Encounters in Greek and Irish Literature

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Creativity, Translations and Critical Perspectives

Edited by

Paschalis Nikolaou

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EDITOR'S PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This volume includes work presented in the course of 'Novel Encounters', a literary festival celebrating Greek and Irish fiction which took place in Corfu between 18 and 20 October 2017. It was hosted by the Ionian University in association with the Solomos Museum, located in the old town of Corfu. The festival brought together novelists from Ireland and Greece: Mia Gallagher, Katy Hayes, Deirdre Madden, Paraic O'Donnell, Christos Chrissopoulos, Panos Karnezis and Ersi Sotiropoulos. They were part of an ambitious programme of seminars, workshops, readings, presentations and roundtables that also involved an array of experts in the two literary traditions—alongside students of literary translation at the Department of Foreign Languages, Translation and Interpreting.

Founded in 1986, the DFLTI co-organized the 'Novel Encounters' event, in collaboration with The Durrell Library of Corfu and its Director, Richard Pine. Our effort to assemble such talent and in planning this festival involved a lot of coordination, yet would go nowhere far without the funding and overall support provided to the organisers by the Embassy of Ireland in Greece (with H.E. Orla O'Hanrahan speaking at the opening session, held at the historic building of the Ionian Academy on October 18, 2017), as well as generous assistance by the Rothschild Foundation and the British Council. These bodies enthusiastically realised the significance of showcasing writing from both countries. Their support of existing dialogue, and in fostering further encounters between the two literatures, was nothing short of critical.

Encounters in Greek and Irish Literature: Creativity, Translations and Critical Perspectives is thus not meant as merely a record of what took place in the course of those three days, and in an island with its own long history of cross-cultural influences. Rather, in featuring bilingual texts, in including personal statements that accompany the eight authors' sampled fiction, as well as critical texts—which range from general surveys of two literary traditions and their varied points of contact to perceptive case studies—this book confirms, and even embodies, some essential linkages: of imaginative writing, its fruitful transposition across languages and cultures, the amplifications involved in critical reflection and evaluation.

What is more, there are various forms of translation already occurring in the world depicted by these authors, because their stories are ones of cultural contact, of migration, of financial and political upheaval, of the moments that change us. Travel is often involved in these narratives, as do descriptions of living abroad—and notably, some of the dissonances that may be found in national self-image are also addressed.

This wider sense of translation does not just emerge in creative work, but is evidenced also in the essays, memoir and interviews of these writers over the years, as they reflect on their development and methods—Ersi Sotiropoulos, to take just one example, visits Italy with her daughter decades later, and remembers formative years spent in Rome:

> We crossed the road and I stood on the opposite pavement under the burning sun. I gazed at the third-floor windows. The corner one had its shutters hermetically closed, on the window ledge was a dried up pot plant and some rubbish. I used to leave it open at night. It was autumn. I didn't even have a table then, I'd put the typewriter on the single armchair and kneel in front of it. For two months I wrote the same page, correcting an adjective, adding an 'n', retyping the whole thing from the beginning. At night the humidity from the Tiber seeped in through this window and the bells of St. Peter's startled me at dawn like slap in the face.[1]

The workings of memory, the significance and manifold ways of leaving a trace, feature prominently in the prose of these writers: both in excerpts presented here and in the rest of their output. More recently, this is felt in Paraic O'Donnell's new book, *The House on Vesper Sands* (2018), a work first glimpsed in his presentation on the opening day of 'Novel Encounters' (and now also among the eight statements published in this volume), as well as in several of the stories comprising Mia Gallagher's *Shift* (2018). In Christos Chrissopoulos' work, the blurring of genre boundaries and frequent inclusions of photographic image also tend to engage these themes. An element variously accented in contemporary Greek prose writing has to do with the environs and mood-scapes engendered by a financial crisis intensely felt over several years post-2009. Even writers who do not usually concern themselves with sociopolitical tides in their work experienced the need to touch on them, if nominally; the characters, for instance, of Alexis Stamatis' novel *Kyriaki* (*Sunday*, 2011) criss-cross the centre of Athens on the same Sunday national elections were held, early on in Greece's financial crisis; Stamatis even integrates victorious political speeches from the day in the background. Just as the main character there, many other characters and plotlines in the fiction written in this period are defined by anger, or by

acts of despair. Anger is present in the very title of Chrissopoulos' 2018 novella, *I gi tou thymou.*

An atmosphere of irrationality and injustice abounds: in the present volume, Sotiropoulos' short story is a clear example, and of course, there is the extract from Nikolaidou's novel, where a school student writes a paper on a violent episode from Greece's past, only to realize the ways in which hurt, blame and ideological viewpoints permeate the decades following the event, still echoing in the present. The fact that this novel and others from the period heavily incorporate testimonies, documents, police and diplomatic memos, itself suggests a processing of history: an agony of gaining perspective. However, it would be a mistake to reduce contemporary Greek writing to these settings and themes, although they are certainly reflected *in translation*, for instance in the success of Nikolaidou's *The Scapegoat* (as translated by Karen Emmerich in 2015, the second volume in the trilogy) and even retroactively, in Penguin's publishing of Chrissopoulos' *The Parthenon Bomber*, nearly two decades after it appeared in Greek, in 1996. It is worth taking note precisely of such movements from a minor to a major language, however: some of the four Irish novelists invited to the festival in Corfu have been translated in several other languages, yet, with the exception of Deirdre Madden, the other three make their first appearance in Greek in the pages of this volume. One hopes—intends, in fact—for this to be a starting point.

Meanwhile, some stimulating considerations of literary dialogue between the two cultures have been published in recent years.[2] Further, in someone like Colm Tóibín, we witness how this interest may extend beyond prose fiction: to his subtle retelling of the tragedy of the house of Atreus in *House of Names* (2017; a Greek translation of Tóibín's novel appeared in late 2019), we can now add a recent reworking of Sophocles' *Antigone* from the perspective of Ismene (in the monologue *Pale Sister*, for the Gate Theatre in Dublin, October 31–November 9, 2019).[3]

Between 2016 and 2017, students of literary translation at the DFLTI enthusiastically undertook translations, of all but one of the eight texts we had decided to focus on (the exception being the Greek version of Mia Gallagher's 'Headhunter', for which my colleague at the University of Cyprus, Vasso Giannakopoulou must be thanked). The students' names can be found under the translations they produced in groups. And for several of these names, I am convinced the work included here represents excellent early efforts in what will surely be long careers translating literature.

