In Byron's Shadow: Modern Greece in the English & American Imagination

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INTRODUCTION

Almost Impossible to Think Sanely about Greece

On the terrace of the Hotel Cecil in the Greek city of Patras just after the outbreak of World War II in the summer of 1939, Henry Miller tried to dissuade Lawrence Durrell from enlisting in the Greek army. "He knew what I thought about war," Miller related, "and I think in his heart he agrees with me, but being young, being serviceable, being English despite himself, he was in a quandary. It was a bad place in which to discuss a subject of this sort. The atmosphere was charged with memories of Byron. Sitting there, with Missolonghi so near, it was almost impossible to think sanely about war" (*Colossus of Maroussi* 25).

Miller's problem was compounded by the fact that it was equally impossible to think sanely about Greece with Missolonghi so near. In Edward Whittemore's *Jerusalem Poker*, a character in Athens asserts that "the light here *is* different. It's a palpable thing and the effect is inescapable, which is why Greece has always been more of an idea than a place. When the modern nation was founded in the last century, Alexandria and Constantinople were the great Greek cities in the world, and Athens was a lonely plain where a few shepherds grazed their flocks at the foot of the Acropolis. But no matter. An idea doesn't die. It only slumbers and can always be resurrected" (113). The idea continuously resurrected from the late eighteenth century into the twentieth century was the regeneration of Greece and the Greeks, the physical reincarnation of the idea of the ancient past. And it was Byron, the martyr of Missolonghi, who had made the dream that "Greece might still be free" a part of a *literary* tradition. In addition to being young, serviceable, and English, Durrell was also a poet, and that, as Miller certainly knew, was a key element in Durrell's desire to join the Greek army.

It was not the last time that Henry Miller would have trouble thinking sanely about either Greece or war, but the shade of Byron did not trouble him long. Durrell, in the end, did not join the Greek army; he went with Miller to Athens, where they met poet George Seferis and George Katsimbalis, a

fellow "out of all proportion," as Durrell called him in his poem "My Theology." With these two Greeks as guides, Miller and Durrell would create a new concept of modern Greece in writing in English, one where young, serviceable, poetic young men no longer debated whether they should join the Greek army. They constructed a Greece where one went to escape from precisely such debates.

As Australian author George Johnston signaled in his novel *Closer to the Sun* (1960), Miller's *Colossus of Maroussi* was the work that replaced the verse of Byron as the canonical text of modern Greece for English and American readers. The protagonist, the fortyish David Meredith, asks a fellow expatriate on the island of Silenus (Hydra), an elderly British woman, how she came to be living in the Aegean. "'Asthma,' she replied. 'That . . . and my own passion for Byron.'" "I feel now," she continues, "it should have been Shelley. . . . But then it would have been Italy instead of here" (33). Some fifteen pages later, David's brother Mark asks him the same question. He responds, "Shall I say I am learning to know something about the light and shadow on rocks against the sky, the true taste of water, the rhythms of the season, the values of simplicity." Mark exclaims, "Oh, for God's sake. . . . All this pseudo-poetic Henry Miller guff" (34). Johnston included these two exchanges to indicate the generational gap between the pre- and postwar generations of expatriates on the island, signified by the two different "books" of Greece they carried with them on their voyage. According to Johnston, after Byron came Miller. There was, he suggests, nothing in between. For more than a hundred years after Byron's death, the Greek land was "haunted, holy ground," as Byron said of Athens. But, with Missolonghi so near, the spirit haunting it was Byron himself.

This book examines the significance of what Victor Hugo called the "Greece of Byron," or modern Greece, in English and American writing. Although ancient Greece, Hugo's "Greece of Homer," and modern Greece occupy the same geographical space on the map, they are two distinct entities in the Western imagination, as demonstrated by Virginia Woolf's comment: "I take pains to put old Greece on my right hand and new Greece on my left & nothing I say of one shall apply to the other" (*Passionate Apprentice* 340). Scholarship has tended to follow Woolf's advice, for while there is a large shelf of books devoted to the position and meaning of old Greece on nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature in English, hardly any attention has been given to new Greece. The Greece of Byron is an interesting case study for several interrelated reasons, including its close connection to a single foreign poet, its persistent politicization, and its survival as a Romantic area long after the age of Romanticism ended.

Few countries have remained in the shadow of a single author for so long. In John Fowles's *The Magus* (1966), Nicholas Urfe says, "My knowledge of modern Greece began and ended with Byron's death at Missolonghi"

(39–40), and most of English and American writing about Greece into the twentieth century was also stuck in the milieu of the Greek War of Independence and Byron's Eastern Tales. For a century after the poet's death, writers tended to replicate rather than revise the Greece found in Byron's poetry. This desire was, to be sure, not simply a homage to a single writer but also an attempt to keep alive the social and political currents of the Romantic age, if only in one small spot on the globe. The literary tradition has, of course, more than one Byron. In addition to the hero of Missolonghi, there is the dandy in London and the introspective Manfred. This book is concerned only with the first. Byron was not always a politicized entity, but "Byron in Greece" was. With Missolonghi so near, one could say with some justice that it was also impossible to think sanely about Byron.

The resurrection of Greece, considered the original font of Western culture, was never an end in itself but rather was connected with a new spiritual, political, or cultural revival. Jerome McGann noted that in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* Byron was deeply concerned with "the renewal of the value of the individual person, and the renewal of Greece as a political entity becomes Byron's 'objective correlative' for this idea" (*Beauty of Inflections* 260). Greece, therefore, was a highly politicized place on the map of Europe, since its renewal as a political entity was associated with the social and cultural changes desired by Western authors. In Maria Edgeworth's novel *Helen* (1834), therefore, a young Englishman, who spoke "with enthusiasm of modern Greece, and his hopes that she might recover her ancient character," is cautioned that "Greece is a dangerous field for the political speculator" (175). I argue that the lack of innovative writing about modern Greece from 1833 to 1920 is directly related to the fact that the country was such a dangerous field for writers, a place where one had to tread lightly because of the powerful presence of Byron and his legendary death in Greece. During his conversation with Durrell that day in Patras, Miller himself saw Greece as such a dangerous field.

In the first decade of the last century, Saki (Hector Herbert Munro) called modern Greece and the surrounding Balkans "the last shred of happy hunting-ground for the adventurous, a playground of passions that are fast becoming atrophied for want of exercise. . . . If the Balkan lands are to be finally parceled out between competing Christian kingdoms and the haphazard rule of the Turk banished beyond the Sea of Marmara, the old order, or disorder if you like, will have received its death blow. . . . the old atmosphere will have changed; the glamour will be gone" (528–31). Another way of phrasing Saki's words would be to say that modern Greece and Macedonia in particular was, in 1912, the last remaining Romantic area on earth. Through Byron, modern Greece became, as it were, embalmed in the time of Romanticism, and it suffered the fate of all perceived Romantic or nineteenth-century conceptions and values after the Great War. If before 1914, Byron in Greece was

a model for the poet as a man of action, then after 1918 he became an anti-model for the young men sent to fight for the dead values of a botched civilization. After the Great War, novels of the conflict, like Dos Passos's *Three Soldiers* and Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*, suggested that the only way to save one's self and one's sanity was to desert. A fitting analogy, or objective correlative, of that act was to desert the cause of the Greeks during the Greco-Turkish War of 1920–1922 and all of the cultural meanings associated with that cause.

With contemporary notions of dancing Zorbas and Shirley Valentines with or without bikini tops, we might forget that before the late 1930s almost no one went to Greece to find their inner selves. This is the Greece that Miller and Durrell began to construct after their close encounter with Missolonghi in 1939. English and Americans in the nineteenth century went for that kind of experience—to discover the self and to be changed within—to Italy. One went to Greece, on the other hand, in imitation of Byron, to help change the Greeks and to assist Greece in its restoration to its ancient splendor. As Edgeworth indicated in *Helen*, discussions of whether Greece would recover its ancient character involved one in dangerous *political* speculations, since, in the eyes of those who pursued such speculations, the revival of the Greeks had to have some effect on the rest of Europe and the world at large. Greek regeneration was not simply a part of nineteenth-century nationalism, it contained within it millennial hopes. Yet while I argue that modern Greece had a particular significance for English and American writers from 1770 to 1967, I also suggest that the depiction of Greece had a symbiotic relation to the perception of Italy, Turkey, and the Mediterranean in general. When the idea of Italy became highly politicized, because of Mussolini and Fascism, the idea of Greece lost political force; conversely, when the idea of late nineteenth-century Italy was not politicized, the conception of Greece was.

From a global perspective, two rather insignificant events frame this study. In 1770, the Greeks rose in revolt against Turkish rule. The revolt failed, but because of an increasing idealization of the Greek past in the eighteenth century and the growing revolutionary sentiment of the age, this uprising caught the attention of Western Europe. In 1967, a group of colonels staged a coup in Greece to prevent elections that the Socialist candidate was poised to win. This event also could have passed unnoticed abroad, but it came at a time of intense worldwide political activism during the late 1960s. After three decades as lotus land, Greece once again became a partisan slogan in the West, as it had been in the time of Byron. If the coup did not put a complete end to the Greece of Miller and Durrell, it forced many writers to reconsider their thinking about modern Greece. My point should be clear—it was not what was happening in Greece that caused England and America to think about a small nation in the eastern Mediterranean. Rather, Greece became an important place in the English and American mind when it fit in

with other, already established ideas. A book about modern Greece, or the literature of modern Greece, would be quite different; for one thing, it would have far more to say about the brutal civil war of the late 1940s. While events of Greek history will have a prominent place in the pages that follow, my focus will be on the meaning given to those events in works in England and America, not what they meant to Greeks.

Modern Greece, in history and in literature, has been viewed as a transitory moment squeezed between two larger and more important entities. Viewed chronologically, modern Greece rests between the glory of the classical Greek past and the hope of a resurrected Greek future, which in many Western minds ought to resemble the democracies of Western Europe and America, which were founded on classical Greek models. Modern Greece as an entity did not exist but remained in a state of becoming. In 1909, nearly eighty years after the end of the Greek War of Independence, G. F. Abbott edited a book entitled *Greece in Evolution*, which argued that modern Greece was beginning to show the promise that the world expected of it. In 1977, John Koumoulides edited a book entitled *Greece in Transition: New Essays in the History of Modern Greece, 1821–1977*, as if the entire existence of the Greek state was a preparation for something to come. Viewed geographically, modern Greece sits between Europe and Asia; it is in the process of throwing off the "Orientalism" it acquired during four centuries of Turkish rule and reacquiring a European nature. This perception was reinforced by the fact that nearly every generation of English and American philhellenes from 1833 until 1922 experienced at least one of a series of Greek struggles to free themselves from Turkish oppression. The notion that modern Greece was still in a state of becoming, an idea supported by a continual series of armed confrontations with the Turks, helped to fix the conception of modern Greece in the time of the Greek Revolution, the Greece of Byron. This is why it could appear to Saki as the last shred of happy hunting ground for the adventurous.

A broad synopsis of the argument that follows would read: the Romantic age constructed an image of a politicized, female, modern Greece fit for the temple of Apollo. This image dominated representations of Greece into the twentieth century and was eventually transmuted by writers affiliated with modernism into an apolitical, male Greece in a Dionysian frenzy. The transition is obvious in literary works, but the reasons are not, and it certainly cannot be explained only as a modernist reaction to Romantic Greece. The literary geography of the Mediterranean is equally important. While the story of Italy or Egypt in English and American writing differs greatly from that of Greece, the perception of these three places and the adjoining areas interact and affect one another.

The first part of this book covers the years from 1770 through the end of the Greek War of Independence (1821–1833). I look at the development of philhellenism as a cultural movement that had revolutionary implications

within a European context while containing imperialist rhetoric with regard to the Turks and the East. I examine the persistent personification of Greece as a female needing rescue from a Turk by a savior from the West and how Byron employed that scenario in works such as *The Giaour*. I argue that one of the main reasons that so little of the mass of philhellenic writings from the Greek War of Independence has lasted is that the canonical texts of the Greek Revolution were written by Byron before the Greek Revolution had even started. With the "scripture" of the Greek uprising intact, later works functioned more as commentary and interpretation.

The second part investigates the omnipresence of Byronic Greece in writing in English from 1833 to 1913. The Greece of Byron was a radical cause linked to other issues, including the abolition of slavery, the extension of the vote, and the independence movements in Italy, Spain, and Poland. For the liberals and the radicals who espoused these causes, the liberation of the Greeks was part of a sacred heritage. Given that the rhetoric about Greece had been established by Byron, the only real developments were an expansion of that rhetoric by Gladstone and other liberals to include the Balkan Christians generally and, in response to that expansion, a simultaneous narrowing of philhellenic rhetoric to cover only those pure Greeks of unmixed blood who lived on remote islands and mountains. Both of these developments had deleterious effects on the perception of the Greeks. On the one hand, when lumped with the other Christians of the East, they were viewed as Balkan or Levantine; on the other, a preserve of real Greeks was created by disenfranchising the majority of Greece's inhabitants. Philhellenes abroad would eventually apply the "true" versus "false" Greek dichotomy to disputes between political factions within Greece.

The third part of this work deals with the reaction to the Greece of Byron in the years during and after the Great War. The idea of a Greater Greece, including Constantinople and Asia Minor, survived the fighting of World War I. In fact, the Versailles Treaty almost established the desired Greater Greece by granting the Greeks eastern Thrace and the territory around Smyrna. Philhellenic writing was surprisingly deaf to the fact that the Romantic nationalism that lay behind the drive for a Greater Greece had died in the trenches. The Greek defeat in the Greco-Turkish War of 1920–1922 and the subsequent exchange of populations with Turkey, in which a million and a half Greeks were forced to leave their homes on Turkish soil and go to Greece, brought an end to Greater Greece and the dream of a Greek regeneration. I argue that Hemingway and other modern writers employed the Greek defeat of 1922 as a symbol for the death of the prewar values because of the focus upon Greek culture and the desire for a revival of the Greeks in the nineteenth century. The fate of the modern Greeks was simply a foil to invert the world of the old men. In the aftermath of the Greek defeat and the end of the Greek revival as it had been envisioned from 1770, authors had to

recreate or reinvent a new modern Greece. The third part ends with a look at the most significant attempts in that direction during the two decades after the Great War and why they failed to gain wide recognition.

The conclusion looks at the Greece brought into existence by Miller and Durrell. These two authors reinvested modern Greece with meaning by stripping it of all political significance; ironically, in the late 1930s, when both Italy and Spain were engulfed by contemporary political questions, Greece offered "the discovery of yourself," to borrow the words of Lawrence Durrell. I show that this occurred when Greece itself was under a dictatorship and under the shadow of the impending war, so that the creation of an idyllic Greece during these years was an act of will by both Miller and Durrell. Those writers who came to Greece in the late 1940s and 1950s carrying the books of Miller and Durrell also persisted in turning their eyes from the internal politics of Greece, despite a bitter civil war between the Left and the Right from 1945 to 1949. Greece became repoliticized in Western eyes by the military coup in 1967, partly because leftist political activism in the West viewed the coup as a cause and partly because the unappealing politics within Greece helped to move lotus land elsewhere.

