Greece and Britain since 1945

Second Edition

Greece and Britain since 1945

Second Edition

Edited by

David Wills

CAMBRIDGE SCHOLARS
PUBLISHING

Greece and Britain since 1945
Second Edition,
Edited by David Wills

This book first published 2014

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

12 Back Chapman Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2XX, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN (10): 1-4438-5534-0, ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-5534-1

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: FROM "ELUSIVE SPELL" TO HOLLYWOOD LOCALE

DAVID WILLS

> Many books have been written about the Athens of classical days, but there are other aspects of her history and associations to which less justice has been done. (Bosanquet 1914:viii)

In 1943, with the Greek people suffering the terrors of Axis occupation, a book by Stanley Casson attempted to reinforce the solidarity between *Greece and Britain*. The author stressed the culture shared by the two peoples. After the fall of the Roman Empire, it was Byzantium which had acted as a beacon of civilization in Europe, spreading Greek art, architecture, literature and religion via trade routes to the West (Casson 1943:38). By the nineteenth century, cultural dominance had been reversed, with the British giving assistance to the establishment of parliamentary democracy in the fledgling nation of Greece: "from the British, [the Greeks] acquired a knowledge of the workings of the British Constitution, on which, in due course, they based their own" (1943:108). As early as the 1840s, Dr Meryon, editor of Lady Hester Stanhope's *Travels*, had argued that "the British were the true inheritors of the imperial Greek past and had become the new naval and colonial masters of the West" (Markidou 2008:46). For Casson, even villages in Cornwall resembled their counterparts in the Mediterranean (1943:20).

In Casson's view, it was inevitable given their shared history that these two peoples would stand together against dictators who threatened civilization and democracy: "in the war of 1914-1918 Greece and Britain were allies . . . and once again in this war the two peoples are fighting together" (1943: cover). In making links between past and present in Greece, Casson had to make the people who lived in that country timeless and unchanging. Throughout the Turkish occupation of their country, lasting

until the early nineteenth century, "the ancient conceptions of freedom and justice were not dead . . . the Greek nature had not changed" (1943:95). This was a reference to the Greeks with whom the majority of Casson's readers were believed to be familiar: the *ancient* people, whose history and achievements formed the backbone of British formal education.

Casson's most famous protégé – both in military terms and as a Philhellene – was Patrick Leigh Fermor. In 1940 Casson, then a military instructor, recruited Leigh Fermor from the Intelligence Corps for the fledgling Greek Military Mission (Cooper 2012:125). Leigh Fermor subsequently operated from Cairo, working with the Greek resistance in Nazi-occupied Crete. Casson was to die in a plane crash in 1944 (1-1), but Leigh Fermor became central to the next – post-war – generation of Philhellenes.

1-1: Stanley Casson's grave, St Columb Minor, Cornwall.
Photograph taken by Victoria Wills, April 2013.

Leigh Fermor was part of a vibrant cultural Anglo-Greek circle in Athens. One of Leigh Fermor's post-war haunts in Athens, the Platanos taverna in the heart of the old town (the Plaka), still (2012) proudly displays a photograph of him with two Greek literary greats, labelled "a pleasant memory from 1946." George Seferis, the Nobel prize-winning poet, stands alongside George Katsimbalis, the publisher and raconteur immortalized by Henry Miller as *The Colossus of Maroussi* (1941).[1] Artists Lucian Freud and John Craxton were introduced to the island of Poros by Leigh Fermor (Cooper 2012:208), where a recently-erected plaque identifies the house they lived in from 1946-7, the beginning of Craxton's long career inspired by Greece (1-2 and 1-3).

1-2: John Craxton's house in Poros. Photograph taken by Victoria Wills, August 2012.

[1] The photograph's inscription appears to be by Leigh Fermor's hand. For its translation, I am indebted to Eleana Yalouri. The photograph can also be found in Cooper, *Patrick Leigh Fermor*, plate 8.

1-3: John Craxton's house in Poros. Photograph taken by Victoria Wills, August 2012.

Post-1945, however, many of the cosy certainties which had underpinned and permeated the work of Casson (and, to be fair, many other observers of his time) rapidly dissipated. Political consensus between

Greeks and Britons collapsed in the face of Civil War, Communism, Cold War, and the future of Cyprus. British education turned away from Classics. Above all, Greece's appearance over the last sixty-five years has changed. Urban expansion and tourist infrastructure cater for modern needs, whilst drawing censure for offending traditional sensibilities.

