

# Borders and Borderlands



# Borders and Borderlands:

*Explorations in Identity,  
Exile and Translation*

(Durrell Studies 1)

Edited by

Richard Pine and Vera Konidari

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Borders and Borderlands:  
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(Durrell Studies 1)  
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Also in the Series:

*Lawrence Durrell's Woven Web of Guesses* (Durrell Studies 2)

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## EDITORS' PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In 2005 the Durrell School of Corfu hosted a seminar on the theme "Borders and Borderlands". Its "Call for Papers" offered the following topics:

Borders are spatial, conceptual, spiritual and psychological and shape the dynamics of identity, community, and governance. Territorial borders are receiving renewed attention in this era of transnational mobility and globalised cultures. As a construction of history, psychology, law and politics, borders are often represented in symbolic form as transitions and rites of passage.

The creation and defence of borders, for example in defining the nation-state, involve both inclusion and exclusion, invasion and enlargement, and pose questions about political, cultural and personal identity. Knowledge, power, *anomie* and xenophobia are intimately associated with these processes.

Arrival at a border raises issues such as cultural negotiation, and confrontation with otherness.

The crossing of borders affects meaning, perception of landscape and sense of identity.

Translation involves the crossing of linguistic boundaries as meaning leaves the homeland of one language and enters that of another.

The motivation for the seminar came from the School's accumulated experience of hosting meetings on globalisation, nationalism, translation and the obstacles to mutual understanding.

At that time, it could not be foreseen that the refugee phenomenon in the Mediterranean would reach today's crisis level; the international economic collapse of 2010 had yet to bring Europe's, and in particular Greece's, economies to their knees; and while the issue of borders in the



Middle East was acute, it had not intensified to the extent that we see today in Syria or Kurdistan or the ongoing paradox of divided Cyprus.

Nevertheless, the seminar attracted contributions as diverse as Panayiota Mini's discussion of the condition of Pontic Greeks as portrayed in Constantinos Giannaris's *From the Edge of the City*, and David Newman's "The lines that continue to separate us: borders in our 'borderless' world" (which was published in *Nostos: proceedings 2002-2005*).

The Durrell Library of Corfu (successor to the Durrell School) recognised that the issues discussed in 2005 have been exacerbated by a succession of international events – war, worldwide financial and political instability, Brexit, and the factors mentioned above, with repercussions throughout the Balkans, the Middle East and in Greece itself. We therefore decided to host another symposium on "Borders and Borderlands", which has given rise to the present volume.

Not the least of these events – in this case almost unforeseeable in late 2019, when we were at an advanced stage of planning – was the Covid-19 pandemic which in fact caused us, first, to postpone, and finally to cancel, the symposium. The decision to cancel was taken in tandem with an equally resolute decision to publish the "proceedings" of what was, in effect, a non-event. This book is, however, decidedly, an "event" celebrating an absence of gathered friends and making available the wisdoms and enthusiasms which they would have brought to Corfu in 2020.

Along the way, we lost some would-be participants, whose academic commitments – due especially to the novel experience of accustoming themselves to remote teaching – prevented them from completing their essays.

When we initially invited contributions, we anticipated submissions on topics including migration across political borders, and translation between languages. We were gratified to receive not only predictable responses, but a level of discussion which transcended the factual and critical analyses of texts and scenarios. This continues to delight and surprise us, confirming as it does the need for a wide-ranging, interdisciplinary gathering of essays and personal testimonies, which address not only literature, politics and history but also – and this we find particularly stimulating – first-person narratives of transitions between cultures, mindsets and politics.

The "Personal Witness" section offers compelling evidence of the vulnerability of identity in the testimonies of Mohamad Omari and Scott Manning Stevens, and the analysis of refugee narratives by Sandra Mateus and Paulo Santos, together with Blanka Čechová's brief summary of her

work as an international jurist in Kosovo which is at the same time tragic and satiric.

We also decided to create a special section devoted to “The Poetry of Exile”, which is also a form of personal testimony – by poets in wartime Egypt (1945) and today. Initially, we had planned a performance of Lawrence Durrell’s poem “In Europe”, with its refrain “We are getting the refugee habit”, which Durrell had in fact intended to be spoken to a musical accompaniment; this would have involved music students at the Ionian University in a world première of the poem in performance; this, too, fell foul of the pandemic, but we decided to include the poem in company with “Anatolia”, by Durrell’s friend from the Cairo days, Elie Papadimitriou, which depicts the destruction of ethnic Greek society in Anatolia in 1922 and the consequent compulsory border-crossing which led, fortuitously and miraculously, to the development of *rebetika* music, as discussed here by Gail Holst-Warhaft.

We have been extremely moved by the many sensitive approaches by our contributors to their subjects of specialised interests. Borders, and more particularly borderlands, are the experience of so many writers discussed here, the in-between spaces where writing and thinking take place. In addition to the participants in “Personal Witness”, there is an aspect of the essays by Katarzyna Szmigiero on “madness narratives” and Eeva-Liisa Myllymäki’s on “the semantic sphere” which bring scientific and humanitarian concepts into the same frame of reference cogently and evocatively. The essay by Melek Chekili on “untranslatability” is particularly effective in highlighting the borderland in which translation so often finds itself; again, she achieves this in a style which is both effective and affective.