A study of this scope must, of necessity, attempt to provide a framework rather than a comprehensive account of each period. I hope that my work stimulates further investigations on particular periods, movements, and literary works. Despite numerous studies about the Greece of Homer in English and American literature, the Greece of Byron has been largely overlooked, especially after 1833. Terence Spencer, in his invaluable *Fair Greece, Sad Relic: Literary Philhellenism before Byron*, stops just before the Greek Revolution begins. Raizis and Papas have done important work on the poetry about the Greek Revolution but do not deal with fiction or drama and do not go much beyond 1850. Larrabee and Eisner have written books on travelers' accounts of Greece, but they generally avoid creative works. Karanikas's discussion of modern Greeks in American literature focuses more on twentieth-century works written after the period that I discuss. Even Artemis Leontis, in her recent and useful book *Topographies of Hellenism*, speaks as if most, if not all, Western travelers ignore modern Greece in an attempt to make contact with a sublime and serene classical past. But when Noel Brailsford, Allen Upward, and Stephen MacKenna went to Greece to fight against the Turks in 1897, and when E. F. Benson, Isabella Mayo, and George Horton published philhellenic novels that same year, it was Byron who provided the inspiration. Since this is the first attempt to trace the portrayal of modern Greece from the Romantic period through modernism, rather than focus on a few key works I have chosen to use a wide array of sources and to fill in the cultural background.

"The trouble with Greece," as the main character of DeLillo's *The Names* says, is that it is "strategically located," and it needs to be examined in

conjunction with Turkey, the Balkans, and Italy. I originally intended such a comparative study but found that Greece (and then Turkey and the Balkans) had to be investigated first.[1] In the course of this study and in the years of my own involvement with Greece, I have at times felt that I have uncovered new territory. But I have always been brought back to earth by Peter Levi's sane words: "Whoever discovers Greece today can hardly rank with Columbus" (*Hill of Kronos* 9). This is not a voyage into the unknown but an investigation into a spot on the literary map that has been generally neglected in the past because it was perceived to be so well known and traveled. My aim is to challenge that perception and to show that modern Greece is more than a transitory moment in writing in English but a place worth stopping in and pondering over.

CONCLUSION

A New Kind of Byronism

> But Athens for me was Katsimbalis, Seferis, Antoniou,
>
> New friends for merry places.
>
> John Waller, *Kiss of Stars*

So wrote Waller in his poem "Spring in Athens" dated April 1945. A new note strikes one immediately. Athens had been many things over the years—haunted, holy ground for Byron, an irritation to Thackeray, a haven of decadence for Plomer—but the violet-crowned city had never, in a poem in English, been summed up by three Greek males treated as peers. In his *Views of Attica* (1950), Rex Warner's first chapter took the reader to the wine bar Psaras, where the author was found drinking with these same three men (28). For both Waller and Warner, the geographical center of Greece had shifted from the Acropolis, Marathon, or Missolonghi to the tavernas and cafes of Athens. Greece was no longer predominantly a visual experience, the sights of the sites, but an aural one; both authors made a point of telling us that listening to Greeks, or at least these three Greeks, had a significant place in their construction of Greece. Something, clearly, had changed since 1935.

Waller pointed to the main reason for this shift when he spoke of Katsimbalis "calling to the cocks from the Acropolis, / Roaring through nightfall" (27), which did not take place when Waller was in Athens in the spring of 1945 but in 1940, and the event was memorialized in *The Colossus of Maroussi*. This event became an emblem of new writing about Greece; Patrick Leigh Fermor, for example, referred to it directly in *Mani* (1958, 123–24). By including an incident with links to Miller and Durrell, Waller, like Leigh Fermor and Warner, was signaling that he wanted to be considered within a particular line of writing about Greece, a "movement," for lack of a better term, that was still too new in 1945 to be called a tradition. And he

counts on the fact that these names, Katsimbalis, Seferis, and Antoniou, are not wholly unfamiliar. His readers already met them in Henry Miller's Greek book, *The Colossus of Maroussi* (1941).

The narrator of Edmund Keeley's novel *The Gold-Hatted Lover* (1961) has also read *The Colossus of Maroussi*; he makes a reference to Miller's visit to Phaestos and the presence of his name in the guest book at the Minoan site (105; see *Colossus of Maroussi* 163). What this reference really does, however, is to inscribe *The Gold-Hatted Lover* beside the works of Waller, Warner, and Leigh Fermor in the guest book, as it were, of *The Colossus of Maroussi*. The desire was widespread.[1] John Fowles mentioned only one contemporary book about Greece in the preface to the revised edition of *The Magus*. When Fowles was teaching on Spetses in 1951, he ran down to the harbor to pay his respects to "Henry Miller's Colossus of Maroussi Katsimbalis" (8).

Louis MacNeice also recognized the prominence of *The Colossus of Maroussi*, although he was hardly happy about it. In 1959, he began his review of Kevin Andrews's *The Flight of Ikaros*: "Many Europeans and Americans visiting Greece fall so in love with the country that they gush into print and give a one-sided picture. *The Colossus of Maroussi* by Henry Miller, though some of its gush is good, suggests that Greece is a never-never land where Miller can become Peter Pan. . . . Now comes Kevin Andrews to redress the balance" (*Selected Prose* 217). Andrews wrote a good book, but *The Flight of Ikaros* hardly redressed the balance, as the numerous references to Miller by other writers demonstrate.

Miller's *Colossus of Maroussi* and Lawrence Durrell's *Prospero's Cell* (1945), along with the Greek poems in Durrell's volume *A Private Country* (1943), invented a new modern Greece, as Edmund Keeley has shown.[2] Their books had an almost immediate impact. Durrell wrote to his editor and fellow poet, Anne Ridler, in 1946, "I'm afraid we've had a bad influence Henry and I's [*sic*] books about Greece. It is becoming a cult. In the last few weeks the number of poets who are compiling anthologies called SALUTE TO GREECE has risen" (*Spirit of Place* 84). The change reflected more than just volume. In 1954, Stephen Spender spoke of "this new philhellenism which has grown up during and since the war" as "a rediscovery of a classical by way of modern Greece," precisely the reverse of Romanticism's attempt to rediscover within the modern Greeks their ancient heritage ("Brilliant Athens and Us" 77). His list of new philhellenes includes Leigh Fermor, Durrell, Bernard Spencer, Francis King, Rex Warner, Osbert Lancaster, and the painter John Craxton. "In common with the American writer Henry Miller," Spender added, "they think of Katsimbalis . . . as their Virgilian guide to modern Athens. He seems to stand in the central square of Athens like one of the gigantic stone lions over the entrance to the ancient ruins of Mycenae" (78).[3] "In common with . . . Henry Miller" is a bit misleading, since Miller's book essentially created Katsimbalis as the guide to modern

Greece. Even Durrell's most important contribution to the Katsimbalis myth, the story of the cocks, was published in *The Colossus of Maroussi*. It is the main reason that writers wanted their works inscribed in the guest book of that volume rather than in Durrell's *Prospero's Cell* or *Reflections on a Marine Venus*.[4]

The Colossus of Maroussi is itself like one of those Katsimbaline monologues it memorializes—it too attacks from all sides at once, tosses things in the air only to catch them many pages later, and contradicts itself often in a wandering, boustrophedontic logic in which Miller delights. Still, it is possible to pick out of what MacNeice called Miller's "gush" several key ideas central to the formation of a new view of Greece.

First and foremost, Greece is a Dionysian place.[5] Greeks were now viewed, as Rex Warner put it in 1950, as "a race knowing excess, knowing intoxication of all kinds" (*Views of Attica* 16). On the Sacred Way to Eleusis, Miller related, "I was on the point of madness several times. I actually did start running up the hillside only to stop midway, terror-stricken, wondering what had taken possession of me" (44).[6] For Miller, this was one of the "marvelous things" that "happen to one in Greece—marvelous *good* things that can happen no where else on earth" (15). At one point, when discussing the terrain on the island of Corfu, Miller asserted, "All Greece is diademed with such antinomian spots; it is perhaps the explanation for the fact that Greece has emancipated itself as a country, a nation, a people, in order to continue as a luminous carrefour of a changing humanity" (21–22). One aspect of a Dionysian madness in which everyone acts on impulse is that there can be no organization of either society or life. In *Reflections on a Marine Venus*, Durrell recorded the following conversation with Manoli the fisherman:

> "You are English. They never see things before they happen. The English are very slow."
> "And what about the Greeks?"
> "The Greeks are fast . . . piff . . . paff . . . They decide."
> "But each one decides differently."
> "That is individualism."
> "But it leads to chaos."
> "We like chaos." (49)

The madness and chaos of Greece put Miller in touch with the elemental world as opposed to the "abstract, dehumanized world" built "out of the ashes of illusory materialism" of America and France (237).[7] In *Prospero's Cell*, Durrell said: "You will think it strange to have come from England to this fine Grecian promontory where our only company can be rock, air, sky—and all the elementals" (13). About a half century earlier, the antidote to a sick Western civilization had been Greek villages, which exuded a combination of

pastoral values and the Apollonian sublime, juxtaposing modern civilization with real civilization, as it were. As Robert Kaplan observed, Durrell and Miller offered a new Greece "linked to an enjoyment of the physical senses that bordered on annihilation" (250). It is this Greece to which a character in Israel Horovitz's play *The Good Parts* (1983) refers when she says, "You're in Greece, remember. There's no need to be embarrassed about anything in Greece. Anything. Ever" (41). As Charmian Clift pointedly observed in *Peel Me a Lotus* (1959), this foreign idea of Greece had deleterious consequences for the Greeks. Every year, the country was awash with visitors who "absolve[d] themselves from all responsibility, all control, all moral laws, all sense of duty" (128). Their justification was that they were simply being "Greek."[8]

This should have a slightly familiar ring. Contact with the "classic" soil of Italy had played somewhat the same role in the fiction of writers such as E. M. Forster and D. H. Lawrence. For Victorian and Edwardian writers, Italy had been the place where "the marvelous *good* things happen." It is not a coincidence that early in Durrell's *Prospero's Cell*, N. defends Lawrence's "grasp of place" or that near the end Count D. says, "It's thirsty work talking like a Norman Douglas character" (15, 125). The two passages serve as bookends for a literature of place, *Italian* place, upon which Durrell drew for his Corfu book.[9] One might say that, despite the gush of the prose, all Miller and Durrell really did was see Pan in Greece. What is surprising is how liberating this "Italianizing" of Greece became for foreign authors. It was, to a significant degree, old wine drunk from a new bottle. But it really was a "new" Greece, one that had not been written about before, and it set a lot of pens in motion.

As if to underline the point that one could see Pan in Greece, Durrell's first book with a Greek setting was a novel entitled *Panic Spring* (1937), which Durrell's biographer, Ian MacNiven, said, "owes almost nothing to Henry Miller but a good deal to Norman Douglas and Aldous Huxley. The evocation of the island scenes are reminiscent of *South Wind*" (142). In *Prospero's Cell*, Count D. points out that, although Corfu has received the report of Pan's death, "in our modern pantheon we have a creature whose resemblance to Pan is not, I think, fortuitous. He is, as you know, the *kallikanzaros*. He is the house sprite, a little cloven-hoofed satyr with pointed ears, who is responsible for turning milk sour, for leaving doors unlocked, and for causing mischief of every kind" (105). In *Reflections on a Marine Venus*, Durrell wrote, "Rhodes, like the rest of Greece, has clung to its belief in Pan" (101).[10] On Nicholas Urfe's first visit to the Villa Bourani in Fowles's *The Magus*, he is confronted by a bronze statue with an enormous phallus. "'You know what it is?' . . . 'Pan?' 'A Priapus'" (84). In 1931, Isabel Anderson lamented that her greatest disappointment upon leaving Greece was that "I did not see Pan or hear his distant flute" (173). She was just a decade too early.

Miller did not catch sight of a Pan; he met a contemporary Dionysus in the flesh, a high priest of madness and chaos. That is why George Katsimbalis is a colossus and the Vergilian guide to modern Greece. Miller said that Katsimbalis "didn't believe in moderation nor good sense nor anything that was inhibitory. He believed in going the whole hog and then taking your punishment." While he was physically restricted as a result of war wounds, he could still "galvanize the dead with his talk" (30). Katsimbalis told Miller he refused to write because he is "an extemporaneous fellow," and "the best stories are those you don't want to preserve. If you have any arrière pensée the story is ruined" (66). Extemporaneity, for Miller, provided a key to human happiness. When the happiest man alive, as Miller called himself in *The Tropic of Cancer*, meets an even happier man alive, he must be colossal.

Katsimbalis was the ur-model for a new "masculine personification" of Greece, as the Katsimbaline figure Manoli was called in George Johnston and Charmian Clift's novel *The Sponge Divers* (1955, 183). The Greek seaman is "*pure* Greek, the essence of it," because he is a fanatic "about life. About living. He takes life in both hands and eats it as if it were a piece of meat" (183, 52). The American poet Kenneth Hanson described his encounter with this new Greek male in his poem "Take It from Me": "Greeks never fill up the tank, he said / so I pushed the car uphill / around a mountain curve at midnight." Hanson concluded:

> But look at it my way.
> Here was a new geography
> a mind where anything that grows
> grows by a kind of tour de force
> requiring only unconditional surrender.
> Here was the pure perfection of an art.
> Nothing like it in the British Museum.
> (*Distance Anywhere* 16–17)

James Merrill had one of these new Greeks phrase it as follows in his poem "Kostas Tympakianákis":

> Take me with you when you sail next week,
> You'll see a different cosmos through the eyes of a Greek.
> (*Selected Poems* 149)

The "new geography," the "different cosmos," of a masculine Greece, extemporaneous with no *arrière pensée*, was first charted by Miller after he met Katsimbalis. To put it another way, Katsimbalis was already Zorba before Kazantzakis wrote his novel in Greek. Greek women, on the other hand, played a small part in both Miller's *Colossus of Maroussi* and the works of the

new philhellenism generally.[11] In her recent poem "Last Visit to Greece," Rachel Hadas wrote that the Greek language "had three genders, it was true, / but only one mattered. What was new / was how I saw this world as one of men" (5). The Greece of the new philhellenes basically had only one gender that mattered as well; the writers were mainly men, as were all of the names on Spender's list of new philhellenes, and their prime subject was the Greek male. Women were not central to this new geography of Greece.

