Greece Between East and West

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Greece Between East and West:
Culture and Geopolitics

(Durrell Studies 7)

Edited by

Richard Pine

With a Foreword by Roderick Beaton

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

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CONTENTS

Culture East and West

The Balkans and the Levant: Two Fictions and Three Cities

India, China and the Rediscovery of Greece

FOREWORD

RODERICK BEATON

Modern Greece, created out of a violent revolution during the 1820s and internationally recognised as sovereign and independent in 1830, has ever since presented a paradox. On the one hand, Greece was established as a modern nation-state according to western European principles and ever since has aligned itself politically (more or less) with those principles. On the other, the modern state was initially carved out of territory that had been ruled by an Islamic theocracy, the Ottoman empire, for hundreds of years – and before that by a *Christian* theocracy based upon the eastern (Greek-speaking) half of what had once been the empire of ancient Rome. Greece during the last two centuries, and the Greeks who have created and maintained their political state, along with a dazzlingly creative culture, bring with them a bewildering amount of baggage: political, cultural, even linguistic (only Chinese and Hebrew, among languages spoken in the world today, can boast as long a tradition of continuous use and evolution as Greek, as attested by written records going back for three and a half millennia).

The challenges that result are part of the daily lives of almost every Greek – counting in the roughly 11 million citizens of the Hellenic Republic, almost another million in the Republic of Cyprus, and perhaps half as many again scattered across the globe in a worldwide "diaspora" spanning every inhabited continent.[1] The same challenges also continue to fascinate outsiders – from the "philhellene" (Greek-loving) volunteers who came from all over Europe and as far away as the USA to support the cause of Greek independence in the 1820s to a good half of the contributors to this volume. The story of Greece, its people, their culture, and their ideas ("philosophy" is of course a Greek word for a Greek invention) is endlessly fascinating – and this is one of the reasons. How *does* a whole people, or an individual creative artist, or an institution such as a parliament or a bank, define its own self, in a way that makes sense both to fellow-Greeks and to

[1] Roderick Beaton, *The Greeks: A Global History* (London: Faber and Faber; New York: Basic Books, 2021), pp. 463–6.

outsiders? The dichotomy that this book explores opens up one of the richest seams for enquiry. And (spoiler alert!) there is no single answer; even if one were to be proposed, it can't be the *right* answer – because there isn't one.

As I expressed it in a book published in 2019:

> The duality between ancient and Byzantine ancestors encourages, or reflects, a far deeper duality of thought and perception. ... Greece *is* part of Western civilization, for the very simple reason that over the last two hundred years Greeks have determined that it should be. But as the double inheritance from its ancestors shows, Greece does not belong *only* to the West. It belongs also to the East. This is part of the same duality and is not reducible to a single proposition. It is not 'either/or', but 'both/and'.[2]

The contributors to the present volume have approached that same conundrum, and that same duality, from a wide variety of backgrounds and have brought to bear on it a correspondingly wide range of discourses. The voices of two novelists and a film director join those of academics from the disciplines of social and political sciences, classical and classical reception studies, literary criticism and biography. We learn how such major figures in the English-language literary canon as W.B. Yeats and Lawrence Durrell constructed imagined worlds of the Greek east as different from one another as the former's Byzantium and the latter's Corfu, Rhodes and Cyprus. (Yeats's compatriot and younger contemporary James Joyce constructed yet another, different again – the story could continue...) Cultures normally seen as quite separate converge in unexpected ways in a chapter on the Greek encounter with early Buddhism in the centuries after Alexander the Great led his army into northern India and another on the modern Indian reception of the Greek classics. Other kinds of cultural meeting are brought to life in accounts of the vanished cosmopolitan worlds of Smyrna before 1922, Constantinople before the 1950s and Alexandria before the early 1960s.

The two great influxes of refugees from the east into Greece (between 1914 and 1925 as the Ottoman empire morphed violently into today's Republic of Turkey, and since 2015) are the subject of moving testimony and thoughtful discussion. There are many similarities between these two historical movements of people into Greece, but also striking differences. In the one case, the incomers were of the same religion and ethnicity, and had been displaced by a war fought by Greece to extend its territory; in the other, mostly Muslim fugitives from wars fought on other continents find themselves on Greek soil in a desperate attempt to find

[2] Roderick Beaton, *Greece: Biography of a Modern Nation* (London: Allen Lane/Penguin, 2019), pp. 10, 11.

safety in the European Union. Other kinds of displacement within Greece have been experienced by groups marginalised by the state for different reasons: speakers of "Slavo-Macedonian" (the dialect of Bulgarian that is now the national language of North Macedonia – recognised by Greece in 2019) and mental patients once incarcerated in the notorious psychiatric hospital on the island of Leros.

Other contributors assess contrasting ways in which Greek insiders have assessed their own situation in relation to the ever-present "burden" of the classical past, to the European Enlightenment during the eighteenth century, or to a vision of future co-existence with the Ottoman empire that might still have been possible at the turn of the twentieth. All of these are reminders that the course of history as we are familiar with it today was never set in stone until it happened: there have been any number of potential turning-points in the past when the flow of events might just as easily have turned into a different course altogether. And the situation of Greece today, between east and west, has inevitably been shaped by each of these turns.

