GUARDING THE WILD: A PLACED CRITICAL INQUIRY INTO LITERARY CULTURE IN MODERN NATIONS

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
The Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By
Eric L. Ball, B.S., M.S., M.A.

* * * * *

The Ohio State University
2003

Dissertation Committee
Professor Gregory Jusdanis, Adviser
Professor Patrick B. Mullen
Professor H. Lewis Ulman
Professor Georgios Anagnostu

Approved by
Adviser
Department of Greek and Latin
ABSTRACT

Scholars in humanistic disciplines have been focusing on “place” in response to issues like environmental degradation and globalization. Literary ecocritics have undertaken place-centered studies in order to address issues important to local communities and ecological sustainability. Such projects, however, have not considered important assumptions about place (and their consequences) inherent in the historically constituted category of “literature” itself. This dissertation addresses this issue by developing a historically grounded place-based theory of literary critical interpretation and by demonstrating its practice.

I begin developing theory by drawing on humanistic geography for an adequate theory of place in social and ecological terms. I engage with literary and folkloric research demonstrating that modern literary categories, critical practices, and assumptions have their roots in, and continue to reflect the concerns of, projects dealing with national identity. My goal is to develop a perspective capable of analyzing simultaneously, and in relation to each other, canonical national literature and widely ignored local literatures hitherto categorized as “mere folklore.”

In order to put theory into practice, and to continue developing and refining the theory, I then turn to critical interpretation of texts relevant to one particular place: Crete. Utilizing techniques from literary criticism and folklore (by viewing oral poetry in context as performance), I examine Greek novels together with Cretan oral poetry. I analyze how these texts refer to, and compete with, one another regarding such issues as modernization, preservation of local traditions, local wilderness conservation, and local agriculture. The climax of this analysis focuses on oral poetry collected ethnographically in Crete. I argue that it promotes an explicitly ecological ethic of the wild that strives to synthesize “the best” of modernity and local folk traditions.
The significance of this research is that it will contribute a historically grounded, theoretically-argued framework for treating social and ecological issues to literary critics, folklorists, and other humanists concerned with the social and ecological well-being of local communities. In addition, my examination of the Greek case will provide concrete examples of how local literary practices, often considered unimportant or uninteresting, can, in fact, become important vehicles for debate on such issues.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My work in this dissertation is a reflection of ideas, issues, and concerns that have preoccupied me in one way or another for the better part of my life, thereby making it impossible for me to acknowledge all the individuals who have contributed something or another to its synthesis. I must restrict myself, therefore, to acknowledging the following individuals who contributed either most directly or most recently to its emergence as a written scholarly document.

Both as my adviser and as the head of the Modern Greek Program of the Department of Greek and Latin at OSU, Gregory Jusdanis provided me with just the right mix of encouragement, references to consult, and favorable material conditions. I benefited immensely from the numerous independent studies he allowed me to pursue on such unusual topics as ethografia and the mandinadha. On multiple occasions, he also made it easy for me to keep working hard in the face of disappointments with his unprecedented and unwavering support. Gregory always made me keep my writing honest and direct. He deserves an award for his turnaround time on manuscripts, too.

I am likewise indebted to the more recent faculty arrival to OSU’s Modern Greek Program, Georgios Anagnostu. I am especially grateful to all the post-seminar and other peripatetic discussions we had, pushing issues all the way over the banks of the Olentangy. It was during his seminar on identity, too, that I finally began to fully realize (and articulate) what scholarly research and writing in the humanities should really aspire to achieve.

Greece and the USA are separated by more than a whole ocean but in Columbus, Ohio, Modern Greek Studies and the English Department are thankfully separated by no more than 17th Avenue because that is where my other two mentors are from. Patrick Mullen was my teacher in the area of folklore studies from the start. His course on material culture is what got me thinking about
cookbooks for something other than just cooking. His folklore methodology seminar formed no less than the foundation of my M.A. thesis on the mandinadha as “placed literature” that led straight into the development of a theory of “placed criticism.” On countless occasions, his brief comment on something here or his terse observations about something there left me thinking and re-thinking until I finally began to recognize (often months later) the immeasurable significance of what he said.

An English department as large as OSU’s should be ashamed to be equipped with but one professor who is an expert in ecocriticism. Luckily, H. Lewis Ulman’s dedication and generosity make up in quality for what OSU lacks in quantity. From classrooms to conferences, his enthusiasm and support were a constant inspiration. How far would I have gotten without his graduate seminar in ecocriticism? Especially important was the fact that he brought to my attention the extant place-based work of ecocritics. His advice early on that my work should not only be theory-driven, but also theory-generating, was invaluable when it came to formulating the scope and purpose of my work.

As far as my OSU experience goes, I would be remiss if I did not also acknowledge my indebtedness to the inimitable graduate seminars of one of OSU’s most lucid and responsible teachers, Eugene Holland. I am also grateful to many scholars who have since moved on from OSU. I thank Don Krug, who left Columbus for Columbia (The University of British Columbia, that is) for discussing with me about place and education, and the implications of one for the other. I am grateful for having the intellectual support of Vassilis Lambropoulos and Artemis Leontis, now at the University of Michigan. I also thank Panayiotis Roilos (Harvard University) for overseeing an independent study I did on the Cretan mandinadha.

If it was not for William Vitek of Clarkson University, the letters we exchanged when I was living in Crete, and the discussions we had when I returned from there, who knows if I would have even figured out that place was the unifying element that would bring many of my life’s concerns
and intellectual interests into focus. Such focus was without question necessary for my academic “success.” His unrelenting encouragement and the example he sets are a constant source of inspiration.