The absence of sex and, for the most part, the female of the species, from the Dionysian world of *The Colossus of Maroussi* is puzzling, particularly since Miller constructed it. From the text, as Eisner noted, one might think that Miller was celibate for his six months in Greece (195). Peter Levi, however, reported, that when, in a cafe in Athens, Miller found that the poets Odysseus Elytis and Nikos Gatsos knew of his books, he "became so excited he wanted a brothel. 'Elytis and I do not know much about those things. We will introduce you to Mr. Katsimbalis. He will know'" (*Hill of Kronos* 140). But if there was no sex in *The Colossus of Maroussi*, there was a kind of romance, for Miller was mesmerized by Katsimbalis's stories, and some of the language of romantic thralldom creeps into Miller's admiration of the garrulous Greek. No other Western male author, including gay authors, has so submitted in print to the dominance of a Greek man.[12] To be sure, Miller viewed Katsimbalis as an alter ego. As Miller noted, Katsimbalis "talked about himself because he was the most interesting person he knew. I admire that quality very much—I have a little bit of it myself" (28). Still, Miller left no doubt in his text that he was, as it were, a Dr. Watson to Katsimbalis's Sherlock Holmes. *The Colossus of Maroussi* remains unique in English and American literature for its celebration of Katsimbalis and other Greek intellectuals. Greek males were generally depicted with an animal physicality while intellectual and emotional sophistication remained with the foreign observer. In the first and only issue of *Greek Horizons*, Derek Patmore said, "The modern Greek character has much of the lovable child" (59), and the "childlike Greek" became a common theme. In *The Sponge Divers*, the Australian narrator explained to a woman who has had sex with Manoli that she can expect no sentimental attention from the "masculine personification of Greece" since he lacks any interior life. "That's his real world, and he lives in it like a child. . . . It isn't complicated in the way that we are complicated, it doesn't have the threads connecting it to any interior mechanisms" (183). A touch of condescension can even be found in statements of Durrell like "the Greek is a terrible fellow. Mercuric, noisy, voluble and proud—was there ever such a conjunction of qualities locked in a human breast? Only the Irishman could match him for intractability, for rowdy feckless generosity" (*Reflections on a Marine Venus* 41). Miller's book is one of the few exceptions where the Greek characters possess superior abilities in both mind and body.

If Katsimbalis provided Miller with a new Greece, then Miller in turn created a version of Katsimbalis that the real man felt compelled to emulate. Whereas in the 1850s a visit to Teresa Macri, the "Maid of Athens," was part of any tour of Athens, in the 1950s literary travelers penciled in a trip to hear Katsimbalis, "the liveliest talker and most fantastic raconteur in Greece," according to John Lehmann (*Ample Proposition* 68). Miller's effect on Katsimbalis can be seen as early as 1940. Durrell wrote his old companion from the Villa Seurat:

> For a week after getting news of you or a letter from you he [Katsimbalis] is quite unquenchably not himself. You seem to stand in some relation of a half-analyst because he develops this mock-colossus, like a mock-turtle out of nowhere. Then he begins to stagger and lurch and boast and swear; and every story he says: "I forgot to tell Miller that one." Or, "Miller would have enjoyed that one, eh?" Some of his stories are so manifestly neither funny, elevating, or even commonly humane, that one winces for him and wonders why. But he goes on roaring and washing the air with his long flat dead-looking hands, trying to carve a mythical personality for himself from the rubbish of language. (*Durrell–Miller Letters* 134)

Still, Durrell ended by saying that "he is the truest Greek I know," and Katsimbalis remained the living embodiment of the true Greek throughout the 1950s. John Lehmann's description of Katsimbalis on a boat from Athens to Poros, "like an archaic statue dressed up in modern clothing for a lark" and "roaring to the wind and the waves and the uncomprehending, rather scared young sailors" appears to imitate a scene on a boat on page 63 of Miller's book, but we cannot be sure if it is Lehmann, Katsimbalis, or both who are trying to recreate the earlier incident (*Ample Proposition* 68).[13] Greece in English and American literature was never the same after Durrell and Miller met Katsimbalis in Athens in the autumn of 1939, but neither was Katsimbalis.

Miller's trip to Greece in 1939 was a symptom as much as a cause of a rethinking of the geography of the Mediterranean. In George Johnston's novel *Clean Straw for Nothing* (1969), a character remarks: "Italy, alas, is spoiling. . . . Even in the south. . . . Now one must go farther afield, I am afraid. Greece is the place, I think. Greece is still possible" (139). Miller commented, "Greece is *still* a sacred precinct" (15, my italics). Landscape was a crucial element in the explanation as to why Greece was still a sacred precinct, for it produced the condition that made Pans possible—"We are the children of our landscape," Durrell said in *Justine*, "it dictates behavior and thought in the measure to which we are responsive to it" (41). He began his

chapter on the history of Corfu with the comment, "Under the formal pageant of events which we have dignified by our interest, the land changes very little, and the structure of the basic self of man hardly at all" (59). In his discussion of the new philhellenism, Stephen Spender said that it "opens on to the 'eternal Greece' not through politics, but through the landscape and the people, and through modern Greek poetry" ("Brilliant Athens and Us" 78). The point is supported by numerous titles and subtitles of works by the new philhellenes, such as Durrell's *Prospero's Cell: A Guide to the Landscape and Manners of the Island of Corfu* and *Reflections on a Marine Venus: A Guide to the Landscape of Rhodes*; Osbert Lancaster's *Classical Landscape with Figures*; Rex Warner's *Views of Attica and Its Surroundings*; and John Lehmann's poem "Greek Landscape with Figures."

As Eisner noted, ideas about the effect of the Greek climate in these works hardly differ from the "Rationalist/Romantic melody of landscape as meaning," which had appeared at the end of the eighteenth century (195). Landscape had, of course, always been an important consideration in the construction of Greece. Arnold Bennett in 1928 repeated the old nostrum about the role of the environment in the creation of the Greek miracle: "The Greek landscape was classical before Greek literature and architecture and sculpture. It is the origin of the Greek spirit" (30). One can compare such sentiment to Fowles's musing, "Perhaps ancient Greece was only the effect of a landscape and a light on a sensitive people" ("Behind *The Magus*" 62).

But the terrain of the new philhellenism was decidedly different from, almost the opposite of, the Greek landscape of Romantic Hellenism. In 1806, Chateaubriand found that in Greece "a suavity, a softness, a repose pervade all nature. . . . In the native land of the Muses, Nature suggests no wild deviations, she tends, on the contrary, to dispose the mind to the love of the uniform and the harmonious" (67). His Greek environment was a reflection of the presiding deity of the day, Apollo.

Over a hundred years later, however, the landscape of Greece was perceived to be full of wild deviations, as if the trees themselves responded to the reappearance of Dionysus on Greek soil. At the beginning of *Prospero's Cell*, Durrell said: "All the way across Italy you find yourself moving through a landscape severely domesticated—each valley laid out after an architect's pattern, brilliantly lighted, human" (11). Greece, Durrell went on, by contrast you approach "as one might enter a dark crystal; the form of things becomes irregular, refracted" (11). The olive tree is never pruned: "Prolix in its freedom therefore the olive takes strange shapes" (94).[14] According to Leigh Fermor, the scenery of the island of Hydra "is violent and dionysiac" ("Background of Nikos Ghika" 42). John Fowles told how he fell instantly in love "with what I have come to call *agria Ellada*, or wild Greece" ("Greece" 71). In 1970, Storm Jameson remarked that what is unique about Greece is not "only the light, nakedly clear, but the hardness. Greece has the hardness—

not of stone, which can soften—but of marble" (*Journey from the North* 2:366). The wildness and hardness of the Greek landscape functioned as both an objective correlative for the psychological freedom of the individual and as a facilitator for shedding restraints placed upon him by society. It was this wildness that made Greece special and unique. "Other countries may offer you discoveries in manners or lore or landscape," Durrell said at the opening of *Prospero's Cell*. "Greece offers you something harder—the discovery of yourself" (11). In Greece, Fermor suggested, "Nature becomes supernatural; the frontier between the physical and the metaphysical is confounded" (*Mani* 288).

A key feature in the search for the primitive in Italy from 1870 through the writings of D. H. Lawrence in the 1920s had been the romanticizing of the Etruscans as a pre-Roman, peace-loving, natural people, a view made possible because little was known about the Etruscans. Miller and Durrell also celebrated the primitive in Greece; in their different ways they were as little interested in the Periclean glory that was Greece as Lawrence had been in the Augustan grandeur that was Rome. Back before Pericles, however, were the Mycenaeans, perceived, after Schliemann's excavations at Mycenae, as a rather bloodthirsty and matter-of-fact crew. Miller said that the Mycenaean fortress of Tiryns "smells of cruelty, barbarism, suspicion, isolation," and he added that the quiet at Mycenae today resembles "the exhaustion of a cruel and intelligent monster which has been bled to death" (85). These were hardly a people on which one could build an idyllic vision of life. But, with the excavations of Arthur Evans at Knossos, one could now go back before the Mycenaeans to the Minoans, about whom even less was known than the Etruscans. In what Lawrence referred to in a poem as "the Minoan distance," the Minoans became a pre-Greek, peace-loving, natural people—or, to put it another way, Etruscans on Greek soil.[15] Osbert Lancaster called the Minoans "a race of happy little extroverts unshadowed by the inhibiting preoccupation with the future life which so troubled the contemporary Egyptians and were quite unconcerned with the intellectual problems which engaged the fascinated attention of the Classical Greeks" (203–5). The hero of Keeley's *The Gold-Hatted Lover* sees Knossos as an "unembarrassed monument to the pleasures of the flesh" (79). At the Minoan site of Knossos, Henry Miller went into more detail:

> Knossos in all its manifestations suggests the splendor and sanity and opulence of a powerful and peaceful people. It is gay—gay, healthful, sanitary, salubrious. . . . The religious note seems to be graciously diminished; women played an important, equal role in the affairs of this people; a spirit of play is markedly noticeable. In short, the prevailing note is one of joy. One feels that man lived to live, that he was not plagued by thoughts of a life beyond . . . that he was religious in the

> only way becoming to man, by making the most of everything that comes to hand, by extracting the utmost from every passing minute. Knossos was worldly in the best sense of the word. (121–22)

Katsimbalis, it appears, was not only a modern Dionysus but also a modern Minoan.

It would be wrong to underestimate the impact of the Minoans on the new pastoral perception of a primitive Greece, even for Durrell on Corfu. In a letter to George Wilkinson in 1934, Durrell informed his friend, "Nancy is rabid to examine the traces of early Byzantine paintings down the coast of Greece, while I am mad to get to Knossos and examine the traces of a Minoan civilization, of which by this time I'm quite sure, my ancestors were a part. . . . They were sturdy and lustful, and had a vital art of their own, which owes practically nothing to the huge contemporary civilizations around it" (*Spirit of Place* 29). Soon after the Second World War, Durrell was at work on a "Minoan" novel, *Cefalú*.[16] In his poem "Greek Excavations" (1942) Bernard Spencer claimed:

> Peering for coin or confident bust
> Or vase in bloom with swiftness of horses,
> My mind was never turned the way
> Of the classic of the just and unjust,
> I was looking for things which have a date
> (20)

But the new philhellenes were not looking for things that had a date, they were in search of a place that had no dates, that was outside of time. They were trying, as Spencer said in "Aegean Islands, 1940–41," to find "elements in a happiness / More distant now than any date like '40, / A.D. or B.C., ever can express" (19). Those elements of happiness, when they had to be placed in a chronology, were placed before history began. Durrell's "In Arcadia" (1940) suggested that "Greece" existed even before the Greeks arrived. The poem opens with the arrival of the Dorians in Greece, bringing fire and a "brute art":

> Rain fell, tasting of the sky,
> Trees grew, composing a grammar,
> The river, the river you see was brought down
> By force of prayer on this fertile floor.
>
> Now small skills; the fingers laid upon
> The nostrils of flutes, the speech of women
> Whose tutors were the birds; who singing
> Now civilized their children with the kiss.
> (*Collected Poems* 88)

The effect of the rain, trees, and birds could still be felt in the 1930s when this was written, since the poem concludes that there might be "Something dead out by the river: / but it seems less than a nightingale ago" (89). Even with the substitution of Dionysus for Apollo, such sentiments were, to use Eisner's phrase again, little more than the "Rationalist/Romantic melody of landscape as meaning" recycled.

The writing of the new philhellenism, however, was much more than that, because, as Spender said, it drew not only upon "the landscape and people" but also on "modern Greek poetry." Spender might simply have named George Seferis as the Greek poet of the new philhellenism. His only Greek rivals in influence were Katsimbalis and the painter Ghika.[17] Three of the names on Spender's list of new philhellenes were involved in early translations of Seferis. Bernard Spencer and Lawrence Durrell teamed with Nanos Valaoritis on *The King of Asine and Other Poems* (1948), and Rex Warner brought out another collection in 1960. In the 1940s, Durrell penned the poem "Letter to Seferis the Greek"; in the 1950s Spender dedicated "The Messenger" to Seferis; and in the 1960s C. Day-Lewis wrote "The Room" in homage to the same Greek writer. Peter Levi said, "It is amazing how much I understood, how early from George Seferis" (*Hill of Kronos* 34). He added that there "is a sense in which he virtually invented modern Greek, both as prose and verse" (34). More to the point, for Levi, as for Miller, Durrell, Fermor, and Spencer, there is a sense in which Seferis created modern Greece.

Miller admitted that he knew "his [Seferis's] work only from translation, but even if I had never read his poetry I would say this is the man who is destined to transmit the flame" (46).[18] The statement is not quite as prescient as it might first seem. For, just as it was Miller who caused literary travelers to look for Katsimbalis in Athens, it was Miller again who ensured that those same literary travelers were reading Seferis.