In arriving at the final versions of their translations, in the weeks and months after the festival took place, our students benefited greatly from

suggestions and advice given by the authors themselves in workshops held during 'Novel Encounters'. Further, the publishers of these works, Faber and Faber, Kedros, Metaichmio, Nefeli, New Island, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, must also be thanked for permission to reprint extracts from the original work in English and in Greek (whilst copyright of course, remains with the authors).

I am grateful to J.M.Q. Davies, Anthony Hirst, Vera Konidari, Joanna Kruczkowska, Vassilis Letsios, Fran O'Rourke and Anthony Roche, for their patience and collaborative spirit throughout the lengthy process of assembling a volume that would do justice to the richness of the material they presented at the festival. (In the case of Fran O'Rourke, whose essay first appeared in the proceedings of a conference, the original publisher, Ellinika Grammata, kindly gave permission to reprint it here.)

The Rector of the Ionian University, Vassilis Chrissikopoulos must be thanked for his opening speech, as well as Nelly Antonatou and Claudia Boettcher for ably promoting and facilitating the October 2017 event. The same goes for Periklis Pagratis and Dimitris Konidaris who managed things so efficiently at the Solomos Museum. For their help in technical and organizational matters at the time of the original event, thanks are due also to Sofia-Maria Andreits and a group of students who gladly volunteered (some of them as interpreters): Angeliki Andriopoulou, Theonymfi Dryleraki, Anna Karolidou, Athina Koutsiafti, Konstantinos Menyktas, Maria Mitta, Stavroula Mystridou, Maria Piperidou and Georgios Polychronis. From among my colleagues, the support of the then-Head of the Department of Foreign Languages, Translation and Interpreting, Associate Professor Yorgos Michalakopoulos proved critical, alongside that of the current Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Professor Yorgos Kentotis (and his son, Dimitris).

Vasso Giannakopoulou, Amanda Millar, Fani Toli and Evelyn Toynton provided immense assistance with corrections. Last but not least, thanks are due to Anthony Wright, Camilla Harding and Rebecca Gladders at CSP: for seeing the potential, despite inherent complications, in this ambitiously structured, hybrid project; and for all their patience and attention to detail. It eventually led to realizing a complex, meaningful representation of dynamics involved in literary dialogue; to illuminations of the workings of influence between authors, between traditions.

And hopefully, we are setting the stage for further encounters.

Paschalis Nikolaou
November 2019

NOTES

[1] Ersi Sotiropoulos, 'Mama Roma'. *Ithaca: Books from Greece* (July–August 2002), 17: 29–32 (32).
[2] See Joanna Kruczkowska's *Irish Poets and Modern Greece: Heaney, Mahon, Cavafy, Seferis* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017); also, several sections in Richard Pine's *Greece Through Irish Eyes* (Dublin: The Liffey Press, 2015).
[3] For a review, which notes how Ismene's character 'grows from silent complicity in terrible events to the discovery of her own voice' and finds Tóibín's *Pale Sister* a 'thoughtful, delicately distilled response to Sophocles' that investigates 'the roots of courage', see Helen Meaney, '*Pale Sister* review—Colm Tóibín and Lisa Dwan's twist on Antigone', *The Guardian* (November 7, 2019). Online at: https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2019/nov/07/pale-sister-review-colm-toibin [accessed November 11, 2019].

THE EDGES OF EUROPE: AFFINITIES BETWEEN IRELAND AND GREECE[1]

JOANNA KRUCZKOWSKA

Even back in the remote past, the peripheral position of Greece and Ireland in Europe, as well as their insular topography, stimulated human imagination into wondering what lay there and beyond. Homer made Odysseus venture across the Mediterranean, visiting several islands which can be located on present-day maps; about sixteen centuries later, St. Brendan crossed the Atlantic charting his way through half-mythical islands, too. The workings of fate and gods in both voyages did not preclude their realistic potential, explored in our times by sailors and historians such as Tim Severin.[2] Greek narratives of late antiquity refer to the isle of Ierne (Ireland) when mapping the cult of Dionysus (Dionysius Periegetes) or the route of the Argonauts (*Orphica*), while the Roman historian Avienus derives the name of Ierne from the Greek word *ιερός* (sacred).[3] Early medieval Irish origin legends and glossaries trace the Irish descent to the forefather of the Ionian Greeks, and provide the etymology of Tara as derived from the Greek language and mythology.[4] Another legend, included in *The Book of Invasions*, refers to the displaced tribe of the Milesians; although believed to have sailed to Ireland from Iberia, in some versions of this story that captivated contemporary writers, the Milesians hailed from the eastern Aegean and migrated to Iberia after the explosion on Thera (Santorini).[5] The mythopoeic power of continental outskirts cannot be overestimated, having engendered potent narratives of Greek and Celtic mythology that continue well into our own time: from James Joyce's *Ulysses* to Michael Longley's Homeric cycle, from Flann O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds* to Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill's reworking of Irish myths;[6] not to mention generations of modern Greek writers, whose imagination has either been fertilized or tormented by the mythological legacy of their country.

Out of that remote past, the circumstance that is perhaps most consequential for modernity is that Greece—once *the* cultural and political centre of Europe, and an ever-expanding empire—and Ireland—destination

of a major tribal migration and an alternative model of Christianity—were both forced into a status comparable to that of a colony. This deplorable fate paradoxically contributed to today's dominance of the periphery in artistic terms: history proves that much of great literature gets born in crisis, and that resistance is a great driving force behind the arts. Both countries produced an impressive literary output, not least confirmed by the Nobel Prizes awarded. Their unique Modernist achievement, for instance, 'homebound in its nativist expression' but 'extroverted in its appeal', to cite Artemis Leontis in reference to Greece,[7] is still a haunting presence for contemporary writers. Ireland and Greece continue to excel in poetry and, as the present volume confirms, in prose. Modern drama presents a different case: thriving in Ireland since the late nineteenth century at least, in Greece it does not occupy a conspicuous place in modern writing—still hampered, perhaps, by the unparalleled achievement of the past.