The plurality of voices and perspectives is invigorating; at the same time it shows up how multi-dimensional is the issue itself. The question, put at its simplest, might sound like a dry matter of classification: does Greece (do Greeks) belong to the east or to the west? But no one who reads more than a few of the chapters that follow will be under any illusion that it could ever be so simple. It's rather a question of identity. And the ways in which identities are formed, and the competing and sometimes irreconcilable *stuff* of which they're made, are matters of intense interest and concern to all of us – far beyond the boundaries of Greece or the worldwide Greek community. In recent years everybody has been talking about identity, and often ever more stridently. In Ukraine at the time of writing, at the end of 2022, people are fighting and dying to defend an identity which a majority of them have chosen, against an alternative identity imposed by force. To understand the ways in which Greeks, their neighbours, and those on the margins of Greek society have grappled with the same issues is to begin to recognise what a complicated thing is identity, and how complex and multi-layered the process of shaping, and re-shaping, one's own.

In giving full rein to the complexities of Greece's (plural) identities, the contributors to this book by no means give a clean slate to the Greek state, its institutions, or the choices exercised by individuals in public positions. From the daily frustrations of the voluntary expat to the experience of marginalisation and worse by those deemed to be outsiders, several chapters present excoriating critiques and juxtapose tragic human stories to a monolithic and sometimes corrupt officialdom. This book is no whitewash. On the other hand, the old (colonially tinged?) commonplaces

about Greece's dysfunctionality look ever harder to sustain, particularly compared to the USA post-Trump or the UK post-Brexit.

At the end of 2022 Greece once again looks like a stable, reliable partner in the European project (as it did between 1996 and 2004); for understandable reasons of self-interest, but also with admirable consistency, all recent Greek governments have insisted on upholding the principles of the rules-based international order that are now under worldwide threat from authoritarian leaders – the most dangerous of them, as it happens, geographically placed to Europe's *east*. In that context, Greece (official Greece) today is incontrovertibly western. But if all Greeks fear and resent the belligerent rhetoric of President Erdoğan of Turkey, a disturbing number of them apparently hanker for the latest manifestation of Russian imperialism cloaked in the appropriated trappings of their own eastern Orthodox Church. And as the final chapter demonstrates, the increasingly blatant authoritarianism and anti-western rhetoric of China under Xi Jinping are not proving an obstacle to bilateral, and asymmetrical, relations that may be of future concern to Greece's European and western partners.

In that 2019 book I also wrote, "No one should take it for granted that Greece and Greeks in future will always align with the values, traditions and politics that we tend to lump together and call 'Western'."[3] The contributors to this volume have collectively gone a long way to explaining why.

[3] Beaton, *Greece*, 398.

EDITOR'S PREFACE

One of the inspirational moments for the conception of this book was my reading of Christy Lefteri's *A Watermelon, a Fish and a Bible* (2010): "Cyprus is a great watchtower, and he who stands at the top has the advantage of a god that can see at once Europe, Asia and Africa […] It is an intermediary between three worlds" (p. 253). Coupled with US Ambassador Pyatt's reference to the "Venn" diagram (below, p. 7), this suggested to me not a passivity of the Greek world between others, but its *agency* as both a conduit and a change-maker, a place of reception and inception.

In her PhD thesis on "Cypriot literature of liberation" (of which Chapter 10 in this volume is part), Lefteri writes: "Considering the paradoxes and questions about British administration and Orientalism in Cyprus helped me to understand the position of the island within the vast post-colonial landscape. […] Cyprus' colonial history was a complex one, leading to the meeting and clash of three great nations: Turkey, Greece and Britain, something which had not been seen before in British history. The case of Greek Cyprus was complicated; it claimed its own imperial heritage, the same heritage on which the British also relied. […] In *A Watermelon, a Fish and a Bible* the empathy lies with the characters who cannot be drawn into the reactions of the colonised, the ones who stood apart." Lefteri's insight into this cross- and inter-cultural maelstrom of continuing history exemplified, for me, the complexity of Greece in both the Balkans and the Levant on which this book is based, both culturally and geopolitically. If we are "the prisoners of history" we may also be the prisoners of the future.

It was important in convening these essays to draw together not only hard evidence but also intimations of Greece's position both geopolitically and intellectually in the vast history of cultural and commercial intercourse between east, west, and Greece. The Irish concept of a "fifth province", which is neither north, south, east nor west, but *here*, suggests a centrality of undeniable immanence which owes all, and at the same time nothing, to those other co-ordinates. This, I believe, can be found in our contributors, from the impassioned account of the "node" of Leros by Neni Panourgiá or Chloe Howe Haralambous' re-telling of "Thermopylae", to the narratives of what we might call the twin cities of Smyrna/Izmir and Alexandria, where the Greek presence is now a compelling absence, or where Yeats's Irish imagination recreates a sense of "Byzantium" – yet

another homeland of Greek faith and passion – which might exist more in a poet's mind than it does on the ground. The co-incidence of imagination and history, of mind and matter, informs the entire conception, and the outcome, of this book.

Gail Holst-Warhaft has written eloquently in *The Road to Rembetika* (1975) of the way *rebetiko* music from Asia Minor has permeated Greek society; and she has also written persuasively and with authority on Mikis Theodorakis, whose homage to his mother's Anatolian legacy she celebrates here (the new edition of her *Mikis Theodorakis: His Music and Politics* appears in the "Durrell Studies" series). And Spyros Orfanos celebrates a central figure of Greek tragedy, Medea, whose origins lie not in Greece but further east.

The politics of modern Greece and its emergent sense of its literature rub shoulders here with much earlier examples of Greece's philosophical commerce with, and penetration of, the east and that fascinating phenomenon of our modern geopolitics, the re-creation of the ancient "Silk Road".