Miller, like Winckelmann, linked the "spirit of eternality which is everywhere in Greece" to the fact that the landscape does not change. Miller did not adduce, as Arnold Bennett had, the classical sublime created by the German thinker but claimed instead that this idea was "embedded in the poems" of George Seferiades, whose "pen name is Seferis." Miller then recalled

> going with Seferiades one afternoon to look at a piece of land on which he thought he might build himself a bungalow. There was nothing extraordinary about the place—it was even a bit shabby and forlorn, I might say. Or rather it *was*, at first sight. I never had a chance to consolidate my first fleeting impression; it changed under my eyes as he led me about like an electrified jelly-fish from spot to spot, rhapsodizing on herbs, flowers, shrubs, rocks, clay, slopes, declivities, coves, inlets, and so on. . . . His native flexibility was responding to the cosmic laws of curvature and finitude. He had ceased

> going out in all directions; his lines were making the encircling movement of embrace. He had begun to ripen into the universal poet—by passionately rooting himself in the soil of his people. Wherever there is life today in Greek art it is based on this Antaean gesture, this passion which transmits itself from heart to feet, creating strong roots which transform the body into a tree of potent beauty. (*Colossus of Maroussi* 46–47)

Miller also depicted Katsimbalis as rooted in the Greek landscape; in fact, Miller concluded his book with the colossus in an Antaean gesture of picking a flower in an Attic field (240–41).[19] But with the appearance of a selection of Seferis's poetry in *The King of Asine*, translated by Durrell, Spencer, and Valaoritis, the example of Seferis was available for imitation. This volume, as Avi Sharon has shown, was part of a concerted effort on the part of Spencer, Durrell, Lehmann, and others to create a reputation for Seferis outside of Greece.[20] Katsimbalis might sit astride the entrance to the "new geography" of Greece like one of the lions of Mycenae, but the poems of Seferis were there to be pondered, translated, and transported to England. Durrell, Spencer, Warner, Sherrard, Keeley, and Levi are only a few of the writers who included translating Seferis as part of their Greek experience. While the extemporaneous fellow now speaks only in the pages of Miller for most English and American readers, Seferis stands firmly at the center of a canon of modern Greek verse, which any real lover of modern Greece must learn to confront in the original, like the poems of Homer for classical enthusiasts.

In his Nobel Prize speech, Seferis asserted that the present Greeks have a kinship with the ancient Greeks because they have been formed by the same geological features, because they are in effect children of the same landscape. Seferis explored the use of landscape as a connecting link in the Greek experience in his poems, such as the twelfth section of *Mythistorima* (1935):

Bottle in the Sea

three rocks, a few burnt pines, a solitary chapel
and farther above
the same landscape repeated starts again:
three rocks in the shape of a gate-way, rusted,
a few burnt pines, black and yellow,
and a square hut buried in whitewash;
and still farther above, many times over,
the same landscape recurs level after level
to the horizon, to the twilight sky.
Here we moored the ship to splice the broken oars,
To drink water and to sleep.

The sea that embittered us is deep and unexplored
and unfolds a boundless calm.
Here among the pebbles we found a coin
and threw dice for it.
The youngest won it and disappeared.

We set out again with out broken oars.
(tr. Keeley and Sherrard 31)

Edmund Keeley suggested that in *Mythistorima*, as Seferis "attempts to carry the reader to the level of myth, the level of timeless universalities, he wins sympathy and belief by convincingly representing the present reality sustaining the myth—a contemporary Greek reality always" (*Modern Greek Poetry* 54). Keeley went on to observe that this strategy resembles to a degree the "mythical method" that Eliot coined in his review of Joyce's *Ulysses*, in which myth is used "'to give a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history' by using the mythology of Homer to manipulate 'a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity'" (74). Leigh Fermor said something similar to this when he remarked that Ghika extracted "a logic from the disorder" composed of the "convulsions of planes, angles, circles, cylinders, polygons, polyhydra" on the island of Hydra ("Background of Nikos Ghika" 30). Eliot asserted that the mythical method was "a serious step toward making the modern world possible for art" (*Selected Essays* 177). It was certainly a major step toward making modern Greece possible for foreign artists. Durrell suggested that the mythical method was almost a natural phenomenon in Corfu: "In this landscape observed objects still retain a kind of mythological form—so that though we are separated from Ulysses by hundreds of years in time, yet we dwell in his shadow" (*Prospero's Cell* 59). In *Reflections on a Marine Venus*, he used the term *historical present* for the sense of observed objects retaining in the present their mythical force. In her autobiography, Storm Jameson concurred: "I suppose that one reason for the stubborn persistence in us of Greece . . . is that, in this light scarred country, one is able, no, forced to impose a myth on reality" (2:369).[21]

As Keeley cautioned, Seferis can only be said to use the example of Joyce and Eliot in a general way, as a "kindred spirit" (*Modern Greek Poetry* 77).[22] But that was enough. To Durrell, as to Warner, Spender, and Lehmann, Seferis wrote verse that could be viewed within a framework that was familiar to them—it was giving back to them a modernism they had learned from Eliot. This may well have had a role in Durrell's warning to Seferis in 1944, "We are having trouble translating you so that you don't sound like Eliot."[23] Seferis, Katsimbalis, and Ghika provided a way into modern Greece because they were perceived to be both Greek and "modernist," different and yet

familiar. But even if to some degree this was a vicarious celebration by Westerners of their own practices by praising those traits in Greeks, even if it could be viewed as a form of intellectual colonialism, it caused a breakthrough in writing about Greece. In the late 1940s and 1950s, some writers may have been attracted to the concept of a Greece connected to the mythical method of modernism and a "Greek Eliot," because it appeared to offer them one of the last modernist spots in a literary world slipping into the indeterminacy of postmodernism after the Second World War.

A crucial ingredient in Seferis's poetry was what Keeley called his insistence on "the contemporary Greek reality always," a characteristic he shared with the painter Ghika, the poet Odysseus Elytis, and other Greek artists. Miller presented a blueprint for the new encounter with Greece, although he might not have accomplished it to the same degree as Durrell did in *Prospero's Cell*. In Greece, he asserted: "Everything is delineated, sculptured, etched. Even the waste lands have an eternal cast about them. You see everything in its uniqueness—*a* man sitting on *a* road under *a* tree: *a* donkey climbing *a* path near *a* mountain: *a* ship in *a* harbor in *a* sea of turquoise: *a* table in *a* terrace beneath *a* cloud. And so on. Whatever you look at you see as if for the first time" (146). In *Reflections on a Marine Venus*, Durrell said, "We have learned to see Greece with inner eyes—not as a collection of battered vestiges left over from cultures long since abandoned, but as something ever-present and ever-renewed: the symbol married to the prime—so that a cypress tree, a mask, an orange, a plough were extended beyond themselves into an eternality they enjoyed only with the furniture of all good poetry" (179). In Don DeLillo's *The Names*, Owen states: "Correctness of detail. This is what the light provides. Look to small things for your joy, your truth. This is the Greek specific" (26). The goal of the writer is now to somehow get that uniqueness, that correctness of detail, on the page, to know the "natural history of a sacred place," as Durrell put it in "To Argos," and to offer a text analogous to what anthropologists would term "thick description." That phrase accurately fits the writing of Durrell in *Prospero's Cell and Reflections of a Marine Venus* and even more precisely the work of Leigh Fermor, who told the reader that his goal was "to attack the country at certain points and penetrate, as far as my abilities went, in depth" (*Mani* x). In *Prospero's Cell*, for example, Durrell carefully recorded the seasonal changes in his island home: "You wake one morning in the late autumn and notice that the tone of everything has changed; the sky shines more deeply pearl, and the sun rises like a ball of blood—for the peaks of the Albanian hills are touched with snow. The sea has become leaden and sluggish and the olive a deep platinum grey. Fires smoke in the villages, and the breath of Maria as she passes with her sheep to the headland, is faintly white upon the air" (45–46). Bernard Spencer strove for precision of description in the poem "Aegean Islands, 1940–41":

To sun one's bones beside the
Explosive crushed-blue, nostril-opening sea
(The weaving sea, splintered with sails and foam,
Familiar of famous and deserted harbors,
Of coins with dolphins on and fallen pillars).
(19)

Miller did not say that one could now look at Greece as if he were seeing it for the first time because the classical and Byronic preconceptions had been laid aside. But the fact that those constructions of Greece were no longer potent was a major factor in permitting English and American visitors to "see" Greece anew. It is worth noting that Miller and Durrell encountered Greece with less literary baggage about the country than most of their contemporaries. Seferis once praised Miller as "the first man I admired for not having any classical preparation on going to Greece. . . . There is such a freshness about him" (in Keeley, *Modern Greek Poetry* 200). Robert Liddell lamented to George Seferis that his university training in the classics interfered with his understanding of modern Greece, while Durrell, who never finished university, "starts with an innocent eye" and "has no means of knowing that Homer is more considerable than Erotokritos [a medieval poem from Crete]."[24]

Even the best of the poems that Durrell wrote on Corfu lack the "spirit of eternality" and historical depth one finds later in the verse he wrote after Seferis had "greatly influenced" him, as Kenneth Young recognized as early as 1950 (58). In Durrell's early Greek poems the discovery of one's self tends to overpower the natural history of the place. But the powerful poems that began to appear in late 1939, like "At Epidaurus," "In Arcadia," "To Argos," and "At Corinth," concern an individual contemplating myth with the help of a charged Greek setting. In "To Argos," despite the fact that the roads have been "identified now by scholars":

Only the shepherd in his cowl
Who walks upon them really knows
The natural history of a sacred place;
Takes like a text of stone
A familiar cloud-shape or fortress,
Pointing at what is mutually seen,
His dark eyes wearing the crowsfoot.
(*Collected Poems* 105)

All of Durrell's and Bernard Spencer's longer Greek poems from the early war period employ a kind of Antaean gesture to evoke the eternality that is everywhere in Greece.[25] But a fundamental difference separates the

work of Seferis from the writings of foreign philhellenes. At the end of Durrell's poems there is often a clear recuperative moment with a pastoral aura, involving some sort of "discovery of yourself," as in "At Epidaurus":

> Then smile, my dear, above the holy wands,
> Make the indefinite gesture of the hands,
> Unlocking this world which is not our world.
> The somnambulists walk again in the north
> With the long black rifles, to bring us answers.
> Useless a morality for slaves, useless
> The shouting at echoes to silence them.
> Most useless inhabitants of the kind blue air,
> Four ragged travellers in Homer.
> All causes end in the great Because.
>
> (*Collected Poems* 98)

The Greek world of Seferis is bleaker and less secure. Here is the final section of *Mythistorima*:

> Here end the works of the sea, the works of love.
> Those who will some day live here where we end—
> should the blood happen to darken in their memory and overflow—
> let them not forget us, the weak souls among the asphodels,
> let them turn the heads of the victims towards Erebus:
>
> We who had nothing will teach them peace.
>
> (tr. Keeley and Sherrard 59)

The first person plural in Seferis's poem opens out to include the entire Greek nation. That same first person plural appears in Durrell's poem above, but it refers to expatriates in Greece, removed from the larger world.[26] The difference between the two writers is highlighted in "Letter to Seferis the Greek," where Durrell wrote:

> O my friend, history with all her compromises
> Cannot disturb the circuit made by this,
> Alone in the house, a single candle burning
> Upon a table in the whole of Greece.
>
> (*Collected Poems* 102)[27]

Any perceptive reading of Seferis instantly reveals that "history with all her compromises" did disturb the private circuit Durrell attempted to carve out in Greece; indeed, the perspective offered by Durrell is one to which, in

my view, Seferis would never assent. In the opening of the second section of Seferis's *Mythistorima*, the poet literally grappled with the Greek past:

> I woke with this marble head in my hands;
> it exhausts my elbows and I don't know where to put it down.
> It was falling into the dream as I was coming out of the dream
> so our life became one and it will be very difficult for it to disunite again.
> (tr. Keeley and Sherrard 7)

In *Journey to the Morea*, Kazantzakis wrote, "For a foreigner the pilgrimage to Greece is simple, it happens without any great convulsion; his mind, liberated from sentimental entanglements, leaps on to discuss the essence of Greece. But for a Greek, this pilgrimage is fraught with hopes and fears, with distress and painful comparison" (8). One can take issue with how easily a foreigner can discuss the essence of Greece, but the visitor is prone to depict the pilgrimage to find Greece in literature as a relatively straightforward endeavor. Greeks like Seferis render that same journey as exceedingly difficult.

The Greek newspaper *Kathimerini* for May 13, 1998, carried an article entitled "Zorba, the Quintessential Greek, Is Still Controversial." The article called Zorba an "icon of the modern Greek since Michalis Cacoyannis filmed Zorba the Greek in 1964" and reported that the face of Anthony Quinn, who played Zorba in the movie, "became identified with the modern Greeks almost as much as the Parthenon was the symbol of the glory that was Ancient Greece." Robert Kaplan said, "The Greek myth was born out of movement in twentieth-century literature that was eventually crystallized in one of history's most memorable films" (249). No one can dispute that the picture of Anthony Quinn, dancing the *zeïmbekiko*, popularized the perception of a Dionysian Greece.[28] Surprisingly, the evidence suggests that Kazantzakis's novel *Zorba* had little to do with creating the new Greece nor much influence on any of the writers involved in the enterprise. In 1964, Patrick Anderson thought that it was strange that Henry Miller did not mention Kazantzakis in *The Colossus of Maroussi* (10–11). Miller, who did not know Greek, could not have read either Kazantzakis's novel nor his epic *The Odyssey* in English until more than a decade after the publication of the book about his trip to Greece. Still, Anderson has a point. *Zorba* appeared in an English translation in 1952 and was known well enough that *Holiday Magazine* asked Kazantzakis, called in the periodical "Greece's foremost novelist," to write an article about the Greek islands in 1954. Why did Spender not mention Kazantzakis in his article delineating the new philhellenism, "Brilliant Athens and Us"? Why did no one mention *Zorba*?

Peter Levi told the following tale of a visit to Athens in 1963: "Late at night, as café after café closed down, everyone in Athens who was still awake homed in on the same few tables, and conversations mingled. A film pro-

ducer I had never met was wandering around looking for someone, anyone, to write an English script for a film called *Zorba the Greek*. We all refused, no one liked Kazantzakis" (*Hill of Kronos* 29). Neither Levi nor anyone else, so far as I am aware, has revealed why no one liked Kazantzakis, but the statement appears to be sound. In the 1950s and early 1960s, when nearly everyone was carrying *The Colossus of Maroussi* and invoking the name of Seferis, no English or American writer of note went to "stay with Zorba in Greece." From one point of view, Zorba was simply Katsimbalis dressed up as a peasant, and one might have expected those who were enamored of the colossus of Maroussi to find his rural alter ego somewhat appealing. It might have been that when a real Dionysus was available as a guide to Greece, one did not need to turn to a fictional one. Zorba did not replace Katsimbalis as the masculine personification of a new Greece until the middle of the 1960s.