The recent proliferation of memoirs by British people who have bought houses in Greece reflects and promotes a perception of Mediterranean pleasures very different from that of the earnest pre-war culture-seekers (Wills 2005). In 1954, a postcard of the Athenian Acropolis sent to a Mr and Mrs Trinder catalogued "Mary's" whistle-stop tour of Greece's cultural and historical highlights: "We are having a wonderful holiday cruising in the Med. In Athens on Monday, here [Cyprus] today and Rhodes tomorrow." For many of today's visitors, the Greek experience is just as hectic, even if it is more sedentary. But the contrast of intent with the travellers of the immediate post-war period could not be more striking, as was suggested by the narrator of a 2012 British television series, *Sun, Sex and Suspicious Parents*: "The Greek island of Zante. Many come for the stunning scenery, beautiful beaches and historic culture. But each year tens of thousands of young British tourists descend on the resort of Laganas, to drink, dance, and party 'til dawn." (BBC 2012) Attendant stories of drunkenness, misbehaviour and scandal surface in the press each summer. In 2009, for example, seventeen male Bristolians found themselves before a Cretan court for (allegedly) exposing their backsides whilst dressed as nuns (*Ekathimerini* 2009). If anything, the present Greek need for foreign tourist income has led, since the first edition of this book, to an even greater focus on budget - rather than cultural - tourism. In 2009, the Greek National Tourist Organization changed the focus of its advertising from 2005's "Live your Myth in Greece" to "A Masterpiece You Can Afford" (Basea 2012:205).

Greece's identity within Europe and the world has been transformed since the 1940s. As a longstanding member of the European Union and the Euro currency, Greece attracted inward investment and foreign media scrutiny. Hosting the Olympics in 2004 hastened the modernization of transport links, but also led to accusations of tardiness in the completion of facilities and criticism of the white elephants which many venues became. International commentators blamed the 2008 Athens riots on old-fashioned political corruption and incompetence. Helena Smith, correspondent for *The Guardian*, attributed the rioters' actions to despair born of "the knowledge that so much of the state apparatus, the levers of power that govern daily existence, are ossified, corrupt and rotten to the core" (Smith 2009:58).

The recent Greek financial crisis has led to tensions between Greeks and the wider world. In the summer of 2011 protestors were encamped in Athens' Syntagma Square, seeking to influence those who worked in the adjacent parliament building against the austerity measures imposed as a requirement of a European Union bailout. In search of blame for their predicament, some Greek critics attacked the world banking system; others, their countrymen's laziness, corruption or wastefulness (Theodossopoulos 2013:203). Anglo-Greek relations were affected, even though Britain was not involved in dictating the financial terms, as is shown by the sweeping reaction of one Greek interviewee: "The foreigners are worried that we will not return the borrowed money. They don't really care about Greece. They never did. History has proven that, again and again: the nations of the West use Greece for their own interests" (Theodossopoulos 2013:207). The anti-austerity protests in turn attracted internal criticism for sullying Greece's image presented to the wider world: "All this in front of the hotels, the tourists, the parliament" (a Greek observer quoted in Theodossopoulos 2013:205). Members of the British anti-fascist movement had apocalyptic visions that Greece's economic woes would lead to a rise in right-wing extremism:

> At this time all those who care about combating Nazism and hate should come together to ensure postwar history in Europe is not repeated, with the destruction of whole sections of society such as under the rule of the Colonels in Greece from 1967 to 1974 and the mass genocidal killings in the Balkans in the early 1990s (Gable 2013).

This book explores the relationship between Greece and Britain since Casson's writing of the 1940s. The authors have not followed his structure or ideas, but seek, as he did, to chart the enduring cultural and political ties between the two countries and peoples. This is a multi- and inter-disciplinary study, covering, amongst others, literature, tourism, politics, photography, and television drama. There is no attempt to present a definitive history, but, rather, to investigate the parameters of this complex topic. Similarly, the editor has not sought to impose uniformity: whether upon such apparently mundane but complex matters as the transliteration of names from Greek, or views about modern Greece expressed.

Peter Mackridge opens this volume with a masterly examination of the life and work of Kay Cicellis, a writer of prose fiction and radio drama in both Greek and English. Cicellis was much-admired, an early sponsor being Vita Sackville-West, but struggled to find her literary identity. Cicellis lived for significant periods in Manchester, Karachi, Athens and Cephalonia, yet her work is curiously placeless, a feature which

Mackridge relates to her sense of not belonging to any one country or culture. On two occasions, however, Cicellis was confronted with political or natural disasters which forced their way into her work. She became a strong opponent of the Colonels' seizure of power in Greece, and she had earlier been in Cephalonia shortly after it was ravaged by an earthquake. Mackridge describes how Cicellis chronicles this latter disaster as the loss of "orientation and social identity". Another observer, British writer Evan John, similarly observed how the people of Cephalonia were taken from social stratification to uniform poverty. John found a "bourgeois and respectable couple", formerly wine importers, pushing through the streets of Argostoli "an amateurish-looking handbarrow" containing what was left of their possessions (John 1954:50).

Eleni Papargyriou identifies the Greek novel as a very post-war development. Its rise coincides with increased urbanisation in Greece. In Chapter Three, Papargyriou shows how a *foreign* city—London—has been used as a literary space where issues of Greek identity are explored: class distinction, urban life, and Greece's relationship with "the West".