We have been gratified by the intuition and empathy which pervades the essays by Michalis Sarlis, Katherine Cooklin, Hedwig Schwall and Ian MacNiven, taking their care for borders and borderlands in four disparate disciplines beyond their specific topics.

The six essays on “Literature and Identity” express both the anguish and the triumph of an art form that takes the reader’s concern beyond the individual authors discussed by Benjamin Keatinge, Manal Khan, Sirshendu Majumdar, Anissa Talahite-Moodley, Michael Davros and Harriet Induni, into the ubiquitous *topos* of the writer as witness and the writer in search of identity.

Our own essays are intended as to be both theoretical and practical in their application to film (Konidari) and the uses and status of metaphor (Pine).

## Acknowledgements

First and foremost, we are grateful to all our contributors, some of whom undertook their essays in conditions previously unexperienced and unforeseen. It has been a privilege to work with them in composing this book.

We also thank the Society of Corfiot Studies and the staff of the Solomos Museum (the cherished venue for our intended symposium) for their hospitality and co-operation at the planning stages and, we hope, for future events which can be more than theoretical or aspirational.

For advice and assistance (in locating copyright holders and in many other ways), we thank Lia Manessi; Pavla Smetánová; Bruce Redwine; Barnaby Rogerson of Eland Publishing, publishers of Robin Fedden; Neni Panourgíá of Columbia University and Kostis Karpozilos of Contemporary Social History Archives (ASKI) Athens, for information regarding Elie Papadimitriou; and, as always, Roderick Beaton.

We are grateful to Frances Fedden and Kathrine Fedden for permission to include “The Anatomy of Exile” by their father, Robin Fedden; to the Estate of Lawrence Durrell for permission to include Lawrence Durrell’s poem “In Europe”; to Lena Savvidis and Manolis Savvidis for permission to include “Anatolia” by Elie Papadimitriou; and to Kapka Kassabova for permission to include her poems from *Someone else’s life*.

### **Cover image: *Nomad in No Man’s Land* by Kostas Papavlasopoulos**

We selected this contemporary painting by a Greek artist because *Nomad in No Man’s Land* suggests to us not only the primary image of the “faceless” person without identity which dominates in the foreground, hinting at all nameless, stateless, vulnerable human beings but also because this compelling image also evokes the idea of a person carrying the weight of the world on his/her shoulders. Those shoulders are painted in such a way as to emphasise the idea of a no man’s land.

The artist, Kostas Papavlasopoulos, does not seek to influence what the viewer sees in this stark image. Instead, there are many viewing experiences and interpretations for different viewers with different contexts and backgrounds. However, we can recognise that, in creating this work of art, the painter was inspired by the never-ending plight of the refugees around the world.

*Nomad in No Man’s Land* is a study of both a bleak landscape and the almost irrevocable loss of identity; the blurring of the two reminds us

that borders and borderlands carry the dreams and aspirations but also the most bitter disappointments of the human race.

**Richard Pine**  
**Vera Konidari**

## NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

**Blanka Čechová** is a Czech lawyer and writer. She studied law in Prague and writing in Oxford. After several years as an international jurist, working for organisations including the United Nations, she now concentrates on writing full-time. Her books include *Total Balkans* (from which we include an extract here) and the *Adriatic Bride* trilogy, currently in translation from Czech to English.

**Melek Chekili** lectures in French at the University of Southern California, Los Angeles, and is currently completing a PhD in comparative studies in literature and culture.

**Katherine Cooklin** is professor of philosophy at Slippery Rock University, Pennsylvania and the author of several essays on social and political philosophy, contemporary Continental philosophy and gender/feminist theory.

**Michael Davros** lectures in English at Northeastern Illinois University, Chicago, specialising in American ethnic literature, African American literature and Hellenic American literature, on all of which subjects he has published widely. His *Greeks in Chicago* appeared in 2009.

**Lawrence Durrell** (1912-1990) was the author of many novels including *The Alexandria Quartet* (1957-59), *Tunc-Nunquam* (1968-70) and *The Avignon Quintet* (1974-85). A distinguished poet, his *Collected Poems* appeared in 1980. He wrote extensively on landscape and character, including books on Corfu, Rhodes and Cyprus, and *The Greek Islands* (1978). His experiences in the British diplomatic and public service brought him to Greece, Egypt, Argentina, Yugoslavia and Cyprus. He lived for the last thirty years of his life in the south of France, which he celebrated in *Caesar's Vast Ghost* (1990).

**Robin Fedden** (1908-1977) served as cultural attaché at the British Legation in Athens before the second world war, when he became a lecturer in English at Cairo University. In Cairo, with Lawrence Durrell and Bernard Spencer, he edited the journal *Personal Landscape*. Subsequently

he worked for the National Trust (UK). He was the author of books on Egypt and Syria and *Chantemesle*, an account of his childhood in France.