This is no place to express my infinite (uncountable, like the irrational reals) personal and intellectual gratitude to Alice Lai and Pericles Kondos. I am grateful to Dimitris Kritsotakis for the Cretan wine and tsikoudhia, the “perdhikes,” and for rolling the phyllo for the wild greens pies on Easter. To Georgios Tserdanelis and Hsiao-Ping Chen for theoretical discussions on just about every topic imaginable, usually over garlic, wine, or coffee.

Without Crete, and without my encounters with remarkable Cretans, there would be no dissertation.
VITA

August 6, 1970  Born—South Glens Falls, NY

1992  B.S. Mathematics, Clarkson University, Potsdam, NY

1993  M.S. Applied Mathematics, The University of Chicago, IL

1995  A.B.D. Applied Mathematics, The University of Chicago, IL

1998-1999  University Fellow, The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH

1999  M.A. Modern Greek, The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH

1999-2003  Graduate Teaching Associate, Department of Greek and Latin, The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH

FIELDS OF STUDY

Major Field: Greek and Latin
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgments</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vita</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapters:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Placed Criticism</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The Nature of National Culture</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The Nature of Regional Culture</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Place, Identity, Awareness</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Guarding the Wild</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Conclusion: The Relevance of Placed Criticism</td>
<td>246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to the Future of the Humanities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>259</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

GATHERING IN PLACE

“A late winter evening. We were eating a sea bream caught yesterday, roasted in the oven with plenty of lemon, oil, and oregano. We were drinking Manolis’s wine, that pure, amber ‘holy water.’ On an evening like this you don’t need more than three glasses of wine to reach the clear-minded drunken state in which you see life simply and clearly, and you begin seeking wine-philosophical conversations. Tonight’s conversation turned once again to the great Cretan visionary and author Nikos Kazantzakis…”

Thus begins a work of creative non-fiction I wrote in 1996 (in Greek) when I was living in Irakleio on the Greek island of Crete. I wrote it for one of the city’s newspapers, inspired by my regular participation in informal, often impromptu gatherings of friends and their families that were characterized by an explicitly artistic dimension. I was struck by the range and depth of the intellectual, artistic, and spiritual expression that occurred on such occasions, never before having experienced anything quite like it. At times, I felt as though I was living in some sort of artist’s utopia, a Cretan Greenwich Village, as it were.

What I found even more remarkable was that, for most of us there, such creative expression was by and large something we pursued in everyday life alongside our other responsibilities, occupations, and hobbies. We were equally teachers, parking attendants, scientists, housekeepers, shepherds, farmers, security guards, carpenters, politicians, and cashiers. We were just as much mothers and fathers, husbands and wives, sons and daughters as we were poets and
painters, singers and dancers. Without necessarily privileging art, we aspired to aesthetic expression and appreciation as a distinct and necessary aspect of our lives, as one of the many dimensions of our existence that was integral to our individual and communal well-being.

The gatherings I participated in were full of aesthetic activity ranging from music to drawing, food to poetry, and dancing to literary criticism. They generally occurred in the context of a homemade meal or were embellished by scanty but satisfying impromptu snacks. And they were, almost without exception, accompanied by limitless amounts of homemade wine. Together with the food and drink, the Cretan rhyming couplet known as the mandinadhā1 (plural mandinadhēs) often served as a focal point of these gatherings. We would listen, and occasionally we would dance to, commercial recordings of “traditional” Cretan music whose lyrics were comprised of mandinadhēs. Participants would sing or improvise mandinadhēs while I added musical accompaniment on the mandolin (Cretan tunes known as kondylies).

The mandinadhā provided a poetic medium, for the men in particular, to express their sense of Cretan identity or spirit.2 Crete has long been associated with a wild, unbridled passion for freedom and the fierce resistance and heroism required to win or maintain that freedom, so much so that by now it has become something of a stereotype. For many people in Greece and abroad, mention of Crete brings to mind the unbelievable stories about Cretan peasants holding off German invaders in the Second World War without the benefit of weapons, or about Cretans’ numerous uprisings against their Venetian or Ottoman rulers, especially the occasion when they blew themselves up at the Arkadi monastery instead of surrendering to the Turks.3 Crete generally has an eccentric image among Greeks in general (Herzfeld 1985a:9), including many non-Cretan Greek authors have celebrated Cretan heroism and love of freedom (Constantinides 1985a:32).4

1It is also called mandiniadha on the east side of the island.
2See Herzfeld (1985a:141-147; 1985b) on the Cretan mandinadhā as an everyday site for performing one’s manhood.
3For more on Crete’s heroic identity, see Herzfeld (1985a:6-9).
Mandinadhes, in addition to entertainment and a means of expression for Cretan heroic identity, also provided an opportunity for the men to express, and even to debate, in verse, their respective philosophies of life. Not surprisingly, the expression of heroism and the expression of a personal philosophy sometimes intersected, and men would express their ethical visions in an idiom of the Cretan heroic spirit. For one participant, Manolis Kritikaros, a schoolteacher and farmer of grapes and olives, this seemed to be the most important function the poetic genre served. For example, Kritikaros loved to sing this one particular verse that had become popular among mandinadha aficionados. It employs the language of heroism and war to celebrate—perhaps to promote—pride in maintaining one’s humanity7 in the modern world, even in the face of almost certain defeat:

Στο μετερίζε τσ’ αθρωπίας και στην τιμή το Χρέος, 
εκεί ως στέκω ως πανώ κινεί μα με ταλεμαινός.

On the ramparts of humanity and on the duty of honor 
I will stand guard, even if I am the only one left.?

