From junta to crisis: modernization, consumerism and cultural dualisms in Greece*

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The Greek economic crisis has triggered a self-reflexive process and prompted a re-examination of political and cultural trends in Greece since 1974 in an attempt to rethink earlier cultural approaches and practices. This article argues that a cultural perspective on the crisis can be productive insofar as it revisits key concepts and dominant models of analysis and charts cultural change in Greece from the fall of the military junta in 1974 to the beginning of the crisis in 2009. Just as the fall of the junta encouraged a re-examination of the post-civil-war period, so the current economic crisis has prompted a rethink of the metapolitefsi *era. Exploring the cultural developments that have taken place during this period, this article focuses on competing notions of culture and engages with the two dreams of the post-junta period: modernization and consumerism. The aim is not to reaffirm oppositions or reverse hierarchies but to rethink cultural dualisms and explore hybrid tensions within a broader political and cultural context.*

Keywords: Greek junta; Greek crisis; modernization; consumerism; cultural dualism

A number of studies on post-1974 Greece published in recent years, and even earlier, have focused on political, economic or institutional changes, but cultural developments do not seem to have received adequate scholarly attention.[1] Even those books which include chapters or sections on culture tend to offer surveys of specific areas rather than

trying to capture and analyse more general cultural trends.[2] The Greek economic crisis has triggered a self-reflexive process and prompted a re-examination of political and cultural trends in Greece since 1974 in an attempt to rethink earlier cultural practices and answer questions such as the extent to which a cultural approach can help us understand the political and economic aspects of this crisis, and whether the crisis frames old issues in a new perspective, encouraging a more critical approach. The answers to such questions are neither easy nor straightforward. Just as the fall of the junta encouraged a re-examination of the post-civil-war period, so the current economic crisis has prompted a rethink of the *metapolitefsi* period. It has fostered a re-reading and retrospective criticism of the post-dictatorship transition to democracy and led to the current difficulties being seen as a result of clientelism, corruption and failed modernization. The country's post-1974 period has been turned into an interpretative framework and is often blamed for the troubled present and an uncertain future.[3] However, looking at this period (1974–2009) from a cultural perspective may offer alternative paradigms and be productive by revisiting dominant models of analysis and charting cultural change in Greece.

Exploring the cultural developments that have taken place since the fall of the junta, this article will focus on two crucial and interconnected areas, namely the discussion of various manifestations of dualism as a method of cultural analysis and the increasing tension between humanist and consumerist cultural practices. [4] The first part of this article interrogates the ways in which dualism has been deployed by a range of scholars to assess the extent of Greece's modernization and how it has developed into a dominant transdisciplinary method of analysis since the 1980s. Culture in this part is discussed within a wider historical and political context. The second part looks at increasingly competing conceptions of culture in the period from junta to crisis and highlights the implications of the growing trend towards popular and material culture.[5] Although both parts deal with the coexistence of two competing cultural discourses and engage respectively with the two dreams of the *metapolitefsi*: modernization and consumerism, the aim is not to reaffirm oppositions or reverse hierarchies but to explore hybrid tensions and cultural ambivalences.

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2 V. Panagiotopoulos (ed.), *Ιστορία του Νέου Ελληνισμού – Η Ελλάδα της ομαλότητας, 1974-2000* (Athens 2003).

3 A. Liakos and H. Kouki, 'Narrating the story of a failed national transition: Discourses on the Greek crisis, 2010–2014', *Historein* 15 (2015) 53.

4 Consumerism is defined here as a cultural ideology highlighting consumption, lifestyle and material culture.

5 This trend might not be particular to Greece and it is likely to have occurred earlier or at the same time in other countries. What could be considered as making the difference in the case of Greece is the rapid pace of change, and this cannot always serve as a reliable measure of comparison due to the differing political and socio-cultural conditions within each country.

Dualisms and the role of the state: modernization, hybridization and cultural ambivalence

One of the most enduring and influential interpretations of Greek cultural and political developments advanced during the *metapolitefsi* is that of cultural dualism, which is based on the assumption that two opposing trends or forces are vying for supremacy. Greek culture, like Greek identity, has been seen from a dualist perspective, marked by symbolic oppositions or tensions. This approach has been adopted in different forms by anthropologists, political scientists and historians and has framed the discussions of political and cultural developments in Greece since the 1980s.[6]

In the 1980s, building on Patrick Leigh Fermor's schema regarding the 'Helleno-Romaic dilemma', the anthropologist Michael Herzfeld proposed the Hellenic-Romeic distinction as 'the difference between an outward-directed conformity to international expectations about the national image and an inward-looking self-critical collective appraisal'.[7] Although Herzfeld has been keen to challenge two-column diagrams (such as the one used by Leigh Fermor) as a European product, he introduced the concept of *disemia* to argue that Greek identity is caught between two extremes. He suggested that the Hellenic and Romeic, or 'outside' and 'inside', views of Greek culture, are the two historical images informing the respective ideals of *self-presentation* and *self-knowledge* (or *self-recognition*) while Korais and Zorba compete for the Greek soul.[8]

In the early 1990s the political scientist Nikiforos Diamandouros explored the relationship between culture and politics in Greece and charted the evolution of two cultures, which held sway alternately according to political circumstances.[9] The older of these two, the underdog culture, has been seen as marked by a pronounced introversion, xenophobia, anti-westernism, and adherence to pre-capitalist practices.[10] Defined by Diamandouros in a somewhat contradictory manner as combining a potent egalitarianism with a

6   For a review of some of the discussions, see I. Katsoulis, 'Ἡ Νεοελληνική κοινωνία: "μεταξύ" εκσυγχρονισμού και παράδοσης', *The Books' Journal* 73 (January 2017) 14–23.

7   M. Herzfeld, *Ours Once More: Folklore, Ideology, and the Making of Modern Greece* (New York 1986 [1st edn 1982]) 20.

8   M. Herzfeld, *Anthropology through the Looking-glass: Critical Ethnography in the Margins of Europe* (Cambridge 1987) 95–122.

9   N. P. Diamandouros, 'Politics and culture in Greece, 1974–1991', in R. Clogg (ed.), *Greece, 1981–1989: The Populist Decade* (New York 1994) 125, 'Cultural dualism and political change in postauthoritarian Greece', in *Estudios = Working papers/Instituto Juan March de Estudios e Investigaciones, Centro de Estudios Avanzados en Ciencias Sociales* 50 (Madrid 1994), available at http://digital.march.es/ceacs-ir/es/fedora/repository/ir%3A3835, and *Πολιτισμικός δυισμός και πολιτική αλλαγή στην Ελλάδα της Μεταπολίτευσης* (Athens 2000). With reference to PASOK and from a leftist perspective, Euclid Tsakalotos attempts a critique of Diamandouros' dualism: 'Modernization and centre-left dilemmas in Greece: The revenge of the underdogs', GreeSE Paper no 13, Hellenic Observatory Papers on Greece and Southeast Europe, April 2008, available at http://www.lse.ac.uk/europeanInstitute/research/hellenicObservatory/pdf/GreeSE/GreeSE13.pdf.

10   Nicos P. Mouzelis specifies two distinct types of the underdog culture, the clientelistic, dominant in the pre-junta period, and the populist, dominant in the post-junta period: 'Greece in the twenty-first century: Institutions and political culture', in D. Constas and Th. G. Stavrou (eds), *Greece Prepares for the Twenty-first Century* (Washington, DC 1995) 17–34.

pre-democratic mentality, this culture competes with its younger counterpart, which has its intellectual roots in the Enlightenment and liberalism. It is also claimed that this modernizing and reformist culture, 'outward-looking and less parochial than its rival', was in the ascendant in the Greek world from the second half of the nineteenth century until the early to mid-1930s. From then on, until the mid-1970s, it entered a period of decline, following the decline of the diaspora communities and the exhaustion of the Venizelist project. However, according to Diamandouros, what might have tipped the balance in favour of this culture was Greece's increasing integration into the European Union.