**Gail Holst-Warhaft** is adjunct professor of comparative literature at Cornell University, where she founded and directed the Mediterranean Studies Initiative in the Institute for European Studies. As a musician she has played with Mikis Theodorakis and is the author of *Theodorakis: Myth and Politics in Modern Greek Music* (1980), *Road to Rembetika* (1975/1994) and *The Fall of Athens* (poems and memoir, 2016). She has made many translations from Greek, including the poems of Nikos Kavadias, Iakovos Kambanellis and Katerina Anghelaki-Rooke. Her *Nisiotika: music and dances of the Aegean islands – sad songs of women who wait* is forthcoming.

**Harriet Induni** is an independent scholar whose research interests include cultural memory, ruins and decay and Irish literature.

**Kapka Kassabova** was born in Bulgaria before moving in childhood to New Zealand; she now lives in Scotland. She is a poet and novelist and, most recently, the author of explorations of the Balkans: *Border: a journey to the edge of Europe* (2018) and *To the Lake: a Balkan journey of war and peace* (2020).

**Benjamin Keatinge** is visiting research fellow in the School of English at Trinity College, Dublin and was previously Head of English, associate professor and Pro-Dean for Academic Issues at South-East European University, North Macedonia. He is the editor of *Making Integral: critical essays on Richard Murphy* (2019).

**Manal S Khan** is adjunct assistant professor of English at Wentworth Institute of Technology, Boston, Massachusetts and previously held positions at Bentley University and the University of Massachusetts. Her research interests are postcolonial theory, eco-criticism, speculative fiction and topics in diaspora and migration.

**Vera Konidari** teaches English at the 1<sup>st</sup> High School of Corfu and previously lectured in Audiovisual Studies at the Ionian University (Corfu, Greece) 2004-2011. Her translations into Greek include Theodore Stephanides' *The Golden Face* (2019) and Lawrence Durrell's *The Magnetic Island* (2019). She co-edited *Islands of the Mind: Psychology, Literature and Biodiversity* (2020) and is working on a biography of Theodore Stephanides.

**Ian MacNiven** is the authorised biographer of Lawrence Durrell (1998) and James Laughlin (2014) and has edited *The Durrell-Miller Letters 1935-1980* and, with Harry T Moore, *Literary Lifelines: the Richard Aldington-Lawrence Durrell Correspondence*. He is an emeritus professor of literature at SUNY Maritime and is currently writing a triptych of novels set in his native Suriname.

**Sirshendu Majumdar** is associate professor of English at Bolpur College (University of Burdwan), India, author of *Yeats and Tagore: Cross-colonial Poetry, Nationalist Politics, Hyphenated Margins and the Ascendancy of the Mind* (2013) and co-editor of *Rabindranath Tagore: Humanity and Cultural Affinity* (2016). He was a visiting research fellow at Trinity College, Dublin 2018-19.

**Sandra Mateus** is a research fellow at the Centro de Investigação e Estudos de Sociologia, Instituto Universitário de Lisboa, Portugal and guest assistant at the Department of Sociology. She co-ordinated the Portuguese section of the “Below 10” European project and the PandPAS project focussing on refugees’ integration and support. She has published widely on the topics of education and migration.

**Eeva-Liisa Myllymäki** is a career diplomat with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Finland, and is currently working with the United Nations on peace and conflict issues. She has served as head of mission in Central America (Managua, 2011-2013), and at the Finnish permanent mission to the UN (2000-2004). She was president of the Finnish Peace Research Association 1977-1978 and is a board member of the Finnish Semiotic Society.

**Mohamad Omari** comes from a stateless Palestinian family, an experience which has allowed him to understand the rootless condition and transitions between cultures, religions and places. As his contribution to this volume indicates, he has worked as a translator and facilitator with refugees in Greece and has compiled *Let there be silence* (forthcoming), a collection of stories by and about Syrian refugees in transit between Turkey and Greece.

**Elie Papadimitriou** (1906-1993) was born in Smyrna; after the evacuation of Greeks from Anatolia in 1922 she grew up in Athens, until the world war forced her into exile in Egypt. She compiled several volumes of personal testimonies of survivors of the “Anatolian catastrophe”, the

second world war and the Greek civil war. She was also an accomplished photographer.

**Richard Pine** is director of the Durrell Library of Corfu, which he founded in 2001, having previously worked in the Irish national broadcasting service. He is the author of many books on literature and music, including *Lawrence Durrell: the Mindscape* (1994/2005), *The Disappointed Bridge: Ireland and the Post-Colonial World* (2014) and *Greece Through Irish Eyes* (2015) and *Lawrence Durrell's Woven Web of Guesses* (Durrell Studies 2, 2021). He has edited Lawrence Durrell's novels *Judith* and *The Placebo* and *Endpapers and Inkings – Uncollected Prose 1933-1988* and, with Vera Konidari, *Islands of the Mind: Psychology, Literature and Biodiversity* (2020).

**Paulo Santos** is a research assistant at Observa Science in Society, the independent research body studying interaction between science, technology and society. He previously worked at the Centro de Investigação e Estudos de Sociologia, Instituto Universitário de Lisboa, Portugal.