Apart from being attracted by the aesthetic and philosophical appeal of these gatherings, I was socially, emotionally, and intellectually affected by them as well. They contributed significantly

---

4The Greek nationalist Dragoumis (1991 [1906]) once wrote about Crete and Cyprus: “The two islands are looking to unite with Greece and do so with stubbornness—much to my liking—but Crete does better, because it also takes up arms” (96).

5This is a pseudonym chosen to reflect the assessment of many of his friends and family that he is “very Cretan.” I deal at length with his poetry, in many ways the climax of my analysis, in Chapter 6.

6Herzfeld (1997) has translated the ethical sense Greeks have of the notion of the “human” (ἀνθρωπός) as follows: “This term expresses less the Enlightenment vision of the perfected human being than notions of social solidarity and decency—a fellowship of the flawed. Greeks stereotypically uphold this model as appropriate to their way of life, placing more emphasis on good fellowship than on formal morality” (18). Thus, “humanity” (ανθρωπιά), which might also be translated as “a capacity for acting in a humane manner,” signifies the virtue of being a good fellow human being, of consistently recognizing that nobody is perfect and according to one’s fellow human beings a certain basic degree of respect, understanding, and perhaps even material generosity.
to my own developing understanding of, and feelings of attachment to, my (then) adopted island home and its inhabitants. In other words, they cultivated within me, a newcomer, a sense of place. They also turned into a regular forum where I could observe and join in on discussions, debates, and pronouncements about social and ecological issues of pressing importance to the island’s inhabitants. Since most of us there were involved on some scale in growing or raising food, such issues often related in some way to food or agriculture. Should the vineyards be turned into olive groves? How can the raisin business be profitable without exploiting immigrant workers and European subsidies? Should we grow our own garlic? Should we raise free-range chickens and rabbits in the village? Can we trust the farmers who sell their produce in the market? Are so-and-so’s tomatoes really organic, as he claims? Why is it so hard to forage for wild coast chicory these days? What can we do about all those fishermen who dump their garbage into the sea? Why doesn’t the city put more garbage bins by the harbor?

Thus, aesthetic creativity and critical discussion regularly intermingled in these gatherings. If the mandinadh, food, and drink comprised their core, then orbiting around them were many other aesthetic and critical activities. Improvisation of mandinadhes would often lead to discussions and debates about the poetics of good mandinadh composition. Arguments about a philosophy of life would refer and allude to works of literature by Nikos Kazantzakis (1883-1957), Pandelis Prevelakis (1909-1986), or Franz Kafka (1883-1924): authors’ biographies would be recounted, texts compared, and debates would ensue over literary merit or the validity of an interpretation of a particular novel or poem. Food, music, dance, poetic creativity, and literary interpretation intersected and cross-fertilized.

For example, in light of our own discussions and philosophical musings about the food and drink we were actually consuming one evening, Kritikaros and I discussed relevant passages

---

7All translations in this dissertation are my own unless otherwise indicated. This mandinadh was composed by the prolific mandinadh composer Yiorgis Karatzis and sung by Vasilis Skoulas on a commercial musical recording, Του Έρωτα και Του Καυτού (EMI Greece 1988).

8I discuss this issue in Chapter 6.
from Kazantzakis’s most famous novel (generally known in English as *Zorba the Greek*). One of these passages is as follows:

Για πρώτη φορά στο ακρογιάλι ετούτο χάρηκα τη γλώκα του φαγιού. Όταν […] αρχίζαμε να τρώμε και να κουτσοπίνουμε και να φουντώνει η κουβέντα, ένιωθα πως είναι και το φαγί μια ψυχή κι αυτό λειτουργία, και πως το κρέας, το ψωμί και το κρασί είναι οι πρώτες ύλες απ’ όπου γίνεται το πνέμα.

For the first time on this [Cretan] shore I enjoyed the sweetness of food. When […] we started to eat and drink and the conversation began to swell, I felt that even the meal is an operation of the soul, and how meat, bread, and wine are the raw materials out of which spirit is made. (Kazantzakis 1981a:78-79)

I could tell by the way his eyes lit up that Kritikaros was instantly inspired by the passages we had re-read from his favorite author. Indeed, within seconds, he began improvising mandinadhes in response, including:

Πίνω κρασί, τρώγω φαγί, κι αντριεύει η ψυχή μου, φτερούγες βγάνει δε χωρεί μπλο μέσα στο κορμί μου.

I drink wine, I eat food, and my soul becomes stronger, it sprouts wings, it no longer fits in my body.

I, in turn, inspired by both men’s works, wrote an essay for a local newspaper in which I interpreted the passages written by Kazantzakis as well as the mandinadhes composed by Kritikaros. From the perspective of these experiences, food, literature, and interpretation almost ceased to feel like “distinct” activities at all.

Thus, these gatherings also convinced me of the potentially intimate relationship that can exist among place, literature, and criticism, and they formed the nucleus around which I began to pursue an academic project. Eager to expand my theoretical understanding of the complex social and ecological relationship between place and culture, I returned to the United States holding in my hands a diverse collection of “Cretan” texts. They ranged from mandinadhes about food drunkenly scribbled on napkins to novels by Cretan-born authors like Nikos Kazantzakis and Pandelis Prevelakis. They included published collections of mandinadhes and Cretan cookbooks that quote them: texts I had read, texts I heard about in our gatherings and intended to read, texts I wanted to
re-read. Meanwhile, it became clear that two interrelated tasks lie before me: First, I wanted to use these texts as a means for developing a historically grounded theory of literary criticism equipped to examine social and ecological issues of relevance to place. Second, I wanted to put this theory into practice—to try it out, as it were—by actually interpreting these texts from the point of view of place.