More than ten years later the historians John Koliopoulos and Thanos Veremis adopted a different, but essentially similar, binary opposition, using Ernest Gellner's concept of the 'segmentary society', which refers to a pre-modern social structure intended to protect the extended family and prevent the authorities from encroaching on its power.[11] They saw the traditional, segmentary society as a deep structure, resisting the unifying impetus of the modern unitary state, which antagonized domestic political practices by adopting western principles of governance. This opposition contrasts the traditional and pre-modern segmentary society, broadly associated with the East, with the civil society and western models of administration (which in the case of Greece were championed by diaspora and modernizing elites including the statesmen Kapodistrias, Mavrokordatos, Trikoupis and Venizelos).[12] In short, the segmentary society and underdog culture are perceived as impediments to modernization.

Cultural and political dualism, in its various forms, has emerged as the dominant model of and for the post-junta period but also for the earlier history of Greece. My aim here is to show its inadequacies as an interpretive methodology and question its evaluative implications and political uses. A cultural perspective can help us to reassess the operation of this dualism from the point of view of the underdog culture rather than that of the elitist modernizing culture. This, in turn, might shift attention from demarcating the discourses of the two cultures or confirming the superiority of one over the other in articulating subject positions to highlighting the instability and hybridity involved in constructing cultural identities. Greeks, for example, may simultaneously admire and hate anything associated with modern Europe. They aspire to be western while at the same time looking down on Northern Europeans, saying: 'when we were building the Parthenon, you were living in the trees' in the same way as they treat their 'homeland' as a 'whore' and a 'Madonna'.[13]

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11 J. S. Koliopoulos and Th. M. Veremis, *Modern Greece: A History since 1821* (Oxford 2010).

12 Th.Veremis, Ὅταν η κατακερματισμένη κοινωνία συναντά τον λαϊκισμό', *Protagon*, 9 December 2011: http://www.protagon.gr/?i=protagon.el.article&id=10772 (accessed 25 May 2016) . See also his lecture 'The Greek crisis: When the segmentary community meets with populism' (The Hellenic Centre, London, 1 June 2013: http://www.livemedia.com/video/45135). It is interesting to note that Andreas Papandreou, who spent a number of years teaching in America and Europe, is not included among those whom Veremis calls 'diaspora statesmen'.

13 It is interesting that *Ellinismos* (i.e. the Greek nation) is often perceived both in terms of great achievement and bare survival.

Recently, the cultural dualism proposed by Diamandouros has been revisited[14] and the 'underdog' culture blamed 'for bringing the country to the verge of economic and political bankruptcy'.[15] This culture has been presented and understood as being at the root of Greece's debt crisis and of the country's inability to address its structural shortcomings.[16] Despite occasional reservations, this dualism continues to inform the way Greek identity is analysed, and Greece is presented as poised between a troubled tradition and a desired modernity. Trying to demarcate the two trends, the exponents of the dualist approach aim to highlight binary oppositions while its critics tend to emphasize their fusion.[17] Instances of hybridization have been explored, a good example being the fusion of the two clashing modes of time. The 'pre-modern' mode of cyclical and ritual time embodied in the celebration of name days now co-exists with an increasing awareness of the irreversible and linear time associated with birthdays. Nowadays an increasing number of people in Greece celebrate both, whereas in the past the celebration of name days was more prevalent.[18] Critiquing the rigidity of the dualist approach by highlighting cases of hybridization or demonstrating how an individual-centred culture co-exists with an earlier collectivist mentality is not sufficient. What is missing here is a historical and to some extent a cultural perspective, although the defenders of the dualist approach will argue otherwise.

The resilience of the dualist approach as a useful analytical tool has something to do with the fact that the notion of modernization, in the sense of 'catching up with Europe', has increasingly entered debates on national identity as representing a break with the vestiges of the country's 'Ottoman' and 'oriental' past. Cultural dualism, as outlined above, involves a form of Eurocentrism which has been indicted by postcolonial theorists studying former colonies in south Asia. Postcolonial theory reflects a desire to avoid Eurocentrism by provincializing Europe[19] and the need to understand the importance of local cultural categories, practices and identities. The underdog culture could be seen in terms of the 'subaltern' (the under-represented in India's history and their hidden history) and the classic question 'Can the subaltern speak?' could be applied to it.[20] As with the

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14 N. P. Diamandouros, 'Postscript: Cultural dualism revisited', in A. Triandafyllidou, R. Gropas and H. Kouki (eds), *The Greek Crisis and European Modernity* (Basingstoke 2013) 208–32.

15 A. Triandafyllidou, R. Gropas, and H, Kouki (eds), *The Greek Crisis and European Modernity*, 9 and 15.

16 Triandafyllidou, Gropas, and Kouki, 8.

17 On hybridity and a critique of the dualist approach, see D. Tziovas, 'Beyond the Acropolis: Rethinking Neohellenism', *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 19 (2001) 189–220.

18 R. Hirschon, 'Cultural mismatches: Greek concepts of time, personal identity and authority in the context of Europe', in K. Featherstone (ed.), *Europe in Modern Greek History* (London 2014) 164–5 and D. Tziovas, *The Other Self: Selfhood and Society in Modern Greek Fiction* (Lanham, MD 2003) 13–29. On the Greek notion of time, see S. Ramphos, *Time Out: Η ελληνική αίσθηση του χρόνου* (Athens 2012).

19 D. Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton 2000).

20 In the South Asian context, the term 'subaltern' applies to all groups that are perceived as 'subordinate' in terms of class, caste, gender, office or 'in any other way'. See G. C. Spivak, 'Can the subaltern speak?', in G. Nelson and L. Grossberg (eds), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Urbana 1998) 271–313, R. Guha and G. C. Spivak, *Selected Subaltern Studies* (Oxford 1988), S. Morton, *Gayatri Spivak: Ethics, Subalternity and the Critique of Postcolonial Reason* (Cambridge 2007) 96–7.

subaltern, whose identity is its difference, one cannot construct the underdog culture as a category with 'an effective voice clearly and unproblematically identifiable as such'.[21] Yet until now the emphasis by those practising cultural dualism has been on the modernizing culture and its transformative potential, while little attention has been given to the under-dog culture.

The dualist approach tends to boil everything down to an underlying opposition between East and West by tacitly valorizing the West and ignoring the negative aspects of western modernity. However, what is not acknowledged here is that the westernizing trend has always had the upper hand, not expressed in the form of a modern polity or civil society, but as a centralizing state mechanism suppressing cultural diversity. In Greece the state represented an authoritarian caricature of western modernity and kept any manifestations of the underdog culture or the segmentary society under control, both culturally and politically.[22] The unitary state exercised its power through the symbolic power of the Greek language and the classical past or through homogenizing and centralizing policies. The uniform education system has also assisted the Greek state in shaping national identity and assimilating otherness. On the other hand, the Romeic self-image, the underdog culture and the segmentary society have invariably been associated either with the backward or the dangerous other. This otherness threatened cultural homogeneity and the authority of the state and therefore had to be suppressed.

Although the binary oppositions outlined above are intended to facilitate the analysis of the political and cultural developments in Greece since the nineteenth century and help account for them in a balanced and detached manner, they do not seem to take into account the hierarchy of power involved in those oppositions. The opposing trends or self-images are simply presented as being either in constant tension or in some sort of fragile equilibrium. None of them appear to dominate or set the agenda for long. However, as mentioned above, what is not considered here is the role of the state and its contribution to tipping the balance. The dualistic interpretation, therefore, tends to overlook the state's role as a kind of hybrid space between the two poles, where an attempt is made to follow western models at the same time as exercising oppressive regulation of the underdog culture. The cultural policy of the Greek state was to assimilate or even suppress ethnic, regional, cultural and linguistic differences while at the same time it fostered a clientelistic system, which attracted large sections of the segmentary society by promising individual benefits.

