Athens to catch fire like a tank of petrol” (Mazower 1995: 362; Theotokas n.d.).¹¹ In contrast to de Bernières, Michaels softens the effect of previous statements saying that “There’s been so much wrong from both sides. Whoever has power for a minute commits a crime” (Michaels 2007: 71). However, crimes committed by Security Battalions against EAM supporters and the persecution of the Left after 1946 are strangely left out of the book.

Not that Zinovieff’s novel is particularly balanced in its depiction of violence, either. The civil war in *The House on Paradise Street* is far from being presented as the multi-faceted, complex thing that Mazower describes in the final chapters of his book *Inside Hitler’s Greece* (1995) or Martin Conway and others have outlined in Philip Carabott and Thanasis Sfikas’ volume *The Greek Civil War* (2004). Antigone’s account omits any atrocities committed on the part of the Left. As one reviewer pointed out, the novel seems to present a polarized version of wartime Greece divided into either members of the resistance or those who collaborated with the Axis powers:

The best parts of Ms Zinovieff’s finely woven book come from Maud, who delivers a poignant portrait of motherhood and her increasingly troubled life with her late husband (“I suppose my outsider’s innocence ceased to be refreshing to Nikitas”). The author is less successful with Antigone. She comes across as a mouthpiece for a leftist reading of national history, which misleadingly suggests that Greeks after the second world war were either heroes (i.e., communists) or fascists.¹²

By limiting violence to one side only, Antigone’s account glorifies the opposite one. But Zinovieff’s endorsement of the Left follows on her subtle and nuanced critique of the British involvement in Greece in the 1940s. This reinstates ELAS as an important part of National Resistance, a fact that had been

mostly obfuscated in fiction written in English. If for de Bernières the British role in wartime Greece is merely to organize resistance, in Zinovieff's novel it is described as an occupying force. This must have come as a surprise to readers in Britain whose impression of its role in Greece was that it remained neutral. In an article titled "Athens 1944: Britain's dirty secret," published only two years after Zinovieff's novel, on the seventieth anniversary of the events in Athens in December 1944 (commonly referred to as *Dekemvriana*), Helen Smith echoes these sentiments of revelation:

And thereafter Greece's descent into catastrophic civil war: a cruel and bloody episode in British as well as Greek history which every Greek knows to their core—differently, depending on which side they were on—but which remains curiously untold in Britain, perhaps out of shame, maybe the arrogance of a lack of interest. It is a narrative of which the millions of Britons who go to savour the glories of Greek antiquity or disco-dance around the islands *Mamma Mia*-style, are unaware. (Smith 2014)

A balanced, impartial literary account of the Greek civil war, which would yield its complexes and paradoxes, is yet to be written in English. Zinovieff's novel nevertheless brings forward those voices which were silenced in a literary climate of cold-war aversion toward the Left. She presents their point of view and their rationale as well as their trials and tribulations after defeat. If this presentation is to a certain extent one-sided, it nevertheless helps shake off the certainties built by previous literary texts on the same subject written in English. Zinovieff's book may not offer a complete or definitive history of the civil war, but it explains the anthropology behind it in terms of a cultural translation of feelings and perceptions that dominate Greek public life. At the same time, her novel reverses past literary perceptions which perpetuate the link between Western imperialism and the dismissal of left politics.

Gender and History

Three facts shape Maud's understanding of Greece and her Greek family: she is female, British and an anthropologist. These three facts also shape (and complicate) her relationship with Nikitas. The latter takes up the role of initiator to a young woman who only had an academic knowledge of the country. He woos her by taking her to tavernas and rebetiko joints only a native would know. He indoctrinates her in the politics of the country. As Maud falls in love with Nikitas she also falls in love with Greece, with Nikitas' Greece, perhaps repeating a stereotype often appearing in romantic novels whereby a Western woman becomes attracted to a country through the charms of a man.¹³ Maud

appreciates Greece as an assault on the senses, often described in terms that could come across as metaphors for the body:

One summer, we ended up on a tiny island in the Dodecanese, near Lipsi. It was inhabited by a single family who owned a taverna with a few rented rooms. We were their only visitors. Nobody came to the bay where we went to swim apart from a few goats, their bells sounding as they trotted down to lick the salt from the rocks. The sea was cool despite the burning July heat and shoals of tiny silver fish darted past as we swam. Nikitas spent one afternoon diving down to collect the black urchins that clung to the rocks and he taught me to recognise the edible females—the larger, browner “priests’ wives”—which often have a small “flag” of seaweed speared on their spines. While he amassed a pile of the creatures, Tig, aged three or four, lay curled up asleep under a thin sarong in the shade of a huge, feathery-leafed salt cedar. Its branches dipped into the water and its twisted roots spread along the edge of the stony beach. In the early evening, as the sun slipped down, Nikitas looked to me like Odysseus—strong and quick-witted, making himself at home on a new island. (Zinovieff 2012: 320–21)

In this account it is the female urchins that are edible, a metaphor, perhaps, for the general vulnerability of women as subjects, and, as expected, it is Nikitas who knows how to recognize them. If Nikitas is instantly perceived as the cunning Odysseus, Maud conceives herself as Penelope, his submissive wife. Maud’s opinions of Greece are quickly erased and written over by a more powerful male narrative. Despite the fact that she has had the chance to study Greece for her fieldwork, her anthropologist’s skills are dismissed by her husband: “These anthropologists generally avoid the complexities and contradictions of Greece’s more sophisticated urban populations. They focus instead on remote rural communities, which conform more easily to ready-made clichés of simplicity and tradition” (Zinovieff 2012: 186).

While Maud’s historical knowledge of the civil war surpasses that of many Greeks, the fact that she has not been personally affected by it, that she never experienced the trauma of belonging to one side or the other and having suffered because of it, is considered a serious fault that casts her out, undermining her claim of belonging to the country: “I understood that the Civil War had left Greece wrenched apart, so that allegiance to one side or the other was still often based on wounds inflicted almost a lifetime before. However, it was impossible for me to feel that pain” (Zinovieff 2012: 185). History in Greece, she finds out, should not only be studied on a scholarly level, it should be felt on an individual’s skin. Experiencing history and its traumas even on a post-generational level is a trait that defines the nation.

Nikitas may have been too young to remember the civil war, but, having lost his mother to it, his life was inadvertently affected. In spite of his lack of memory, Nikitas’ wound is still open, continuously transmitted to future

generations. In a parallel—this time retrospective—cross-generational fashion, he demands that his wife own up to the mistakes of her British colonial forefathers:

I began to believe that at least part of his veiled hostility was due to my nationality. When he made his documentaries about Greece's relationship with Britain, each new scandal he uncovered was like a black mark against me personally. I began to feel ashamed and humiliated, as though I was being smeared with mud and cinders, as the Byzantines used to do to miscreants, after parading them sitting backwards on a donkey. [...] "Do you know what you English did to the resistance fighters after the end of the Second World War?" he asked, using the second person plural when speaking about British politicians who had been in power decades before my birth. "And don't forget Cyprus—your handy little colony in the Mediterranean." (Zinovieff 2012: 244)

Despite Nikitas connecting all three female characters in Zinovieff's story, it is they who emerge as storytellers after his death: Antigone writes a memoir, Maud gives us a first-person account of the events following his passing, while their daughter Tig (short for Antigone), steps in as a narrator at the novel's end to conclude her grandmother's account after her death in a letter to Johnny Fell. Nikitas' attempt at storytelling (and writing history) is unsuccessful; his book is left incomplete and we only get a fragmentary glimpse into his own thoughts through short notes and letters. Nikitas is trying to reconstruct history in a scholarly fashion, conducting research and reading history books. In contrast, the three women rely more on their experience and the personal accounts of others, confirming perhaps what has been argued about women being able to conceptualize narrative as a conglomeration of intimate discourses: they often quote others and are more attentive listeners than men, willing to feel the pulse of events as long as these have been experienced by someone close to them (Ely and McCabe 2007).

Through their narratives the three women come across as empowered subjects. Their accounts are complementary; despite their differences they seem to understand and value each other. Knowledge is passed from one generation to another, it is cherished and embraced in a way which recalls Parita Mukta when she states: "I have written about lives that are woven together, of threads that bind, of patterns that are stamped in the cloth of our very being, that go beyond the call of history, obligation, loyalty. I have written about shards of memory, as history inflicted wounds on those caught up with its embrace. These shards of memory have been handed down between the generations" (Mukta 2004, quoted in Leydesdorff 2007: xi–xii). In Zinovieff's novel knowledge seems to work retrospectively, as younger generations revise and reinstate memory according to their own

experiences, needs and desires. Coming through as a powerful voice at the end of the novel, Tig waters down the drama of Antigone’s statements and her mother’s anxious responses.