The motivation of my work in this dissertation, then, is both personal and academic. It is, on the one hand, a reflection of my respect for, and indebtedness to, Crete and Cretan culture, aimed at contributing to ongoing discussions and debates about the island’s social and ecological well-being. It is personal testimony to the fact that the more I strive to become an expert through scholarship, the more I wind up discovering that I am a student, and not merely an interpreter, of the works of my former companions and the authors they revered.

On the other hand, it is also meant to be an academic intervention. Specifically, it is an attempt to negotiate the boundaries of “ecocriticism” on the map of literary studies. Quite simply, it asserts that literary criticism aimed at fostering place inhabitation, if it is to be true to its word, must begin taking more seriously local genres and practices hitherto deemed “non-literary” or simply ignored altogether, and, in doing so, must pay more attention to certain socio-political issues (e.g. regionalism, nationalism) than it has in the past. It is thus an argument for expanding the range of texts, as well as the kinds of issues, that place-oriented ecocritics should examine. Consequently, it is an attempt to enlarge the boundaries of the ecocritical movement more generally. That is not to say that what follows is a sociological study of literary criticism or that it merely engages in abstract theoretical discussions about literary criticism’s assumptions and goals. Although it frequently relies on such theory, and aims to make certain contributions to it as well, this dissertation is also an exercise in exploring certain possibilities for the actual practice of place-based literary interpretation. It strives to offer as much in the way of “close readings” of texts as it does in terms of theoretical discussion and the negotiation of disciplinary assumptions and boundaries. Therefore, this dissertation also winds up becoming a case study of sorts, a place-specific interpretive endeavor aimed at coming to terms with pressing theoretical issues—local cultural identity, nationalism, the
ecological place awareness—surrounding the contemporary relationship of literature, criticism, and place in modern nations worldwide. I am hopeful that exploration of such issues even from the perspective of just one place will have important implications regarding how academic literary and cultural criticism, not to mention literary education, should be conceptualized and practiced in the future. In other words, this dissertation is a place-based inquiry that aims to speak not only “literally” of and to a particular place, but also allegorically to the practitioners of literature, criticism, and literary education in all manner of places. It seeks to provide a theoretical and practical framework to critics desiring to promote social and ecological sustainability and justice through their interpretations and analyses of literary texts from a place-based perspective.

SURVEYING THE FIELD

Any project that seeks to negotiate the boundaries of a particular critical practice or field ought to begin with a brief discussion of the wider terrain. In undertaking a study of the relationship among literature, criticism, and place, I am not embarking on entirely new ground. In fact, the study of literature and place is not a new subject at all. Moreover, as researchers in the humanities increasingly pay attention to the issue of place, this topic of “ancient lineage” (Lutwack 1984:vii) is becoming more important all the time. Thus, for instance, literary scholars have been writing about texts that celebrate a particular locale or evoke a sense of place, especially through landscape or ecology. Indeed, there is now an entire branch of literary studies known as “ecocriticism” dedicated specifically to the study of literature and environment that aspires to make place a central object of critical concern (Glottfelty and Fromm 1996). Folklore, cultural anthropology, and cultural studies have been addressing the role of local and regional cultures in national and transnational cultures. Also, many researchers in the humanities and social sciences have been studying the concept of place in response to the perception of “placelessness” that globalization supposedly engenders: “[I]n a number of works published in the last ten years, one
can see a retreat from unbounded, indeterminate space and from the destabilizing possibilities that it inaugurates and instead a reconsideration of and a return to place as a fundamental category for critical and philosophical discourse” (Alonso 2002:203).

Glancing at the diverse approaches scholars so far have taken to literature and place, it is not readily evident just what an inquiry into literature, criticism, and place should entail. For this reason, before getting into the heart of the subject, I find it necessary to survey extant scholarship on literature and place. In my estimation, most critics of place have followed one of three overlapping paradigms: (1) scrutiny of place within the text (representation of place), (2) study of the text’s actual and/or potential effects on readers’ ideas about, awareness of, and sense of place (most ecocriticism is located here), and (3) examination and critique of the text’s embeddedness in broader sociopolitical processes and ideologies that affect and are affected by place (generally the view of poststructuralism, postmodernism, and cultural studies). I will thus begin with a survey of various critical projects, including my own work in this dissertation, with respect to these three broad perspectives, I will also point out ways they sometimes approach one another or overlap.

As I will explain more fully below, this dissertation attempts to bring the latter two perspectives together. That is, I want to explore the role of literary culture in facilitating individual place awareness and its ideological complicity. Furthermore, I want to study the interrelationship of these two aspects of literary culture. I want to analyze how institutions and discourses

---

9Since there are already many (perhaps too many!) published appeals and apologies for taking the notion of place seriously in literary studies, I need not repeat them here. See, for example, Lutwack (1984:2-12).

10Please note that my attempt at classification here is not meant to possess any intrinsic value but simply to serve as a means for introducing in an organized and coherent fashion how I see my own approach vis-a-vis the work of other scholars.

11In this dissertation, I will use Paulson’s (2001) phrase “literary culture” to refer “not only to literature itself but to the communities, institutions, activities, and attitudes that cluster around it, without which there could be no such thing as ‘literature itself’” (3), and use “literature” primarily to refer to actual literary texts and “(literary) criticism” to refer to literary culture’s critical texts and practices.
appropriate local literary texts for larger-than-local\textsuperscript{12} ideological purposes, and examine how such institutions and discourses provide the specific context in and/or against which authors striving to facilitate place awareness can respond.