Over many of these chapters hovers the *ároma* – if I can use one sense to evoke a whole continent – of the mind of Anatolia and the Pontic region: its cultures, languages, cuisines, as epitomised in Tassos Boulmetis' film *A Touch of Spice* (2003). As I write, a culinary festival in Thessaloniki is marking the centenary of the "Anatolian Catastrophe" with awards to contemporary entrepreneurs in Greece who continue to reproduce culinary skills from the kitchen of Asia Minor (*Kathimerini* English edition, 6 December 2022). This is no mere genuflection to the east, nor to history, but a fact of life: the living presence of traditions which make that life possible.

The cover image: The map on the front cover is a crude representation of the culmination of the *Megáli Idéa* ("Great Concept") of Greek irredentism. Following the Treaty of Sèvres in 1920, between the victorious allies in the First World War and the Ottoman Empire, substantial areas of Ottoman territory were assigned to France, Britain, Italy and Greece. The map shows the expansion of Greek territory following the Balkan Wars of 1912-13: the areas in green, which had been won from the Ottoman Empire in the first of these wars and included gains from Bulgaria in the second, as well as Crete; and the areas which Greece had been led to believe in 1920 would be part of an expanded state (the areas in dark blue). The area in dark blue further north is known in Greek as East(ern) Thrace. The region includes Constantinople/Istanbul (although that city and the land bordering the straits between Europe and Asia on both sides were excluded from the award to

Greece and were to remain neutral, under International control). The area in dark blue on the Anatolian mainland was the main justification for the Greek campaign in Asia Minor, or Greco-Turkish War, of 1919-1922, which ended with the defeat of its army and the destruction of Smyrna/İzmir, followed by the compulsory exchange of populations between Greece and the newly created Republic of Turkey in 1923.

Richard Pine
Durrell Library of Corfu
December 2022

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My first indebtedness is to Roderick Beaton, an old friend of the Durrell Library, for graciously agreeing to write a Foreword to this book.

This volume reproduces two chapters which appeared previously elsewhere: Reşat Kasaba's chapter on İzmir is reproduced (under licence) from *Modernity & Culture: from the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean*, edited by Leila Tarazi Fawaz and C.A. Bayly (Columbia University Press, 2002).

Kapka Kassabova, another friend of the Durrell Library, whose work we published in *Borders and Borderlands: explorations in identity, exile and translation* (Durrell Studies 1, edited by Richard Pine and Vera Konidari, 2021), was unable to contribute new work to this volume, due to her writing commitments, but generously allowed us to republish the chapter "The Howl" from her 2020 "Balkan Journey of War and Peace", *To the Lake.* Thanks are due to Jessica Bullock of the Wylie Agency for her intermediary skills and to Granta (the original publishers) and to Graywolf Press (in the USA) for a licence to republish.

Christy Lefteri, from whose novel *A Watermelon, a Fish and a Bible* I quoted in my Preface, was also unable to write for this volume due to her own writing commitments, but generously allowed us to reproduce "The Conception and Composition of *A Watermelon, A Fish and a Bible*", the final section of her PhD thesis "The Flame and the Sword: Cypriot Literature of Liberation considered from Post-Colonial, Psychological and Creative Perspectives" 2011 at Brunel University, where she teaches creative writing.

Tassos Boulmetis, director of *A Touch of Spice*, generously gave time for a revealing discussion of his conception of the film.

Ian MacNiven, biographer of Lawrence Durrell, commented with authority on the "Notes" on Durrell's Greek, Balkan and Levantine interests in the Appendix.

I also wish to record my gratitude to my colleague Vera Konidari, co-editor with me of *Islands of the Mind: psychology, literature, biodiversity* (2020) and *Borders and Borderlands* (2021) and translator of my *The Eye of the Xenos: letters about Greece* (Durrell Studies 3, 2021) for support and advice at the inception of this project.

As in the case of a previous symposium which nevertheless became a book (*Borders and Borderlands*), a proposed gathering of the contributors to this book, at the Solomos Museum in Corfu, was postponed from 2021 to 2022 and eventually cancelled due to the continuing uncertainties about air travel, public health and other anxieties. Nevertheless, thanks are due to the Solomos Museum, Corfu, and its curator, Nafsika-Maria Fronimou, where many events associated with this project have successfully taken place, and the Society of Corfiot Studies (President Perikles Pagratis and Secretary Dimitris Konidaris) for their constant interest and support.

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Roderick Beaton is Emeritus Koraes Professor of Modern Greek and Byzantine History, Language and Literature at King's College London, a Fellow of the British Academy, and Chair of the British School at Athens. He has published widely on the literature, culture and history of Greece and the Greek-speaking world since the twelfth century. His most recent books are *Greece: Biography of a Modern Nation* (2019) and *The Greeks: A Global History* (2021).

Tassos Boulmetis studied Physics at the University of Athens and Film Production and Direction at the University of California (UCLA). In 1990 he wrote, directed and co-produced the film "The Dream Factory" which won awards in Greece and the Golden Award of Fantasy Movies in the Houston Film Festival. His second feature film, "A Touch of Spice", is based, mostly, on true facts drawn from his own life. and has won 8 awards of excellence in Greece. The film was Greece's official entry in the Academy Awards of 2005. His recent academic activities include teaching classes on Advanced Film Directing, in private institutions in Greece. His third feature, "Mythopathy" (2016), is a sarcastic comedy, about the Greek political system, and how it ended up in today's crisis. He is a former president of the Hellenic Film Academy and a member of the European Film Academy.

Roy Foster is Emeritus Professor of Irish History at Oxford, and of Irish History and Literature at Queen Mary University of London and a cultural commentator and critic. His many prizewinning books include *Modern Ireland 1600-1972*, *Paddy and Mr Punch*, the two-volume authorised biography of W.B. Yeats, *Vivid Faces: the revolutionary generation in Ireland 1890-1923* and *On Seamus Heaney*. A Fellow of the British Academy, an Honorary Member of the Royal Irish Academy, and the holder of several honorary degrees, he received the President's Distinguished Service Award in 2021.