Another possible result of historical marginalisation is a considerable scale of natural environment preservation, ensuing from low industrialisation in both countries. Perceived by many as a drawback, in terms of the tourist industry it is a huge asset, reinforcing what Louis Turner and John Ash in the 1970s called a 'pleasure periphery':[8] now a kind of a safety valve for an over-urbanised and over-populated Europe. The heavy reliance of Greece and Ireland on tourism can provide grounds for illuminating comparisons which would deserve a separate book. In Ireland, with the advent of the Celtic Tiger, the question of tourism shifted from the imposed notion of the 'unruly romantic periphery'[9] to 'what to do with the past?': preoccupied with the present and the future, pressure grew during the economic boom to sell history as national heritage, and nature as 'an eco-friendly sanctuary from the wasting breath of the industrial revolution'.[10] In Greece, the strand of nineteenth-century Romantic philhellenism, with its emphasis on touring the antiquities was gradually yielding to twentieth-century philhellenism, seeking the Greek paradise for the senses,[11] and later, to sheer hotel tourism. Furthermore, as the British philosopher Kate Soper claims, the postcolonial margins have an advantage over metropolitan power in that they can 'offer an eco-critique of hegemonic representations of "progress", "development", and human well-being';[12] and both Ireland and Greece can serve as interesting case studies of such an approach, especially when it comes to the crisis which unfolded in 2008.

Historically speaking, the colonial and political periphery was also of vital strategic importance. The critical location of Ireland in the Atlantic basin must have influenced Britain's decision regarding the partition of the

island in 1922. Because Winston Churchill did not manage to convince Éamon de Valera to open Irish ports in the Second World War, only the North provided a platform in the Battle of the Atlantic. In Greece, the controversial role of Britain and the United States in the Civil War and under the Colonels apparently aimed at keeping a 'political balance' in Europe by controlling the spread of Communism. Echoes of these strategic foreign power interventions in both countries reverberate even now, taking a toll of national and family histories.

Some years ago, when asked why I compared Greece and Ireland, I replied with two words: voyage and exile. These notions, which have appealed equally to many writers, encapsulate the quintessential axis of the present comparison. While in Trieste Joyce learned Modern Greek and wrote *ελληνικά*[13] across the map of Ireland in his copybook, using this language to approach his native ground; later, in *Finnegans Wake*, he deconstructed Ireland's coloniser's language by means of, among others, Modern Greek words.[14] Harry Clifton's 'Irish Greeks', exiled from Blasket Islands and drifting in a leaking vessel,[15] recall the protagonists of George Seferis' *Mythistorema*, the long poem inspired by the expulsion of Greeks from Asia Minor in 1922. Nowadays, Irish and Greek diasporas are spread across the world and maintain essential links with their homeland, especially with the islands. Paula Meehan and Theo Dorgan juxtapose Ikaria and the Aran, observing that diaspora frequently contributes to the well-being of their native community and performs a role of its bridge into modernity.[16] In the course of history, diasporas were often ahead of the metropolis; such was the case, for instance, of Alexandria *vis-à-vis* Athens at the beginning of the twentieth century. When referring to the diaspora-homeland interaction, Yiorgos Chouliaras states that it keeps 'getting broken and reestablished according to a bipolarity [which is] simultaneously ethnocultic and diasporophobic […] Post-colonial or self-colonized, writers go on exile, on foot or in their mind, and never come back, as if they had never left'.[17] Yet some emigrants return—at least in body if not mind—when the local climate starts to change, and this applies to writers, too.

Such was the case of Desmond O'Grady, the title of whose 1967 collection I have borrowed in this essay. By *The Dark Edge of Europe*, O'Grady meant the then narrow-minded and religiously extreme Ireland he fled in his early years in order to trace a vaster framework of Celtic tribal migrations as far as Egypt and Iran. Going into self-exile, he followed in the footsteps of many Irish writers, including those represented in this volume: Deirdre Madden and, on the Greek side, Panos Karnezis. O'Grady found his counterbalance, his bright edge of Europe,

when he settled in Greece, on the Cycladic isle of Paros; and the same Irish-Greek contrast can be found in the work of his fellow poet Derek Mahon. O'Grady discovered Greece a year before the junta and reacted to the dictatorship with the volume *Hellas* (1967), quoting an Irish-language lament; Mahon arrived a few days after the Greek liberation and translated Cavafy's poems from the folder *Prisons* into the reality of the conflict raging in his native Northern Ireland. They both found Greek islands to be a cure, yet without idealising Greece, contrary to a host of Byronic philhellenes in the previous century.[18] Eventually, however, they returned to Ireland; Deidre Madden did as well, and we may well ask here how voyage and exile helped these authors in coming to terms with their homeland. This is the question Cavafy asks in his most famous poem 'Ithaca'.