Greece was available as an alternative to Italy in the late 1930s because the Smyrna Disaster had depoliticized its soil and its Pans. Spender noted in 1954 that a "revealing aspect of this rediscovered love of Greece is that it has nothing to do with current Greek politics. . . . Their [the new philhellenes'] passion for the country is unpolitical. It implies a recognition of the fact that the politics of foreign countries are more complex than they appeared in the thirties. This mood of refusal to judge Greek politics, or even to take them into account, is probably as characteristic of the 1950s as taboos about Spain are a hang-over from the 1930s" ("Brilliant Athens and Us" 78). The refusal to take account of Greek politics began earlier than 1950. The first and only issue of *Greek Horizons* (1946), a magazine featuring the work of British expatriates in Greece and published in Athens, announced in the midst of a civil war: "This quarterly will not be political. It aims rather at describing the natural beauties, customs, and the varied progress the modern Greeks have made in the arts" (2).[29] The struggle of West against East to free the Greeks was over, and after the Great War those who wanted to revolutionize the world sought Moscow not Athens. Without the quotations from Byron, without maids of Athens who needed rescue, without the dream of regeneration, Greece could be a sunny Mediterranean place where one could rid oneself of Western inhibitions. On the boat to Greece Miller met people of several Mediterranean nationalities: "The Turk aroused my antipathies at once. He had a mania for logic which infuriated me. It was a bad logic too. And like the others, all of whom I violently disagreed with, I found in him an expression of the American spirit at its worst. Progress was their obsession" (6). Here the concept of progress, so closely tied to the construction of modern Greece for decades, has been transferred to the Turk, whose race throughout the nineteenth century was thought to be impervious to progress.

Further, in the late 1930s another Italy was also needed because Italy, under Mussolini, had itself become a politicized place for visitors. Thomas

Mann signaled that in his story "Mario and the Magician" (1929), in which a vacationing German family is confronted by Fascists on the beach. And Spain had erupted in civil war by the middle of the decade. Ironically, when the impending war politicized nearly all places in Europe and many elsewhere, Greece, because the disaster had depoliticized it, was available as a pastoral retreat—"a private country," as Durrell called the book that contained many of his early Greek poems. It was certainly no longer the political country it once had been. "Left to his own resources," Miller wrote, "man always begins again the Greek way—a few goats or sheep, a rude hut, a patch of crops, a clump of olives, a running stream, a flute" (170). Durrell has Father Nicholas phrase it a bit differently: "What more does a man want than an olive tree, a native island, and [a] woman from his own place?" (*Prospero's Cell* 19). Greece was now envisioned as an escape from the quotidian world; Miller described the boat from Athens to Corfu as gliding in "more than a Greek atmosphere—it was poetic and of no time or place actually known to man" (24).[30]

Olivia Manning's *Friends and Heroes* (1965), set in Athens in 1940–1941, contained a revealing discussion between Alan Frewell and Guy Pringle:

> Alan talked for some time about the Greeks and the countryside: "an idyllic, unspoilt countryside." Guy, interested in the more practical aspects of Greek life, here broke in to ask if by "unspoilt" Alan did not mean undeveloped, and by "idyllic," simply that conditions had not changed since the days of the Ottoman empire. How was it possible to enjoy the beauty of a country when the inhabitants lived in privation and misery?

"'I've seen a great deal of the country,' Alan responded. 'I have not noticed that the people are unhappy'" (658). When Alan is asked whether Greece is "happy under a dictatorship," he laughs. "'You *could* call it a dictatorship, but a very benevolent one. . . . Before Metaxas took over there'd been an attempt to impose a modern political system on what was virtually a primitive society. The result was chaos.'" Guy responds: "'You prefer the peasants to remain in picturesque poverty, I suppose?'" To which Alan answers: "'I prefer that they remain as they are: courteous, generous, honourable, and courageous'" (658–59). Like Manning's Alan Frewell, most of the new philhellenes did not draw attention to whether the Greeks were unhappy under the dictatorship of General Ioannis Metaxas, which lasted from August 4, 1936, until Greece's entry into the Second World War, or whether there were political prisoners in Greece. "'I'm sure I don't know,'" Alan says in Manning's novel. "'There may be, but if people are intent on making a nuisance of themselves, then prison is the best place for them'" (659–60). Neither of the protagonists gets the better of the other in this exchange, since the leftist,

Guy Pringle, has his own set of ideological preconceptions, which impede his vision of the country around him.

The Colossus of Maroussi, *Prospero's Cell,* and *Reflections on a Marine Venus* are not deeply concerned with Greek politics either. Miller and Durrell surely knew that Greece was under a dictatorship in 1939, but they did not allow that to affect their view of it as a sacred precinct. Miller briefly met a political exile during a trip to Spetses, but he never tells us what the man had done to deserve his sentence (65–66). Durrell made only the briefest mention of the political problems that brought Metaxas to power in 1936 in his first novel, *Panic Spring* (9–10).[31] Bernard Spencer, in his poem "Salonika (June 1940)," began: "My end of Europe is at war." He concluded that he would "shut . . . if I could, out of harm's way" the whole of bright life he witnessed in the Greek city. "The dancing, the bathing, the order of the market, and as day / Cools into the night, boys playing in the square; / Island boats and lemon-peel tang and the timeless café crowd, / And the outcry of dice on wood" (21). Who could tell from this description that Greeks lacked political freedom when Spencer wrote the poem? Of those who wrote about Greece in the late 1930s, only Bert Birtles clearly connected the Metaxas regime with authoritarian governments elsewhere in Europe, and he dedicated his book *Exiles in the Aegean* (1938) to "the brave Greek victims of Fascist terror in prison and in exile."[32] Ironically, Greece could be the sacred precinct for the new philhellenes in part because the political liberty of the Greeks was no longer a central concern. The real "Greece," as Miller and Durrell conceived it at the start of the Second World War, was one of personal discovery, not of political action.

This helps to explain the rather bizarre fact that the great majority of the texts written by the new philhellenes in the 1950s did not depict the terrible years of the Nazi occupation and the Greek Civil War, a struggle between bands of Communist guerrillas and the right-wing government supported by Britain and America, with the same defining sense of tragedy that imbued the Asia Minor Disaster. In *Views of Attica* (1950), Rex Warner offered this disclaimer for his book. "It is by no means to attempt any kind of description of the civil war in Greece. I shall be chiefly concerned with sights and sounds. Violence, savagery, poverty, irreconcilable hatreds are not part of my theme, yet it is only too true they exist." It was not that he was ignorant of the conflict, he added, but his book aspired to recount "other aspects of the scene which are real and will be, I hope, more permanent" (36–37). The sights and sounds of Greece could, in fact, be the civil war, as Kevin Andrews's *The Flight of Ikaros: Travels in Greece during a Civil War* (1959) demonstrated. Andrews's book stands out for the fact that, almost alone of the books of the 1950s, it did not attempt to separate the sights and sounds of Greece from its politics and did not present the view that the strife in Greece was any less crucial than the landscape. But where Durrell presented a journey to Greece

that ended with the "discovery of yourself" in *Prospero's Cell*, Andrews recorded a journey to find the self that ended in the discovery of Greece. Not many of his generation made that trip.

Most of the other writers, even those who served in the eastern Mediterranean during the Second World War, had a reaction about the war in Greece and its aftermath similar to that of John Fowles:

> All my generation had been dazzled by the exploits of a celebrated band of odd men who had fought beside the brave Greek resistance from 1939 to 1945. The aura of these contemporary Xans and Paddys somehow gilded our dream of those other handsome, dashing, and divine *andarte* and their women friends who once lived on Mount Olympus. We knew we couldn't rival them; my generation just missed fighting in the Nazi war and the bout of world belligerence in Korea, Malaysia, and so on that followed. We read all those glamorous exploits in Crete rather as the suburbs today read of the flamboyant goings-on in Hollywood. All that was somehow not quite credible, belonging less to real life—or certainly our own real lives—than to fiction. It allowed us to nibble and float in lotus land, but not to live where we really were. ("Behind *The Magus*" 69)

The Greek resistance to the Nazi occupation was viewed as a kind of heroic age, a return to the Greece of Byron. C. M. Woodhouse, one of the British officers who worked with the Greek resistance, later wrote: "Every experience of the 1820s was repeated, including torture, betrayal, and attempted murder, but also including loyalty, generosity and heroic self-sacrifice. The very names were the same, even if they were only pseudonymous: Odysseus, Kolokotronis, Botsaris, Karaiskakis, even Byron—all were there again in the 1940s" (*Philhellenes* 168). Patrick Leigh Fermor, who parachuted into occupied Crete during the war, recalled, "The people we lived among were mountaineers, shepherds, and villagers living high above the plains and cities in circumstances which exactly tallied with the life and background of the klephts in revolt at any point in the past few hundred years" (*Roumeli* 126). But after the war, that Byronic world was considered, as Fowles said, "not quite credible, belonging less to real life," and it was quickly relegated to the past. A klephtic past was hardly credible to Woodhouse, author of the best fiction written about Greece during the war, the sadly neglected collection *One Omen*. These stories are a grimly realistic picture of working with the resistance in Greece, in which the "brigand" clothes of some of the guerrillas are referred to as "romantic relics of an unreal past that had perhaps never lived" (18). The quick disappearance of the Byronic tradition after a brief resuscitation during World War II may have occurred because, as Woodhouse suggested:

> Nothing comparable to the progressive causes of the 1820s—Catholic emancipation, parliamentary reform, republicanism, utilitarianism, evangelicanism, abolition of slavery, freedom of trade unions, education for the working class, and so on—existed in the 1940s to be merged with the philhellenism in a "protest movement." . . . The desire to liberate the Greeks from the Nazis was not, as the desire to liberate them from the Ottoman empire had been, part of a complex of radical ideas. It was in fact singularly free of ideology. (*Philhellenes* 169)

The desire to keep Greece out of the Communist bloc was also fairly free of ideological discussion in Western writing and certainly not part of a complex of radical ideas. None of the new philhellenes, however liberal, championed a leftist victory in the Greek Civil War. Once again, foreigners found unanimity on an issue that was deeply divisive among the Greeks themselves. Just as all of the versions of the romance of Greek liberation were Venizelist in the First World War, so all of the versions of the romance of liberation set during the civil war, such as Mary Richmond's *Maid of Athens* (1948), Winston Graham's *Greek Fire* (1957), and Helen MacInnes's *Decision at Delphi* (1962), are anti-Communist in sentiment.

What was new was the desire of so many of the new philhellenes to leave politics out of their experience of Greece, a reaction that partly stemmed from the fact that, by the 1940s, politics was part of a Byronic Greece associated with both Romanticism and "popular" writing. The "new philhellenism," as Fowles suggested, portrayed Greece as the new lotus land. The wheel had come full circle from the early nineteenth century. In 1872, Murray's *Handbook for Travellers in Greece* suggested that travelers to the country could "form an accurate opinion of the important question, the present state and future destiny of the Levant." By the 1950s, the lotus eaters went to Greece to avoid such worldly concerns.

As a result, the books about the wars in Greece during the 1940s did not make a large impact on the postwar idea of Greece in the English and American mind. Andrews's *The Flight of Ikaros* has had admirers, to be sure, but nowhere near the number of readers or the importance as the books of Miller and Durrell.[33] John Waller, for example, visited Athens in the spring of 1945 while on active duty, but his poem "Spring in Athens" celebrated evenings with Katsimbalis, Seferis, and Antoniou, as if his Athens were hardly different from the city Miller left in December 1939. Many writers turned their heads away from the civil war as Warner had, at least in print. In *Reflections on a Marine Venus*, Durrell alluded briefly to the problems in Greece during his stay on Rhodes from 1945 to 1947, when Manoli the fisherman says of the Communists: "They come to deliver us from poverty. God knows we need that. But they will end in enslaving us with other evils. God knows we don't want that"; but he did so mainly to indicate that no such

political strife interrupted his enjoyment of Rhodes (50). Leigh Fermor knew as much about the civil war as anyone, but in *Mani* he made only a passing reference to the fighting in the 1940s (18–19). From his "private invasions of Greece," he stated in the preface, he would leave out "anything which had not filled me with interest, curiosity, pleasure, or excitement" (xi, x). Politics, apparently, was one of those things.[34]

A curious irony, then, lay at the heart of the work of Spender's new philhellenes. "Whatever you look at you see for the first time," Miller proclaimed, and there was an effort to put that advice into practice in descriptions of the landscape and people. On the other hand, Greek politics were not quite credible or real to these foreign observers, to paraphrase Fowles, and since their goal was to portray their Greek reality, politics were largely left out. Louis MacNeice appeared to take aim at the prevalent attitude of his literary colleagues in the third section of "The Island" in which a visitor, "gorged" on a Greek meal, settles down to take an August siesta:

> Here, he feels, is peace,
> The world is not after all a shambles
>
> And, granted there is no God, there are gods at least, at least in Greece,
> And begins to drowse; but his dreams are troubled
> By the sawmill noises of cicadas, on and on—Will they never cease?
>
> Were he to count a thousand, a hundred
> Thousand sheep, they would all be scraggy and stare at him with the stare
> Of refugees, outraged and sullen, . . .
>
> And there are prisoners really, here in the hills, who do not agree
> To sign for their freedom, whether in doubt of
> Such freedom or having forgotten or never having known what it
> meant to be free.
>
> (*Collected Poems* 306–7)

Yet even in this poem there seems to be a recuperation and reaffirmation for, in the fourth section, after asking, "But where is their island of wind and oil? / Where the slow concord of an island?" MacNeice concluded that one can find it in the light of the Greek sun, which can soothe one even in sleep, and he suggested there might be something to what Durrell called "islomania" after all:

> The round of dark has a lip of light,
> The dams of sleep are large with daybreak,
> Sleeping cocks are primed to crow
> While blood may hear, in ear's despite,

The sun's wheels turning in the night
Which drowns and feeds, reproves and heartens.
(308)

When politics mattered in the English and American construction of Greece, the country was routinely personified as female. Greece gained a masculine personification abroad when political concerns were not taken into account. This suggests that there was still a problem in coming to terms with the enduring dichotomy of Greece.

"The best books in English about Greece, as a personal discovery, are by Patrick Leigh Fermor, Lawrence Durrell, Henry Miller, Kevin Andrews, Dilys Powell. They have something in common, which I take to be Greek reality, not just a similar temperament, though most of them have been a close friend of at least one of the others, and a quality of the same generation marks them all" (Levi, *Hill of Kronos* 9). As a canon, this list is open to some revision; Robert Eisner suggested that Charmian Clift's *Mermaid Singing* (1956) and *Peel Me a Lotus* (1959) deserve consideration (229). One thing that all of these books have in common, which gives them the sense of Greek reality, is that they all are or purport to be nonfiction. In what V. S. Pritchett called "the candor of Greek light" (141), the discovery of the self seemed unsuited to the shadows of fiction's ambiguity. In Greece, Miller said, "The light penetrates directly to the soul, opens the doors and windows of the heart, makes one naked, exposed, isolated in a metaphysical bliss which makes everything clear without being known. No analysis can go on in this light" (*Colossus of Maroussi* 45).[35] Such a view made the country as inhospitable to the bourgeois interiority of the novel as had the idea of the classical sublime. The story of Italy as a personal discovery was often, if not predominantly, told in novels. But then Italy, especially places like Rome, Florence, and Venice, was granted a murkier atmosphere and a Renaissance past. The first novel of Greece as a "personal discovery" of which most readers would think would probably be James Merrill's *The (Diblos) Notebook* (1965), a fictional account of his visit to the island of Poros with Kimon Friar, or Fowles's *The Magus* (1966), both of which appeared just before the idea of Greece as lotus land was challenged by the military coup of 1967.