This dual role of the state can be held to justify its intermediary position between the two poles of the binary patterns proposed. Although it is often pointed out that state-building in Greece did not live up to western expectations and standards, it is also

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21 B. Ashcroft, G. Griffiths, and H. Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts* (London and New York 2007) 201.

22 George T. Mavrogordatos points out that 'Antivenizelism typically sheltered and expressed the stubborn resistance of a variety of *particularisms* against the modern, liberal, and national state, which aspired to control, assimilate, neutralize, or even suppress them': G. T. Mavrogordatos, *Stillborn Republic: Social Coalitions and Party Strategies in Greece 1922–1936* (Berkeley 1983) 271.

claimed that 'Greece's state-building began with a war of independence in 1821 and continued along the lines of its Western prototypes – the twentieth-century French administration, the German legal system, and British parliamentary practices'.[23] Greece has been described as 'one of the earliest late modernizers' in the sense that it embarked unusually early on its modernization drive.[24] State-building, therefore, seems to have followed an ambivalent process of development by being both western and non-western and carving out a space between conformity to the notion of the individual rights of western civil societies and loyalty to the extended family (segmentary society). This complicates the binary oppositions outlined above because the state is seen to act not as a modernizing but as a homogenizing and centralizing force. Although the Greek state has undergone rudimentary modernization and institutional reform over the years, its role in suppressing various manifestations of the underdog culture remained largely unchanged until the 1980s.

In the past, the state was perceived more in adversarial terms and less as a source of social security or employment. This antagonistic perception has become more nuanced since 1981 and in some cases the balance has even been reversed, while European Union subsidies have reinforced the perception of the state as provider.[25] A 'culture of entitlement' and a desire to extract compensation for the poverty and material deprivation that followed World War II developed. Complaints about state inefficiency were combined with an expectation that the state would provide jobs for life and handsome pensions. However, the expansion of the state was not accompanied by the development of a proper welfare system. During the post-junta period, instead of the state being liberalized and its grip on power being loosened, there was simply an exchange of roles in exercising authority. In this respect, the state was treated in a contradictory way – both as provider and opponent.[26]

Over time the Greek state, that reluctant agent of modernization, has been replaced by the EU and more recently by the so-called Troika (International Monetary Fund,

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23 J. S. Koliopoulos and Th. M. Veremis, *Modern Greece: A History since 1821*, 1. Nicos Alivizatos claims that during the Greek War of Independence the most conservative strata of Greek society adopted principles contained in the most progressive constitutions in Europe: N. C. Alivizatos, 'The contribution of modern Greece to today's European identity', *The MGSA Bulletin* 35 (2003) 21.

24 S. N. Kalyvas, *Modern Greece: What Everyone Needs to Know* (Oxford 2015) 197.

25 Perhaps the perception of the state changed with the rise of PASOK to power in 1981, when state mechanisms were taken over by the party: K. Kostis, *Τα κακομαθημένα παιδιά της Ιστορίας': Η διαμόρφωση του νεοελληνικού κράτους, 18ος–21ος αιώνας* (Athens 2013) 812.

26 The following observation sums up the peculiar role of the state in Greece: 'The size of the state by conventional metrics is about average for a European country, but its influence on the incomes of private households, and especially of the middle class, is extraordinary. Whereas in northern Europe states typically provide public services for all and a safety net for the most needy, in Greece a major function of the state is to provide, or to support, the incomes of middle-class occupational groups, during their working age': A. Doxiadis and M. Matsaganis, *National Populism and Xenophobia in Greece* (London 2012) 40: http://counterpoint.uk.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/507_CP_RRadical_Greece-web-1.pdf (accessed 26 July 2016). It is interesting to note that the term used in Greek is 'κρατικοποιώ' (bring [an industry] under state ownership) rather than 'εθνικοποιώ', the literal equivalent of the English verb 'to nationalize'.

European Central Bank and European Commission) with the task of reforming Greece and its economy. However, integration in Europe or the implementation of the recent economic adjustment programme may not be enough to ensure the swan-song of the underdog culture. It has even been argued that, although EU membership may have brought Greece politically closer to the European institutions, it has further distanced the country from Europe in cultural terms.[27] It could be said that the crisis has increased cultural ambivalence among Greeks and contributed to the somewhat surprising situation in which 'the decline in general EU support is accompanied by an increase in support for the euro'.[28] Even the referendum of 5 July 2015, seen by many as a test of the country's European identity, once again intensified debates about Europe.

Previous studies have emphasized the political role of the modernizing culture, while underestimating the cultural dimension of the underdog culture. The latter is not simply associated with backwardness or vested interests, but also with forms of social exclusion and cultural otherness. One of the problems with the concepts of the underdog culture and the segmentary society is that it is assumed that both remained static and undeveloped for centuries.[29] In post-junta Greece, however, these categories can be said to have expanded to include different, and even apparently incompatible, groups of people: intellectuals, minorities or anti-establishment activists. For the first time, for example, the anti-western trend even found rigorous intellectual support from academics and philosophers, including Christos Yannaras, Yorgos Kontogiorgis, Kostas Zouraris, and Dimitris Kitsikis. One could also query whether the ideological supremacy of the Left after the military dictatorship was connected to the ascendancy of the underdog culture, the legitimization of otherness and the emancipation of anti-establishment forces.[30]

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27 T. Theodoropoulos, P. Mandravelis, P. Markaris, and V. Papavasileiou, *Υπό το μηδέν: Τέσσερα σχόλια για την κρίση* (Athens 2010) 56.

28 B. Clements, K. Nanou, and S. Verney, '"We no longer love you, but we don't want to leave you": The eurozone crisis and popular Euroscepticism in Greece', *Journal of European Integration* 36 (2014) 263.

29 Nicolas Demertzis criticizes 'cultural dualism' for treating 'tradition and modernity as two pre-constituted and mutually exclusive rather than inter-constituted and interrelated cultural entities'. Instead, he proposes 'inverted syncretism' as 'a category designed to deal more accurately with the articulation of modernity and tradition in Greek political cultures' and the ways 'modernizing patterns lost their original function while traditional ones remained intact or even became rejuvenated': 'Greece', in R. Eatwell (ed.), *European Political Cultures: Conflict or Convergence?* (London 1997) 119, and I. D. Stefanidis, *Stirring the Greek Nation: Political Culture, Irredentism and Anti-Americanism in Post-War Greece, 1945-1967* (Aldershot 2007) 6–11.

30 With reference to the Greek Civil War and the return of the repressed left/other, G. T. Mavrogordatos has used the phrase 'the revenge (revanche) of the vanquished' to suggest that since 1981 history has been rewritten from the point of view of the defeated during the civil strife: 'Η "ρεβάνς" των ηττημένων', *To Vima*, 17 October 1999, available at http://www.tovima.gr/opinions/article/?aid=115282). Kostis Kornetis also writes about the 'triumph of the Left in the realm of memory', and particularly in the area of cinema: 'From reconciliation to vengeance: The Greek Civil War on screen in Pantelis Voulgaris' *A Soul So Deep* and Kostas Charalambous' *Tied Red Thread*', *Filmicon: Journal of Greek Film Studies* 2 (September 2014) 98.

After 1974 the underdog culture emerged not as a parochial culture but as an agent of the repressed other and a challenge to high culture (as seen in the second part of this article). The empowerment of the repressed other (political, social, ethnic or linguistic) turned the underdog culture into a broader, and increasingly powerful, coalition of anti-systemic forces. Two popular albums by Manolis Rasoulis and Nikos Xydakis, *Η εκδίκηση της γυφτιάς* [The Revenge of the Gypsies] (1978) and *Δήθεν* [Pretentious] (1979) can be seen as an attempt to give a voice to the underdog culture through music and song. It was not until after 1974 that the centralizing culture first acknowledged the underdog culture, when, for example, the word 'decentralization' (αποκέντρωση) became *de rigueur* and attention was turned to the provinces. A sign of cultural decentralization was the creation in 1984 of the Municipal Regional Theatres (ΔΗΠΕΘΕ) by the then Minister of Culture Melina Mercouri. Even the culturally pejorative term 'province' (επαρχία) was avoided in favour of the rather more neutral 'region' (περιφέρεια).