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**Hedwig Schwall** is director of the Leuven Centre for Irish Studies and editor of *Boundaries, Passages, Transitions (Irish Studies in Europe*, vol. 8, 2018) and *The Danger and the Glory* (2019). She is project director of the European Federation of Associations and Centres of Irish Studies, and is currently establishing a translation project on the work of Anne Enright.

**Scott Manning Stevens** is a citizen of the Akwesasne Mohawk nation and director of the Native American Indigenous Studies program at Syracuse University. He has published widely on Native American literatures and visual culture. He is co-author of *The Art of the American West* (2014) and co-editor of *Why You Can't Teach United States History without American Indians* (2015).



**Katarzyna Szmigiero** is associate professor at the Institute of Literary Studies and Linguistics, University of Jan Kochanowski, Poland and specialises in cultural representations of psychiatry and gender; she has edited *Probing Madness* (2011) and co-edited *“In Sickness and in Health”: interdisciplinary perspectives on illness* (2017).

**Anissa Talahite-Moodley** is an honorary research associate at Royal Holloway, University of London and an associate researcher at the University of Cergy-Pontoise, France. Her publications include *Problématiques identitaires et discours de l'exil dans les littératures francophones* (2007) and *Gender and Identity* (2013) and is a member of the Editorial Advisory Board of the *Journal of Gender Studies*.



## **PART ONE:**

### **TRANSLATION, MEANING AND IDENTITY**

# CROSSING THE LINE(S): BORDERLANDS, METAPHOR AND MEANING

RICHARD PINE

## Introduction

This essay will explore the *borderland* – the in-between space – which is home to migration and transition, to the “homeless mind”, and to the imprecise meanings which lurk between definitions and within the attempts at translation. It will suggest that on each occasion of a borderland there is a need for a *metaphor*, or a bridge between states of polity, states of mind, states of language, states of sexuality, and that the elusiveness of that metaphor creates a sense of insecurity, mistrust and the uncanny which characterises so much of contemporary society: that, in essence, we live more in borderlands than within borders, and with a multiplicity of meanings and identities rather than black-and-white definitions and codes of behaviour. It is the uncertainty, the lack of metaphor, which, rather than imperilling meaning, enhances the conditions for discussion, debate and, of course, the danger of discord.

A metaphor-ical example may explain the *relativity* of borders and cultures and the precarious nature of the borderland (I write “metaphor-ical” to emphasise that the metaphor *is* the border):

When the poet Ovid was exiled from Rome to a village on the Black Sea (in present-day Romania) by the Emperor Augustus (ostensibly on account of his *Ars Amatoria*) he wrote: “*barbarus hic sum quia non intelligor ulli*” [I am regarded as a barbarian in this place because no-one understands me]. One of the leading poets of the “known” world became a barbarian because he had somehow crossed the border of *decency* in his written work; he had then been forced to cross the border of *civilisation* into an “unknown” world; he now lived among people, whom the Romans would regard as barbarians, but who could regard *him* as the barbarian,

because they themselves possessed the civility of their location.<sup>1</sup> As André Naffis-Sahely tells us, “civilisation begets exile”.<sup>2</sup> The *writer* is always in this space. Was Ovid black, white, or grey? Ovid’s story exemplifies the *relativity* of civilisation in relation to barbarity and questions the entire status of borders as guarantors of that civilisation.

Later in this essay I will discuss “the Balkans”, an area both with, and without, borders, a region which exemplifies all our fears and insecurities about our individual and collective identities. The example of “Balkanisation” will offer many examples of *the lack of metaphor*, especially as explored in the works of Maria Todorova and Kapka Kassabova.

In *coming to terms* (literally) with the concept of borders and borderlands – that is, in establishing a satisfactory language, one that does not necessarily depend on metaphor – we should understand that there is a spectrum of differences, and of the lines that differentiate them, from the hard line of a political *frontier* to the laws of the state which we should not cross, the physical contours of the landscape and the metaphysical contours of the mindscape, the difficult conduit of the *corpus collosum* between the hemispheres of the brain, and the “soft” borders between truth and untruth, trust and distrust, place and displacement.

If it is possible, without breaking any social code or *mos*, to move across such borders, then it must also be possible to move between territories of the mind. But such a trans-itus is open to dangerous constructions and can lead to violence. John Buchan wrote: “There are spiritual frontiers, the horizons of the mind. We are still frontiersmen in a true sense, for we are domiciled on the edge of mystery”.<sup>3</sup> And “mystery”, with its association with the “uncanny”, can breed fear and its consequences.

## Borders, borderlands and metaphor

A border: a line on the ground, on the map, in the mind, across which we can or can not, may or may not, move.

A borderland: a space between two border-lines, a “no-man’s-land” or “in-between” space of indeterminate quality and status.

A metaphor: a means of crossing from one side of a border to the other (I deliberately emphasise the basic Greek word *μεταφέρω* [*metaféro*])

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<sup>1</sup> Similarly the Anatolian Greeks, after the 1922-23 exchange of populations, found that in Greece (a country which was foreign to them) they were regarded as *Turks*.