**Paradigm 1: Place within the Text**

The first of the three perspectives I have noted is interested primarily in studying the role of place within the text. For example, one such approach gauges the distinctive characteristics of a literature in terms of the place from which it originates and/or represents. Thus, Bruce Bennett (1985) considers the “specific places in Australia as crucibles of, and stimuli to, literary expression” (41) and Parks Lanier, Jr. (1991) collects critical essays that study the distinctive ways Appalachian writers’ treat interior space (1). In its more reductionist forms, this approach ends up practicing geographical determinism. Probably the most well-known example of this is Frederick Jackson Turner’s frontier thesis in the 1890s, which accounts for the development of American culture and values in terms of its wilderness (see Nash 1982:145-147). More recent examples of this are not difficult to find. Kenneth Mitchell (1987) argues that the “remarkable differences” between American and Canadian literature can only be accounted for by the “very real differences of geography” of the United States and Canada,\textsuperscript{13} and Rudolfo A. Anaya (1989) writes about the “space of earth and sky” in New Mexico as “an ingredient which dictates the natural pace of the stories” (7). In works like these, scholars assert that place functions to endow, or determine, literary texts with certain distinctive qualities.

Another way scholars have studied place within the text is by way of literariness. For example, Leonard Lutwack’s (1984) *The Role of Place in Literature* conceives of place as a “literary element” (1) and catalogs many of the formal uses of place (e.g., place as setting, place as metaphor)

\textsuperscript{12}My use of the expression “larger-than-local” derives from Amy Shuman’s (1993) problematization of local culture as a de-politicized category, since “local culture is always marked and always part of a larger-than-local context” (345).

\textsuperscript{13}For further discussion on geographical determinism lingering in literary criticism, see Lutwack (1984:139-142).
in American and British literature. Deamer (1990) collects examples of literature’s dramatization of myths associated with American places. In addition to mere cataloging, critics using this approach often put forth an argument about how place functions aesthetically or rhetorically to further a text’s literary merit. Thus, Gillian Tindall’s (1992) analysis of English and French literature argues that the use of place as a metaphor transcending space and time is a means for providing “much of the force of the novel” in its presentation of “great themes” and “perennial human preoccupations” (10).14

In this dissertation, I shall not engage with such approaches at all. Of course, by promoting a place-based approach to literature I no doubt take for granted that there are indeed ways that place provides “meaning,” “distinctiveness,” and “force” to literature. However, my primary concern is to consider the implications and significance of the fact that the practitioners of various literatures in particular contexts believe this to be the case. Authors like those above seem to assume that there is a universal, ontological category called “literature” or, at the very least, that literature is a contingent category that is worthwhile constructing as if it were universal. They do not address, for example, the historical particularities involved in the formation or development of different national literatures,15 just as they seem to take for granted a distinction between folk literature, say, and literature proper. As a scholar, I do not share these assumptions about literature and consequently do not consider it necessary to unearth “its” textual characteristics, let alone to debate literary merit.16 Although I could seek to supplement, relativize, or complicate these critics’ findings

14Modern Greek studies, too, has its own examples of critics looking at the role of place within the text. Nadia Charalambidou (1992) explores how Thanasis Valtinos has interwoven time and the Greek country into a metonym for the emotional and ideological processes a group of soldiers undergoes in The Descent of the Nine. Christopher Robinson (1992) examines the role of place in selected Greek poetry as a metaphor for cultural identity. Robinson (1994) also examines Ritsos’s use of place “as part of a system of reference through which inner and outer realities can be linked” (75). Hero Hokwerda (1992) asserts that the countryside functions in Dimitris Hatzis’s works as the (undesirable) other of the (desired) city to which socialism aspires.

15This is something that is being increasingly scrutinized lately. For example, the critics in Davis and Jenkins (2000) have examined modernism—long considered “an international, urban and yet placeless, phenomenon”—from the perspective of place, region, and nation (3).
about place’s role in “literature” by cataloging its role in various other literatures, like folk literature, neither is this my immediate goal. I am less interested in discovering the variety or distinctiveness of uses of place in literature than I am in the implications of some of those uses, distinctive or not, considered in context, especially when those implications appear to have an impact on actual places.

Lutwack almost goes in this direction (in his fifth chapter) when he discusses place’s function in literature as “image” or “symbol” in relation to American national history, leading us from considerations of place-in-the-text toward the other two paradigms I will discuss. Specifically, he discusses American literature’s representation of places in the New World according to three mutually contradictory “landscape archetypes” (165): garden, wilderness, and place of treasure (144). Drawing on the earlier work of Frederick Jackson Turner, Henry Nash Smith (1950), and Leo Marx (1964), he argues: “The relation of people to land is finally a product of the interaction of three factors: the basic physical nature of the environment, the preconceptions with which it is approached by its inhabitants, and the changes man makes in it” (142). Lutwack addresses history, oppression, and violence. But, since he adheres to the notion that literature simply depicts “preconceptions” through images and symbols, he does not quite recognize the agency, or complicity, of literature in all of this, something I want to address in this dissertation.17