It has been argued that urbanization did not involve the same transformation of *Gemeinschaft* into *Gesellschaft* in Greece as in Britain or Germany.[31] Instead of the breakdown of traditional kin and village networks and their replacement by a modern division of labour, there was a wholesale transfer of the *Gemeinschaft* into an urban environment with the consequent survival of traditional patron-client relationships. This transfer had been completed by the fall of the junta in 1974, while the increasing urbanization of villagers entailed a process of cultural homogenization.[32] However, towards the end of the twentieth century, this process started to be questioned from below by an explosion of cultural difference and diversity, which seriously undermined the notion of monoculturalism and the idea of a dominant monolithic high culture.[33] Firstly, after 1981, it involved the empowerment of rural or previously unprivileged social strata, who for the first time felt that they had a voice and could exercise some influence thanks to political and cultural changes. Secondly, the influx of migrants and various debates and controversies over minorities in Greece, as well as the rehabilitation of the Balkan and Ottoman pasts, led to changing attitudes towards otherness and regional difference.

Although one might have expected that otherness would find support among those who promoted the modernizing culture, paradoxically it has mostly been associated with the underdog culture, whereas the modernizing culture, relying on state authority, has sometimes been tainted with authoritarianism. After years of authoritarian practices the unshackling of otherness created a cultural and intellectual climate in which it was

31 F. Fukuyama, 'The two Europes', *The American Interest*, 8 May 2012: http://www.the-american-interest.com/2012/05/08/the-two-europes/ (accessed 3 April 2016).
32 This process is epitomized to some extent by the album *Μικροαστικά* (1973) of Loukianos Kilaidonis and Yannis Negrepontis, especially the songs 'O Yorgos' and 'Kolliga yos'.
33 It should be noted that since 1974 cultural associations (πολιτιστικοί/μορφωτικοί σύλλογοι) have mushroomed in Greece and their main aim has been to preserve and promote local distinctiveness and regional culture.

difficult for the modernizing culture (even in the form of the EU) to stage a comeback.[34] The often patronizing, top-down practices of the modernizing culture, supported by the state, created a mentality of resistance and disobedience among representatives of the underdog culture, which tends to be egalitarian.[35]

Before the crisis, Greek society relied heavily on the state for employment and for funding cultural activities and projects (e.g. films subsidized by the Greek Film Centre). As a result the neologism κρατικοδίαιτος (state-nourished) was coined. However, in a way the crisis has contributed to the detachment of people from the anchor of the state by undermining their perception of it as a secure provider and challenging the deep-seated statist mentality. People gradually lost faith in the state's accountability and its capacity for law enforcement, while the state and its institutions went from being an authoritarian agent or job provider to being a target for attack, along with the whole political system. The growing mistrust of any government made it very hard for reform of any kind to be accepted by the public, who increasingly placed their trust in the achievements of the past and the myth of national exceptionalism.

The tension between the two cultures increased in the last quarter of the twentieth century and could be detected in a number of areas, but the outcome of this tension has been rather ambiguous. Cultural identity, according to Homi Bhabha, emerges in a contradictory and ambivalent 'Third Space of enunciation' that makes the claim to a hierarchical 'purity' of cultures untenable.[36] As in post-colonial cultures, we might have to consider the mutuality and hybridization of these two cultures – although without downplaying their oppositionality – in post-authoritarian Greece. It may be useful to concentrate on three case studies from different decades of the post-junta period in order to demonstrate this tension and raise some questions.

The language reform of 1976, which can serve as the first case in point, poses the question as to whether this is a victory of the modernizing or the underdog culture. On the one hand, it could be seen as a form of modernization with a beneficial impact on education. On the other hand, it could be treated as a rehabilitation of the underdog culture and the Romeic trend. It is also interesting to note that some of those who fought for the institutionalization of the demotic language resisted the introduction of the monotonic system in the early 1980s and agonized over the lexical poverty of the young or the general decline in linguistic standards. Secondly, the liberalization of the Greek media after 1989 could similarly be considered a sign of a modernizing pluralism, as well as offering a platform of expression to the popular, underdog culture and promoting a star system. The state media were generally viewed as being controlled by the government and their programmes were seen as boring, although this assessment was later

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34 The frequent reference to a 'colony of debt' to describe the bailout for the Greek economy suggests that the eurozone is seen by many Greeks as a colonizing power.

35 The historian Nicos Svoronos identified resistance, primarily towards foreign intervention, as a constant feature of modern Greek history: *Επισκόπηση της νεοελληνικής ιστορίας* (Athens 1976) 12 (trans. of *Histoire de la Grèce modern*, Paris 1953, 2nd edn 1964).

36 H. K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York 1994) 37.

revised to some extent when their quality came to be compared with the popular shows of the commercial media. The third case concerns religion and the controversy over identity cards in 2000–1. Although the outcome of this controversy has been hailed as a victory for the reformist and western-oriented culture (perhaps the first in this area since the declaration of the autocephalous status of the Greek Church in 1833), at the same time the presence of the Church in the media and elsewhere has grown exponentially.[37] It has become commonplace to find bishops writing in newspapers, interviewed in the media or expressing the Church's opposition to non-traditional practices (e.g. cremation, reform of religious teaching in schools, introduction of Islamic Studies), thus confirming the increasingly influential role of Orthodox religion in Greek society.[38] These three cases demonstrate that since 1974 the tension between the modernizing and the underdog culture has been more ambivalent than ever before. They also show that the underdog culture, along with otherness, gained in strength rather than losing influence, fostering some ambiguous or interstitial spaces in the syncretic encounter between the two cultures. Just as the post-colonial identity emerges in the ambivalent spaces of the colonial encounter, similarly the strengthening of the underdog culture suggests that change in post-junta Greece is not in one direction alone but rather multi-directional and transcultural, involving an increasingly fluctuating relationship, interaction and tension between the two cultures by comparison with the earlier periods.

A similar type of ambivalence can be traced in a recent study on the crisis in which modernization is defined as 'a mechanistic importation of western models without consideration of anthropological differences', although the conventions and values supporting the Greek economy and polity are recognized as differing from those of the West.[39] It is argued that identities and social bonds in Greece are based on family, friends and the community, creating a non-western 'social ethos.' This 'Greek ethos' has been considered the primary target of the austerity measures, but its status seems ambiguous, apparently coming close to the notion of the underdog culture. Douzinas claims that, although in its corrupted version this ethos promotes neo-liberalism, it is at the same time the most powerful force for resisting it. Yet there is no explanation as to how the Greek ethos, 'with its mild nationalism, secular religiosity and familial base' and its presumed resistance to westernization, performs this double act.[40]

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37 On the politicization of Christian Orthodox discourse following the decision of the Greek government to exclude any reference to religion from identity cards, see Y. Stavrakakis, 'Religious populism and political culture: The Greek case', *South European Society and Politics* 7 (2002) 29–52.

38 Although Greece elected its first professedly atheist prime minister, Alexis Tsipras, in January 2015, spectacles mixing religious sentiment and patriotic pride continued unabated. In May 2015 the remains of St Barbara, which had been kept in Venice for the last thousand years (a gift from a Byzantine emperor in 1003), were flown to Athens and met with an exuberant welcome from crowds of ordinary people. Something similar occurred two years later with the relics of St Helen, 'Equal to the Apostles' and mother of Constantine the Great. The relics arrived in Greece from Venice amid the pomp and splendour reserved for heads of state.