<sup>2</sup> A Naffis-Sahely (ed.), *The Heart of a Stranger*, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> “The Interpreter’s House” (1938) quoted in Ursula Buchan, *Beyond the Thirty-Nine Steps*, p. 368.

meaning *to carry across*); a crossing, for example, from one language to another (also, literally, a *trans-lation*, since *trans-late* and *trans-fer* are the “translations” from Greek to Latin and hence to English).<sup>4</sup>

*Arrival* at a border raises issues such as cultural negotiation, and confrontation with otherness. The *crossing* of borders affects meaning, perception of landscape and sense of identity.

Borders are spatial, conceptual, spiritual and psychological and shape the dynamics of identity, community, and governance. They are necessary to the extent that a society regards its identity as dependent upon the definitions which borders can, but not always, provide.

Borders are enforced by the law, which in itself creates boundaries (a catalogue of “thou shalt not...”). Seldom does a law encourage or liberate: in most cases it sets limits to freedom and norms of behaviour, the crossing of which invites ostracism or exclusion. The innateness of “civil rights” presupposes the existence of laws which protect those rights. If one breaks the law, one “oversteps the mark” (that is, the boundary, the line in the sand) between “good” and “evil”, “acceptable/unacceptable”, “permissible/impermissible” (boundary-breaking actions). But what is it, to live in a world *without laws*? Or a world where there is “one law for the rich, one law for the poor”? A society where some have “civil rights” and others have none? And what of those internal borders, those porous, pervious membranes in the mind, where we decide for ourselves what is, or is not, allowed?

One principle seems to me to be paramount: that we must distinguish between the inevitable existence of borders – both on the physical and moral bases – and the equally inevitable crossing of such borders by people in all conditions. Think of refugees displaced by civil war, or the asylum-seekers from totalitarian states, in the same frame of mind as the “exilic” intellectual who is, in effect, stateless; or the woman who discovers that she is trapped in a man’s body and undergoes the transgender trans-ition in search of a new identity; or the orphaned child who no longer has the security of parental care or love or a physical home. None of these can be prioritised over the others, and none can be regarded as culpable for their “trans-gression”.

A keyword in the paradox of borders is “transgression”. There may be a fine line to be drawn between the meanings of “transgression”: to violate, or trespass on, another’s property (his land or his ideas) or the movement from one place or idea to another without culpability – a

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<sup>4</sup> Or, in Russian, *nepe-вecmu*, or in German *über-setzen*; the ubiquity of this concept of *carrying across* is at the heart of metaphor and, therefore, at the heart also of the crossing of borders in search of meaning.

quality of “transgressivity” which connotes nothing more than, for example, “oscillation between center and periphery [...] a simple act of border crossing inherent to the system”.<sup>5</sup> “Trans-gression” therefore depends for its positive/negative connotation on its “transgressivity”: whether it is an agreed and understood action, or one which is open to doubt and dispute. Toni Morrison’s much-quoted act of “trans-gression” underlines this core-periphery oscillation: “I stood at the border. Stood at the edge and claimed it as central, and let the rest of the world move over to where I was”.<sup>6</sup>

Conversely, Anna Burns’s novel *Milkman* severely depicts the insecurity of both sides in the virtual civil war in Northern Ireland, so minute, topographically, that to move from one street to another in Belfast might be seen as an act of betrayal. To cross the street might be a normal act of “trans-gression” but in Anna Burns’s Belfast it can become a reason for killing.<sup>7</sup>

Binary ethical divisions – White or Black, Right or Left – offer no space for discussion, no “grey area”. So, there is an ethical dilemma where some thought or action might be *both* right *and* wrong. For many, this in-betweenness is a natural habitat – as if uncertainty in meaning is more “homely” than the black-and-white polarity of definitions. As filmmaker Syllas Tzoumerkas says of his 2019 film *The Miracle of the Sargasso Sea*, “I love raising questions. I love grey areas, I love the gaps that sometimes exist between different convictions”.<sup>8</sup> I recall George Steiner: “Uncertainty in meaning is incipient poetry”.<sup>9</sup>

The creation and defence of borders, for example in defining the nation-state, involve both inclusion and exclusion, invasion and enlargement, and pose questions about political, cultural and personal identity. Knowledge, power, *anomie* and xenophobia are intimately associated with these processes.

Borders exist in order to define what is included and what is excluded. Even the walls of our houses define our own “civilisation” from

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<sup>5</sup> B Westphal, *Geocriticism: real and fictional spaces*, quoted in B. Keatinge (ed.), *Making Integral: critical essays on Richard Murphy*, p. 85.

<sup>6</sup> In a 1998 interview with Lana Wendt, in Toni Morrison, *Playing with Difference*, p. 101.

<sup>7</sup> It is noteworthy that, where Bahriye Kemal can state that Nicosia is “the world’s last divided city” she ignores the “peace wall” dividing Protestant Belfast from Catholic Belfast: *Nicosia Beyond Barriers*, p. ix.

<sup>8</sup> Interview with Aimilios Charbis, *Kathimerini* English edition, 12 December 2019.