David Connolly is the translator of numerous books by Greek authors. He is therefore responsible for introducing the English-reading public to the work of, amongst others, Petros Markaris, whose tales of Inspector Costas Haritos are to be recommended as revealing more about the modern city of Athens than most guidebooks (e.g. Markaris 2009). This makes Connolly uniquely qualified to survey the rather mixed fortunes of Modern Greek literature in the English language. In doing so in Chapter Four, Connolly gives some fascinating explanations for the rise, fall, and rise again in the numbers of Greek authors finding their way onto Britain's bookshelves. He suggests that increased tourism and literary awards have a part to play in raising international awareness of a country's literature. But so too, he demonstrates, does war and conflict: Britons felt a connection with Greece in the immediate aftermath of 1940s hostilities, and in 1967 interest was renewed by the arrival of the military junta.

The work of British humanitarians in Greece in the wake of the 1945 armistice is examined by Alexandra Moschovi in Chapter Five, viewed through the work of two local photographers. Moschovi shows how politics, ethnographic trends, and "Western" views of Greece, are as integral to understanding the photographic record as they are to the motivation behind the relief work itself. Photographs of the Greek plight keyed into existing images of "timeless" Greece. This is true also of a book published in 1944 to raise funds for the relief efforts of the Greek Red Cross, *The Glory that is Greece*, edited by Hilda Hughes. In his contribution to that volume, the great classical scholar Maurice Bowra

wrote that a visitor "will soon see that the Greek islanders keep alive the ancient and noble traditions of their race" (Hughes 1944:19). British humanitarian fundraising was therefore inspired as much by the glory of Greece's past as its devastated present. The editor of the 1944 volume was quick to point out—on the first page of her introduction—"the priceless gifts to civilisation made by such a small nation and such a great people" (Hughes 1944:11).

In Chapter Six, Jim Potts presents an astonishing list of eminent authors who have been employed, sponsored by, or otherwise associated with, the British Council in Greece: John Fowles, Lawrence Durrell, Dilys Powell, Philip Sherrard, Yannis Ritsos, and Nikos Kazantzakis, amongst others. As its former Acting Director in Greece, Potts is understandably proud of the Council's record. He is dismayed at some recent episodes he considers inglorious, such as the dispersal of its library and the effective closure of a regional office in Thessaloniki. Potts regards the work of the Council as being vital in building *trust*, not least in Greece where relations with Britain have not always been harmonious. He argues that, at a time when the international reputation of Britain can no longer be taken for granted, re-establishing "trust" is more important than ever.

An insight into the close relationship between fiction set in Greece and the burgeoning tourist industry of the 1970s and 80s is offered by David Rice in Chapter Seven. Greece was seen by producers as uncharted television territory, and the promise of warm sunshine and friendly locals had the desired effect of attracting increased numbers of visitors. But, as Rice explains, Michael J. Bird, the creator of such series as *The Lotus Eaters*, felt anxiety for the changes which tourism might bring. This was a familiar refrain for many observers during the post-war period. As Peter Bull wrote in his late-1960s travel memoir about Paxos, "the newspaper public is avid for suggestions and will react as strongly to an article as they do to an effective advertising campaign" (Bull 1967:161). Since *The Lotus Eaters*, several Hollywood productions have used Greece as a backdrop, with predictable media histrionics about the consequences.

> Nobody goes there any more for the marvels of antiquity, or to see where Alexander fought or Aristotle thought; they go to see where Shirley Valentine copped her epic shag. They go to learn how Meryl Streep felt when she first heard Pierce Brosnan's godawful singing in *Mamma Mia!* Where Nic Cage strummed dolefully in *Captain Corelli's Mandolin*. And no doubt Nia Vardalos' latest, the Greek road movie *Driving Aphrodite*, will do the same for whatever trail of towns and villages she passes through. Picture living in a country where your most serious immigration debate will soon be about how to rid your lands of an annual million

matron march of squealing, drunken hen party coach tours (Patterson 2009).

Though allies during the Second World War, Anglo-Hellenic political relations had become more complex by the 1950s. Even long-established cultural institutions were affected by the crisis in Cyprus. Arriving at the British School at Athens in 1956, Brian Sparkes found that archaeological excavations had been suspended and students advised to live within its protective walls (Sparkes 2009:8). Nevertheless, Sparkes experienced a warm reception in Crete, being "assured that the trouble over Cyprus was really only between governments, not between ordinary individuals" (2009:11). Of course, British troops faced real danger in Cyprus. Army musician "Raj" Goodrich's local, Greek, girlfriend begged him to change their plans to go dancing. Fortunately for him, Goodrich complied. In the morning he discovered the reason for her entreaties: the dance hall had been destroyed by a bomb that night.[2]

Many who served in Greece or Cyprus in the 1940s and 50s—and survived—left believing that they had preserved freedom for the Greeks. This view was challenged by the takeover of the Colonels in the 1960s. In Chapter Eight I show how British residents of Greece, and other observers, struggled with the concept of dictatorship in the land of democracy.