16Place-based literary anthologies in the United States have overwhelmingly worked within the generally accepted boundaries of “literariness” sometimes stating so, and other times implicitly. Higgs and Manning (1975) are a rare exception in their anthology on Southern Appalachia when they write: “In a project such as ours we are aware of the inherent dangers of provincialism and sociological interpretation of literature, but we are also conscious of what seems to be a greater danger than either, the study of ‘literature as literature.’ The inevitable consequence of this approach is myopia and elitism, which as far as Appalachia is concerned, have been evident in the study of Southern literature itself” (xix). Martin Shockley (1976) includes folklore and literature proper in his anthology on the American Southwest, and the Norton anthology of literature of the American South (Andrews 1998) is accompanied by a compact disk with folk expression (singing, preaching, storytelling). Others, like Jim Stephens (1989), include traditional Native American texts. Of course, the argument can be made that the mere inclusion of traditional texts does not necessarily call into question an elite “literariness” as much as it serves to expand the boundaries high literature to include these texts within its purview. See, for example, Herzfeld (1985b:202-203) on some of the drawbacks of the “folksong-as-literature model.”
In contrast, the second and third paradigms ascribe to literature a potential, sometimes an inevitable, role in the construction, maintenance, or negotiation of such preconceptions. Here, representations of place in the text are explicitly held to be important because of their possible or historical effects on particular places. If critics analyze how place functions in the text, they do so in order to consider how the text functions in an actual place. Their overlap notwithstanding, I will differentiate between the second and third paradigms as follows: the former concentrates on how literary texts promote certain understandings, ideas, values, or emotions in individual readers, who presumably act upon them, whereas the latter focuses primarily on literature's broad socio-political function.

Paradigm 2: The Text’s Effects on Individual Readers in Terms of Place

Many critics ask how or what literature communicates with readers about a particular place. They go beyond asking how literature “gives form to feelings about land” (Lutwack 1984:144) in order to ask how such imaginative renderings manage to foster a sense of place among readers, allowing them “to participate emotionally in their place of living” (Turner 1989:x). They seek literature that can “illuminate its region” through its representations of topography, climate, local history, and human stories (Lyon and Williams 1995:2). This perspective also provides the motivation behind a number of place-based literary anthologies, either by asking writers in a particular region to explain their own interpretation of the meaning of “sense of place” (Roach 1992; Vinz and Tammaro 1995) or by selecting texts aimed at fostering place awareness:

I have tried, and still am trying, to make the people who live in New Jersey aware of all New Jersey, to persuade those whose lives have held them in the Delaware Valley to become more conscious of the sea, to make those barely aware of the flatlands to the South become more sensible of the mountains to the North, and to infuse in the boy complacent among the salt sedges of Atlantic and Cape May a longing to see and brood upon the rocky ledges of Sussex or the misty hills of Somerset. (Beck 1961:v)

\footnote{In Modern Greek studies, Robert Shannan Peckham (1995) discusses in similar fashion Vizyinos’s and Papadiamantis’s use of place as a way of negotiating the uneasy fit between nation and territory.}
Joyce Dyer (1998), in her anthology of women’s writing of the Southern Highlands of Appalachia chooses texts that explore how authors have been influenced by their region (3) as a means for promoting geological, historical, cultural, and genealogical, and “spiritual” understanding of it (7). Place-based literary collections promote inhabitants’ understanding of “the close connection between the self and the environment that is so vital to literature, by examining the literature of a place near to their own experience” (Fischer 1989:ix).19

Recently, many of the scholars who have focused on how and what literature communicates to readers about place have been ecocritics interested in explicitly environmental or ecological issues. Lawrence Buell (1995), for example, asks how literature can provoke “environmental reflection by expanding preconceived understandings of the nonhuman environment as a dimension of personal and communal sense of place” (260). He argues that environmental literature constructs places in a particular way “not just by naming objects but by dramatizing in the process how they matter” (267). Place attachment thus becomes a “resource in the articulation of environmental unconscious” (Buell 2001:28).20 Authors promoting a bioregionalist perspective, such as Scott Russell Sanders (1995), look at literary representations of their home place in order to know how it “has been inhabited and how it has been imagined” (50). Moreover, they write about it themselves as a means for promoting place (re)inhabitation among readers.21 Michael P. Branch and Daniel J. Philippon (1998) edit an anthology of nature writing of

---

18For an example of a literary anthology from the perspective of Crete, see Kedraios (1984). Cretan cookbooks (e.g. Psilakis 1997) and other Cretan-published texts also do the work of regional anthologizing by including voluminous quotations from the literary works of exclusively Cretan authors.

19Vinz and Tammaro (1993), in their collection of contemporary writing of the American Midwest, fully recognize regional literature’s ability to contribute to human understandings of place when they critique the exclusionary logic behind “defining” a region and promote open-ended exploration instead (x-xi). See also Steinberg (2000) for writing “examining matters of place and identity, setting and self” (xviii).

20This line of inquiry has been productive in generating research primarily concerned, once again, with place within the text. Thoreau’s relation to place, for example, becomes a “central concern in understanding Thoreau” (Schneider 2000:2, my emphasis).
Virginia’s Blue Ridge and Shenandoah Valley,22 and Scott Slovic (2001) a collection of environmental literature of the American Southwest. John Elder (1998) writes a largely autobiographical book-length study of Robert Frost’s poem “Directive” as a way to “understand how the mountains around our home assumed their form, as well as what it might mean to identify with such a place on earth” (1). Ian Marshall (1998), exploring the literature of places that happen to be intersected by the Appalachian Trail (AT), considers the influence of place on its authors as well as the influence of those authors on his own AT hiking experience. A few scholars have also examined folk literature in terms of its role in negotiating a sense of place. In fact, Kent C. Ryden’s (1993) Mapping the Invisible Landscape examines together both literature (the essay of place) and folk literature (place-based folk-narratives) from such a perspective.23

My own work is, in part, motivated by similar concerns. It is important to me that literary criticism and cultural theory consider their own role in facilitating or hindering place inhabitation. I agree that literature can foster a sense of place in many different ways. I, too, think literature can raise readers’ awareness about important local social and ecological issues, and that as scholars we need to add the treatment of such issues to our agenda, or foreground them ever more diligently. However, I find that most scholarship along ecocritical lines is far too reluctant to call into question fundamental critical categories and assumptions in light of recent cultural theoretical research. As I will argue in Chapter 2, the role of literature in constructing a sense of place entails more than texts communicating certain ideas, feelings, or sensibilities to readers. Literature also participates in various discourses and institutions. Consequently, it affects and is affected by place on a sociopolitical level as well.

