

became, for him, part of the story of post-war Greece, and the author uses this ‘middle voice’ throughout her text.

After the Introduction there are three main parts. Of these, Part 1, ‘The Past that Has not Passed’, consists of seven sections, dealing mainly with the political background (the Greek Civil War and its aftermath) to Mike’s story. Part 2, ‘Nation of Orphans, Orphaned Nation’, has 16 sections concerning the legal and other mechanisms for adoptions. One aspect of the ‘demand’ in the USA for Greek children to adopt was that Jewish couples on the East Coast were anxious for adoptees ‘who looked like them’ (page 133). Part 3, ‘Insights from Greek Adoption Cases’, also has 16 sections, of which eleven are the testimonies referred to earlier. The Conclusion, ‘Greek and Greece, Where Home and History Rhyme’, is followed by a number of appendices, including one which provides ‘Practical Information for Greek-born Adoptees’.

This is a compelling and thought-provoking book, raising important and provocative issues not only for this past but for our present too.

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Trine Stauning Willert and Gerasimus Katsan (eds.), *Retelling the Past in Contemporary Greek Literature, Film, and Popular Culture*. Lanham: Lexington Books, Pp. 276.  
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The longstanding obsession with history in Modern Greek literature and literary studies is intertwined with attempts to raise Greece’s cultural, political and economic profile internationally, whether through expressions of pride in a glorious classical past or by citing the Ottoman ‘occupation’ in extenuation of any perceived failings.

The present volume is no mere rehashing of the uses and abuses of history in contemporary Greek literature. Instead, it addresses tears in the historical fabric: Derridean ‘ghosts’ of history, Foucauldian ‘most uncompromising places’, or ‘[the] areas of human experience that tend to elude the archive’ (p.62). More importantly, it is about public versus official history, reassessed and re-mediated through the lens of contemporary Greece and its current ideological and cultural context. The editors aim to ‘present the reader with the way a set of contemporary storytellers in different genres have incorporated previously under-explored or little-known themes, events, and epochs in modern Greek history and to show how the past, by being interpreted and re-presented in the present, can teach us a lot about contemporary Greek society’ (p.3). The genres explored include prose fiction, poetry, graphic novels, drama, films, documentaries and TV series.

The book is divided into two parts: Part 1 accommodates the bulk of the chapters discussing different uses of the past in the various media examined, while Part 2

contains reflections, views, projections into the future and English translations of two of the literary works discussed in Part 1. Most of the chapters are well researched and thought-provoking; this brief review cannot do justice to them all.

Trine Stauning Willert (Chapter 1) examines the presentation of Greece's Ottoman past and historically hostile relationship with Turkey in four contemporary works of fiction, a short story and three novels, at a period when Greek-Turkish relations were at their zenith, with Turkey still a prospective EU member. These are: Amanda Michalopoulou's short story, "The four hundred pleats" (2004), and the novels, *Imaret: In the shadow of the Clocktower* (2008) by Giannis Kalpouzou, *The Waters of the Peninsula* (1998) by Theodoros Grigoriadis, and Maro Douka's *Innocent and Guilty* (2004).

Willert's premise is that changing socio-political and cultural circumstances change the perception and interpretation of national history, colouring attitudes to racial and religious identity and 'the Other'. Yet, even in these unconventional texts, the Other seems to be incorporated in the image of the Self: it constitutes an aspect or an extension of the Self (given the shared Greek-Turkish past of the Ottoman Empire) rather than an entirely different entity, equal in status to the Self.