With Miller, of course, the distinction between fiction and nonfiction might not be appropriate; nearly all of his work is about the life of Henry Miller. But it is worth noting that while the story of Miller in Paris, narrated in *Tropic of Cancer*, has generally been recognized as a novel, the account of Miller in Greece in *The Colossus of Maroussi* has consistently been placed in the category of nonfiction. Readers and critics have determined that whatever Paris might be, Greece should be real. Durrell might seem a better example of the need for "the real" in writing about Greece. One might reasonably

argue that Durrell could not write fiction set in Greece, adducing *Panic Spring*, *Cefalú*, and the Athenian sections of *Tunc* and *Numquam* as proof. Durrell's most engaging fictional places were the urban, decadent cities of London (*The Black Book*), Alexandria, and Avignon. Things are actually not quite so clear, however. Durrell's Greek island books might not be autobiographical fiction, but they are certainly fictional autobiography, for Durrell was actually in Paris for many of the dates in *Prospero's Cell* and invented at least one main character, Gideon, for *Reflections on a Marine Venus*.[36] George Johnston's autobiographical novel about his life on Hydra in the 1950s, *Clean Straw for Nothing* (1969), is truer in "the correctness of detail" than either of Durrell's books.

The canon offered by Levi erased the novels about Greece as a personal discovery written in the early 1960s, including George Johnston's *Closer to the Sun* (1960); Charmian Clift's *Honour's Mimic* (1964), in my view her best book about the Greek experience; and Edmund Keeley's *The Gold-Hatted Lover* (1961). *Closer to the Sun* and *The Gold-Hatted Lover* both invoke Henry Miller as a precursor and attempt to critique the new Greece under the microscope of fiction's probing lenses. The specific merits of these works can be argued elsewhere, but they have at least partly been ignored because of the kind of fictional project in which they were engaged. Fiction qua fiction did not have to deconstruct Greece as a personal discovery—Johnston's and Clift's *The Sponge Divers* did not nor, on stage or screen, did Willy Russell's *Shirley Valentine* (1988).[37] As Fowles said in *The Magus*: "Greece is like a mirror. It makes you suffer. Then you learn" (99). His novel in fact fits this pattern, for while we may not agree on what Nicholas Urfe has learned or discovered about himself during the novel, we think that the problem is not with the mirror but with the reflection.[38] Interestingly, while both *The Magus*, with its illusory psychological permutations of the god game, and Merrill's *The (Diblos) Notebook*, with its device of replicating the jottings and crossed-out lines of a provisional text, have narrative styles that are influenced by the new trends of postmodern fiction, the Greek setting in both books is still enveloped in something like the mythical method of modernism.[39] Six years before the publication of *The Magus*, however, the characters of Johnston's *Closer to the Sun* discuss the problem of the "flawing of the mirror" (294); personal discovery in Greece might itself be a fiction.

In *Closer to the Sun*, an Australian family moves to the Greek island of Silenos to learn "something about the light and shadow on the rocks against the sky, the true taste of water, the rhythm of the seasons, the value of simplicity" (48). In the course of the novel, that project is threatened by an invasion of crass outsiders, the lure of money, and infidelity. The heroine says near the end, "Everybody thinks we're escaping from something by living here, and really this is where you find that there isn't any escape at all, not from anything, not yourself" (167). That has the typical Durrellian ring to it,

except that such sentiments are balanced by statements that, by living on Silenos, the main characters have simply "lost [their] way" and have "to find it again" (275); in the end they have learned no more in lotus land than Odysseus's sailors did among the lotus eaters.[40] The sexual awakening that Kate has with a handsome, faunlike Frenchman does not lead to a happy return home to her husband in the manner of *Shirley Valentine*, but rather it threatens everything that she really cares about in her life. As the hero of Johnston's other novel about life on Hydra, *Clean Straw for Nothing*, is told, "You simply cannot cut yourselves off on a little island, as you have done, for all these years. Not without reckoning cost. Life becomes altogether too claustrophobic. Even incestuous. In the long run fatally destructive" (141). When one turns to Charmian Clift's *Mermaid Singing* and *Peel Me a Lotus*, rather cheerful memoirs of Clift's life with Johnston on Kalymnos and Hydra, one realizes that in the new Greece nonfiction is really Sophoclean, the world as the authors think it should be, while fiction is Euripidean, men and women as they really are.

In Clift's *Honour's Mimic*, Kate, an Australian woman married to an Englishman, is sent to stay with her sister-in-law on a Greek island after a suicide attempt. When she arrives, her brother-in-law tells her that her sister "has found it difficult . . . to adjust her romantic expectations to the reality of this poor and primitive place" (13). Kate's romantic expectations are different, but they also cannot survive the reality of life on a remote Greek island. She has an affair with a sponge diver but in the end realizes that they both must return to the worlds in which they lived before they met. This again sounds, minus the suicide attempt, much like the plot of *Shirley Valentine*. But in this case the sponge diver is a crude, sleazy, rather lazy fellow, more "Levantine" than "Greek," and Kate's jealous brother-in-law rapes her when he finds out. Early in the novel, Kate is said to have a predilection for slumming, and the reader is left to wonder if Kate's love affair with Fotis is a growth experience—*the* event that reconciles her to life—or simply an attraction to Greek lowlife. The Greek setting is not emphasized in this work; in fact the island and its inhabitants are depicted as rather dull, savage, and claustrophobic. The novel ends when, as her Greek lover departs on a sponge boat, a woman in the market spits on Kate and the boys throw stones at her, hardly a fitting end to an island idyll.

The narrator of Keeley's *The Gold-Hatted Lover*, an American diplomat stationed in Greece, takes an old college friend and his wife on a holiday to Crete with a beautiful Greek woman as a guide. She offers many of the standard lines about American visitors: they are "cold" and "ashamed of showing their emotions" (87). The married American has an affair with the guide, while his wife takes up with the narrator. As the reunited married couple leave for America together at the end, the narrator imagines they will be "pleased to be back in their own little world after such a trying and dangerous

excursion into unknown territory, and who could argue that it wasn't for the best?" (235). On the last page of the novel, the narrator has retreated at night to the temple at Sounion where "none of the proper responses were aroused: no sense of imminent death, no final illuminations, no hint of tragic joy that one might feel in swan-diving over that cliff towards the black sea. . . . the only tangible emotion I felt was a sort of comic despair over having felt nothing at all, over having failed so miserably when the moment for the grand gesture—or at least for a grand thrill—finally came" (243). He concludes that he had not "loved hard enough." But Greece, or the idea of Greece as a place where one manages to have the grand thrill, has also failed the hero. None of the novels that subverted the idea of Greece as a personal discovery has received much notice. Nonfiction seemed better suited to the candor of Greek light.

> "What were you doing in Greece?"
>
> "Being happy." He turned his handsome face to her and smiled. "Just being happy. But unfortunately"—he sighed—"happiness does not last." (King, "Kind," in *So Hurt and Humiliated* 66)

If Greece was a paradise, then the inevitable fall from the garden had to occur. In *Prospero's Cell* and *The Colossus of Maroussi*, the loss of paradise was caused by World War II. The Germans were snakes on a biblical scale, so the end of paradise became especially poignant; in 1941 Durrell felt "the loss of Greece like an amputation" (*Prospero's Cell* 131). In *Reflections on a Marine Venus*, paradise ended with the termination of Durrell's position with the British Military Administration of the Dodecanese islands in 1947. In the decade after the war, ironically, the snakes became the very people who carried the books of Durrell and Miller under their arms. Leigh Fermor noted, "An old Athenian aware of the havoc that tourism has spread in Spain and France and Italy, laments that this gregarious passion, which destroys the object of its love, should have chosen Greece as its most recent, most beautiful, perhaps most fragile victim. . . . Greece is suffering its most dangerous invasion since the time of Xerxes" (*Roumeli* 117–18).

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, the "real" Greece kept getting pushed by tourists into remoter mountains and islands. Leigh Fermor said in the preface of *Mani* that his project was "to situate and describe the present day Greeks of the mountains in relation to their habitat and history; to seek them out in those regions where bad communications and remoteness have left this ancient relationship, comparatively speaking, undisturbed" (x). This argument has both logic and illogic, for by writing about regions like the Mani, Leigh Fermor ensured that the tourist hordes would disturb life there. In "Matapan" (1943) Durrell began:

Unrevisited perhaps forever
Southward from the capes of smoke
Where past and present to the waters are one
And the peninsula's end points out
Three fingers down the night
(*Collected Poems* 116)

Durrell never returned to Cape Matapan, the southernmost point of mainland Greece, but Leigh Fermor traveled there in *Mani*, as did Robert Liddell in *The Morea* (127). It became harder and harder to find the unvisited and unwritten place in Greece; William Travis went as far as the small island of Symi just off the Turkish coast (*Bus Stop Symi*, 1970). Even the region in Greece called *ta agrafa*, literally, the unwritten places, has been written about, most recently in Tim Salmon's *The Unwritten Places* (1995) and Patricia Storace's chapter "The Unwritten" in *Dinner with Persephone* (1996).

The unwritten places in Greece in English and American literature actually have been the cities of Athens and Thessaloniki. The comparison with Egypt is instructive. More than three-quarters of the books in English about Egypt focus on the urban centers of Cairo or Alexandria. Foreign authors can find something Egyptian about Cairo but not, apparently, anything Greek about Athens. Few books center on expatriate life in Athens and use the city as a character with various moods represented by its geographical regions. One that does, however, is Olivia Manning's *Friends and Heroes* (1965), which describes life in the city during 1940–1941, just before the German invasion. Another is Francis King's *The Firewalkers* (1956; published under the pseudonym Frank Caulfield), which is about the good life among expatriates in Athens in the early 1950s.[41] King was a gay author greatly influenced by the idea of a Cavafian Athens, and he employed the decadent hedonism found earlier in the work of William Plomer in both *The Firewalkers* and *The Man on the Rock* (1957), a fictional autobiography of one of the handsome, young, kept men. Thessaloniki has gained a presence in writing in English with Keeley's *The Libation* (1958) and *School for Pagan Lovers* (1993).[42]

Writing in 1981, Peter Levi suggested that the Greece of Durrell and Miller, that is, Greece as a personal discovery, "was hardly born in 1930, and in the last ten years has been transformed" (9). The military coup of 1967 in Greece certainly marked a breaking point in the narrative of Levi's *Hill of Kronos*—the snakes in paradise in this case being homegrown. The coup clearly altered the landscape of Greece; the junta that ruled for the next seven years ended, or at the least interrupted, the new philhellenism and caused a repoliticization of Greece as a place on the map. Once again, Greece became part of a complex of radical ideas when foreign opposition to the

Greek dictatorship became associated with, among other things, student rebellions in Europe and America, the movement against the Vietnam War, and reaction to the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia.

Lawrence Ferlinghetti, one of the San Francisco Beat poets, embodied the renewed links between desire for freedom in Greece and opposition to political and social oppression elsewhere. His poem "Forty Odd Questions for the Greek Regime and One Cry for Freedom" (first read at a benefit for the Greek Resistance on April 20, 1972) suggested that the coup destroyed the new Greece of Durrell and Miller when it asked the questions: "Where is Katsimbalis Where Zorba Who stole Euripides?" and "Why can't we sail the Isles of Greece and forget everything?" (*Open Eye, Open Heart* 109). Spender's new philhellenes of the 1950s themselves contributed to the reexamination of the place of Greece by putting aside their refusal to comment about Greek politics. Osbert Lancaster, for example, penned a poem entitled "On not going to Greece, Easter, 1968" and steadfastly declined to set foot in the country until after the collapse of the junta in 1974.[43] In a work entitled simply "Political Poem" (1970), Kenneth Hanson reached back to a potent name not heard in writing about Greece for several decades: "Now in spite of the censorship / Greeks by the sea / or sitting on stones. Are flexing their muscles / and dreaming a new Marathon" (*Uncorrected Word* 14). In "After the Countercoup That Failed" (1970), Hanson used an allusion to Yeats's "The Fish" to inject politics into what would have been an idyllic seaside scene:

> What will the fishermen in Kalamáki
> do but spread their nets
> as yellow as the sun
> beside the sea, blue as the sky
> and name the colonels one by one
> until the colonels' names
> are bitter on the tongue?
> (*Uncorrected Word* 12)

Seferis became an overtly political figure within Greece during the last years of his life. His famous statement against the junta in March 1969 and his superb poem of protest, "The Cats of St. Nicholas," ensured that after his death in 1971, which was itself a political event within Greece, foreigners could never again engage with Seferis without taking account of Greek politics.[44]

The Greek coup not only politicized Greece and Seferis abroad but also Henry Miller and his Greek book. Ferlinghetti invoked the totemic moment of the new philhellenism when he asked: "Can you still hear the cocks of Athens from the Acropolis?" (111). Kay Boyle's "A Poem for the Stu-

dents of Greece," commemorating the uprising against the junta at the Polytechnic University in Athens in the autumn of 1973, included the following passage:

> "I am thinking of that age to come," Henry Miller
> Wrote for those who have closed their windows, their doors,
> "When men will fight and kill for God . . . when food
> Will be forgotten. . . . I am thinking of a world
> Of men and women with dynamos between their legs,
> A world of natural fury, passion, action, drama, madness, dreams."
> (155)

In place of Seferis, the poet of Spender's new philhellenism, Boyle invoked Yannis Ritsos as the "poet of Greece, poet of prison, poet of house arrest" (156). It was because he was placed in detention in 1967 by the junta and then kept under house arrest from 1968 to 1974 that Ritsos became the poet of Greece for Boyle in 1973. Ritsos had been the leading poet of the Greek Left for decades, but his name was not often heard in English writing about Greece before the coup of 1967.[45]

There is a specific moment, within the period of the dictatorship, that I think symbolizes the end of the Greece of the new philhellenes. In 1972, the American author Mary Lee Settle went to Kos because it was cheap and she was trying to finish a book on seventeenth-century England; as she noted, it was always good to get some distance from the subject. "Wild packs of adolescent boys" roamed the area near her house, but they smiled at her, because, as she later discovered, her friend Vangeli had threatened them if they did not behave (*Turkish Reflections* 5). As soon as Vangeli left the island for a holiday in Athens, however, the situation changed: "The first large stone hit me in the back. I ran to my house, with stones being thrown at me from behind, got into the door, locked it behind me" (6). She decided to take the ferry across to the Turkish city of Bodrun as soon as she could. "The Greeks were terrible to me," she said as she got off the boat, "I have come for the protection of the Turks. . . . When what I said got around, as I knew it would, they welcomed me as if I were their long-lost sister" (7, 8). Settle stayed in Bodrun for three years and in 1977 published her novel about the Turkish city, *Blood Tie*, which won the National Book Award. By 1972, Greece was politically unappealing and spoiling, but Turkey—Turkey was still possible.