Three Generations at War

If *The House on Paradise Street* is a novel of Greece’s past, it is equally a novel of its present.¹⁴ It bridges time from 1940 to 2008, the year in which the killing of a teenage boy by a policeman in Athens sparked violent civil unrest in cities across Greece. While Zinovieff’s primary focus is the history of the Greek Left during and after WWII, she presents three generations of political activism: in addition to the generation who fought against the Axis powers, represented by Antigone, it is the Polytechnic generation of the 1970s, putting up resistance against the military Junta, represented by Nikitas, and youngsters rioting against the police in 2008, represented by Nikitas’ children, Orestes and Tig.¹⁵ Zinovieff’s understanding of the 1940s is filtered through the present crisis and she is equally interested in demonstrating how Greece’s political past has fueled modern passions. At the same time, she discusses how political designs and tropes of resistance, this time to state oppression rather than an externally-imposed enemy, have mutated in the generations following the 1940s.

As Kostis Kornetis (2010) has argued, there is a continuum between December 1944 and December 2008; younger generations conceptualize their political role through the legacy of those persecuted in the 1944 *Dekemvriana*. The 1960s, filtered through the French May 1968 and the resistance against the Greek Junta, placed in the general European climate of dissent, also played a part in this conceptualization (see also Close 1993).

Zinovieff perceives the three rebelling generations as a series of disjunctions, showing visible signs of antagonism. Older generations despise younger ones, while the latter strive to prove they are worthy of the previous and their legacies. Both create spaces for themselves by dismissing others: “‘Yours is a soft generation,’ [Nikitas] said to Tig and Orestes last year, when they were making plans for breaking into the school at night. ‘You haven’t been up against the tanks or beaten by the Junta’s police’” (107). Orestes is entirely dismissive of the Polytechnic generation to which his father also belonged: “They’re all wankers. They talk about their own heroism, how they fought against the Junta, how they saved Greece from tyranny. All we hear about is the “Polytechnic generation,” but they became the establishment. They’re the ones ruling the country now—the politicians, the journalists, the professors. And look what they’ve done” (36).

Tig, and to some extent Orestes, feel reluctant to meet their grandmother, not just because of the disruption to their family life they believe she has caused, but primarily, because they feel uncomfortable with the political past she represents: Tig leaves the celebrations commemorating the sabotage at Gorgopotamos to return to Athens. In a climate of much more oblique oppression, Orestes' way of resistance consists mainly in demonstrating, squatting, and occupying buildings. Orestes seems to represent the more radical side of the Left, which feels betrayed by its parliamentary representation. Tig participates in the large occupations and sit-ins of pupils at schools organized as a way of protesting the murder of their peer. While Tig is largely indoctrinated into politics by Orestes, in the end she makes clear that she and her generation do not subscribe to his radicalism, or their lust for destruction.

In Zinovieff's earlier non-fictional account *Eurydice Street: A Place in Athens* Greece at the beginning of the third millennium constantly oscillates between tradition and modernity. In the years preceding the Athens Olympics, Greece experienced a rapid modernization which brought it abreast of other European capitals. At the same time, its relation to the West remained as contested as ever: a constant theme in *Eurydice Street* is Greece's ambivalent sense of belonging to a Western continuum in terms of infrastructure, culture, society, and politics.

Despite the progress toward modernization, as shown in *The House on Paradise Street*, tropes of polarization keep repeating themselves. When circumstances of oppression arise, younger generations look to civil war legacies to conceptualize their own methods of resistance. Zinovieff's novel ends in 2008, just at the time when a fresh period of turbulence began for Greece. Having published it in 2012, two years into the Greek economic crisis, she must have absorbed the debates on austerity measurements, the fierce debates on their necessity or lack thereof, the protests and demonstrations. Subsequently, she must have followed news on the sinking political institutions and the plummeting morale. Zinovieff's affective anthropology, thinking, and probing into the past to feel the pulse of the present, outlines Greece's trajectory from the stony 1940s into its present fragile status as a European state.