<sup>9</sup> G Steiner, *After Babel*, p. 234.

the “barbarians” at the gate. There is an excitement, as well as a danger, in exploring what lies *between* borders, in the borderlands where civilisation meets the barbarians, where law meets outlaw, where insider meets outsider. A delicious, vertiginous excitement in the uncertain, “grey” area where one might fall in love.

On the larger scale, the building of walls to protect “us” is one of the basic duties of a civil society and yet it is capable of demonstrating and activating that most dangerous of collective emotions: nationalism. The fact that, by the end of 2019, ten of the twenty-eight EU states had erected walls specifically to exclude migrants illustrates the *fear* of the Other that both creates civil society and exposes its most craven weaknesses.

The most basic border is that between “Us” and “Them”. It is at the same time the most understandable and the most unforgivable, because fear and prejudice are the complement of difference and otherness. In psychological terms, we are concerned with the Self and the Other, the gap between them, and the means of crossing that gap. Whether it is an *ethnos* or a political state or a language, or even the line dividing two sides of a street, the transition of the Self towards the Other is the root of our behaviour and, therefore, of our anxiety. In a world increasingly without borders, we seem desperate to erect fences between ourselves and those whose labels we neither respect nor accept. We should not overlook the idea that bridges, which are conventionally the conduit of metaphor, can also act “like traitors – they go over to the other side”.<sup>10</sup>

## Perspectives

I offer here some brief “thumbnail” examples of the issues that arise when we consider different aspects of the *topic* – and I use the word to emphasise that it is from a sense of *place* (Greek, *topos*) that such issues arise. *Where* you are – the *topos* – dictates what you think and how you express your thoughts. In *The Alexandria Quartet* Lawrence Durrell incorporated two statements:

Two paces east or west and the whole picture is changed;  
We live lives based upon selected fictions.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Allegedly the remark of Ian Paisley, leader of a particularly hard-line sect of protestant opinion, when political leaders in Northern Ireland tried to establish lines of communication with the leaders of the (predominantly Catholic) Republic – a step which many such as Paisley regarded as an act of betrayal.

<sup>11</sup> L Durrell, *The Alexandria Quartet*, p. 210.



The first proposal indicates that there can often be a very narrow line separating two or more points of view, and that, in both physical and intellectual terms, these differences of perspective might lead to severe differences in temperament. “From where I stand, I see it *this* way”. “And from where *I* stand, *I* see it *this* way”. Two “this-es” do not make a “that”. And so we disagree and, quite possibly, go to war.<sup>12</sup>

The second proposal indicates that there may be a correspondingly narrow line, or border, between fact and fiction: the converse of Durrell’s statement would be that “we live lives based upon selected *facts*”. As in the case of differences of perspective, the possible clash of facts and fictions, either between individuals or between groups, or even within a single mind, is potentially a source of friction or discord.

My references are anecdotal because we cannot understand borders by looking merely at a map – a paper landscape – or a GPS facility. These give no sense of either a border being crossed or a border being not crossed. And they give no indication of the mindscape of the person, or the society, in borderland. I think of:

- the millions of refugees who have made the perilous crossings from Turkey to Lesvos and Chios and Samos, or from Libya to Lampedusa; and the thousands of men, women and children – the children surely the most innocent – who have drowned in that attempt – constituting, in death, a permanent no-man’s-land or borderland of anonymity, vulnerability and, perhaps, innocence;
- the child of my friends who was born “Louis” but is now “Lily”, who, at the age of fourteen, found that she was a girl trapped in a boy’s body and now, at the age of eighteen, is negotiating the border-crossing from one gender-label to another gender-label;
- the Albanian women who, in order to inherit property, must undertake to live as men, suppressing all aspects of their gender;<sup>13</sup>
- Franz Kafka, so tortured between three languages and three

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<sup>12</sup> Joseph Brodsky speaks of “Turkish *Gastarbeiters* prowling the streets of West Germany, uncomprehending or envious of the surrounding reality” (“The Condition we call ‘Exile’” in *Literature in Exile* (ed. John Gled), p. 100). We should note here that the “reality” is normal only for the West Germans, and *unreal* for the Turkish guest-workers. What is perfectly comprehensible to the Germans is incomprehensible to the Turks, *because of where they stand*.

<sup>13</sup> As discussed by Elvira Dones, in *Sworn Virgin* (2014).