39 C. Douzinas, *Philosophy and Resistance in the Crisis* (Cambridge 2013) 36.

40 Douzinas, 38.

The interpretation of the economic crisis as being the result of insufficient modernization has often been questioned by Liakos and others,[41] and indeed such an approach cannot easily be applied to developments in Greek culture. Alternatively, Greeks are presented as having to cope with the conflicting tensions resulting from a fusion of dated and modern practices. For example, the mass media in Greece are considered modern in form and technology but outmoded in content, while in the social sphere the Greek nuclear family embodies competing 'archaic' and modern features.[42] Pulled in different directions, Greeks appear to walk a tightrope stretched between archaic institutions and structures and modern aspirations and lifestyles. It should be evident by now that the theory of cultural dualism tends to obscure ambivalence and hybridizations, which in turn leads to treating the state both as a source of secure employment (a survival of the earlier clientelist mentality) and as an adversary (a result of the increasingly anti-systemic discourse of the underdog culture). It seems that during the crisis this ambivalent attitude towards the state has been extended to the EU, leading to its being considered as both saviour and enemy, and thus suggesting that the crisis has simultaneously strengthened and profoundly undermined the authority of the modernizing discourse.

Having looked at cultural dualism and its limitations as an analytical tool in accounting for the belated or incomplete modernization of Greece, I will now explore how the tension between two competing notions of culture intensified in post-junta Greece and further complicated the hierarchies involved in the dualist approaches. This was partly due to the confluence of the anti-western underdog culture and the ascendancy of a westernized consumerist culture, as will be seen in the next section.

Greek culture between humanism and consumerism

The dualist approaches to Greek culture and politics discussed above gained additional momentum by increasingly opposing notions of culture during the post-junta period. The growing social diversity, the increased visibility of various minorities and the striking improvements in living standards in Greece at the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first century challenged the notion of culture as an autonomous and homogeneous realm and created the conditions for cultural debates similar to those that had arisen in other western societies, and particularly in Britain, decades earlier.

These involved F. R. Leavis and T. S. Eliot, who exemplified an idealistic and highly selective tradition of cultural criticism, and Raymond Williams and others, whose more materialistic approach envisioned culture as always 'ordinary'.[43] For Leavis and Eliot culture linked different individuals in an 'organic community', built around historical

41 A. Liakos, *Η επιστροφή της κοκκινοσκουφίτσας* (Athens 2014) 68–83.

42 P. Panagiotopoulos and V. Vamvakas, 'Acrobats on a rope: Greek society between contemporary European demands and archaic cultural reflexes', in Bülent Temel (ed.), *The Great Catalyst: European Union Project and Lessons from Greece and Turkey* (Lanham 2014) 113–34.

43 R. Williams, *Resources of Hope: Culture, Democracy, Socialism* (London 1989 [1st edn 1958]) 3–14.

continuity and tradition. This notion of an organic national culture was seen as being threatened in the modern mass society by technology and popular entertainment, which eroded its cohesion and its high standards. Williams, on the other hand, saw culture as 'a whole way of life' and not in selective terms. During the twentieth century, the debate in England about the meaning of culture was largely informed by 'the distinction, established by nineteenth-century writers such as Matthew Arnold and John Ruskin, between culture as a realm of ideal values (nobility of purpose, beauty of forms) and the non-culture of an industrial society increasingly defined as mechanical and dehumanised'.[44]

The fact that recent Greek cultural trends present certain similarities with earlier cultural debates and transitions in England is not a matter of belatedness but of social developments leading to a more pronounced distinction between high and low culture. Over the years, high culture, associated with universalism and absolutism, has become part of the problem rather than part of the solution. The perception of culture as art and civility gave way to the perception of culture as lifestyle and identity politics, highlighting the tension between making and being made. As Terry Eagleton points out, 'culture as spirituality is eroded by culture as the commodity, to give birth to culture as identity'.[45] Although it is hard to see cultural values as not being bound up with those of everyday life, one could argue that two broad notions of culture have driven the cultural impulse in Greece since 1974: the humanist or elitist definition of culture (the best of everything) and the anthropological or lifestyle perception of culture as primarily a way of life and identity.

The earlier humanist conception of culture presupposes canonization and hierarchy, with high culture taking precedence over popular culture or subcultures. The modern conception of culture as lifestyle involves plurality and choice, leading in turn to individualization and the challenging of the idea of society as a cohesive and collective body. In this case, society is perceived as a collection of individuals with changing personal tastes, identities and lifestyles. The humanist conception of culture promotes an allegiance to a set of spiritual values, ideas and works of art, whereas the conception of culture as diverse ways of life promotes individual lifestyles and personal choices, which often override community values and humanist principles. The rise in Greece of the latter form of culture led to the rise of individualism, something previously unknown to Greek society, a feature widely recognized by analysts as being a key feature of the period since 1980.[46] It could be said that humanist culture works top-down and tends to look to the past, whereas the conception of culture as lifestyle is more forward-looking and prone to differentiation, developing in various directions across the board. This conception also fosters a proliferation of audiences, communities of readers or

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44 A. Swingewood, *Cultural Theory and the Problem of Modernity* (London 1998).

45 T. Eagleton, *The Idea of Culture* (Oxford 2000) 72.

46 V. Vamvakas, 'Αλλαγή. Ατομικισμός και καταναλωτική κουλτούρα', in V. Vamvakas, *Ο λόγος της κρίσης: Πόλωση, βία, αναστοχασμός στην πολιτική και δημοφιλή κουλτούρα* (Thessaloniki 2014) 255–66.

spectators.[47] Humanist culture tends to rely more on tradition, heritage and ideal standards, whereas lifestyle culture relies on conditions that can become dated or obsolete more quickly due to advances in living standards, social mobility, technology and modes of communication or entertainment.

The apparent polarization in Greek culture between elitist aestheticism and hedonistic consumerism can be seen as corresponding to the disjunction between humanist/high and lifestyle/popular culture. Of course, tensions between high and popular culture can be traced even farther back, but it was at the end of the twentieth century that the representatives of high culture first felt seriously threatened by popular culture and the postmodern celebration of consumerism, hedonism and style.

As a consequence of postmodernism and the fusion of styles, it became more difficult in a number of western countries to maintain a meaningful distinction between art and popular culture. Whereas the boundaries between the two were not so apparent in Greece earlier,[48] since the 1980s there has been an attempt to draw a clear line between them and, above all, high culture has felt itself to be under attack. This was partly due to the fact that the earlier left-wing rejection of the 'American way of life', which was discarded as fake or a form of cultural imperialism, in favour of an authentic popular Greek culture, no longer held sway, resulting in a reversal of earlier taxonomies and changing the cultural landscape in Greece. The earlier, politically driven, distinction between the authentic 'Greek tradition' and the 'American way of life' gradually gave way to a depoliticized, broader opposition between high and popular culture or led to the paradox that the folk tradition was venerated and yet at the same time anything defined as folkloric or 'ethographic' (ηθογραφικό) was downplayed or even rejected.[49]

This was evident in a book on Greek kitsch published in 1984, where the negative association of popular culture with the anti-aesthetic is made explicit.[50] The volume includes articles by contemporary art historians, literary critics, anthropologists, musicians, and intellectuals, as well as historical texts by Periklis Yannopoulos and Dimitris

47 It is interesting to note that until recently the Greek word for audience/public (κοινό) was hardly ever used in its plural form. Literary awards decided exclusively by the public are also a recent phenomenon in Greece

48 Vrasidas Karalis points out that 'the dividing line between an artistic production for an educated and sophisticated middle class, or a self-conscious aristocracy, and an entertainment for the masses has not been very clear in post-war Greek history': 'In search of Neo-Hellenic culture: Confronting the ambiguities of modernity in an ancient land', *Interactions: Studies in Communication and Culture* 3 (2012) 138.