The book continues with two memoirs. Of Anglo-Greek stock, novelist Loretta Proctor in Chapter Nine describes coming to terms with her parents' countries during the post-war period, offering an insight into literary and personal dilemmas similar to those faced by that earlier writer Kay Cicellis. Proctor's portrayal of Greece will be familiar to those who have analysed the many accounts of British travellers from the 1950s and 60s: hospitality and generosity, pagan survivals in religion, and apparently "oriental" traditions. Ultimately, Proctor is disappointed with many of the changes which have occurred in Greece; though, unlike some other writers, she recognises that such "progress" often benefits the people who live there. She portrays Athens as noisy and smelly, complaints which many travellers of the 1980s and 90s might share (Wills 2006).

Brian Church is a veteran observer of life in the Greek capital. His wry, often satirical, column was eagerly devoured by readers of *Athens News* for many years. Here, in Chapter Ten, Church takes rioters' attacks on Exarcheia police station as his starting point for musings on the character of Greek discourse and democracy. Antonis Karakousis, of newspaper *To Vima*, has noted that "Greece has a tradition of such clashes". Karakousis

[2] The source for this story was my late father, John Wills, Goodrich's fellow tuba player in the Alamein Band of the Royal Tank Regiment.

argues that "hard core left and leftist cells within the universities and youth circles in general" have existed since the 1960s, and opposed the Junta during the 1970s (2009:29-30). Now resident in Britain, Church's affection for Greece shines through as strongly as ever; though it is reassuring that he cannot resist another swipe at his *bête noire*, the Syntagma post office.

For this new edition of *Greece and Britain Since 1945*, four new chapters have been commissioned. Agatha Kalisperas, for Chapter Eleven, considers how the Hellenic Centre in London has become a vital source of support to the Greek community, and a way of preserving Hellenic prestige during difficult times. Richard Pine follows this with an account in Chapter Twelve of how the Durrell School has, for over a decade, promoted British interests and culture, focusing on the legacy of novelist Lawrence and naturalist Gerald, in the former UK protectorate of Corfu.

In Chapter Thirteen, George Tzogopoulos offers a survey of how Greece's current economic problems have been represented in the British media. He discovers an immense collection of newsprint, reflecting Greece's long-established place in Britain's cultural and touristic heritage. British journalists are shown to be unflinching as they reveal Greece's ugly underbelly of nepotism and tax-evasion, and unflattering in their portrayal of the competence of Greek politicians.

Finally, as Chapter Thirteen, an outline by William Mallinson of an optimistic development in the face of such negative publicity about Greece: an institute founded in Corfu to bring together and promote research into Anglo-Hellenic relations. Mallinson concludes with his reflections on the highs and lows of this sometimes stormy relationship since the formation of the Modern Greek state.

In the 1960s, Alan Wace, archaeologist and former head of the British School at Athens, wrote that Greece has "an elusive spell which is felt only by sensitive experience" (Wace 1964:8). Tourism, movies, musicals and literature have democratized the Greek experience for the British, even as observers have criticised the condition of Greece's governmental democracy. Nevertheless, as this volume demonstrates, there is much of Greek literature and character which many Britons have yet to discover. The understanding of (Modern) Greece still has a long journey in Britain.

Bibliography and References

Basea, Erato. 2012. "*My Life in Ruins*: Hollywood and Holidays in Greece in Times of Crisis." *Interactions: Studies in Communication and Culture* 3(2):199-208.

BBC television. 2012. *Sun, Sex and Suspicious Parents*. Series 2, Zante, first broadcast 29th February 2012, BBC3.

Bosanquet, Mrs R.C. [Ellen]. 1914. *Days in Attica*. London: Methuen.

Bull, Peter. 1967. *It Isn't All Greek to Me*. London: Peter Davies.

Casson, Stanley. 1943. *Greece and Britain*. London: Collins.

Cooper, Artemis. 2012. *Patrick Leigh Fermor: An Adventure*. London: Murray.

Ekathimerini. 2009. "Brits in Cretan Court for Bare-Faced Cheek." 26th May. www.ekathimerini.com

Gable, Gerry. 2013. "Editorial: A Dangerous Time for Europe and Democracy." *Searchlight* 452:4.

Hughes, Hilda, ed. 1944. *The Glory that is Greece*. London: Hutchinson.

John, Evan. 1954. *Time After Earthquake: An Adventure Among Greek Islands in August, 1953*. London: Heinemann.

Karakousis, Antonis. 2009. "Saint Nicholas Night." In *The Return of Street Politics? Essays on the December Riots in Greece*, ed. Spyros Economides and Vassilis Monastiriotis, 27-31. London: The Hellenic Observatory, London School of Economics.