In 2005 Peter Bien published 'Inventing Greece', an article with the title borrowed from Declan Kiberd's well-known book *Inventing Ireland* (1995). Kiberd documented, among others, the role of the writer in the reconstruction of national identity: a vital issue in Ireland and in Greece. Nation formation processes in both countries followed centuries of foreign occupation, and sadly involved civil wars as well as the 'crucification' of national leaders (Charles Parnell and Eleftherios Venizelos), as Bien points out.[19] It should be added here that the domination by a single Christian church, another issue Bien mentions, was strongly related to the resistance against the invaders and their religion. Together with secret schooling, diaspora and literary renaissance, it pertains to many countries that regained independence in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (my own country, Poland, included). Even the concept of an *aisling*—where the country was epitomised in a female figure calling men to arms to join the independence struggle, later also used for propaganda purposes—was a common construct in or in reference to all these countries, be it Cathleen Ni Houlihan, Dark Rosaleen, Byron's Hellas, or Mother Poland. In the more recent past, political conflicts in Greece have invited comparisons with the situation in Northern Ireland. Back in the 1970s, George Seferis' comment on the Asia Minor Catastrophe of 1922 provided John Montague with a framework for his most accomplished volume, *The Rough Field* (1972) touching upon the history of the conflict in the North. The case of divided Cyprus appealed to Gerald Dawe, another poet from the North. Now, even though the Irish crisis does not compare in scope to the Greek one, its reality certainly fosters a search for parallels—or denial. 'In Ireland we watch Greece very closely. We do so with different degrees of trepidation, terror, hope and inspiration,' Helena Sheehan wrote in 2012. 'The narrative of Irish exceptionalism has prevailed. It was put to me on a

radio programme: "We don't want to be like Greece, do we?"…[Later, in] international TV coverage of demonstrations in Greece, we saw a banner declaring "We are not Ireland" and we heard of protesters chanting "We are not Ireland. We will resist." It stung.'[20]

The weight of institutionalised religion is another vital issue Ireland and Greece share, and one that has triggered memorable prose accounts in both countries. The power the Catholic Church had in Ireland can be juxtaposed with the 'holy bond' between the state and the Orthodox Church in Greece, which still lives on. However, the controversies in which both Churches have been involved differ. In Ireland, they concerned the upbringing the Church offered, sexual abuse, abortion and divorce questions, its support for censorship bans on books such as John McGahern's *The Dark* (1965) or Edna O'Brien's *The Country Girls* (1960). In Greece, the Church's stance on the moral life of its congregation is more relaxed, yet financial issues raise public discontent. The Orthodox Church is allegedly the second largest property owner in the country, while monasteries have been involved in embezzlement scandals. It all reverberates in the modern writer's mind, as we can infer from, for instance, Vassilis Alexakis' novel *Ap. J-C* (2007, published in Greek in 2012) alluding to the extreme wealth of the monastic state of Mount Athos, or from Paula Meehan's statement that Ireland still 'struggle[s] with an internalized theocracy'.[21]

Going back to nation states in their birth pangs, perhaps it is the language question and the struggle with the past that make Ireland and Greece stand apart from other European countries—and both issues have to do with literature. It perhaps appears far-fetched to draw comparisons between the loss of the language in Ireland and in Greece. Although both Irish Gaelic and ancient Greek are still compulsory at schools, this does not translate into their wide command or use. In Sophia Nikolaidou's *The Scapegoat* (2015, published in Greek in 2012), a high school student protests against ancient Greek classes: 'We want to talk about things that affect our lives, not memorize words from a dead language.'[22] The reconstructors of the Irish nation believed that 'the substitution of Irish for English…would be enough to de-anglicize Ireland', as Declan Kiberd observed.[23] Similarly, in Greece the fathers of the modern state believed that the substitution of demotic Greek for *katharevousa* (or 'purist' Greek, based much on the ancient one) would be enough to eradicate Turkish influences from the Greek language. Essentially however, Greece does not speak the language of the coloniser, though the status of ancient Greek as a language no longer spoken remains a fact, despite ancient etymologies present in Modern Greek. Even Adamantios Korais, who was instrumental

in the creation of *katharevousa* in the nineteenth century sensed that 'it was as feasible to revive Ancient Greek as it was to resurrect the dead'.[24] Writers took a very active part in these language wars, with Dionysios Solomos and Yannis Makriyannis pioneering the use of demotic in literature, and George Seferis putting a final touch in this long process. In Ireland, despite the efforts of the Gaelic League and the Revivalists, resuscitating Irish Gaelic on a larger scale also failed, although at present it thrives in literature and media, and remains spoken on a daily basis in Gaeltacht.

Struggling with the past revolved around the question 'How to build the future on the past without returning to it',[25] how to steer clear of the dangers of ancestor worship and heritage illusions. In Greece, the matter was even more complicated: the weight of antiquity was multiplied by the claims other nations made on it, accepting it as the world's common legacy. In a way, Brian Friel's *Translations* and the Northern Irish vogue for ancient tragedy—discussed in this volume by Anthony Roche—contributes to these claims. The issue of how to shoulder the burden of the past has long preoccupied Greek and Irish writers, including those included in this volume. Some of the events of the twentieth century in both countries—1922, the year when the Asia Minor Catastrophe converged with the Irish civil war; the 1940s, when the end of the Second World War overlapped with the civil war in Greece; the turn of the 1960s and the 1970s, when the *junta* in Greece converged with the 'Troubles' in Northern Ireland; and in recent years, when the financial crisis swept through both countries—these events may turn out to be too sensitive to talk about. The Greek civil war for instance, still a taboo topic in some family circles, was turned into a popular film only in 2009 (Pantelis Voulgaris' *Ψυχή βαθιά*), although Theo Angelopoulos' films had previously touched upon the subject. Three years earlier, in 2006, *The Wind That Shakes the Barley*, directed by an *English* filmmaker, Ken Loach, explored the civil war in the Irish context. In literary terms, a brilliant treatment of the theme can be found in Sophia Nikolaidou's *The Scapegoat*, where the expulsion of Pontic Greeks intertwines with the civil war on the one hand, and the current crisis—called the 'game of Monopoly'—on the other. The author wonders at the end 'if Greece were a country where silence wasn't hereditary, like genetic material';[26] and this statement could apply to Ireland as well, summing up the complexity of both countries' relationship with the past.

The dialogue with the past through the present is also maintained by Deirdre Madden in *Time Present and Time Past* (2013), set in the phase of Celtic Tiger 2, with its philosophy of success and consumerism. 'Time

present and time past', Madden repeats after T.S. Eliot, are 'present in time future',[27] for the book spells the doom of the roaring economy, with some protagonists, and eventually the author herself, acting as Cassandras of the imminent collapse. Life seems extremely fragile after that final sensing of the disaster. With national stereotypes 'homogenised and deconstructed by globalisation',[28] with 'no emotional baggage',[29] some protagonists struggle for authenticity while others live an illusion of reality where the past strikes back: be it the 'Troubles' or old photographs of Dublin which question the uncontrolled urban spread of the modern capital.