Gail Holst-Warhaft is the retired director of the Mediterranean Studies Initiative, and adjunct professor in Comparative Literature at Cornell University. She writes on Greek music and literature and is also a poet.

Recent books include Επικίνδυνες φωνές (expanded Greek edition of *Dangerous Voices: Women's Laments and Greek Literature*), 2022; Ένα ταξίδι στο ρεμπέτικο για μικρούς και μεγάλους (*A Journey into the Rembetika for Young and Old*), 2022; *Nisiotika: Music, Dances and Bitter-sweet Songs of the Aegean*, 2021. She has recently revised and updated her 1980 book on Theodorakis, published in 2023 by Cambridge Scholars as *Mikis Theodorakis: His Music and Politics* in the Durrell Studies Series.

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Reşat Kasaba is a Professor at the Henry M. Jackson School of International Studies at the University of Washington, Seattle. He has written on economic history, state-society relations, migration, ethnicity and nationalism, and urban history in the late Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey. His publications include volume four of the *Cambridge History of Modern Turkey* and *A Moveable Empire: Ottoman Empire, Migrants, and Refugees*.

Kapka Kassabova grew up in Bulgaria, was university-educated in New Zealand, and lives in rural Scotland. She is the author of *Border* (2017), *To The Lake* (2020) and *Elixir* (2023). These journeys into the trans-boundary human geographies of the southern Balkans explore the relationship between humans and places, and the nature-culture connection. *Border* won a British Academy Prize, the Saltire Book of the Year, the Stanford-Dolman Travel Book of the Year and the Nicholas Bouvier Prize. *To the Lake* was named France's Best Foreign Book of Non-Fiction. Her work is translated into twenty languages.

Christy Lefteri was born in London in 1980 to Greek Cypriot parents. She teaches Creative Writing at Brunel University, London. She has also studied

Psychoanalysis and worked in the British National Health Service as a psychotherapist with trauma patients, and as a result has been researching the links between creativity, displacement and trauma. Her novels are: *A Watermelon, A Fish and a Bible* (2009); *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* (2019, inspired by her working in a UNICEF-supported refugee centre in Athens); and *Songbirds* (2021).

Sirshendu Majumdar is Associate Professor of English at Bolpur College (University of Burdwan), India. He has edited *Rabindranath Tagore and James Henry Cousins: A Conversation in Letters, 1915-1940* (2022). He was a Visiting Research Fellow at Trinity College, Dublin, 2018-19. He has published a monograph on the relationship of Rabindranath Tagore and W. B. Yeats (*A Comparative Study of Cross-Cultural Poetry, Nationalist Politics, Hyphenated Margins and the Ascendancy of the Mind*, 2013), and writes academic and popular essays in English and Bengali. He has served as reader for Peter Lang and Routledge and as translation consultant for Literature Ireland.

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Neni Panourgiá is the Academic Adviser at the Justice-in-Education Scholars Program at Columbia University. As primarily a medical anthropologist, her research crosses questions of the materiality of power and the body to look at confinement, torture, and their architectonics. She has published extensively on death and ritual, theory of ethnography, and architecture as a national project. Her latest book *Leros. The Grammar of Confinement* was published in Greek in 2020 and is forthcoming in English and is a continuation of her project on political prisoners as it was delineated in her *Dangerous Citizens. The Greek Left and the Terror of the State* (2009), translated into Greek as *Επικίνδυνοι Πολίτες* (2011).

Richard Pine is Director of the Durrell Library of Corfu, and series editor of "Durrell Studies". He is the author of many books on literature and music, including *Lawrence Durrell: the Mindscape* (1994/2024), *The Eye of the Xenos: letters about Greece* (2021), *The Disappointed Bridge: Ireland and the Post-Colonial World* (2014) and has co-edited *Islands of the Mind: psychology, literature, biodiversity* (2020) and *Borders and Borderlands: explorations in identity, exile and translation* (2021). His collected essays on cultural politics 1978-2018, *The Quality of Life*, appeared in 2022.

Emilia Salvanou is currently a post-doctoral researcher at the University of Thrace. She has published extensively on issues of refugeehood and migration of the 20th and 21st centuries. She is the author of three books: *How we learn history without being taught about it. Historical culture, public history, historical education* (2021, in Greek), *The shaping of Refugee Memory. The past as history and practice* (2018, in Greek and translated into Turkish), and *Disease and Care in the Asia Minor Catastrophe and for the Refugees* (forthcoming 2023, in Greek).

Richard Stoneman is an Honorary Visiting Professor at the University of Exeter. He is the author of over twenty books including *Alexander the Great: A Life in Legend* (2008), and most recently *The Greek Experience of India* (2019) and *Megasthenes: Indica: a new translation of the fragments with commentary* (2022). He edited the catalogue for the British Library exhibition, "Alexander the Great: the Making of a Myth" (2022-2023).

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: GEOPOLITICS AND SPIRIT OF PLACE

RICHARD PINE

Introduction

In this chapter I shall explore the two elements in my title not as binary opposites but as analogues – as "both-and" rather than "either-or". In doing so, it is necessary to distinguish substantive "Hellenism" or "Greek Hellenism" (as George Seferis preferred to call it) from "Greekness" or ελληνικότητα [*ellinikótita*] which tends towards an "abstraction" of "the Greek character", what Seferis called a "national stereotyping". Seferis saw this stereotyping as having been imposed on Greeks – "European Hellenism", in fact; it was not entirely devoid of value (and I, as a philhellenic non-Greek, am very much aware of the difficulty of discussing the question) but should be re-introduced into Greek life *by* Greeks. It could not be undertaken lightly: in his long poem *Mythistorema* we find Seferis' acknowledgement of the weight of history: "Ξύτπνησα μὲ το μαρμάρινο τούτο κεφάλι στα χέρια που μου εξαντλει τους αγκώνες και δεν ξέρω που να τ'ακουμπήσω" [I woke with this marble head in my hands; / it exhausts my elbows and I don't know where to put it down.][1] The weight and style of both freedom and tragedy were considerable.