Markaris, Petros. 2009. *Che Committed Suicide*. Translated by David Connolly. London: Arcadia.

Markidou, Vassiliki. 2008. "Travels Off-centre: Lady Hester Stanhope in Greece." In *Women Writing Greece: Essays on Hellenism, Orientalism and Travel*, ed. Vassiliki Kolocotroni and Efterpi Mitsi, 39-54. Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi.

Patterson, John. 2009. "Will *Driving Aphrodite* Drive Greeks up the Wall?" *The Guardian*, 26th September.

Smith, Helena. 2009. "Greece, December 2008: A Tragedy in the Waiting." In *The Return of Street Politics? Essays on the December Riots in Greece*, ed. Spyros Economides and Vassilis Monastiriotis, 57-61. London: The Hellenic Observatory, London School of Economics.

Sparkes, Brian. 2009. "Recollections of Greece in the 1950s." *The Anglo-Hellenic Review* 39:8-12.

Theodossopoulos, Dimitrios. 2013. "Infuriated with the Infuriated? Blaming Tactics and Discontent about the Greek Financial Crisis." *Current Anthropology* 54(2):200-21.

Wace, Alan J.B. 1964. *Greece Untrodden*. Athens: privately printed.

Wills, David. 2005. "British Accounts of Residency in Greece 1945-2004." *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 23:177-97.

—. 2006. "Ancient Sites, Modern Eyesores? The Transformation of the City of Athens in English-Language Accounts (1945-2005)." *Κάμπος: Cambridge Papers in Modern Greek* 14:103-27.

CHAPTER TWO

KAY CICELLIS: THE UNRESOLVED DILEMMA OF THE BILINGUAL WRITER[1]

PETER MACKRIDGE

"My childhood was rather ordinary, bourgeois and dull," wrote Kay Cicellis in the blurb for her first novel, written in English and published in 1953.[2] Bourgeois and dull it may have been, but it was by no means ordinary, for her upbringing enabled this Greek girl to become an English writer before ever setting foot in an English-speaking country. Her prosperous bourgeois parents spoke French with her and employed English governesses to educate her at home, and she took to the English language like a duckling to water. As well as writing fiction, she became one of the leading translators of literary and other texts from Greek into English and in general acted as a cultural ambassador and interface between Greece and Britain from the date of her first published work in 1943 until her death in 2001.

Other Greeks, such as Demetrios Capetanakis, C.A. (Constantine) Trypanis (whose broadcasts on the BBC Third Programme in the 1960s first fired my interest in modern Greek poetry), Nikos Stangos, and Panos Karnezis, have performed a similar mediating role between Greece and Britain during the same period by straddling the frontiers between the relevant languages and cultural traditions.[3] Kay Cicellis is unusual in that,

[1] I am grateful to Kay Cicellis' daughter Lila Paleologou for supplying me with the photograph and some biographical information, and to David Ricks and Karen Van Dyck for reading through a draft of my chapter and suggesting some improvements.

[2] Text on back of dust jacket of US edition of Cicellis 1953.

[3] On Capetanakis (1912-44) see Capetanakis 1947, Ricks 1996, and Papanikolaou 2006. Trypanis (1909-93) wrote poetry in English, four volumes of which were published by Faber and Faber; his English translations of Sophocles were performed on BBC radio and at the National Theatre in London. Stangos (1936-

whereas the other authors I have just mentioned wrote in English while they lived in England, Cicellis wrote in English (as well as Greek) while living in Greece. Her case is rather more like those writers from British colonies or ex-colonies who write in English, the difference being that for Cicellis English was not the language of a present or former colonial master; the British "protection" of Cephalonia from 1814 to 1864 was too far in the past to be relevant to her case.

The title of my chapter gestures towards the titles of two texts by Cicellis, one ("The Unresolved Past") a talk about the situation of young Greek writers at the time, broadcast on the BBC Third Programme in 1951, the other ("Translation: The Unresolved Dilemma") an article published forty-five years later (Cicellis 1951b, 1996). Her bilingual writing and her activities as a translator made her feel that she was the servant of two masters, as she put it in the title of a review article on translations (Cicellis 1996). The unresolved split within her between the Greek and English languages and their associated cultures (possibly along with other splits) was no doubt one of the chief sources of her artistic inspiration.