49 In March 1976 in the periodical *Anti* a discussion on 'What is folk/popular culture (λαϊκός πολιτισμός)', coordinated by the author Dimitris Hatzis, starts with contributions from scholars and intellectuals. It should be noted that it was in this period that the concept of 'Greek tradition' was historicized and its normative conceptualization questioned. It is also significant that the Greek Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs designated the academic year 1978–9 the 'year of Greek tradition': K. Karavidas, 'Αναζητήσεις της λαϊκότητας: ιδεολογικές διασταυρώσεις και απομακρύνσεις στο *Αντί* και τον *Πολίτη*', in M. Avgeridis, E. Gazi, and K. Kornetis (eds), *Μεταπολίτευση: Η Ελλάδα στο μεταίχμιο δύο αιώνων* (Athens 2015) 302–16.

50 D. Koutsikou (ed.), *Κάτι το 'ωραίον': Μια περιήγηση στη νεοελληνική κακογουστιά* (Athens 1984).

Pikionis. It was richly illustrated with photographs of buildings (exteriors and interiors), cars, advertisements, social events, pages from newspapers, film stills and other pictures, which purported to show Greek bad taste. Kitsch was presented as an epidemic spreading through Greek society and signifying a decline in the quality of Greek life. Conceived as an attack on the anti-aesthetic in Greece, this volume articulates a nostalgia for some sort of vanishing popular authenticity and the purity of the Greek landscape. It also represents a reflection on Greek identity, judging from the references to the 'face of Greece' and a resistance to commercialization and consumerism, as implied in the foreword written by the then Greek minister of culture Melina Mercouri and other contributions. In short, the volume tries to record a 'fake', urban or semi-urban, popular culture, as opposed to an earlier genuine folk culture, which raises the question whether the volume was merely a study of popular forms of expression or an attempt to correct and improve the aesthetics of popular culture.[51]

Conversely, the pejorative neologism *koultouriaris*, assigned to intellectuals and artists in the 1980s, can be seen as a kind of response to this corrective aspiration and a sign of confidence in the popular, consumerist culture. The first Greek lifestyle magazine *Klik* (Click) began to be published in 1987 and marked a new era for journalism, sexuality and popular culture. The following year Dick Hebdige's book on subculture was translated into Greek, indicating a growing interest in cultural diversity. Narcissistic individualism and the search for an 'authentic self' coexisted with new forms of social intimacy and crowd rituals (open-air concerts, beach parties, football celebrations and mass demonstrations).

The difference between the humanist and consumerist cultures was manifested mainly in areas which had opened up to commercialization rather belatedly, such as the book trade and the media. Music and film had become commercial much earlier, but even in those areas it was in the 1980s that the flourishing of the so-called *skyladika*,[52] new modes of entertainment (e.g. watching videos) and the frequent screenings of popular films on Greek television contributed to a further accentuation of cultural divisions. Meanwhile, under the directorship of Manos Hatzidakis from 1975 to 1981, the Greek Radio's Third Programme promoted qualitative distinctions and tried to redefine cultural boundaries. Hatzidakis' standoff with the newspaper *Avriani* in 1987 and the so-called *Avrianismos* are indicative of the cultural polarization that was developing during the 1980s. From the early 1970s onwards, youth became a less vague cultural category; new subcultures and youth slangs developed, school uniforms were abolished and students' customary leisure activities (*frappé*, backgammon and television, together

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51 Vamvakas and Panagiotopoulos point out that 'it was in the 1980s that 'kitsch' and 'culture' became the two oppositional terms corresponding to new, opposed social groups': V. Vamvakas and P. Panagiotopoulos (eds), *Η Ελλάδα στη Δεκαετία του '80: Κοινωνικό, πολιτικό και πολιτισμικό λεξικό* (Athens 2010) xlviii.

52 A derogatory term, deriving from the Greek word for 'dog', to describe a branch of popular music and refer to cheap or often unlicensed night clubs.

with a taste for *rebetika* and old partisan songs) gradually changed.[53] The emergent combination of consumerism and radical humanism could not be sustained for long and broke down during the crisis, fostering a culture of resistance, disobedience and radicalization.

In order to better understand cultural developments in Greece, we need to delve into the ways concepts such as the 'popular' (λαϊκό) have been used over the years. In the past, 'popular' was defined either in linguistic terms (demotic vs. formal/archaic) or by the mode of production (collective/individual) or it had class connotations with reference to marginal or proletarian cultural production. After 1974, and more particularly after 1981 (with the rise of PASOK to power), the words 'people' (λαός) and 'popular' (λαϊκό) became overused, albeit in ways that their meaning was hard to pin down. The settling of the language question in 1976 and increasing social mobility made the earlier uses of the term 'popular' more or less obsolete.

With the emergence of consumer culture in Greece the popular was increasingly associated with material culture, lifestyles and light entertainment (for example, a revival of interest in the Greek cinema of the 1950s to the early 1970s), in opposition to high culture. There has been a move away from the Marxist model of popular culture (with the focus on production) to a more Weberian model (with the focus on consumption).[54] The popular has to a large extent lost its earlier association with authenticity and has come to be judged aesthetically or ethically.[55] In a way, the popular, associated with consumerism and lifestyle, has assumed the position previously reserved for the 'other' by the elitist culture. It could be argued that the negativity associated with otherness and underdog culture has been transferred to the notion of the popular and the related phenomenon of populism, which has manifested itself primarily in the area of politics, but which has wider ramifications. The redefinition of the popular accentuated the distinction between popular and high culture in Greece, which has become all the more evident in the area of literature.

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53 See N. Papadogiannis, *Militant Around the Clock? Left-Wing Youth Politics, Leisure, and Sexuality in Post-Dictatorship Greece 1974–1981* (New York and Oxford 2015). The number of students in higher education increased considerably during the post-junta period. From less than 30,000 in 1960, their numbers more than doubled by 1971–2 (70,161) and continued to rise till 1981–2 (87,476) and the subsequent years (111,911 by 1991–2): D. Charalambis, L. Maratou-Alipranti, and A. Hadjiyanni (eds), *Recent Social Trends in Greece 1960–2000* (Quebec 2004) 584. It should be noted that these figures do not include those studying abroad, whose numbers increased rapidly from 9,985 in 1970 to 41,086 in 1981.

54 H. N. Parker, 'Toward a definition of popular culture', *History and Theory* 50 (2011) 158.

55 Adopting a Marxist perspective, Yorgos Veloudis argues that there are two kinds of 'popular' literature: the old, associated with rural communities and the demotic, and the new, associated with urbanism and so-called 'para-literature'. The former originates from the people and is a primary form of popular literature while the latter is written for the people and is a secondary form of popular literature. In the first case producer and consumer are identical, whereas in the second they are distinct: '"Λόγια" και "λαϊκή" λογοτεχνία', in Y. Veloudis, *Ψηφίδες: Για μια θεωρία της λογοτεχνίας* (Athens 1992) 57.

The novel by Alexandros Kotzias *Φανταστική περιπέτεια* (1985) was the first to deal with culture as a state institution and produce a grotesque caricature of literary kitsch.[56] Although the novel focuses on the events of a single day (tellingly 21 April 1983), it deals with the emergence and collapse of a literary bubble and the rise and fall of a megalomaniac narcissist, aspiring to capture the ethos of the post-junta period and chart its cultural trends. Alexandros Kapandais, the book's main character, personifies, as a writer and high-ranking civil servant, corruption, self-promotion and the abuse of power. His career also exemplifies the role of public relations in literary careers and the dominance of pompous junk literature in 1980s Greece and its connections with state institutions. The cynical Kapandais had managed to become a fake literary celebrity and has received a number of awards in Greece and abroad while making scornful remarks about established writers such as the 'pervert' Cavafy, the 'charlatan' Seferis or the 'opportunistic' Tsirkas. Thus, the novel highlights the widening gap between trash and highbrow literature due to the increasing institutionalization of culture and its exploitation by figures such as Kapandais, who even managed to have his own biographer.