Both "Hellenism" and "Greekness" represent that indefinable spirit that so many commentators wish to define – "that many-faced expression

[1] G. Seferis, *Collected Poems 1924-1955*, pp. 6-7. This burden of the past would reappear in the cinema of Theo Angelopoulos, who quoted these lines in *Alexander the Great*, his parodic portrait of Alexander as brigand (*klepht*) and hero, and shows it explicitly at the end of the film.

which is the Greek expression" as Seferis put it.[2] My intention is to emphasise that many elements in this sometimes elusive "spirit" which emanate from Greek connections with the "East" are at risk of being diminished, overlooked and possibly eliminated by an excessive interest in, and reliance on, the "West". In doing so, I shall briefly discuss the factors influencing the founding of the state of Greece in 1830-32, the aspirations of territorial expansion in the *Megáli Idéa*, Greece's relations with the Balkans, and the exilic imagination.[3]

If I associate this "Hellenism" with the quality of *filotimía* (the sense of honour and loyalty) it is because I regard this as most at risk from the course of westernisation which I see everywhere in Greece.

Above all, I am looking for a *metaphor* to create a bridge of meaning between the twin ideas of "East" and "West", because *metaphors* are not only the enablers of conceptual life, but the means of making daily life possible – to *translate* or carry across (the word is the same in Latin as in Greek) from one set of givens to the other without loss of meaning or identity. By this means we could regard sense-of-place as enriching, and perhaps enriched by, the science and practice of geopolitics. Ullrich Kockel even adopts the suggestion that the terms represent "obsolete terminology".[4]

The differentiation and, indeed, polarisation of "West" and "East" was never perfect or complete because the intercourse between them was always a two-way exchange not only of goods and money but of philosophy, world-views and culture. As Robert Kaplan insists, "To talk of East and West as exclusivities in Greece is to ignore that the country is an inextricable compound of both".[5]

My title thus juxtaposes two aspects of the preoccupations you will find throughout this book: the place of Greece as a pawn and as a player in the geopolitics of the eastern Mediterranean, the Balkans and the Levant; and the qualities which inhere in the Greek mind when we refer to more local issues – that which is intimately local, ντόπιο [dópios] or native,

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[2] G. Seferis, "Some Notes on Modern Greek Tradition" (Nobel Lecture), 11 December 1963: https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1963/seferis/lecture/ [accessed 10 June 2022].

[3] I am grateful to Roderick Beaton for his advice in relation to Seferis' "Hellenism", and especially to his essay "'A Continent as Big as China': Hellenism in the Life and Work of George Seferis" and to constructive comments on this essay as a whole.

[4] Kockel is quoting (in his *Borderline Cases*, p. 50) F. Mislivetz's 1997 essay on "Redefining European Security".

[5] R. Kaplan, *Adriatic*, p. 275.

and which gives rise to the continuity of tradition. The distinguishing feature of "Hellenism", as far as it has a place in this argument, is *culture*; not alone poetry, or sculpture, or music, or film but, in F.S.L. Lyons' graphic phrase, everything "from the furniture of men's [and women's] kitchens to the furniture of their minds".[6] In the *culture* of Greeks – the shape of their thought, the shape of their lives, the shape of their responses to the landscape or seascape, the shape of their welcomes and phobias, we can detect elements both eastern *and* western. The eastern elements in this culture are no doubt inextricable from the western. They are, however, celebrated separately in, for example, the literature of exile, or some of the music of Mikis Theodorakis or Manos Hadjidakis, or Nikos Skalkottas,[7] or the "border" films of Theo Angelopoulos.[8] It is in the *total* culture that the eastern element has a place and assumes its most profound significance, which cannot be eliminated by Wifi, Facebook, EasyJet or Starbucks.

As Homi Bhabha cogently observes, "It is the trope of our times to locate the question of culture in the realm of the *beyond*." He prefaces this remark with Heidegger's statement: "a boundary is not that at which something stops but, as the Greeks recognized, the boundary is that *from which something begins its presencing*."[9] Nothing could be more apposite to the themes under discussion in this book: the twin ideas that there is an *other* thought, an *other* concept, an *other* dynamic, beyond the known, the assumed, the received (which I shall discuss below in relation to Philip Sherrard's "Other Mind of Europe"), and the border as a place where something *begins*. Greece is a border of both east and west, and its *presencing* is both its danger and its opportunity, its past and its future, where *otherness* happens. In Bhabha's phrase, "*to touch the future on its hither side*"[10] is the challenge that most of us, acculturated to a western way of thinking and behaving, will find difficult: the experience of that otherness, the preparedness to look *differently* at received wisdom, to think

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[6] F.S.L. Lyons, *Culture and Anarchy in Ireland 1890-1939*, p. 4.