- cultures that he began to doubt his own existence;<sup>14</sup>
- the “Poets’ Road”<sup>15</sup> that so closely follows the borders and borderlands between eastern Finland and the Russian Federation for 1000 kilometres, from Salla to the Gulf of Finland, dividing the province of Karelia, the heartland of Finnish folklore which gave it, in the nineteenth century, its sense of identity, where the new border of 1944 called that identity into question;
  - the rivers in Kosovo dividing ethnic Albanians (mostly Muslim) in Mitrovica from ethnic Serbs (mostly Orthodox Christians) in Kosovska Mitrovica;
  - the “Pontic Greeks” (who had lived for at least five centuries in the Black Sea region from which they derived their designation), exiled from their homeland in Russia, trying to find a new life on the edge of Athens; they are liminal and foreign in every sense: their Pontic version of Greek is almost unintelligible to Athenians; Constantinos Giannaris’s 1998 film *From the Edge of the City* (*Από την άκρη της πόλης*) depicts their possible life turning towards drugs and prostitution;
  - the chilling statement by Albert Memmi “*I was Tunisian and therefore colonized*”<sup>16</sup> which opens an entire debate, not merely about the inevitability of colonisation, but about what *place* can mean in relation to *displacement*, what *identity* can mean in relation to the *anonymity* enforced by relocation; Memmi “was consumed by alienation”: “I am Tunisian, but Jewish, which means that I am politically and socially an outcast”;
  - Tassos Boulmetis’s film *Politiki Kouzina/A Touch of Spice*, showing the translation of Greek cuisine from Anatolia: “Our cuisine is tinged with politics. It’s made by people who left their dinner unfinished somewhere else”;
  - the symbiosis of master and servant, wherein each takes on the strengths and weaknesses of the other – in Pergolesi’s opera *La Serva padrona* or in Joseph Losey’s 1963 film *The Servant* – to say nothing of P G Wodehouse’s comical creation, the duo of Jeeves and Wooster;

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<sup>14</sup> I think of Kafka’s short story “The Bridge”, where the narrator *is* the bridge attempting, and failing, to provide a metaphor and thus questioning his/its own identity or ontology: we *become* the attempt itself of translation.

<sup>15</sup> Officially designated “The Road of Poem and Border”, 2002.

<sup>16</sup> A Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, p. viii.

- the case of a pathological individual, where there may be, within the one mind, psychological borders which, if liberated from any ethical or moral inhibition, can be negotiated with equanimity: “He finds himself in a twilight zone where all the boundaries that exist for him are of his own making [...] He has two different identities that he controls utterly”;<sup>17</sup>
- and finally, those words φιλότιμο [filótimo, sense of honour] and αγάπη [agápi, love] which are virtually untranslatable, without borders, but which often find themselves in borderlands.

### The failure of metaphor

A metaphor, to be successful as a carrying across (of persons, material or meaning), must be exact: the transference across the border must be *the same on either side*; the meaning carried across the linguistic border must be *the same in either language*, despite the differences in the two languages, and the two cultures. The near-impossibility of metaphor, of exact mapping of one mindscape onto another, is at the heart of violence.<sup>18</sup>

Compromise is the antithesis of metaphor but also the substitute for metaphor, since it excludes the possibility of complete, exact, transference of meaning from one side of the discussion to the other. While metaphor is essential for exact translation, it is so seldom achieved that it is possible to envisage a world without metaphor, but with multiple meanings, even as the basis of communication, the encoding and decoding of messages between people, between governments.<sup>19</sup> In translating between languages – for example, literary texts – the near-impossibility of *exact* metaphor gives the translator the *latitude* of imagination. In recent years, the determination of many transgender people of “non-binary” status underlines the impossibility of establishing definitive status of gender – where the male/female polarity gives way to a “both/and”: imprecise in established terminology, but thereby establishing its own new norms.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Henning Mankel, *Sidetracked*, p. 174.

<sup>18</sup> See Melek Chekili’s essay on “Untranslatability” in this volume.

<sup>19</sup> This, in the study of language and grammar, seems to have become a commonplace: so much so that (as for example in the work of Denis Donoghue [*Metaphor*]) the congruence of *simile* and *metaphor* has become permissible.

<sup>20</sup> Note, for example, the following: “Despina Michaelidou was born in Limassol. They are a post-graduate student [...] Their interests include genders, sexualities, desires and bodies”: in *Nicosia Beyond Borders*, p. 236.

It is, perhaps, the *label* which is the most revealing aspect of our distrust – of both others *and* ourselves; as the poet Brendan Kennelly said, in regard to the tyranny of labels and labelling: “I came out of a very labelled society [County Kerry, Ireland, in the 1930s]. I resisted, or resented, people beating you with labels and *assuming* all that to be true about you. So my engagement with the label was a war against a facile understanding of the complexity I apprehended in myself [...] and felt vaguely insulted by being described in easily accessible ways.”<sup>21</sup> The poet went on to re-examine the “labels” which had been attached by Irish nationalism to Oliver Cromwell (*Cromwell: a poem*, 1983) and by Catholicism to Judas Iscariot (*The Book of Judas*, 1991).

I think of the poem “Walls” by Constantine Cavafy, whose awareness in his own life of the borders that can and cannot be crossed was acute:

Without consideration, without pity, without shame,  
they built around me great and towering walls.

.....

Imperceptibly, they shut me off from the world outside.<sup>22</sup>

And reference to Cavafy also, predictably, evokes “Waiting for the Barbarians”, where the poet remarks

night has fallen and the barbarians haven’t come.  
And some of our men just in from the border say  
there are no barbarians any longer.

Now what’s going to happen to us without barbarians?  
Those people were a kind of solution.<sup>23</sup>

Without someone to fear, without a threat to one’s “civilisation”, there is no need for walls. Where would we be without walls? If we had no-one to hate? The cruellest walls are those within the heart, within the psyche, dividing love from reality, sense from hope. Walls that shut down all possibility. One thinks of Albert Memmi’s pursuit of the theme of colonisation in *Dependence*, where he emphasises the symbiosis and

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<sup>21</sup> B Kennelly and R Pine, “The Roaring Storm of Your Words”.