The novel has been seen as a fictional caricature of the state of affairs that led Greece into the crisis and perhaps for this reason it was reprinted in 2012.[57] It also aimed to demonstrate how state machinery promoted so-called *paralogotechnia* ('para-literature', i.e. popular or trashy literature), thus suggesting that alongside the earlier notion of the 'para-state' a similar concept emerged in the cultural arena after the junta. In this case, Kotzias was not so much concerned with literature written for a mass audience, since this was a later phenomenon in Greece, but was trying to show how opportunists could take advantage of state and party mechanisms in order to promote themselves and thus undermine values or blur aesthetic distinctions. Moreover, he suggests that para-literature is more of a cultural practice, a kind of subculture, increasingly fostered by state institutions during the 1980s.[58] It should be noted here that although a kind of popular literature in Greece could be traced back to the nineteenth century,[59] it

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56 More recently a novel published under the *nom de plume* Aliki Doufexi-Pope, *Το ακατέργαστόν μου* (Athens 2013) has satirically explored the interaction and antagonism between highbrow and popular literature. The fictional author Alkis Chatzikostis — at the suggestion of his publisher — changes from being a serious and elitist writer to being a commercially successful popular fiction writer, publishing under the pen name of Aliki Doufexi-Pope (a supposed descendant of Alexander Pope) in order to subsidize the publication of his highbrow fiction (a novel of 832 pages). The irony here is that Alkis easily and successfully imitates the style of the popular writers he despises.

57 More recently, in April 2017, the newspaper *Το Βήμα* reprinted and distributed it to its readers, describing it as a prophetic novel that offered insights into post-junta Greek culture and the current crisis.

58 'Populism in literature' was the theme of a colloquium organized by the Etaireia Scholis Moraiti in 1983. For a definition of 'literary populism' see N. Vayenas, 'Οι μεταμφιέσεις του λαϊκισμού', *To Vima* 22 October 2006, reprinted in N. Vayenas, *Σημειώσεις από την αρχή του αιώνα* (Athens 2013) 170–3.

59 See K. D. Kassis, *Το ελληνικό λαϊκό μυθιστόρημα (1840-1940): Μυθιστορήματα και μελέτες σε λαϊκά φυλλάδια* (Athens 1983) and P. Moullas, *Ο χώρος του εφήμερου: Στοιχεία για την παραλογοτεχνία του 19ου αιώνα* (Athens 2007).

was at the end of the twentieth century that it was treated as a serious commercial and aesthetic threat to high culture.

From the mid-1990s the commercialization of the novel became a feature of the production of fiction, and the setting up of the National Book Centre (EKEBI) in 1994 contributed to the trend that treated literary books as products rather than artefacts, applying quantitative criteria in exploring reading patterns and readers' responses.[60] Greek book production trebled between 1987 (2,348 books) and 2010 (8,900 books) while increasing emphasis was placed on promoting and translating them. Some saw the introduction of book supplements by newspapers (*To Vima* in 1997, *Eleftherotypia* in 1998 and *Ta Nea* in 2002) as a sign of the expansion of the reading public and others as a confirmation of the increasing commercialization of the book market, a sense reinforced by the coining of the term 'τα ευπώλητα' for best-selling books. A shift seems to have taken place in publishing from literariness and aesthetic appreciation to cultural consumerism, something which has been met with vociferous opposition from the literati.

The rise of popular culture since the 1980s has fostered an explosion in the production of popular novels in Greece, and this may have led to the decline of the short story, which had previously dominated Greek prose fiction, although it has shown signs of recovery during the crisis.[61] In the last thirty years, the term *paralogotechnia* has become increasingly familiar, while popular culture in Greece has been associated with two types of fiction: best-selling novels primarily addressed to and enjoyed by a female audience[62] and works which were seen in the 1980s as promoting individualism, consumerism and the emerging media culture.[63] Both types of fiction, relying on simple storytelling and shunning formal experimentation, became increasingly associated with popular literature, and crime fiction went from being a neglected and somewhat despised genre to becoming accepted as one of the most effective methods of engaging with contemporary social problems. For many years crime fiction in Greece was

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60 E. Kotzia, 'Το ευπώλητο μυθιστόρημα και η ιδέα της λογοτεχνικότητας, 1985-2010', in A. Kastrinaki, A. Politis and D. Tziovas (eds), *Για μια ιστορία της ελληνικής λογοτεχνίας του εικοστού αιώνα* (Herakleion 2012) 379–86.

61 This recovery (published short story collections went up from 123 in 2008 to 168 in 2014) can be attributed, among other things, to economic reasons and a proliferation of creative writing courses.

62 The much-discussed bestseller by Maira Papathanasopoulou, *Ο Ιούδας φιλούσε υπέροχα* (Athens 1998) sold around 300,000 copies, a considerable number for the Greek book market, was serialized on Greek television and was translated into a number of languages. Judging from the recent book by Eva Stamou (*Η επέλαση του ροζ*, Athens 2014) resistance to trashy literature consumed primarily by women is still growing. It should be noted that one of the first studies of para-literature goes back to the early 1980s (see P. Martinidis, *Συνηγορία της παραλογοτεχνίας*, Athens 1982).

63 Yannis Xanthoulis, one of only two writers to be given an entry in a dictionary of 1980s Greece (the other being Chronis Missios, who wrote political narratives) is listed as being the leading representative of popular Greek fiction, and his novel *Το πεθαμένο λικέρ* [The dead liqueur] (Athens 1987) is treated as a landmark in the emerging trend for bestsellers (Vamvakas and Panagiotopoulos (eds), *Η Ελλάδα στη Δεκαετία του '80*, 379-82). It should be noted that the same dictionary has an entry for fiction but not for poetry.

considered a form of pulp fiction, but since the 1990s its reputation has been significantly enhanced and the leading crime writer, Petros Markaris, has written a number of detective novels depicting Greek society in crisis. Also, the recent rehabilitation of the crime fiction of Yannis Maris has been seen as a legitimization of popular culture in Greece. [64]

Perhaps the regression in terms of narrative experimentation has to do with a reversal in the trend for subordinating function, promoted by the 'popular aesthetic', to form, favoured by the 'pure' aesthetic gaze.[65] High culture is about representation and contemplation; popular culture is about performance and what is represented, in other words the affirmation of the continuity between art and life. As Bourdieu has stated, 'intellectuals could be said to believe in the representation – literature, theatre, painting — more than in the things represented, whereas the people chiefly expect representations and the conventions which govern them to allow them to believe "naively" in the things represented'.[66] An elective 'aesthetic distance', to use Bourdieu's term, has been developed, while at the same time the detachment of the pure gaze has been challenged. The primacy of form over function, of manner over matter, has increasingly been questioned. As a reaction to this, those who defend the autonomy of literature and the seriousness of high culture have deplored the demise of poetry or tried to rescue fiction from the perils of facile storytelling by promoting experimentation, self-referentiality or the hybridization of essay and fiction.[67]

In cinema the distinction between elitist and popular culture can be understood by comparing the aesthetic, existential and eclectic approach to the Balkans in Theo Angelopoulos' *Ulysses' Gaze* (1995) with the popular and stereotypical perception of the area portrayed in the road movie *Balkanisateur* (1997) by Sotiris Gkoritsas. The elegiac and highbrow pessimism of Angelopoulos contrasts with the cheeky, jocular tone of Gkoritsas' film. In *Ulysses' Gaze* the characters are crossing the Balkans, searching for the meaning of history and identity, whereas in the *Balkanisateur* they are driven by the desire to make easy money through a currency scam. The distinction between elite and popular culture is also translated into performances of antiquity and modernity, as was the case with the opening and closing ceremonies of the 2004 Olympic Games. The opening ceremony highlighted antiquity by projecting cultural and historical continuity and playing to the expectations of foreign audiences. The closing ceremony celebrated traditional music and dance and showcased popular culture.