[7] See Chapter 6 in this volume by Gail Holst-Warhaft, or her *Mikis Theodorakis: His Music and Politics* (2023, Durrell Studies 6) and Nicholas Papandreou, *Mikis + Manos: ιστορία δύο συνθετών / a tale of two composers* (2007; text of an address to the Durrell School of Corfu). For a discussion of Skalkottas, see Katerina Levidou, "A Museum of 'Greekness': Skalkottas' *36 Greek Dances* as a record of his homeland and his time" in P. Tambakaki et al. (eds.), *Music, Language and Identity in Greece.*

[8] See Vera Konidari, "*If I take one more step, I'm elsewhere*: the representation of borders in Theo Angelopoulos' 'Trilogy of Borders'", in R. Pine and V. Konidari (eds.), *Borders and Borderlands.*

[9] H. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 1 (emphasis original).

[10] Ibid., p. 7 (emphasis original).

round corners.[11] In the case of the debate explored in this book between Greece's western and eastern options, past and present, this capacity to think in both directions at once is the litmus-test.

The declaration "Ανήκωμεν εις τήν Δύσιν" [generally interpreted as "We belong to the West"] by prime minister Konstantinos Karamanlis, as the prelude to Greece's membership of the then European Economic Community,[12] set Greece on a trajectory which did not necessarily take into account Greece's experience of, and contribution to, eastern ways of thinking, both historically and in the present. He was supported by president Constantine Tsatsos, who argued for Greece's inclusion on cultural and political, as well as economic, grounds, stressing that Greece could strengthen Europe, but also issuing the caveat that the difference between Greece and northwest Europe was a "difference in time" and that Greece, like Portugal, Spain and Italy, would have to catch up quickly or be left behind.[13]

We should bear in mind a character in Evangelos Averoff-Tossizza's novel *The Call of the Earth* who argues "The West [is] a thousand years ahead of this impoverished and wretched country" to which his friend responds: "But the greatness of Greece has always been measured by the greatness of the mind and soul"; one speaker evokes today's geopolitics, while the other insists on spirit of place. It has been

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[11] Joep Leerssen suggests the converse: that a sense of community depends on "being *distinct from others*" and that a community "articulates" its identity "against an Outside": *National Thought in Europe*, p. 17 (emphasis original).

[12] Greece joined the EEC in 1981; Karamanlis' declaration was part of political rhetoric during the preceding six years, following the fall of the military junta in 1974 and the restoration of democracy. The EEC became the European Union (EU) following the Maastricht Treaty of 1993. Greece's accession to the EEC was the fourth new state (including the UK) added to the original founding Six (Belgium, Netherlands, Luxembourg, France, Italy and West Germany, as it then was). Since then, the EU, as it now is, has rapidly expanded, with in 2004 the remarkable number of ten accessions, including the Baltic states, Cyprus and four previously communist-controlled states from central and eastern Europe. Greece's accession provided the then EEC with a new and more extensive eastern border – a border which has not only created a new frontline tension between Greece, as an EU member, and Turkey, but has also demonstrated the affective ties that "orient" Greece towards Anatolia. James Pettifer, writing in 1992, pointed to the reluctance in some areas of the EEC to admit Greece, not least because it might involve the EEC in "complicated and sometimes lethal quarrels of eastern Mediterranean countries": *The Greeks*, p. 230.

[13] C. Tstatsos, *Greece and Europe*, passim. Tsatsos was the brother-in-law of George Seferis.

Greece's dilemma since its inception that these two imperatives should be reconciled.[14] Many would argue, in addition, "But we *also* 'belong' to the East". As Arnold Toynbee (who will occupy us later in this chapter) warned in 1922 – a date which Greece cautiously commemorated in 2022 as the centenary of the "Anatolian Disaster" – "If […] being 'radically alien to Western civilisation' is a valid reason for 'the expulsion from Europe of the Ottoman Empire', many other non-Western European states, beginning with Greece herself, will have to pack their bags."[15] That situation has not changed very much in the following century. In 2022 Roderick Beaton observed: "since achieving their independence […] Greeks have faced choices between competing versions of who they really are".[16] These competing versions, or narratives, have at certain periods led to deep divisions within Greek society.

When a colonial society, which has been a subsidiary part of a dominant empire, is reborn as a free, autonomous state, its images begin to change both internally and externally. Internally, it begins to re-assess its view of itself, to call into play the forces and themes which brought it to freedom; externally, it begins to assert its new identity, to talk for the first time in the present tense. Previously, "difference" was what identified it as the weaker of two powers; now, "difference" describes its inherent strengths, its distinguishing mark among the nations of the world. The moments immediately following freedom are the most dangerous. Yet, if Greece is not, in today's geopolitics, completely free and autonomous, those dangerous moments will recur unmercifully. It could be argued that the gap between subjection and freedom has yet to be fully explored, to be successfully bridged. As Bhabha points out, "it is in the emergence of the interstices […] that the intersubjective and the collective experiences of *nationness*, community interest, or cultural value are regulated."[17] Hellenism today is most likely to be found in these interstices, the in-between spaces where meaning becomes elusive yet essential.

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[14] E. Averoff-Tossizza, *The Call of the Earth*, p. 93; as one character travels southwards towards Athens, he ponders: "Somewhere this side of Croatia runs the line which separates the Balkans from the West. From here southward everything is uncivilized and dirty" (p. 6). Averoff was leader of New Democracy 1981-84.
[15] A. Toynbee, *The Western Question*, p. 334.
[16] In his obituary of Peter Mackridge, *Guardian*, 11 July 2022.
[17] H. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 2 (emphasis original).

Geopolitics and Spirit of Place

"Geopolitics" – inevitably a process influenced by the more powerful factors rather than by smaller players – suggests seeing the world (or a particular region, like the EU or the eastern Mediterranean) as a single system and, by implication, the possibility of a single culture; any polarisation of "West" and "East" would suggest that "geopolitics" is antagonistic to the "spirit of place" – a "spirit" which might reveal an "other way of seeing". We must bear in mind that, in cultural terms, geopolitics suggests "West" while "spirit of place" suggests "East". In view of the new Silk Road, this polarisation is no longer tenable.