The theme of failure recurs in the writings of the authors of this volume. In *The Maze* (2004), Panos Karnezis addresses the fiasco of his nation's envisaged glorious past. Interestingly, he contemplates the greatest Greek trauma of the twentieth century—the demise of the *Megali Idea*—via the retreat of the Greek army after its defeat in the Turkish campaign. Another of his books, *The Birthday Party* (2007), offers a study of a career at all costs, with blurred reality borders, where even family ties cannot save the protagonist from moral bankruptcy.[30] What Panos Karnezis shares with Deirdre Madden is the feeling for everyday miracle, which Karnezis skilfully approaches through a style akin to magical realism, and Madden through her Joyce-like epiphanies.

Another excellent psychological portrait of a career-oriented protagonist is presented in Katy Hayes' *Curtains* (1998). Personal failure (sometimes finally made into an asset) set against the prospering Dublin of the 2000s preoccupies the author of *Curtains* and *Gossip* (2000), with both books showing the price of complacency: a rapid falling into the precipice of solitude and chaos. In *Lindbergh's Legacy* (2004), the protagonist undertakes a quest into an unknown part of his family's history.[31] A gradual uncovering of secrets, usually set against the backdrop of national history, is a common motif in fiction, across the world; yet in Ireland and Greece it is further complicated by deeply buried or unspeakable fragments of the more recent past.

Reading the contents of this volume, observing Athenian walls filled with highly literate remarks on the crisis, and browsing through recently published anthologies of poetry revolving around these turbulent issues, one definitely feels that literature acts as a negotiating force within and between the present and the past in both countries.

A final note regarding the present volume: one of the forces which allows the reader to shuttle freely between these literary edges of Europe is translation. A journey of the mind and a form of exile, translation provides

a bridge that protects the reader from *dépaysement* when travelling inside these two cultures that speak, metaphorically, a language so close in historical and social terms.

NOTES

[1] For further discussion on these affinities see my *Irish Poets and Modern Greece: Heaney, Mahon, Cavafy, Seferis* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017); the introduction to *Landscapes of Irish and Greek Poets: Essays, Poems, Interviews* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2018); 'Decadent Tourism in Derek Mahon's The Yellow Book', *Etudes Irlandaises* 42, no. 2 (2017): 123–38; and others. This essay is part of my research project called IRELLAS (www.irellas.com).

[2] The British explorer reconstructed St. Brendan's voyage in 1976–1977 and Odysseus' in 1985.

[3] Laury-Nuria André, 'From Ancient Geographers to the Journey of the Argonauts: Ierne Island (Ireland), a Landscape Island between Two Worlds', in *Irish Contemporary Landscapes in Literature and the Arts*, ed. Marie Mianowski (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 13–25.

[4] Bart Jaski, '"We are of the Greeks in our origin": New Perspectives on the Irish Origin Legend', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies* 46 (Winter 2003): 6; 12–13.

[5] See Paula Meehan, 'Between Ireland and Greece', interview by Joanna Kruczkowska, in *Landscapes of Irish and Greek Poets: Essays, Poems, Interviews*, 166.

[6] For further examples from modern Irish poetry see, for instance, Adam Wyeth, *The Hidden World of Poetry: Unravelling Celtic Mythology in Contemporary Irish Poetry* (Ennistymon: Salmon Poetry, 2013).

[7] Artemis Leontis, 'Beyond Hellenicity: Can We Find Another Topos?', *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 15 (Oct 1997): 222.

[8] Louis Turner and John Ash, *The Golden Hordes: International Tourism and the Pleasure Periphery* (London: Constable, 1975), 11.

[9] Eóin Flannery, 'Ireland of the Welcomes: Colonialism, Tourism and the Irish Landscape', in *Out of the Earth: Ecocritical Readings of Irish Texts*, ed. Christine Cusick (Cork: Cork University Press, 2010), 87.

[10] Michael Cronin and Barbara O'Connor, eds, *Irish Tourism: Image, Culture and Identity* (Clevedon: Channel View, 2003), 10–11.

[11] For differences between these two philhellenisms, see David Roessel's *In Byron's Shadow: Modern Greece in the English and American Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

[12] Kate Soper, 'Neither the "Simple Backward Look" nor the "Simple Progressive Thrust": Ecocriticism and the Politics of Prosperity', in *Handbook of Ecocriticism and Cultural Ecology*, ed. Hubert Zapf (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), 169–70.

[13] 'The Greek language.'

[14] For the use of Modern Greek by Joyce see the relevant chapter of R.J. Schork's *Greek and Hellenic Culture in Joyce* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998).

[15] Harry Clifton, 'The Year of the Yellow Meal', in *The Winter Sleep of Captain Lemass* (Tarset: Bloodaxe Books, 2012), 39–41.
[16] Meehan, 'Between Ireland and Greece', 169; and Theo Dorgan, 'Temenos, Eurydice, Ithaca', interview by Joanna Kruczkowska in *Landscapes of Irish and Greek Poets: Essays, Poems, Interviews,* 176.
[17] Yiorgos Chouliaras, 'Greece, Ireland, Poetry: A Single Topic in Three Words?', in *Landscapes of Irish and Greek Poets: Essays, Poems, Interviews*, 26.
[18] I discuss all these issues in *Irish Poets and Modern Greece* as well as in my essay 'Irish Poets on Paros: O'Grady, Mahon, Longley, Brennan', in *Landscapes of Irish and Greek Poets,* 71–94.
[19] Peter Bien, 'Inventing Greece', *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 23:2 (Oct. 2005): 220.
[20] Helena Sheehan, 'To the Crucible: An Irish Engagement with the Greek Crisis and the Greek Left', *Irish Left Review*, Jan. 21, 2013, http://doras.dcu.ie/17743/1/HS13_Greece.pdf [accessed July 10, 2019].
[21] Meehan, 'Between Ireland and Greece', 171.
[22] Sophia Nikolaidou, *The Scapegoat*, trans. K. Emmerich (Brooklyn and London: Melville House, 2015), 152.
[23] Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 265.
[24] Peter Mackridge, *Language and National Identity in Greece, 1766–1976* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 109.
[25] Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland*, 292.
[26] Nikolaidou, *The Scapegoat*, 195; 236.
[27] Epigraph from T.S. Eliot's 'Burnt Norton', opening Deirdre Madden's *Time Present and Time Past* (London: Faber and Faber, 2013).
[28] Madden, *Time Present and Time Past*, 109.
[29] Madden, *Time Present and Time Past*, 20.
[30] Panos Karnezis, *The Maze* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2004); *The Birthday Party* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2007).
[31] Katy Hayes, *Curtains* (London: Phoenix House, 1998); *Gossip* (London: Phoenix House, 2000); *Lindbergh's Legacy* (London: Phoenix House, 2004).