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64 See F. Filippou, 'Crime fiction during the crisis', in N. Lemos and E. Yannakakis (eds), *Critical Times, Critical Thoughts: Contemporary Greek Writers Discuss Facts and Fiction* (Newcastle upon Tyne 2015) 144–59.

65 P. Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. R. Nice (New York and London 1986).

66 Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, 5.

67 E. Giannopoulou and Th. Tramboulis, 'Οι συγγραφείς ως οργανικοί διανοούμενοι: από την ηθογραφία στην ηθικολογία', *Unfollow* 12, 13, 14, 16 (December 2012–April 2013).

Although the distinction between a humanist and a lifestyle conception of culture might offer useful insights into recent cultural trends, there are some areas in which this dualistic pattern seems to break down.[68] Music and song, where the distinction between popular (λαϊκό) and high popular (έντεχνο λαϊκό) has been highlighted and debated for a long time (following the rehabilitation of *rebetika* and poetry set to music), could be considered as such an area. However, this kind of distinction could be challenged by the extensive hybridization of styles and the number of established poets who have written lyrics for popular songs.[69] It is not only earlier poets such as Gatsos and Leivaditis who have made their mark (and living) by writing popular lyrics, but contemporary ones as well (for example, Manos Eleftheriou, Michalis Ganas). It should also be noted that during the crisis street and hip-hop artists have increasingly blended elements from popular and elite culture.

More than other artists, poets faced the predicament of choosing elitist isolation or opening up to the wider public, thus acknowledging the incommensurability of the humanist and popular culture and at the same time trying to bridge the gap. Kiki Dimoula, a poet who is popular with the public, has been disparagingly described as the Harry Potter of Greek poetry[70] and a media phenomenon,[71] while other poets such as Ganas have managed to transcend poetry's isolation and lack of rapport with the public by reconciling the elitism of poetry with the popularity of song, the urban with the regional and individual lyricism with collective memories.[72] In the last twenty years some poets and critics have lamented the mass production of unsophisticated poetry and its relegation to the status of a self-indulgent hobby.[73] They seem to hark back to the times when poetry in Greece was more engaged with the public and aesthetically

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68 Panagiotis Kondylis has argued that 'in Greece the "popular" song, from its narration of the sadness of the hash smoker to the setting of serious poetry to music, has helped a great deal to transcend the old basic distinction between the "urban" or "high" and "popular" culture and produced something considered desirable by theorists of postmodern culture': *Οι αιτίες της παρακμής της σύγχρονης Ελλάδας* (Athens 2011) 59.

69 Dionysis Savvopoulos, for instance, mixed Greek folk music and *rebetiko* with rock sounds in his songs (for example, 'Black Sea' and 'Zeibekiko') on the album *Βρώμικο ψωμί* [Dirty bread] (1972). See D. Papanikolaou, *Singing Poets: Literature and Popular Music in France and Greece* (Oxford 2007).

70 M. Topali, 'Οι δύο όψεις μιας δημοφιλούς ποίησης', *Poiisi* 26 (Autumn-Winter 2005) 246–9. See also the reaction of K. Georgousopoulos 'Η αλεπού και τα σταφύλια' (*Τα Νέα*, 25-6 February 2006) and Topali's response ('Απάντηση στον Κώστα Γεωργουσόπουλο', *Τα Νέα*, 13 March 2006).

71 E. Garantoudis, 'Το επικοινωνιακό φαινόμενο Κική Δημουλά', *The Athens Review of Books* 52 (June 2014) 50–4; see also the rejoinder from C. Margellou Inglessi, 'Δημόσιοι καιροί και ιδιωτικές ακαιρίες', *The Books' Journal* 46 (September 2014).

72 K. Koutsourelis, 'Μιχάλης Γκανάς, Ποιήματα 1978–2012', *Book Press Online*, 4 December 2013: http://www.bookpress.gr/diabasame/poiisi/ganaspoiimata?utm_source=Newsletter&utm_medium=email (accessed 2 February 2016).

73 K. Koutsourelis, 'Πώς η ποίηση από τέχνη έγινε χόμπι', *Η Καθημερινή* (Τέχνες και Γράμματα), 9 December 2012.

accountable. The crisis seems to have reversed this downward trend and led to an efflo-rescence of a new kind of poetry associated with what Lambropoulos calls 'Left Melancholy'.[74]

It could be argued that a gradual transition towards cultural materiality is one of the main features of the period following the fall of the junta. This can be seen in the proliferation of food programmes on Greek television, the growing number of publica-tions on cooking (including novels on the theme of cooking and food), the increasing emphasis on body care, the first gossipy life-style tabloids and the attempt to promote Greek culture not only in terms of its past but also its material present. A characteristic example of this trend is a video entitled 'Be one of us' (2013) by the students of the 'Tab-ula Rasa' School of Arts, which aims to promote Greece and its culture.[75] In this video images of Zorba and the Acropolis are replaced by sensory experience, food and the communal way of life.

Yet the crisis has spawned a new kind of humanism, based on the axiom that peo-ple matter more than numbers and statistics, calling for a rediscovery of human solidar-ity against consumerist individualism and neo-liberal austerity.[76] There is now a growing emphasis on the role of local communities and public space in an attempt to revive the sense of a spirit of human interaction among ordinary people that has been to some extent lost. The crisis has questioned the individualistic narcissism and the life-style culture of recent years, making the cultural ambivalence even more intense by inviting a rethink of the two dreams of the *metapolitefsi*: modernization and consumerism.

Conclusion

Between the fall of the junta and the onset of the crisis, Greece enjoyed its longest period of democracy and prosperity, and many institutional reforms have come primarily from the EU following a top-down approach. What I hope to have shown in this article is that by contrast, in the area of culture, we can see a bottom-up approach with an increasing prominence of materiality, diversity, otherness, popular culture and anti-sys-temic forces. This has meant that cultural differences are now more widely tolerated and accepted than ever before, thus calling into question the notion of a homogeneous

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74 V. Lambropoulos, 'Left melancholy in the Greek poetry generation of the 2000's', *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*, Occasional Paper 10: https://www.press.jhu.edu/journals/journal_of_modern_greek_studies/VassilisLambropoulos.pdf (accessed 10 July 2016).

75 'Be one of us: Hellas by Tabula Rasa' (2013), available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w9bKe0KwEEA.

76 Th. Rakopoulos, 'Resonance of solidarity: Meanings of a local concept in anti-austerity Greece', *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 32 (2014) 313–37.

national culture. For Greece this has been particularly challenging, as for many years it had endeavoured to promote national homogenization and cultural assimilation.[77]

Although modernization and Europeanization were valorized by dualist approaches, the ascendancy of a diverse underdog culture, fostered by the undermining of the hierarchical distinctions between high and low, has not received proper attention despite its earlier vociferous manifestations and despite the fact that it has become a culture of resistance during the crisis.[78] The period from junta to crisis can be read as the story of two cultures and an era of increasing cultural tension and diversity, making it a testing ground for established models of analysis and one of the most dynamic periods of Greek culture. Interestingly, however, the underdog culture has been seen as largely anti-western, whereas consumerist culture is seen as westernized, thus challenging neat oppositions and highlighting once again hybridizations and tensions in Greek culture. Interrogating dualist interpretations and analysing cultural oppositions offers an opportunity to revisit the two main features of the culture of *metapolitefsi* (modernization and consumerism) and ask probing questions in the light of the current crisis.

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77 It should be noted that debates over competing definitions of the nation in terms of ethnic descent or civic society have also increased in the last thirty years and have contributed to raising awareness about ethnic and cultural diversity.

78 The manifestations of this culture range from toleration of various forms of violence or the non-payment of toll road charges to Greece's failure to enforce a smoking ban.