"Hellenism" (meaning the presence of a Greek culture, in the widest sense) has been central to the history of the Balkans, the Mediterranean generally and the Levant. Whether "Greece" in the modern political form of Hellenism is central to those areas in the *present* is debatable. Certainly, Greece's geopolitical position, regarding the supervening powers of the EU, the USA, NATO, Russia, China and, to a far lesser extent, Turkey, puts it at the centre of Mediterranean and European diplomacy.

But this may be the point where "Greece", as a political state with defined limits and powers, and "Hellenism" as an expression of the Greek spirit, part company. The Greek state cannot claim ownership, in any political sense, of Hellenism as a diasporic or ubiquitous phenomenon. Under the weight of history and with the more recent growth of westernisation, globalisation and the homogenisation that they bring in cultural and economic terms, Greece as a political entity is parting company from Greekness as a cultural and ethical way of life. Therefore, one major factor which must be kept in mind when discussing Greece's relationship with both West and East is that the *political* reality is not necessarily congruent with *social* or *cultural* realities. The two *tópoi* do not always coincide, and it is in the interstice between these *tópoi* that we will seek a metaphor.

"Spirit of place" in fact requires that *two* places must be recognised. The first is the landscape within which most ethnic Greeks of the modern state have developed their mindset: the various landscapes of mainland, islands and the sea. These landscapes have contributed to the emergence of a relationship between people and the places where they live. This awareness of landscape is celebrated in the writings of, for example, Nikos Kazantzakis and Odysseas Elytis. It stresses the immanence of the landscape itself: words such as τόπος [tópos, meaning in modern Greek *country* or *native land* – a word which permeates languages worldwide in its manifold etymologies], τοπικός [topikós, *local*], and χωριό

[chorió, *village*] or χωριάτικος [choriátikos] (which suggests both locality and continuity) are essential to a Greek sense of identity, belonging and obligation.

In 2016, speaking on "Contemporary Security Challenges in Europe, Mediterranean and Greece: the Role of NATO and the EU", the US ambassador to Greece, Geoffrey Pyatt, stated:

> I have often said that, if you draw a Venn diagram of this region, there are three circles which come together: one is the circle which, of course, comes with the security challenges that come out of Syria, Iraq, and the Eastern Mediterranean; another is a circle which reflects the security challenges arising from militarization of the Black Sea, [and] expands to Russia; and the third circle is that which reflects developments in North Africa. Where that Venn diagram comes together is right here with Greece. So, we recognize that you are living in a very complicated neighborhood.[18]

Pyatt was bearing out Arnold Toynbee's pithy observation: "'Europe' and 'Asia' are conventions which are only possible on a small-scale two-colour map."[19] And he was echoing prime minister Ioanis Kolettis in his "*Megáli Idéa*" speech of 1844 (see below), when he asserted: "By her geographical location, Greece is the centre of Europe", adding (significantly for our purposes) "with the East on her right and the West on her left, she has been destined […] to enlighten the West and […] the East".[20]

Given the context in which ambassador Pyatt was speaking, the recent investment by the USA in the development of the north-eastern port of Alexandroupolis (near the border with Turkey), underlines the strategic importance he attributed to Greece.[21] Yet in 2014 the then prime minister, Antonis Samaras, in stating "Greece is the friendliest and most reliable country in Europe for China", could mention the possibility of establishing a Chinese naval base in Crete (where the US already has a base).[22]

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[18] https://gr.usembassy.gov/our-relationship/our-ambassador/speeches_amb_pyatt/ [accessed 17 August 2022].
[19] A. Toynbee, *The Western Question*, p. 333.
[20] Quoted in P. Kitromilides, *Enlightenment and Revolution*, p. 329.
[21] See *New York Times* (International edition), 19 August 2022: "Four groups of companies are competing to buy a controlling stake [in the port] – two include American companies, backed by Washington, and two have ties to Russia […] The complex interplay of interests at Alexandroupolis highlights how the war [in Ukraine] is shifting the strategic focus of Europe to the Black Sea region."
[22] Greek News Agenda, 10 July 2014.

Once more the Mediterranean is becoming *central* to international affairs, regaining the position it once held by virtue of its name. So too is the historic "Silk Road" in its new epiphany as a trading route. We cannot behave as if "geopolitics" is new to either geography or politics: it is not merely that Greece has land borders with countries that did not exist in the 1830s – Albania, North Macedonia (and its predecessor, the Yugoslav Federation), Bulgaria or even the modern Turkish state, or sea-borders with yet-to-be states like Italy and Cyprus, but that historically the connection between Greek lands and lands to the east is intimate in ethnic, cultural and commercial terms.

The second "place" is thus the extended territory – both conceptual and concrete – where Greek activity and experience have been active: from Ai Khanum in Afghanistan to Odessa in Ukraine, from Egyptian Alexandria to French Marseilles. Greeks do not envisage recapturing Marseilles or Sicily. Greeks *do* regard their *eastern* losses as still palpable – a part of their lives that continues to exercise an affective pull.