<sup>22</sup> C Cavafy. “Walls”, from *Poems 1910* in *Collected Poems* trans. Evangelos Sachperoglou, pp.12-13.

<sup>23</sup> C Cavafy, “Waiting for the Barbarians” in *Collected Poems* trans. E Keeley and P Sherrard, p. 15.

mutual dependence of coloniser and colonised, citizen and barbarian.

It is in the transference of thought – no less than of material goods or persons – that the danger exists of misunderstanding. Where a *person* crosses a border, they are, inevitably, changed by the experience of the transition. Where a thought is moved from one language to another or from one mind to another, a similar change is inevitable.

All people tell their stories, as individuals and as societies; a dominant, outward-going nation will tell stories from a position of strength and confidence, and its public and private narratives will establish their credible, acceptable images and traditions of orthodoxy, success and rootedness; whereas a colonised, subdued nation, however inhibited by its subjection, will tell stories of failure and embarrassment, narratives of self-doubt, and will create images of hope and despair which are future-oriented; thus nations tell these stories differently before and after freedom. When freedom comes, men and women explore each other in a new light, as citizens and as lovers, but above all they explore freedom itself. Attitudes to land, society and sexuality take on new perspectives and are subject to new descriptions. Narratives alter both subtly and violently.<sup>24</sup>

The change is manifold: it involves *time* (the movement through history); *violence* (physical revolution in the pursuit of freedom and independence); and *psychology* (the new ideas consequent on the arrival at that state of freedom which, for example in the case of a long-dominated people, has been unknown except as an alien concept). To carry an entire culture across from subjection to freedom is a process (often referred to as “decolonisation”) which is dangerous in the extreme, as we have seen in the tragic post-colonial experiences of so many newly independent states.

To carry across meaning (for example in diplomacy) always involves a potential act of hostility. Translation as a quest for mutual meaning can also be an act of hostility. In political or ethical terms, that kind of attempted untruth happens all the time. When is the truth not the truth? When it is “true” for you, but “false” to me. It’s another instance of “From where I stand ...” These issues highlight the fact that *all* border crossings involve, to some degree, political, ethical, moral, or cultural *choice* and that such choice will lead to inclusion, love, creativity and understanding as much as to exclusion, fear, hatred, violence and destruction.

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<sup>24</sup> This paragraph incorporates material from R Pine, *The Disappointed Bridge: Ireland and the Post-Colonial World*, p. xxiv.

## The borders of time and memory

As we age, we move across borders of time: birth itself, college graduation, “leaving home”,<sup>25</sup> parenthood, the death of one’s parents, retirement and the final border-crossing of one’s own death, are all signals of transition and also markers of different kinds of memory.

Movement in space is also movement in time: each time we cross the room, we occupy several moments of time – time which was future, is present, and will become past, and in doing so we cross those borders between times. Time zones.<sup>26</sup> And movement, even within a confined space (the very word “confined” suggests both inclusion and exclusion) creates differences which can in themselves create boundaries.

Much longer *spaces of time* can create discrete identities between the same person: Lawrence Durrell’s novel *The Placebo* posits a character who revisits his own past and sees himself as a different person to whom he refers as “he” rather than “I”: “rather like turning out a dead man’s pockets [...] Could he have been myself?”<sup>27</sup> Many writers, revisiting their early work, reflect “Did I really write that?” Durrell also famously adopted Rimbaud’s “*Je est un Autre*” [“I” is an Other], thus emphasising that within the apparently single identity there can be two, or more, identities, each with its own borders and borderlands.<sup>28</sup> Edward Said also expresses this idea of multiple personalities: “I occasionally experience myself as a cluster of flowing currents. I prefer this to the idea of a solid self”.<sup>29</sup>

The movement, through time, of the individual is microcosmically the movement through time of society. If one can be so “moved” by a theatre performance as to become (slightly or significantly) a different person, then a people or a state which has experienced a war will be *a different state* and *in* a different state, with consequent affect on the status and nature of memory and relation to history.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> See Rony Alfandary, “Leaving Home and Adolescence in Lawrence Durrell’s *Pied Piper of Lovers*: a psychoanalytic reading”.

<sup>26</sup> Zoran Nikolić may be only half-joking when he draws attention to one border where “it is possible for a ball to leave the ground on the border golf course in one hour and to land an hour earlier”, or where, in another instance, “it is possible to cross a national border by moving from one end of a restaurant to another”: *The Atlas of Unusual Borders*.

<sup>27</sup> L Durrell, *The Placebo* (eds. R Pine and D Roessel), pp. 133–4.

<sup>28</sup> See Durrell’s poem “*Je est un Autre*”, *Collected Poems*, pp. 106–7. Oscar Wilde’s poem “*Hélas*” is also relevant here: “But strange, that I was not told / That the brain can hold / In a tiny, ivory cell / God’s heaven, and hell”.

<sup>29</sup> E Said, *Out of Place*, p. 295.

<sup>30</sup> See the essay by Michalis Sarlis in this volume.