The politicization of Greece in foreign eyes did not end when the junta lost power in 1974. In Don DeLillo's *The Names*, the main character sounds a note not stressed in the years before the junta: "You realize the trouble with Greece, Greece is strategically located." To which his Greek companion

replies simply, "We have noticed" (236). From the political point of view, Greece had been strategically located throughout the 1950s and the early 1960s. But from the literary perspective, Greece, as the place where one went to escape into "antinomian spots," could not be situated strategically in the international world. In a telling moment that places *The Names* in the post-Arcadian, post-Millerian, and postmodern Greece created by the junta, the main character says: "I think I'd feel at home with the Minoans. . . . They weren't subject to overwhelming awe. They didn't take things that seriously." His estranged wife replies:

> "Don't go too far. . . . There's the Minotaur, the labyrinth. Darker things. Beneath the lilies and antelopes and blue monkeys."
> "I don't see it at all."
> "Where have you looked?"
> "Only at the frescoes in Athens. Reproductions in books. Nature was a delight to them, not an angry god-like force."
> "A dig in north-central Crete has turned up signs of human sacrifice. No one is saying much." . . .
> "A Minoan site?"
> "All the usual signs. . . . Human sacrifice isn't new to Greece."
> "But not Minoans."
> "Not Minoans. They'll be arguing for years."
>
> (84)

Rachel Hadas also signaled that she had entered a post-Arcadian and postmodern Greece in the opening of "Last Visit to Greece" (1988):

> I had the labels ready with their essence:
> Add water, serve. Light, language, beauty, sea,
> body, etcetera, etcetera. Time.
> In honesty I had to change the tune:
> Queasiness, boredom, and misogyny.
>
> (5)

In addition, beginning in the 1960s, the image of Greece in writing in English began to be extended and complicated by the work of authors of Greek ancestry of the diaspora; in America alone, modern Greece and its past have been explored in Harry Mark Petrakis's novel of the Greek War of Independence, *The Hour of the Bell* (1976), Theodore Vrettos's revisionist look at the removal of the Elgin marbles in *Lord Elgin's Lady* (1982), the poems of Greek-born Olga Broumas starting with the volume *Beginning with O* (1977), and Catherine Temma Davidson's *The Priest Fainted* (1998), to name just a

few works. They bring a different perspective to the encounter with Greece; one could say they offer the reader an entirely new country.

Many years after Seferis first met Durrell in Athens in 1939, he was asked to contribute an essay on Durrell's Greek poems. In a draft of that essay, written in French and now in the Gennadius Archive in Athens, Seferis, like Spender, noted that Durrell, Miller, and Spencer had exhibited a new kind of enthusiasm for the modern Greeks and a new interest in the Greek landscape not present in the work of earlier writers. The name he gave to their enterprise was "une nouvelle sort de Byronisme." This new kind of Byronism was meant, of course, to be the death of the old Byronism and, consequently, the end of Byron as a guide to modern Greece. Seferis apparently had no other term by which to denote this new direction in writing about modern Greece, so the very movement that finally superseded the Greece of Byron, by the use of the term *new Byronism*, still had the shadow of Byron attached to it.

There were, not surprisingly, several attempts to appropriate the famous first philhellene for the new kind of Byronism. In "At Corinth" (1940) Durrell invoked the spirit of Byron in his personal discovery in Greece:

> My skill is in words only:
> To tell you, writing this home,
> That we, whose blood was sweetened once
> By Byron or his elders in the magic,
> Entered the circle safely.
> (*Collected Poems* 87)

Durrell's magic circle here was hardly Byronic in the traditional sense in which the philhellenic journeys to Greece are supposed to help reform both Greece and the world. It was this latter kind of Byronism that had led Durrell, then "young, serviceable, and English," to consider enlisting in the Greek army in the autumn of 1939.[46] In "At Corinth," Durrell coopts Byron for the magic of Greece as a private circle, as opposed to the politicized "magic force of legend" so prominent in English writing in the century after Byron's death. Patrick Anderson entitled a chapter in his book *Dolphin Days* (1964) "Missalonghi: The Pleasures of Youth," and he portrayed Byron in Greece as the forerunner of contemporary lotus eaters. More recently, Stephen Minta, in *On a Voiceless Shore: Byron in Greece* (1997), spoke of Byron's "fascination with life beyond the boundary"; the "imagined Greece of Byron's youth was almost all extraordinary, a wild place, always on the edge" (151, 51). "What was original about Byron," Minta also said, "was that he found in Greece not a paradise of monuments, as many did, but a land of sensation, of sun, sea, and sky; a place of mountains, a rough physicality

of sunburn and dust" (70). Such elements can in fact be found in Byron, and Minta cannot be faulted for reminding us about them. But this is a Byron who resembles Henry Miller and Lawrence Durrell, and before Miller and Durrell, hardly anyone paid any attention to this aspect of Byron's Greek experience.

John Lehmann was close to the mark in his poem "The Road to Rhamnous" when he said, "The way we came, we seemed to have left the map / Somewhere beyond Marathon" (*Collected Poems* 123). The map to Marathon had been written by Byron. The writers who provided directions for those going beyond were Miller and Durrell. Yet the name that Seferis gave to the place that they discovered was the new Byronism. With Missolonghi so near, it was still almost impossible to think sanely about Greece.

NOTES

Introduction

1. Vesna Goldsworthy's useful investigation of British attitudes about the Balkans, *Inventing Ruritania*, was published after this manuscript had been completed.

Chapter 1

1. See Finlay, *History of Greece* 5:250–57.

2. The author quickly went on to say, "Their first attacks discovered the womanly spirit by which they were inspired," indicating that the Greeks fell short of expectations in the West from the very beginning; see the comments of Constantine 172. On the reaction in the West to Orloff's arrival, see Constantine 168–72, Augustinos 146 and Terence Spencer 184–86.

3. Even in the midst of the Greek War of Independence, the most famous American philhellene, Samuel Gridley Howe, saw Greek freedom as a cause larger than Greece itself: "The Independence of Greece is not to release her children alone from the thralldom of the Turks, but it will open the door for the advance of liberty, of civilization, and of Christianity in the East" (*Historical Sketch of the Greek Revolution* xxx). As late as 1852, Edward Masson, an old philhellene, wrote: "The regeneration of Greece and the establishment of the Hellenic Kingdom are destined to exert a powerful influence, social and religious, as well as literary, on the rest of the world" (12–13).

4. As Jusdanis noted, the only other people who could "relate their own national imaginings to the core of European identity" were the Zionists (14). On the enduring yet different cultural significations of Hebraism and Hellenism in modern Europe generally, see Lambropoulos.

5. See St. Clair, *That Greece Might Still Be Free* 19–20. On the growth of a Western identity among the Greek intelligentsia in the late eighteenth century, see Jusdanis 17–30.

6. Augustinos noted that Catherine wanted to "use him [Voltaire] as a propagandist to promote her image in Europe" (141).

7. See Jusdanis 26–27.

18. The one manly Greek in Plomer appears in the poem "The Philhellene." In this piece, a rich American woman takes up with a Greek man whose "favorite tense, is the Present Erotic." After the Greek gets a hold of all her money and leaves her, she wanders around Athens in a dazed state. Plomer may be alluding to his own relationship with the sailor Niko, who Plomer described as a tender little lamb until Niko robbed him and left him with a case of gonorrhea.

19. The Greek from Alexandria in "Nausicaa" is a dandy, while the people of Corfu are so "decadent" that "one is not prepared for the degree of degeneration as that in which they live and move" (*Child of Queen Victoria* 149–50).

20. Christopher Brennan's novel *Massacre of Innocents* (1967) makes an explicit connection between Alexandria and Greece. The book opens with the narrator on a boat between Alexandria and Athens pondering a passage of Cavafy.

21. Christopher Isherwood went to Berlin, he tells us, because he "couldn't relax sexually with a member of his own class and nation. He needed working class foreigners" (*Christopher and His Kind* 10; see also the comments of Fussell, *Abroad* 115–16). See also Mark Doty's collection of poems, *My Alexandria*, which brings the atmosphere of the Greek poet to New York. Isherwood never mentioned Cavafy in *Down There on a Visit*, but it seems likely that he knew of the Greek poet. Plomer and Isherwood became friends in 1929 and met in London in 1932—after Plomer's trip to Athens but before Isherwood's stay on the Greek island of St. Gregory in 1933. The tone of Isherwood's account, however, owes little to Cavafy and more, as I have suggested, to Firbank.

22. A briefer, more autobiographical, version of Isherwood's sojourn in Greece with Francis Turvill-Petre, the original for the fictional Ambrose, appears in *Christopher and His Kind* 107–12. Stephen Spender visited Turvill-Petre on St. Gregory in 1936 and described what he saw there in a letter to Isherwood; see *Letters to Christopher* 114–17.

23. As Roger Hinks asked when he arrived in Greece to work at the British Council in the early 1950s, "As the Hellas of the Philhellenes—Byronic Greece—is bankrupt, and the Byzantine Greece has always been publicly suspect—even to English Levant-fanciers like Robert Byron, what can we put in their place? How can we give Greece a new look?" Hinks suggested a "Mannerist Greece" of "the empty centre, the distilled perspective, and the lurid lighting" (194). Greece was acquiring its new look even as Hinks posed his question.

Conclusion

1. See also Lancaster 63. In *The Children of Thetis*, Christopher Kininmouth (214–16) does not cite *The Colossus of Maroussi*, but, as Avi Sharon informed me, took Durrell's concept of the "heraldic universe" almost wholesale from its pages; see *Colossus of Maroussi* 95–97. See also the mention of Katsimbalis as "the best-known figure in Athens" in King's *Firewalkers* (9). See also Durrell's reference to Katsimbalis in his poem "Mythology":

All of my favorite characters have been
Out of all proportion
Some living in villas by railways
Some like Katsimbalis heard but seldom seem.
(*Collected Poems* 115)

2. See *Inventing Paradise: The Greek Journey 1937–47* (1999). The point was made as early as 1950 by Kenneth Young, who said, "In the last twenty years, artists and writers have skipped the enchantments of France and Italy, and have gone purposefully to Greece. They have 'discovered' Greece—or, more accurately, rediscovered it" (53). The first writers whom he adduces to show the emergence of a new Greece free from inhibitions are Durrell and Miller.

In *Inventing Paradise*, Keeley described in detail the friendship and interrelations among Miller, Durrell, Seferis, and Katsimbalis in Greece during 1939, and those who want to follow that story further should look at that volume. Keeley also made extensive use of Miller's notebook of his trip to Greece, which was published in 1973 as *First Impressions of Greece*. Since that work appeared beyond the boundaries of this study, and Keeley has discussed at length the differences between the notebook and *The Colossus of Maroussi*, I have refrained from going over that ground again here.

3. Philip Sherrard, one of those involved in the creation of a "new Greece," has also called attention to the central role of Katsimbalis in the discovery of a "living Greece"; see 68–69.

4. Lancaster, for example, used a quotation from Durrell's poem "To Argos" as an epigraph for his chapter on the Argolid (111) and later referred to *Prospero's Cell*; also see the mention of Durrell in Martin Sherman's play *A Madhouse in Goa* (9). But specific references to Durrell are far fewer than those to Miller. Durrell's Greece, one should note, is much tamer than that of Miller. One reason for this might be Durrell's decision to promote silence as one of the dominant, if not *the* dominant, aspects of Greek island life. The opening epigraph of *Prospero's Cell* from *The Tempest* reads, "No tongue: all eyes: be silent," and silence is an important presence throughout the book. "At such moments we never speak," Durrell wrote of himself and his wife. Durrell's choice of silence as the hallmark of his Corfu was, I believe, largely literary in origin. His friend Miller had depicted Greece as a world of noise and conversation, and he wanted to offer something different. It was Durrell, after all, who wrote Miller the letter about Katsimbalis calling the cocks, but those sorts of loud, extemporaneous episodes are largely absent from *Prospero's Cell* and *Reflections on a Marine Venus*.

5. The word *Dionysiac* began to show up more often in writing about Greece after 1940. For example, in 1946, Derek Patmore said that the men dancing in a taverna on Aegina "seemed entirely unself-conscious and rapt in what was almost a dionysiac pleasure" ("Notes in a Greek Journal" 285). See also Leigh Fermor's comment that the landscape of Hydra is "violent and Dionysiac" ("Background of Nikos Ghika" 42).

6. On the madness Miller found in Greece, see also the comments of Katsimbalis in Miller's book about Yannopoulos, a poet "greater than your Walt Whitman and all the American poets combined. He was a madman, yes, like all great Greek fellows." Yannopoulos, Katsimbalis went on to say, "became so intoxicated with the Greek language, the Greek philosophy, the Greek sky, the Greek mountains, the Greek sea, the Greek vegetables, even, that he killed himself." Katsimbalis then concluded: "He wasn't crazy—he was *mad*. There's a difference. . . . He was out of proportion" (67–68).

7. Charmian Clift also contrasted life on Hydra with "the rat-race of modern commercialism" in *Peel Me a Lotus* 19.

8. Osbert Lancaster remarked that after the Second World War, "a new contingent . . . arrived, easily to be distinguished from the other [classical or Byzantine enthusiasts] by the erratic and seemingly purposeless nature of their course and by the fact that they are entirely unencumbered by guide-books or intellectual impedimenta of any sort" (7–8).

9. See also Fowles's remarks on the influence of Lawrence on *The Magus* in "Behind *The Magus*" 72.

10. In *Children of Thetis*, Christopher Kininmouth asserted that "on islands one expects to see Pan" (14). In 1994, Fiona Pitt-Keithley went in search of Pan in the Mediterranean in *The Pan Principle* but reported that the Greeks were the least priapic men she found.

11. In *Inventing Paradise* 139–52, Keeley has a short but interesting discussion of Greek women in *The Colossus of Maroussi*. Melina Mercouri played a female "Zorba" character as a prostitute in the film *Never on Sunday* (1960), but female Zorbas were rather rare in literature (one appears in Keeley's novel *The Gold-Hatted Lover*). Usually, both Greeks and foreigners would have sex with foreign women in Greece, as in Merrill's *The (Diblos) Notebook*, where the foreign narrator and his Greek acquaintances share a Scandinavian woman during a drunken orgy.

12. In Christopher Brennan's novel *The Massacre of the Innocents*, for example, the gay narrator says that with Greek youths he could be "physically dominated, but not, in any way, mentally so" (106).