I:

PROSE AND DRAMA:
INHERITANCES, EXCHANGES

JAMES JOYCE AND THE GREEKS[1]

FRAN O'ROURKE

The literary achievement of James Joyce is inconceivable apart from its many and varied elements of Greek origin. Joyce was profoundly influenced by Greek literature, language, mythology and philosophy. He enthused about all things Greek, classical and contemporary, and owed many of his deepest inspirations to Hellenic influences. Homer was Joyce's favourite storyteller, providing the motif, model and structure for *Ulysses* in which Leopold Bloom, the new-age Odysseus, reenacts his epic journey through the modern cityscape of Dublin. Joyce regarded Aristotle as 'the greatest thinker of all times', and studied his writings assiduously. The Greek philosopher was one of the principal sources for Joyce's aesthetic; he provided, moreover, the categories with which Stephen Dedalus, Joyce's largely autobiographic character, interpreted everyday life and experience. In the foreign cities where he lived, Joyce sought out the company of Greeks, believing them to be the natural inheritors of an ancient legacy. In this paper I will refer summarily to the importance for Joyce of Homer and Aristotle, to Joyce's dealings with modern Greeks, and finally to his knowledge of modern Greek.[2]

The name given by Joyce to his literary *alter ego*, in both *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Ulysses*—'Stephen Dedalus'—is itself a conscious claim by the author to his ancient Hellenic legacy. The composite name refers both to the first Christian martyr, and to the creator of the labyrinth—Joyce was familiar with Arthur Evans' excavations at the time.[3] Joyce's first reference to Greece occurs in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, where Stephen's first holy communion is described: 'When the rector had stooped down to give him the holy communion he had smelt a faint winy smell off the rector's breath after the wine of the mass. The word was beautiful: wine. It made you think of dark purple because the grapes were dark purple that grew in Greece outside houses like white temples.'[4] This took place on Easter Sunday, 21 April 1889, when the author was only seven years of age. It is probably a case of reconstructed memory; while with Joyce one must accept the unexpected, it is doubtful that Greece would have entered the child's imagination at such an early age.

What certainly entered Joyce's consciousness very early on, taking deep root in his schoolboy imagination, was the epic world of Homeric myth. For the curriculum of the Intermediate Examination in English, Joyce was required to study Charles Lamb's *The Adventures of Ulysses*; examination questions of the time indicate that a very detailed knowledge was required.[5] Presented with the topic 'My Favourite Hero' for an English essay, he chose Ulysses as his subject.[6] On another occasion, when permitted to select his own topic, he wrote on Pope's translation of the *Odyssey*.[7] Joyce later recalled: 'I was twelve years old when we dealt with the Trojan War at school; only the *Odyssey* stuck in my memory. I want to be candid: at twelve I liked the mysticism in Ulysses.'[8]

Joyce was impressed above all by the completeness of the character of Odysseus. Most revealing is a conversation with the sculptor Frank Budgen, who posed the question from the perspective of his own artistic technique. 'What do you mean by a complete man? For example, if a sculptor makes a figure of a man then that man is all-round, three-dimensional, but not necessarily complete in the sense of being ideal. All human bodies are imperfect, limited in some way, human beings too.' To which Joyce replied: '[Ulysses] is both. I see him from all sides, and therefore he is all-round in the sense of your sculptor's figure. But he is a complete man as well—a good man.'[9] Joyce asked Budgen if he knew of any complete all-round character in literature, and pointed out lacunae in the personalities suggested, such as Faust or Hamlet. Joyce did not even consider Christ a perfect man: 'He was a bachelor, and never lived with a woman. Surely living with a woman is one of the most difficult things a man can do, and he never did it.'[10] Ulysses meets all of the requirements: 'Ulysses is son to Laertes, but he is father to Telemachus, husband to Penelope, lover of Calypso, companion in arms of the Greek warriors around Troy, and King of Ithaca. He was subjected to many trials, but with wisdom and courage came through them all.'[11]

Joyce declared that the most beautiful, all-embracing, theme was that of the *Odyssey*, and that the subject of Odysseus was the most human in world literature. He offered the following profile of Odysseus' personality and psychology to his friend George Borach:

> Odysseus didn't want to go off to Troy; he knew that the official reason for the war, the dissemination of the culture of Hellas, was only a pretext for the Greek merchants, who were seeking new markets. When the recruiting officers arrived, he happened to be plowing. He pretended to be mad. Thereupon they place his little two-year-old son in the furrow. In front of the child he halts the plow. Observe the beauty of the motifs: the only man in Hellas who is against the war, and the father. Before Troy the heroes shed

> their lifeblood in vain. They wish to raise the siege. Odysseus opposes the idea. The stratagem of the wooden horse. After Troy there is no further talk of Achilles, Menelaus, Agamemnon. Only one man is not done with; his heroic career has hardly begun: Odysseus. Then the motif of wandering. Scylla and Charybdis—what a splendid parable! Odysseus is also a great musician; he wishes to and must listen; he has himself tied to the mast. The motif of the artist, who will lay down his life rather than renounce his interest. […] And the return, how profoundly human! Don't forget the trait of generosity at the interview with Ajax in the nether world, and many other beautiful touches. I am almost afraid to treat such a theme; it's overwhelming.[12]