21On bioregionalism see, for example, McGinnis (1999). For essays on place (re)inhabitation, see Vitek and Jackson (1996) and Barnhill (1999).

22Despite the authors’ recognition of the area’s “rich folk traditions” (Branch and Philippon 1998:18), their anthology does not include folk literature.

23Closely related to such works on “place” are those that treat the notion of “home,” for instance, by asking how a place is turned into a home (Olsen 1999:2). See also Bonner (1996).
Recognition of literature’s broader sociopolitical potential has provided much of the impetus behind the publication of many of the place-based literary anthologies. In the United States, there is at least one literary anthology for every state, many cities (e.g. Marqusee and Harris 1985; Gilbar and Stewart 1994; Vangelisti 1999), and various other geographical regions (e.g. West 1946; Hausman and Silverstein 1972; Winter 1989), including some that even go beyond the national border (e.g. Vinz and Williamson 1992). As I have indicated, many of these aspire to provide readers with the opportunity to learn more about their own place’s history and culture, or to inspire or fortify a sense of place. But, in addition to trying to enhance an awareness and sense of place, many authors and editors acknowledge their understanding of literature’s broader social role by promoting some socio-political program or issue,24 or by engaging in cultural politics. The specifics of such projects vary widely. For instance, Lucas (1991) gathers stories by writers of the American South in an attempt to raise the region’s level of literacy. Elmendorf (1932) hopes to “kindle a desire in its contributors to do better work, and assist in awakening the state to a sprightlier realization of the talent within its borders” (7). Beck (1961), in addition to broadening the awareness of New Jersey’s inhabitants about the state, also seeks to dispute stereotypical identities associated with the state (vi). Ward and Maveety (1995) aspire to complicate discussions about race, class, and gender by adding “place” to the mix (1). Osborne and Spurlin (1996) examine gay and lesbian writers of the Midwest in an attempt to problematize queer identity, on the one hand, and stereotypical cultural representations of that region, on the other (xiii). Kate Winter (1989) dismantles the association of New York’s Adirondack region with masculinity by recovering the writing of its women (see also Lignell and Wilson 1989), while Gould (2001) makes the case for a “true Adirondack literature” (xxiii). Wollner and Dillon (1999) complicate the Pacific Northwest’s association with idealized conceptions of nature and place by presenting writing about the region’s work life (ix). Gregory McNamee (1993) collects writing about Arizona in the hopes

24In Modern Greek studies, Peter Mackridge (1992) argues that the prevalent use of place in Greek prose from 1883-1903 functions “to present particular Greek rural areas to their readers as ‘countries of the mind’ in an attempt to preserve traditional Greek culture from the inroads of cosmopolitan modernity” (148).
that it will help to protect “an Arizona long under siege […], to free its dammed waters and rescue its plundered forests, to set aside mountaintops and watersheds and deserts for sciences and technologies more humane than the ones we have now” (xvii).

In works like these, a place is sometimes said to have “a literature of its own” (Milton 1976:vii), but more often than not, place-based projects are framed with explicit references to the nation and/or national literature. American writers are “passionate” about places (Daynard 1997:9). Santa Barbara becomes “an American archetype” (Gilbar and Stewart 1994:iv), the “voices of Brooklyn are the voices of America” (Yurick 1973:xvii), and Washington is a possible location from which a “national [poetic] genius may hail” (Elmendorf 1932:5). Helm (1982) celebrates Northern California, “undaunted by New York/L.A.-oriented mass media cynicism” (255). Mississippi produces “an unusual number of writers and a body of work unequalled by any other single state (and most countries, too), in either quantity or quality” (Polk and Scafidel 1979:xvi). South Carolina needs to ponder its failure to “produce a Faulkner” (Calhoun and Guilds 1971:4). Writers of the American South (Beatty and Fidler 1940:iii) and West (Davidson and Bostwick 1939:5) are anthologized as a corrective to their having been neglected by those who edit national anthologies. Literature is a site for Chinese Americans of Hawaii, “like Americans of all cultural backgrounds,” to redefine, reinvent, and improve themselves (Chock and Lum 1989:9). Joyce Dyer (1998) celebrates regional writers in order to get them into the national canon as a corrective to the injustice they have suffered because of their gender and their place (2). In short, many of these texts promote a particular place as an integral or representative component of the nation in general, whereas others are explicit attempts to problematize the dominant concerns of a national literature.

Indeed, some scholars deal with place in order to problematize the idea “national literature” itself. Anne E. Goldman (2000) uses a relational understanding of place to critique existing spatial approaches to American studies based on the model of center vs. periphery (margin/border). She dismisses the logic of Cartesian-like cartography and asks that scholars focus instead on the interrelations of regions, “the political and social pressure points that originate in
one area but that prompt similar fractures in other sections; the stresses that develop in different regions simultaneously, but whose implications are not confined to a particular geography” (3-4). She is not interested in constructing new regional identities, but exploring “the extent to which regional identities […] produce one another” (4).