Greece's "Venntrality"

This "Venntrality" of Greece is both spatial and conceptual, both present and historical. Let us look briefly at "the glory that was Greece". Roderick Beaton observes that it was in the copying (and thus preservation) of Greek classics in that most hybrid of cities, Alexandria, that the *accent* was first placed on words of more than one syllable, which has become a permanent feature of the Greek language and thus an extra-Greek intervention into the heart of Greek communication and, therefore, identity.[23] In the empire of Alexander the Great, Kandahar and Samarkand (respectively in present-day Afghanistan and Uzbekistan) "were flourishing Greek cities",[24] while Ai Khanum, on Afghanistan's northern border, features a 6,000-seat Greek theatre only slightly smaller than that at Epidaurus.[25]

Trade between Greece and Egypt in the Minoan and Mycenean eras involved the importation into the Aegean of gold, ivory, amber and tin,[26] while, as Beaton observes, we might talk of "a geopolitical

[23] R. Beaton, *The Greeks*, p. 54.
[24] Ibid., p. 183.
[25] R. Beaton draws attention to the fact that Seferis noted "visible traces of Hellenism" in cities such as Baalbek, Palmyra and Babylon: "'A Continent as Big as China'".
[26] R. Beaton, *The Greeks*, pp. 14-29.

dimension to the Mycenean world".[27]

Nearer our own time, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Greek merchants and their associates populated cities like Mariupol and Odessa[28] (where the Filikí Etaireía was inaugurated which precipitated the war of independence) and today Odessa has the "Athena Gallery", a Greek shopping mall in Greek Square, with 200 shops over seven storeys.

As Thomas McEvilley reminds us, very strong similarities exist between Gautama and Aristotle, Jaimini and Socrates, Kapila and Pythagoras, Heraclitus and the Upanishads; he refers to "significant intrusions first from India to Greece in the pre-Socratic period, then from Greece back to India in the Hellenistic period", and suggests that Neoplatonism owes much to Indian metaphysics.[29] The traffic was thus two-way: Toynbee referred to "the influence of Ancient Greek originals upon early Islamic literature […] and of Hellenistic upon Islamic ideas and institution".[30]

In view of the modern emphasis on the effects of the Anatolian disaster (when Greek forces attempted to control western Turkey and were repelled, resulting in the expulsion of ethnic Greeks from that region), it's worth recalling that Hesiod was a native of Cyme; Heraclitus, who would become, for Seferis, a "powerful bulwark against the forces of disorder in the world",[31] was a native of Ephesus; Anaxagoras was born in Clazomenae, whose site lay close to Vourla (a village which was the summer home of the Seferis family in the early 1900s) – all on the coast of Anatolia. That three minds which shaped Greek thought were born in what is today western Turkey is a small indicator of the extent of the Greek presence in classical times.

Why, in contemplating Greece's future, should we mention the empire of Alexander the Great, the existence of the "Silk Road", even the comparatively recent (eighteenth-century) settlements by Greeks in Odessa or Mariupol? Because, ineradicably, the experience of looking eastward has been absorbed into the cultural "DNA" of Hellenism. While

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[27] Ibid., p. 27.
[28] Ibid., p. 390.
[29] T. McEvilley, *The Shape of Ancient Thought*, pp. xxx-xxxi and 38-39, citing (among others) William Jones' *Collected Works* (1807), George P. Conger's essay "Did India Influence Early Greek Philosophy?" in *Philosophy East and West* (1952) and M. L. West's *Early Greek Philosophy and the Orient* (1971).
[30] A. Toynbee, *The Western Question*, p. 329. See also Richard Stoneman's chapter (15) in this volume; and Speros Vryonis, "Islamic Sources for the history of the Greek People" in J. Koumoulides (ed.), *Hellenic Perspectives.*
[31] R. Beaton, *George Seferis*, p. 135.

it can be suppressed, it cannot be dismissed or left to the history books. It remains an innate part of the experience of being Greek, of a Greek identity. It is this identity – composite and palimpsestic rather than monolithic – which westernisation may diminish.

It is not as if I am arguing for merely the *historical* aspects of Greece's "orientation". When an Israeli strategist refers to the "Athens – Jerusalem – Nicosia alignment" in the context of possible conflict in the eastern Mediterranean,[32] we realise that Greece's relations with Cyprus and the Levant continue to have very serious ramifications which impact on its Western alliances. The connections have always existed. The traffic may be different but the routes remain valid. The conflicts that result from such interconnections are largely unchanged: contests (*agónes*) for commercial, political or military dominance. For the West, "*Outremer*" was a synonym for eastward exploration and adventure, not least in the cases of the Crusades and Venetian mercantilist expansion (which, some have argued, were on occasion synonymous).[33] In one direction, the expanding Venetian empire. In the other, the Silk Road. The meeting-point was the Levant.

The "Silk Road", which stretched (in the thirteenth century AD) from the Pacific Ocean to Constantinople, is today being re-invented. Where camel trains transported "spices, silks and goldsmiths' work", today pipelines and railroads bring gas and manufactures. As Robert Kaplan observes, "the new and vast maritime empire of China threatens to overwhelm all of these associations [of modern commerce …] The Chinese want to make Trieste part of the same maritime geography as the South China Sea […] China will help shape Europe […] Greece is, in a very concrete geopolitical sense, very much back at the crossroads of East and West".[34]

Greece cannot avoid its position in geopolitics, since the capitalist West, to which it aspires to belong, is engaged in an *agón* with a new world order, in which the Silk Road has become a *chemin de fer*. As Peter Frankopan observes, "the world's centre of gravity [is] shifting – back to where it lay for millennia".[35]

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[32] Efraim Inbar, "What is the agenda for the Eastern Mediterranean?", *Kathimerini*, 11 July 2022; also published in the *Jerusalem Post*.
[33] See Robert Kaplan, *Adriatic*, p. 71; and Peter Ackroyd, *Venice*, pp. 157-64.
[34] R. Kaplan, *Adriatic*, pp. xviii, 124, 279. See Sophia Kalantzakos' chapter (17) in this volume.
[35] P. Frankopan, *Silk Roads*, p. 509.