Catherine-Mathilde Cicellis (to use her official name) was born in Marseille in 1926. Her parents had their origins in widely separated Greek islands: her mother was from Chios in the extreme east, while her father's family was from Cephalonia in the extreme west, though he himself was born in France. In 1936, at the age of ten, she settled with her parents in Athens. She had never visited Greece before this, and it was then that she learned Greek during three years of private tuition. She then attended high school at the American College for Girls in the seaside Athens suburb of Elliniko (later moved to the northern suburb of Agia Paraskevi and renamed Pierce College); this was the first time she had been to school. At the age of thirteen she also began to write literary texts in English (Cicellis 1956a). After the German invasion of Greece in April 1941, her family's Athens home was requisitioned by the Germans and her school was turned into a hospital. For that reason her parents decided to move the family to Cephalonia: "we have an old country house there, which I love passionately," she wrote in 1953. As she reminisced later, "I lived in a house that stood on a hill by itself, looking out to sea. The nearest village was three miles away." (Cicellis 1977) The three years she spent in

---

2004) was poetry editor of Penguin and then art and history editor at Thames and Hudson, where he became "one of the outstanding figures of art publishing in the English-speaking world" (Bell 2004). Karnezis (b. 1967) has written four books of fiction in English, beginning with *Little Infamies* (2002), and the fourth (*The Convent*) published in January 2010.

Cephalonia were "the most wonderful in my life. It was a very primitive life, sea and salt and sun, fruits and bare-footedness in the summer, solitary storms, thick books and candle-light writing in the winter—extraordinary years that influenced me permanently, for it was the first time I was left completely to myself."[4]

After the Second World War Cicellis settled again in Athens, where she worked for Radio Athens, also travelling to Italy, Iraq, Lebanon and Nigeria. In 1950-1 and 1955-6 she spent two extended periods in London, but she soon met her future husband Nikos Paleologos on a boat travelling between Greek islands. Like Kay, Nikos was born outside Greece of Greek parents; born and bred in Romania, he continued to speak to his sister in Romanian for the rest of his life. Nikos was working for the import-export firm of Ralli Brothers, and at the time that they met he was posted to Karachi in Pakistan.[5] After they married in 1957, Kay accompanied Nikos to Karachi, where they spent several months, but Nikos managed to have himself transferred to Manchester, and they lived in the nearby dormitory town of Altrincham from 1958 to 1962. In 1964 they settled permanently in Athens, where Kay went back to work for Greek radio, this time initiating a highly successful, albeit brief, career as an agony aunt.[6]

Cicellis' first published works were two stories that appeared in 1943, when she was only sixteen, under the pen-name Helen Diamantis in the magazine *Orientations*, published by a group of British servicemen in Cairo. These pieces, which were smuggled out of German-occupied Greece to Egypt, most probably by the diplomat and art historian Alexandros Xydis, present vivid depictions of the people of Athens starving during the great famines resulting from the German occupation (Diamantis 1943a and 1943b).[7]

---

[4] Most of the information in this paragraph is based on the blurb referred to in note 2.

[5] The Greek firm of Ralli Brothers, founded in the 1820s, employed a number of prominent figures in Greek literature and culture, including Alexandros Pallis, K. K. Michailidis (who published under the name Argyris Eftaliotis) and Petros Vlastos in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

[6] The correspondence she received from listeners in this capacity was later handed by Cicellis to the writer Thanasis Valtinos, who made extensive use of this material in his 1989 book *Stoicheia gia ti dekaetia tou '60* (Valtinos 2000).

[7] In a much later manuscript note attached to the first of these publications, kept in the Cicellis archive at Princeton University, the author refers to Xydis but places a query after his name. It is almost certain that the messenger was indeed Xydis (1917-2004).

Cicellis' first six books were written and published in English. The first stage of her writing career was marked by phenomenal success: she published five books of fiction and at least eight individual short stories within ten years, between the ages of twenty-four and thirty-four. Her early books were all published in London, and some of them almost simultaneously in New York. All of her first five books were translated into other languages: by 1964, no fewer than four had appeared in German, translated, among others, by Heinrich Böll, who went on to receive the Nobel Prize in 1972, while one each had appeared in French, Spanish and Portuguese.

The early stages of her writing in Greek are shrouded in uncertainty. In later life she let it be assumed that she did not start producing literary work in Greek until the 1970s. Yet a story of hers in Greek was published in 1948 without being presented as a translation, and in 1950 she published a story in two versions, one English and one Greek, with quite different titles, within three months of each other (Cicellis 1948, 1950a, 1950b).

Her visit to England in 1950, immediately after the end of the Greek Civil War, to publicize her first book was her first visit to this country. A month after her arrival she gave a talk on the radio in which she explained why she had come to England: to study broadcasting, since that was her job in Athens, but chiefly "to hear the English talk". She went on to reminisce about how she had taken part in a performance of Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* in Athens, which was produced by an Englishman.[8] Through learning the words off by heart, she says, she became intimate with them for the first time. This was when she felt capable of writing her first book. After this, however,

> the old intimacy only came rarely . . . Instead of feeling the taste of the word I was going to say against my palate, I merely saw the letters that composed it, written in my imagination in a terrible silence. I found out that I was hopelessly ignorant of the colloquialisms that help to make living speech . . . With horror, I realized that soon English would be nothing more than a book-language, a dead language. And it would mean the end of writing. Like a painter whose hands have been cut off.