Chapter 2 focuses on the Jewish Other, the 'ghosts' that represented one fifth of Thessaloniki's population in 1922. Kostis Kornetis discusses the renewed awareness of the city's Jewish past from the mid-1990s onwards, after decades of silence. This involves discussion of a range of works: the documentaries, *Salonique, ville de silence* (2006) by Maurice Amaraggi; *Salonica* (2007) by Paolo Poloni and *Kiss the Children* by Vasilis Loules; the film *Cloudy Sunday* (2015) by Manousos Manousakis, based on Giorgos Skambardonis' novel *Tsitsanis' Dive* (2001); and the graphic novel *Little Jerusalem* (2015) by Electra Stamboulis and Angelo Menillo. Each of these works addresses the presence of this huge Jewish community of Thessaloniki (dating back to 1492), its demise in the Nazis' extermination camps and the spoliation of its properties by individuals and by the Greek State. Kornetis argues that the first two documentaries, with their rather negative view towards the Christian Greeks of Thessaloniki and their intensely subjective and nostalgic tone, did not have much impact in Greece, and were indeed not widely shown. Loules' documentary, by contrast, was widely viewed and favourably reviewed because it portrayed the Greeks in a positive light (it is about a Greek family who hid and saved three Jewish girls). Similarly, Skambardonis' book became a best-seller despite (or possibly because of) its clichéd views about the causes of the Jewish community's annihilation: betrayal by the chief rabbi and wider Jewish passivity rather than Christian collaboration and complicity. However, Manousakis's film based on the novel seems to overcome its stereotypes by focusing on Jews' participation in the Resistance: this counteracts their traditional characterization by the Greeks as an insular and passive community. Finally, Stamboulis and Menillo's graphic novel, widely read, especially by the young (and now translated into Turkish) places Thessaloniki as the field *par excellence* where

amnesia is detected: the changing urban setting and the extinction of urban traces reflects the deletion of the memories related to the Jewish community and of other communities which disappeared with Hellenization.

A similarly repressed event of public and national history is dealt in Chapter 5 by Vassiliki Kaisidou. It concerns the establishment of ‘children’s towns’ by Queen Frederica to shelter 18,000 children from the civil-war-stricken areas of Northern Greece in 1947–1950, as a countermeasure to the evacuation of another 20,000 minors to the Eastern bloc by the Greek Communist Party. An ideologically polarised issue, children’s towns were not discussed widely before the 1990s and if they were, this was as a tool of anti-communist propaganda, according to Kaisidou. However, since the 1990s and in the context of a reconciliatory mood between the two camps of the Civil war, there has been rekindled interest in their existence, on the part of historians and writers of fiction. Yet this latest interest compromises historical accuracy either directly and on purpose (Thanasis Skroumbelos’s *Bella Ciao*, 2005) or indirectly through their ideological and personal prejudices and the lenses they choose to remember the past (autobiographical novels by Vasilis Boutos, *The Queen’s Tears*, 2000 and by Yannis Atzakas, *Murky Depths*, 2009). Once again, the present rewrites the past according to its own ideological gaze.

Another occasion of re-writing history, this time with the purpose of undermining the present, is discussed in Chapter 8. Konstantina Georgiadi discusses a play written and directed by the well-known avant-garde playwright, Lena Kitsopoulou. Staged in 2012, at the peak of the Greek financial crisis, *Athanasios Diakos – The Comeback* has a martyr of the Greek War for Independence, who was impaled by the Turks, as its central character. Diakos is presented here as a macho, violent contemporary, the owner of a kebab restaurant, who, towards the end, rapes and murders his adulterous, vain and heavily pregnant wife, Krystallo (her name, too, being drawn from the nineteenth-century popular folk tradition in their Athenian *nouveau-riche* apartment). Reversing history and rendering historical figures as caricatures, the play is seen by Georgiadi as an analogy of contemporary Greece, torn apart by violence due to the crisis, and as a strong comment on the consumerist culture of the Greeks which paved the way for the financial crisis.

This is an intriguing, thought-provoking volume which offers a fresh view of the culture of contemporary Greece. Despite the authors’ stated target being ‘the general audience with an interest in better understanding Greece today’ (p.2), I would unreservedly recommend it to students and scholars of Modern Greek as an invaluable tool for their research endeavours.

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