13. Louis MacNeice, according to Stallworthy, was put off by the flamboyance of Katsimbalis and his mock-Katsimbalis act (391).

14. Miller made somewhat the same point about domestication versus wildness when he said that, unlike the Greek, the Frenchman "puts walls around his talk, as he does around his garden: he puts limits about everything in order to feel at home," but a Greek "has not walls around him: he gives and takes without stint" (32, 36). See also the comparison between Italian and Greek olive trees in Warner, *Views of Attica* 10; and see Lancaster 9–10 on landscape generally.

15. The pastoral picture of the Minoans was already in place by the late 1920s, for Waugh was certainly playing with it when he mentioned the "barbarities of Minoan culture" and presented the Minoans as if they were variants of the bloody Mycenaeans (*Labels* 136–37). On the attitude toward the Minoans in English writing in the 1940s, see also Cecil Day-Lewis's poem "Statuette: Late Minoan."

16. In Durrell's *Cefalú*, also published as *The Dark Labyrinth*, a group of tourists finds itself lost in a cave labyrinth in the east of Greece; each meets the Minotaur in his or her own way. After the initial Cretan setting, the story becomes highly allegorical, but at least two of the characters find their way back to a land before time began.

17. For example, in his poem "A Kind of a Philhellene," written in the early 1950s, John Fowles remarked on English-speaking expatriates who found the "essence of Greece" in the poetry of Seferis, the paintings of Ghika, and whatever Katsimbalis "said last week" (*Poems* 13). It was Miller's book that had guided these foreigners to Seferis, Ghika, and Katsimbalis. On Ghika, see *The Colossus of Maroussi* 52 and the essays on the painter by Spender and Fermor in *Ghika: Paintings, Drawings, Sculptures*. John Lehmann said that he learned about the Greek poets Seferis, Odysseus Elytis, and Angelos Sikelianos "owing to a chance meeting with Demetrios Capetanakis at Cambridge during 1940–41" and that Capetanakis provided translations of these poets for Lehmann's journal *New Writing* (*Ample Proposition* 58; see also Young's mention of Capetanakis, 56–57). But neither Durrell, Miller, nor Spender mention Capetanakis, and his influence does not appear to be extensive nor lasting. Further, when Lehmann traveled to Greece in 1946, he met Katsimbalis, with whom he visited Seferis on Poros; he then went to see Ghika at Hydra. He also had a chance meeting with Sikelianos in a taverna, but he never mentioned meeting Elytis, although he said that when he arrived in Athens in 1946, he quoted from Elytis's "The Age of Blue Memory" (*Ample Proposition* 59). He took, in essence, the Miller tour of Greek intellectuals. In the first stanza of the poem "A Spring Wind" from 1945, Bernard Spencer said:

> Upon this table
> Elytis's poems lie
> Uttering the tangle of the sea, the "breathing caves"
> And the fling of the Aegean waves.
>
> (48)

One is struck by the passage in part because it is rather rare to find the poet Odysseus Elytis, who won the Nobel Prize in 1979, invoked by an English or American writer before 1960. In the fourth stanza, "haunted Seferis, smiling, playing with beads" makes an appearance. That is not surprising at all. If a Greek writer received mention, it was usually Seferis.

18. For a discussion of what the Greek-less Miller might have known about Seferis's poetry, see Keeley, *Inventing Paradise* 60–70.

19. For more on this, see Keeley, *Inventing Paradise* 54–55.

20. I am grateful to Sharon for letting me see this paper before publication and for pointing me to Stephen Spender's essay "Brilliant Athens and Us."

21. The painter John Craxton asserted that "some painters can make their reality out of myth. By going to Greece I was trying to make a myth out of reality" (7).

22. See Keeley's discussion about how Seferis "has been particularly vulnerable to the prejudices of his English-speaking interpreters" in *Modern Greek Poetry*

68–86, as well as his perspective on a related prejudice, for some of the same reasons, for viewing Elytis as the "poet of the Aegean" (131–48).

23. This letter, dated March 29, 1944, is now in the George Seferis Archive in the Gennadius Library, Athens. Speaking of Seferis, Peter Levi said, "As a poet he belongs undoubtedly to the modern movement; he knew and loved the work of Laforgue before he ever met Eliot; but there is a directness in his poems unique in Europe, I think. Yeats is hysterical and Eliot is obscure by comparison" (*Hill of Kronos* 34).

24. The letter is dated November 26, 1941, and is now in the George Seferis Archive, Gennadius Library, Athens.

25. This is also true of John Lehmann's poems "The Road to Rhamnous" and "Greek Landscape with Figures" and Craxton's comments that he was drawn to paint "certain features of landscape, and a human identity in it, an inhabited landscape if you like, which were like tokens for Greece" (6). See also Francis King's comment that tourists should not go to Greece primarily for the ancient sites but for "its unparalleled landscape and its unparalleled people" (*Introducing Greece* 31).

26. The last lines of Durrell's "To Argos"—"The hyssop and the vinegar have lost their meaning, / And this is what breaks the heart"—seem to suggest a more problematic ending for "we the endowed who pass here/ With the assurance of visitors in rugs" who "Can raise from the menhir no ghost/ By the cold sound English idioms" (106). But as Keeley points out in *Inventing Paradise* (120–21), the despair is only for those who look for their meaning in the landscape and not in the living beings around them. For the fate of the English "well endowed" in Greece depends on whether they understand that "Our true parenthood rests with the eagle / We recognize him turning over his vaults" and in the shepherd with "dark eyes wearing the crowsfoot." As one of the English who had learned this lesson, it seems to me, Durrell suggested that he had, again, entered a sacred circle.

27. Elsewhere in his poem "Letter to Seferis the Greek," Durrell reprised the idea that life in Greece focuses on the personal and private: "can one say that / Any response is enough for those / Who have a woman, an island and a tree?" (*Collected Poems* 101).

28. On the difference between the film and the book, see Bien, *Nikos Kazantzakis: Novelist* 11–12. In his article "Greece Today," Kazantzakis presented Zorba as a talker like Katsimbalis: "He used to talk and talk, and when words could no longer encompass what he wanted to say, he would jump up and begin to dance" (70). The film, by making the dancing visual, diminished the fact that the Greece of Katsimbalis and of Zorba was like a siren song—a charm of words.

29. Durrell opened *Bitter Lemons*, a book about Cyprus during the EOKA uprising, with a similar statement: "This is not a political book, but simply an impressionistic study of the moods and atmospheres of Cyprus during the troubled years 1953–6." Durrell went on to say that he had concentrated on individuals, not policies, because he wanted to keep the book "free from the smaller contempts, in the hope that it would remain readable long after the current misunderstandings have been resolved as they must sooner or later" (11). No one would have tried to write a book about the "moods and impressions" of Spain from 1935

to 1939 or about Nazi Germany without acknowledging that politics was a crucial factor in the equation. One could, it seems, look at the Greek world with a "long" view that was beyond political concerns.

30. Gore Vidal said of the first group of American artists and writers to visit Rome after World War II: "Rome was strange to all of us. For one thing, Italy had been sealed off not only by war but by fascism. Since the early thirties, few English or American artists knew Italy well" (150). Greek islands function as places outside of the "real world" and even the world of the narrative in Storm Jameson's *One Ulysses Too Many* (1958; see, e.g., 39–41) and Durrell's *Justine* (1957).

31. Keeley commented that as "far as one can gather from his travel writing and his letters, Durrell's view of Greek politics was never very broad or deep, and though he celebrated the courage and vigor of the Greeks' resistance to the Italian invasion in 1941, he subsequently appears to have shared something of the superficial cynicism of those Western observers who could not fathom or were uninterested in penetrating the complexities of a political landscape that often seemed alien to them in the conflicting passions it occasioned, especially in times of crisis" (*Inventing Paradise* 229–30). In *First Impressions of Greece*, Miller identified the political exile he met on Spetses as Seferis's brother-in-law Constantine Tsatsos; see Keeley, *Inventing Paradise* 90–91.

32. Birtles, a committed leftist, had a different view of Seferis. Noting Seferis's "studied air of intellectual evasion" and his "unwillingness to see the Fascist implications" of Eliot's poetry, he predicted the poet would support "some form of retrograde authoritarianism" (88). One hopes that Birtles lived long enough to read Seferis's denunciation of the Greek junta in 1969.

33. For nonfictional works from the periods of the Second World War and the Greek Civil War, see Eisner 199–215; for fiction see Karanikas 227–42. What was written generally recalled the Byronic tradition of liberation from the previous century. Glenway Westcott's *Apartment in Athens* depicted the sufferings of the Athenians under the brutal Nazi occupation, but see Karanikas on its "total lack of ethnicity" (236). Cherakis's *Hand of Alexander*, Sedgewick's *Tell Sparta*, and Mary Richmond's *Maid of Athens* are all variations on the romance of liberation. George Weller's *Crack in the Column* is the most politically sophisticated in this vein, but it too invoked the Greek War of Independence with an epigraph from the famous American philhellene Samuel Gridley Howe. Winston Graham's *Greek Fire* offered a Greek romance of liberation in which the role of the Turks is taken by the Communists.

34. In *An Affair of the Heart*, Dilys Powell divided her narrative into sections entitled "First Sight," "Estrangement," "Reconciliation," and "Ever After." "First Sight" provided a brief account of a prewar idyll in Greece with her archaeologist husband with some similarities to *Prospero's Cell*; it ended with his death in 1936. At first one might think that "Estrangement" was an attempt to come to terms with this loss, but it turns out to be a disenchantment with Greece in 1945 because politics and the civil war have come between her and the Greece of her memory. She departed thinking it might be "time for me to get Greece out of my blood" (55). Her next visit went better. There were still hardships, but in her

touchstone village of Perachora "the war is over. Nobody speaks of it any more. . . . now they go back to their old ways, now they concern themselves with today and tomorrow. They grow old, they die, but they are the same" (146)—as if that were what they were *not* doing in 1945. Because the old ways have returned, Powell can once again find the Greece she loved. What estranged her from Greece, it seems, was a period in which she could not avoid Greek politics and could not pretend that it did not affect her relationships with the people of the country.

35. The idea appears in fiction as well. Everything "seems to be stripped away by this light, stripped away to bare bones," says Kate in Johnston's novel *Closer to the Sun*. "You see people all the way through, as if they're transparent almost. And you see yourself the same way" (167).

36. See MacNiven 166–214 for Durrell's whereabouts in 1937 and 1938; and on the character of Gideon, see 306 and 722 n. 2.

37. Johnston's *The Cyprian Woman* (1955), which uses Aphrodite instead of Dionysus as the presiding deity in a Greece of the libido, also does not deconstruct the efficacy of personal discovery in Greece.

38. Thomas Fisher plausibly suggests that at the end of *The Magus* readers are asked to "decide whether Nicholas has grown adequately from his experiences on Phraxos, or if he is even capable of growth" (61). What the novel does not ask us to decide is whether the experiences on Phraxos do in fact promote personal growth; that seems to be assumed.

39. See, for example, Nicholas Urfe's description in *The Magus* of his first encounter with "the stripping-to-essentials" sunlight and with the "Circe-like quality of Greece; the quality that makes it unique. In England we live in a very muted, calm, domesticated relationship with what remains of our natural landscape and its soft northern light; in Greece landscape and light are so beautiful, so all-present, so intense, so wild, that the relationship is immediately love-hatred, one of passion" (49). In Merrill's novel, Orson offers the following toast: "I give you the light of Greece. . . . Once you have had your vision no lesser world is tolerable" (*The [Diblos] Notebook* 113), and that sentiment about the hold of the place on the characters runs throughout the book.

40. In *Clean Straw for Nothing*, the narrator muses on his personal and professional failure: "Is it the island that has done this to us? Or only ourselves? I don't think we can find redemption here. It must be elsewhere" (145). Perhaps Johnston is the only one who could ask this question because he spent a decade on a Greek island with only a six-month hiatus in England.

41. Barry Unsworth's first novel, *The Greeks Have a Word for It* (1967), provided a look at the several kinds of English and Americans who came to Athens in the early 1960s. The book is something of an apprentice work and has never been reprinted.

42. Thessaloniki was the setting for Daniel Nash's novel, *My Son Is in the Mountains* (1955), which is based loosely on the killing of the journalist George Polk (on which see Keeley, *The Salonika Bay Murder*).

43. Charmian Clift also spoke out strongly against the junta in her article "The Voices of Greece" (*Being Alone with Oneself* 33–36). Clift, who lived in

Greece for ten years, never indicated such an interest in Greek politics in *Mermaid Singing*, *Peel Me a Lotus*, or *Honour's Mimic*, but something like the coup of 1967 had not occurred during Clift's stay in Greece.

44. On Seferis's declaration against the junta in March 1969, see Levi, *Hill of Kronos* 151–53, who provides the full text of the statement in English. The aging Katsimbalis's star may have faded a bit at this time because of his sympathy with, if not his support for, the military government; see Levi 140.

45. In the introduction to of a collection of poems by Ritsos published in England, *Selected Poems* translated by Nikos Strangos (1974), Peter Bien remarked "how extraordinary" it was "that Yannis Ritsos, who for decades was acknowledged inside Greece as one of the undeniably major figures of her literary revival . . . should be so new to the English-speaking world" (11; in 1971 Strangos had translated a smaller selection of Ritsos's work from 1968 to 1970). Bien does not consider that the English-speaking world might be more ready to accept Ritsos because of the new interest in the Greek political situation. The early 1970s saw the real emergence of translations of Ritsos in English; in addition to the translations by Strangos, Amy Mims brought out a translation called *Eighteen Short Songs of the Bitter Motherland*. A collection of poems published in the United States in 1969, *Romiossini and Other Poems*, translated by Georgakas and Paidoussi, explicitly made the connection between Ritsos's detention and the appearance of the book; the introduction includes a request that the reader write to the U.S. State Department demanding Ritsos's release, for a "poet's life might be saved." I would not want to push the point, however, since the first volumes in English of the work of Odysseus Elytis also began to appear in the early 1970s, and Elytis could not be described as the poet of prison and house arrest. Still, the coup does seem to have had an effect on the dominance of Seferis as "the poet of Greece." A description of Ritsos's career up to 1973, including his detention in a camp from 1948 to 1952 and his subsequent imprisonment by the junta in 1967, which was changed a year later to house arrest, can be found, among other places, in Bien's introduction to Ritsos's *Selected Poems*.

46. See Durrell's poem "Byron," written in 1944 during the Second World War; Ian MacNiven correctly noted that a "deliberate ambiguity" in the first person pronoun serves to conflate the present and past poets (273). But writing from the "headquarters of a war" like the one to which he referred in the poem, Durrell communed with a Byronic spirit far different from the one invoked in "At Corinth" within the magic circle. He was, rather, looking back to the Byron of Missolonghi for solidarity in a time of war and disenchantment.