Joyce was equal to the overwhelming challenge and set his ambitions high; his aim was to embrace through art the full amplitude of human existence. As his biographer Herbert Gorman noted: '*Ulysses* is the revelation of all life in a single day.'[13] Joyce aimed to transpose the universal humanity personified by Odysseus to the Dublin of his day. The strategy adopted for this purpose was ingenious: the daily events of the modern citizen would resonate with the echoes of the greatest character from world literature. *Ulysses* follows loosely the structure of Homer's *Odyssey*, not slavishly, but in cavalier fashion. As T.S. Eliot comments, Joyce's use of myth, 'in manipulating a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity […] is simply a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history'.[14] At times the parallel is tenuous and inventive; nonetheless Joyce himself regarded it as crucial. He wrote to his aunt Josephine: 'If you want to read *Ulysses* you had better first get or borrow from a library a translation in prose of the *Odyssey* of Homer.'[15]

The story of *Ulysses* is simple. It is the account of a single day in the life of an ordinary citizen as he goes about his business in the capital city. Leopold Bloom cooks breakfast, attends a funeral, eats lunch, visits a maternity hospital, meets the younger Stephen Dedalus, and goes to a brothel before returning home, accompanied by Stephen. The latter's activities are also described: he starts the day in a seaside tower which he shares with two friends, teaches a history class, and has an animated discussion about Shakespeare with acquaintances at a library, where he encounters Leopold Bloom. Central to the narrative is the relationship between Leopold Bloom and Stephen Dedalus, reflecting that of Odysseus and Telemachus. Leopold is the wanderer seeking his son; Stephen seeks a father figure. The modern Ulysses reenacts Homeric episodes as he wanders through Dublin. According to Ezra Pound, 'the parallels with the *Odyssey* are mere mechanics, any blockhead can go back and trace them'.[16] I will

refer to a sample few: the ragged milkwoman recalls the goddess Athena, the barmaids reincarnate the Sirens, the Cyclops becomes the crude nationalist, Bloom's cigar evokes the spear which blinds him. Circe appears as the madam of the brothel; even the Trojan horse has its counterpart in the dark horse tipped by Bloom in the races.[17]

The Greek connotations of *Ulysses* are evident from the first scene. Set in the Martello tower at Sandycove (one of the coastal defences erected by England during the Napoleonic wars), there are three characters: Stephen Dedalus, Buck Mulligan and an English friend called Haines. Mulligan's gold fillings elicit the name '*Chrysostomos*'. He in turn refers to Stephen's name: 'Your absurd name, an ancient Greek. … My name is absurd too […] but it has a Hellenic ring, hasn't it? … We must go to Athens. Will you come if I can get the aunt to fork out twenty quid?'[18] The Greek theme is sustained in his admiration of the sea: '*Epi oinopa ponton*. Ah, Dedalus, the Greeks. I must teach you. You must read them in the original. *Thalatta! Thalatta!* She is our great sweet mother.'[19] He suggests to the Englishman: 'God, Kinch, if you and I could only work together we might do something for the island. Hellenise it.'[20]

Joyce's admiration of the Greek language is also evident from the speech of Professor MacHugh, who in rhetorical flight, contrasts the Irish and Greeks, pioneers of spirituality, with materialist empire-builders of past and present:

> 'I speak the tongue of a race the acme of whose mentality is the maxim: time is money. Material domination. Domine! Lord! Where is the spirituality? Lord Jesus? Lord Salisbury? A sofa in a westend club. But the Greek! KYRIE ELEISON! A smile of light brightened his darkrimmed eyes, lengthened his long lips. The Greek! he said again. *Kyrios*! Shining word! The vowels the Semite and the Saxon know not. *Kyrie*! The radiance of the intellect. I ought to profess Greek, the language of the mind. Kyrie eleison! The closetmaker and the cloacamaker will never be lords of our spirit. We are liege subjects of the catholic chivalry of Europe that foundered at Trafalgar and of the empire of the spirit, not an imperium, that went under with the Athenian fleets at Aegospotami. Yes, yes. They went under. Pyrrhus, misled by an oracle, made a last attempt to retrieve the fortunes of Greece. Loyal to a lost cause.'[21]

Joyce even applied the Greek character of *Ulysses* to its externals, insisting that the cover be printed in the colours of the Greek flag: 'The colours of the binding (chosen by me) will be white letters on a blue field—the Greek flag though really of Bavarian origin and imported with the dynasty. Yet in a special way they symbolize the myth well—the white islands scattered over the sea.'[22] On the wall of his apartment in Paris hung

a Greek flag, brought from Trieste.[23] Joyce noticed a visitor's surprise at a vase on the piano containing several Greek flags:

> There are a lot of them, aren't there? *Ulysses* has a Greek theme; therefore they are Greek flags. Each new edition of *Ulysses* is a new flag in the vase. At present there are nine. Likewise my room is blue, and I have requested that wherever *Ulysses* is published it have a blue cover.[24]

Let us move on to Aristotle. It is arguable that, after Homer, Aristotle was Joyce's greatest literary master. Without Homer, Joyce could never have conceived *Ulysses*; however, had he never written *Ulysses*, whatever he wrote would have been profoundly marked by the philosopher from Stagira. He regarded Aristotle as the greatest thinker of all time. In conversation with Georges Borach, he declared: 'In the last two hundred years we haven't had a great thinker. My judgment is bold, since Kant is included. All the great thinkers of recent centuries from Kant to Benedetto Croce have only cultivated the garden. The greatest thinker of all times, in my opinion, is Aristotle. Everything, in his work, is defined with wonderful clarity and simplicity. Later, volumes were written to define the same things.'[25]