She concluded by saying that she had at last found the living language in England.

[8] The producer was probably the actor and writer Robert Speaight (1904-1976), who had performed in radio plays since 1927 and played Becket in the first production of *Murder in the Cathedral* in 1935.

This first stay in England, which lasted about a year, initiated an amazingly productive phase in Cicellis' career. Between 1951 and 1957, apart from her books and stories, she published seven articles in magazines (mostly in Britain), and the BBC broadcast three talks and two dramatic dialogues by her. One of her articles of this period, entitled *The Living Springs of Greece*, begins: "I have often felt the obscure urge to scoop up in one handful the spirit, the living matter, of this city of Athens which has been my home for over fifteen years now." The article consists chiefly of an evocation of the national 28th October parade, commemorating the refusal by prime minister Metaxas to allow the Italians to occupy Greece without a fight in 1940. Full of praise for the controversial figure of Queen Frederika in the wake of the Civil War, this article is nevertheless full of insights into a city that Cicellis knew intimately and loved deeply without being a native. Another article is a description of a village wedding in Steiri on the slopes of Mount Helicon. This is a piece of superior travel writing, this time about a place with which the author was not intimately familiar (Cicellis 1951a, 1955a). While this pair of articles conveyed an understanding of aspects of Greece to a British and American readership, in other works of this period the Greek writer is transported to unfamiliar environments in Britain, from where she reports her impressions. In her radio programme *When Greek Meets Gael* she compares and contrasts life in the Hebrides with life on her own island of Cephalonia, while in a pair of articles entitled *Two Englands Apart* she reports on visits that reveal two sharply contrasting aspects of Yorkshire life: tea at Castle Howard and a tour of factories in Leeds (Cicellis 1955b, 1956b, 1956c). Given the class distinctions that characterized her own island, it was natural that Cicellis was fascinated by the contrasting life-styles of the different social classes in 1950s England.

Much of her early fiction is set on the island of Cephalonia. So, when it comes to the representation of Cephalonia in English literature, before Captain Corelli there was Kay Cicellis.[9] Her first book, a collection of short stories entitled *The Easy Way*, caused a sensation on both sides of the Atlantic when it appeared in 1950, with a foreword by Vita Sackville-West and with enthusiastic reviews. Sackville-West wrote that Cicellis' work embodies "an original vision linked to a poetic idiom", while she ended her preface by saying: "Critics and reviewers should be on the look-out for a real discovery." Ominously, however, she quotes Cicellis as having told

[9] At the end of *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* (1994), Louis de Bernières acknowledges his debt to Cicellis' *The Easy Way*. It is curious that, while he describes the earthquake that struck Cephalonia in 1953, he does not refer explicitly to her text *The End of a Town*.

her that she "will never be accepted in England as an English writer, only as a foreigner who writes in English" (Sackville-West 1950:viii, x, ix).

The story entitled *The Excursion* contained in this volume is the kind of story one might expect from such a young writer. It is narrated from the viewpoint of a girl who isolates herself from her classmates during a school outing to the sea. The story is an intricate analysis of new and inchoate feelings, a fresh sense of being herself, of being independent, but also of her relationship with others.

By contrast, some stories in this first volume evoke the subtle modulations or violent transformations of feelings within a relationship and read like the work of a mature writer. Here and in her later work a few words spoken by one spouse, lover or relative to another changes the whole world, which is no longer the world it was, nor the world it would have been had these words not been uttered at that moment. *Aegean Storm* is a powerful story of the relationship between an unnamed husband and wife, disturbed by the death of a friend, a peasant and fisherman bearing the symbolic name Anghelos [Angel]. The story is told from the woman's point of view as she struggles to understand her emotions. This death has forced her to think about her relationships and her feelings in a new way. The situation is somewhat similar to the one in James Joyce's story *The Dead*, while the style, with its evocation of powerful feelings, is sometimes reminiscent of D.H. Lawrence. The woman realizes she has been in love with the dead Anghelos, who represents freedom from the spatial and moral restrictions unintentionally imposed on her by her husband. Finally they both abandon their house separately. In this story Cicellis depicts conflicts of class and gender, and the antithesis between being housebound and the freedom to roam.

Another story in the same collection, *Turn of the Tide*, is a poetic first-person narrative of a dreamlike scene. The narrator conveys impressions, sensations, contradictory feelings of joy and sorrow, carefreeness and apprehension, but always beauty; there is no ugliness. But at the end a body is washed ashore, and, in the final words of the story, the rows of houses, the people and the days stand "desolate as black rocks emerging on the shore after the ebbing of the tide" (Cicellis 1950c:156). In this ending the narrator seems to have returned to reality.

In a brilliantly perceptive comment on her own fiction, written twenty-five years later, Cicellis writes:

> I think I write more about situations than about "characters". I'm attracted by the schematic face of situations and the structure hidden within them, and the sudden clashes, through which this structure can be illuminated (Cicellis 1975:313-4).