Notes

1. As stated in the acknowledgments, for the history of Greek events Michaels relied on Mark Mazower's *Inside Hitler's Greece: The Experience of Occupation, 1941–1944*. But her reading of the civil war as a left-instigated affair is not to be found there.
2. This interest has recently shifted towards World War I, the Greek–Turkish War of 1919–1922, the Asia Minor catastrophe and the ensuing population exchange. Louis de Bernières' subsequent novel *Birds without Wings* (2004) and Panos Karnezis's *The*

- Maze* (2004) deal with the war in Asia Minor (on Karnezis's novels see Papargyriou 2009). As David Wills aptly demonstrates in the present volume, Victoria Hislop and Loretta Proctor also preoccupy themselves with facets of this turbulent history.
3. On Manning and Greece, see David, this volume.
4. De Bernières' depiction of Cephallonia in the 1940s is to some extent indebted to Kay Cicellis' collection of short stories *The Easy Way* (1950), set on the island, where Cicellis spent the years between 1941 and 1946 (Mackridge 2015: 17–19).
5. One revisionist account, which condemns the perfunctory attachment to an ideology, is Aris Alexandrou's *To kivotio/The Mission Box* (1974). In the beginning of the 1980s the project of National Reconciliation (Ethniki Symfiliosis) instigated by the socialist government of PASOK encouraged more testimonies of suffering on the leftist side to come forward; these include Dimitra S. Petroula, *Where's Your Mother, You Twat* [*Pou 'nai i mana sou, mori*] (1986) and Chronis Missios, *Well, You Were Killed Early* [*Kala, esi skotothikes noris*] (1985). An example that showcases the complexities of winning the moral battle in the civil war can be found in Alexandros Kotzias' novella *The Jaguar* (1987).
6. On that subject see Iatrides (1993); Close (1995: 163–65).
7. Zinovieff first came to Greece in the late 1980s to conduct anthropological research for a Cambridge PhD. Since 2001, she has been living in Greece. Her non-fiction book *Eurydice Street: A Place in Athens* (2005) documented her experience of moving to the Southern suburbs of Athens with her Greek husband and two daughters. Zinovieff reads Greek and consulted sources written in Greek. Thus, her treatment of historical material echoes the debates held in Greece on these subjects.
8. See, for example, Manos Simonidis in Stratis Tsirkas's trilogy *Drifting Cities*.
9. On the inevitable subjectivism of suffering *vis-à-vis* the Greek civil war see Carabott and Sfikas (2004: 2).
10. See, for instance, Margomenou (2000) and Milne (2000). The Cephallonian Lefteris Eleftheratos produced a book response to de Bernières titled *The Captain's out-of-tune mandolin* [*To faltso mandolino tou lochagou*] in 2002.
11. Michaels puts these words into the mouths of Kostas and Daphne, who relate these events to Athos sometime in the late forties. She presents Theotokas as someone whom Kostas and Daphne evidently knew, as saying rather than writing these phrases, thus avoiding anachronism: Theotokas' journals, from which the quotation was taken, were only published posthumously.
12. <http://www.economist.com/node/21551438>.
13. See Laura Vivanco, this volume. The stereotype of a Western woman being initiated by a Greek man finds its counterpart in Antigone being introduced to British culture through Johnny Fell. The idea that women get to know places and cultures through a man's knowledge persists throughout the novel.
14. Zinovieff follows in the footsteps of a host of female anthropologists who researched Greece out of a similar political interest, such as Margaret Kenna in the 1960s and Renée Hirschon in the 1980s: Kenna researched the political prisoners on the island of Anafi, while Hirschon researched the settlement of Asia Minor refugees in the working-class area of Kokkinia in Athens after the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923.
15. The interweaving of generations of political activists is a topic common in Greek fiction. One example is Stratis Tsirkas's novel *Lost Spring* [*I hameni anoixi*] (1976) in which the generation of National Resistance is compared to that of the Lambrakis

Youth Organization, rallying in support of George Papandreou during the July 1965 events in Athens. Recently, a similar theme was taken up by Rhea Galanaki in her novel *Ultimate Humiliation* [*I akra tapeinosi*] (2015), in which the Polytechnic generation is contrasted to a generation of youngsters rioting against austerity measures in February 2012.

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