Joyce may have read Aristotle's *Rhetoric* while at secondary school; at university he became familiar with the fundamentals of Aristotle's philosophy. Aristotle was central to his attempts to formulate a personal aesthetic. There is ample evidence for Joyce's commitment to Aristotle. Stanislaus, his younger brother, wrote in his diary: 'He upholds Aristotle against his friends, and boasts himself an Aristotelian.' This was pursued more systematically during his time in Paris; on 8 February 1903 Joyce wrote to Stanislaus: 'I am feeling very intellectual these times and up to my eyes in Aristotle's *Psychology*.'[26] The following month he wrote to his mother: 'I read every day in the Bibliotheque Nationale and every night in the Bibliotheque Sainte Genevieve… I am at present up to my neck in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* and read only him and Ben Jonson.'[27] This experience would be recalled in *Ulysses*, in Stephen's classroom reflections on the meaning of history: 'It must be a movement then, an actuality of the possible as possible. Aristotle's phrase formed itself within the gabbled verses and floated out into the studious silence of the library of Sainte Genevieve where he had read, sheltered from the sin of Paris, night by night.'[28]

Due to a happy series of events the notebook used by Joyce during those months in Paris was acquired by the National Library of Ireland in 2002. It contains thirty-one quotations from Aristotle, from *De Anima* and the *Metaphysics*. Joyce drew upon these quotations during subsequent decades.

The quotations from Aristotle in Joyce's Paris Notebooks from 1903–1904 are a valuable insight into what Joyce found significant in the writings of Aristotle, and into the way Joyce's understanding of the world was being formed. The choice of passages from Aristotle made by Joyce, confirmed by the effort to copy them down, attests to a tacit sympathy of mind and outlook upon the world.[29]

Shortly before he left Dublin in 1904 Joyce wrote a lengthy satirical poem entitled *The Holy Office*, in which he lampoons Yeats and other leading figures of the Irish literary revival; he criticizes in particular their false, ethereal, Celtic mysticism. Following the example of Aristotle, Joyce, in a literal interpretation of Aristotle's doctrine of catharsis, wants to cleanse literary Ireland, appealing to the authority of Aristotle, even in most inauspicious surroundings:

> Myself unto myself will give
> This name, Katharsis-Purgative.
> I, who dishevelled ways forsook
> To hold the poets' grammar-book,
> Bringing to tavern and to brothel
> The mind of witty Aristotle,
> Lest bards in the attempt should err
> Must here be my interpreter:
> Wherefore receive now from my lip
> Peripatetic scholarship.

What makes Joyce unique in his Aristotelianism is that he made it reflectively his own, and applied it to his own art—either as material of his content, or as principle of organisation. Aristotelian metaphysics and psychology provide Stephen Dedalus with the vocabulary and categories he needs to understand himself and to interpret the world. Aristotle inspires his reflections upon a series of enigmas presented to his consciousness throughout the course of the day. We are privy to his thoughts on the meaning of history (in the classroom), the nature of perception and knowledge (Sandymount strand), and the identity of the self (National Library).

It is often presumed that Joyce was competent in Ancient Greek; to his great regret this was not so.[30] He wrote to Harriet Weaver in 1921:

> I don't even know Greek, though I am spoken of as erudite. My father wanted me to take Greek as third language my mother German and my friends Irish. Result, I took Italian. I speak or used to speak modern Greek not too badly… and have spent a great deal of time with Greeks of all kinds

> from noblemen down to onionsellers, chiefly the latter. I am superstitious about them. They bring me luck.[31]

This he repeated to Padraic Colum in 1923: 'The Greeks have always brought me good luck.' According to Colum, Joyce began to learn the Greek vernacular in the Mediterranean seaport of Trieste.[32] However on arrival in Zurich in 1915 and making the acquaintance of Pavlos Phokas, an emigré from Cephalonia, he took up the study of Modern Greek seriously. He also conversed in Greek with Paul Ruggiero, an Italian who had spent several years in Greece.[33]

The notebooks used by Joyce while learning Greek are preserved in the library of the University of New York, Buffalo, and provide interesting insights into his learning methods.[34] They show remarkable progression from his awkward lettering of the alphabet, declensions of nouns and conjugations of verbs, to elaborate vocabulary lists and practice passages written in stylish flowing script. As well as the usual vocabulary and grammatical exercises that one might expect, the notebooks contain a miscellany of materials which also reveal something of Joyce's character and interests. To mention a sample few, they contain a children's lullaby, the first verse of the Greek national anthem, sample letters in commercial Greek, a Greek song of Independence, two couplets from Homer's *Odyssey*, and an extract from a newspaper article on war manoeuvres in Greece.

Of curious interest are two facing pages which are emblematic of Joyce's contrasting fascinations with the eschatological and scatological. Opposite the page which contains his autograph of the Πάτερ ημών ο εν τοις ουρανοίς, we read some choice examples of vulgarity: Συγνόμην, πρέπει να πηγαίνω εις το αποχωρητήριον / Οι χίροι τρόγουν σκατά / Εάν δεν το αγαπάτε, να (Σε) χέσω τα μούτρα σας. These phrases are followed by the genteel gesture: Πέρνετε ένα συγαρέτο, κυρία.[35] The word-list which follows provides a more extensive vocabulary of the same genre. (Joyce, as is well known, was fascinated by the workings of the human body—at one time he intended to study medicine—and had an almost prurient fascination with the workings of all bodily functions. His interest, it should be stressed, was not crude or vulgar; while he enjoyed robust humour in male company, he did not tolerate indelicate conversation in the company of women.)

Joyce believed that modern Greeks provided the best access to the spirit of ancient Hellas.[36] He associated with Greeks in the belief that they all had a streak of Ulysses in them.[37] Joyce was fascinated by his Greek acquaintances in wartime Zurich: Nikola Santos, although illiterate, could recite much of the *Odyssey*. Pavlos Phokas, a commercial clerk, bore the name of a Byzantine emperor. Antonio Chalas had written a book arguing that the centre of gravity of the earth passed through Athens—he sent a copy