As is the case with all her work, none of the stories in *The Easy Way* is set in an English-speaking country. In the stories set in Greece, all the characters are Greek, yet all the dialogue is conveyed in English. The language of her narratives is confidently English. There are some powerful and original poetic sentences, e.g. "In the centre, muffled and blunt, there existed the memory of the cold, and of raw, naked death congealed and walled up in it, like a frog enclosed intact in a piece of ice" (*Aegean Storm*, Cicellis 1950c:78). There are some occasional foreignisms, such as "oscillate" where she means "teeter" or "totter" or "swing"; or "I won't be late" instead of "I won't be long" (no doubt translated literally from the Greek phrase "Den th' argiso"). Sometimes the verb tenses aren't quite right, as in the sentence: "Gregory suspected that she tried to turn Maya against him", instead of "was trying" (Cicellis 1950c:207).

No doubt one of the features that intrigued British and American readers of Cicellis' first books was precisely this sense of estrangement created by a writer who was writing in English about non-English-speaking characters living in non-English-speaking countries. Indeed, this is perhaps one of the chief characteristics of her writing, whether in English or in Greek: a sense that the characters and the language do not belong in any particular place; indeed, they are all in some subtle sense *out* of place. Even the landowning characters in the Cephalonia stories seem not to belong in their native place in the way that the peasants, servants and fisherfolk do. This can then be seen as symptomatic of a general sense of placelessness and alienation that characterizes the modern world, and it stands in contrast to much of the mainstream Greek literary tradition of the mid-twentieth century—take major poems of the 1940s and 1950s such as Yannis Ritsos' *Romiosyni* (written 1945-7) or Odysseus Elytis' *To axion esti* (1959), for example—which is based on confident assertions of *ithageneia* (nativeness), of rootedness and belonging within the Greek landscape.[10]

In the novel *No Name in the Street* (1953) there are no specific references to the country in which the action takes place, although many of the characters' names could well be Greek. In addition, the dateline at the end of the book, "Athens, March 3rd, 1952", emphasizes that there is much of Athens in the setting and situations (Cicellis 1953:38, 109).

Despite their relationships and conversations with each other, the characters in this novel live in their own private worlds, and their utterances are oblique. A group of friends discuss revisiting the Round

[10] *Romiosyni* was first published in Ritsos' collection *Agrypnia* (1954). An English translation was published in Bold 1970; *To axion esti* has been published in an English translation by Keeley and Savidis (1980).

Island, in search of "the land of Lost Happiness". They want to relive the experiences they had had on an earlier visit there, when they were forced to go there because of the war: it was the discovery of the beach there that had brought the members of the group close together in the first place.[11] There are some reminiscences here of Kosmas Politis' novel of adolescence, *Eroica* (1937), which Cicellis translated into English in the 1950s but (alas) never published, and perhaps even of Enid Blyton's "Famous Five" adventure stories for girls; this series began appearing in the 1940s, and three of the early volumes in Blyton's series involve adventurous trips to islands. At the same time, the style of Cicellis' novel resounds with echoes of Virginia Woolf's *The Waves*.

The characters seem to be trying to make an impression on others, to be remembered, to alter the world in subtle ways; only then can they be sure they exist. Gregory, the chief character, and Marietta talk about that expedition to the Round Island years ago: "'So that was your first memory,' said Gregory, 'that was the first time you reached out a hand backwards and found something there to touch, a response, a resistance, an existence'", and he contrasts this with what he calls "coexistence by chance", as in a concert hall. Such experiences—what Sartre, in *La Nausée* (1938), called "privileged moments"—transform life "from a flat stretch into a meaningful landscape". "Once that landscape is created, you can go on unfolding it, continuing it as far as you go, from that beginning to the end of your life." After such experiences, which don't happen until adulthood, you can be in control of your existence, making it up as you go along. The characters are constantly searching for some meaning in life and in specific situations; they crave certainty in what one of them calls "the acrobatic game" (Cicellis 1953:112, 110, 113, 219).

In *No Name in the Street*, once again, there is a sense of not belonging, but also of the future transforming the past, even to the extent of erasing it. The characters' emotions are constantly changing, often suddenly and violently, as if they are moving inside a fluid that carries them along with its currents, but often buffets them unexpectedly and painfully. When Gregory, after many postponements, eventually goes off to Germany, the rest of his group "had all they needed to carry on without him. He did not leave an empty place behind him" (Cicellis 1953:244). This seems to be because he has subtly altered the world—yet, ironically, he has done so in such a way that his presence is no longer necessary; in the words of the

[11] In the blurb for this novel (see note 2 above) Cicellis states that the Round Island is Cephalonia. It is characteristic of the unspecificness of the geographical setting in much of Cicellis' fiction that the island remains unnamed in the text of the novel.