Paradigm 3: Literature, Place, and Ideology

Goldman’s explicitly political approach brings squarely into view the third general perspective on literature and place, namely, that which focuses on literature’s broad socio-political assumptions and/or implications. This perspective, consonant with the sensibilities of poststructuralism, postmodernism, and cultural studies, takes an explicit interest in issues of power, ideology, and discourse. Many, such as the aforementioned anthologists, practice cultural politics simply by invoking literature to promote or dispute a particular place identity or by striving to revise the national canon. Others participate by taking the cultural politics of literature as an object of study in and of itself. For example, Roberto Dainotto (2000) argues in Place in Literature: Regions, Cultures, Communities that every appeal to place in literature and criticism is an oppressive means for supporting dominant social formations by hiding politics and history through a rhetoric of local authenticity and rootedness. Michael Kreyling’s (1998) Inventing Southern Literature extends research on the invention of national literatures (e.g. Spencer 1957; Jusdanis 1991) to the realm of regional literatures, by providing a genealogy of critics’ and anthologists’ participation in the regional identity politics of the American South. Like Dainotto, Kreyling rejects de-politicized place identities and de-historicized notions of cultural continuity, but admits that regions are sites “for the study of and participation in the reinvention of culture. We should not wish this activity shut down; the process is our collective life” (182).

Scholars also examine the complicity of place in literature with respect to the market or the nation. From the perspective of Marxism, Raymond Williams’s (1973) study of English literature, The Country and the City, examines the role of nostalgia for the countryside and its peasants in facilitating the development and dominance of the capitalist mode of production. By hiding “the
real social processes of alienation, separation, externality, abstraction” (298) with powerful images of city and country, modern nostalgia for an idealized countryside and past provides a crucial mechanism for the development of rural and urban capitalism. From the perspective of the critique of nationalism, Artemis Leontis (1995) looks at how literature and geography interact in the construction of a homeland according to the logic of national culture. National literature cites particular places, thereby constituting a discursive space for assigning meaning to those places. Places, in turn, make “meaning possible by providing landmarks, monuments, lines of connection, lines of flight, and barriers that facilitate or hinder representation” (23). Literary texts participate in the discursive and institutional construction of the very places they purport to “depict,” ostensibly with transparency. In Williams, as well as in Leontis, literature about place functions as a modern institution—capitalist or nationalist, respectively—complicit in the sociopolitical organization of that place. In more recent work, Robert Eric Livingston (2001) suggests the need for expanding the interrogation of literature’s role in constructing place in the modern capitalist nation-state to include consideration of the processes of globalization.

Also along the lines of a cultural studies approach to literature, critics have shown considerable interest in late nineteenth century American regional (or “local color”) fiction. They have examined the relations between regional and national identity, as well as between region and gender, race, or ethnicity (Inness and Royer 1997; McCullough 1999; Foote 2001). For example, Stephanie Foote’s Regional Fictions (2001), examines ways that nostalgic depictions of pre-modern rural communities were complicit in the elite project of modern American national identity formation and consolidation, in an age marked by increased imperialism and immigration: “Its formal concern with assigning to different kinds of people a place in relation to the standard, national culture demonstrates that regional writing was a powerful method of understanding not just the ‘place’ where certain people lived but also the ‘place’ they inhabited in a social hierarchy” (11).

Ideological critique extends beyond the realm of high literatures to include folk literatures of various places as well. Folklorists and anthropologists, in their interrogations of folklore theory
and the social construction of “the folk,” have illuminated how the collection of folk literature, and folklore in general, functions in nationalism (e.g. Dorson 1966; Wilson 1989 [1973], 1976; Kyriakidou-Nestoros 1977; Herzfeld 1986 [1982]; Dick 1989; Abrahams 1993). Local texts may contribute to the promotion or maintenance of cultural pluralism, but they also “operate in the formation of national culture. They are epitomized, like the ruin in the landscape, as emptied history, experienced in terms of both the discovery of continuity in the tradition and the continuing loss of its bearers” (Abrahams 1993:15).

Thus, in addition to being motivated in this dissertation by the potential role of literary texts in promoting place sense and place awareness among individual readers, I am also concerned with the approaches and analyses of poststructuralism, postmodernism, and cultural studies as well. I am interested in both literature’s role in facilitating place inhabitation as well as the discursive, institutional, and ideological relationship between place and literature. Moreover, I am interested in probing their interrelationship, in considering the interplay of elite discourses and everyday life in place, of national politics and personal ethics. Cultural studies scholarship has not generally been interested in asking how, in practice, literature might facilitate place awareness or a sense of place among actual individuals in specific places. Surely place and literature can function as more than mere vehicles for, or discursive expressions of, power and ideology. Community- and ecologically-oriented studies of place, on the other hand, tend to deal inadequately with the issues of discourse and ideology that can figure prominently in the development, negotiation, and display of individuals’ sense and understanding of place through literature. It is my contention that a place-based approach to literature aimed at fostering social and ecological sustainability must eventually account for both aspects together (facilitation of individuals’ place awareness and discourse/power/ideology). The approach I will formulate and advocate in the chapters that follow, which I call “placed criticism,” intends to do just that.
OUTLINE OF THE DISSERTATION

In Chapter 2, I begin to theorize and outline “placed criticism,” an approach to literature from the perspective of socio-ecological place inhabitation. To do so, I find it necessary to start with an interrogation not only of the concept of “place,” but also of the category of “literature” itself. In doing so, I will call into question the efficacy (for place sense and place awareness) of many literary critics’, especially ecocritics’, understandings of both of these terms. In theorizing “place,” ecocritics have relied almost entirely on the work of phenomenological humanistic geographers. I argue that ecocriticism should also borrow from constructivist humanists and social scientists who understand place as a process that constitutes, and is constituted by, interdependent phenomenological and discursive, institutional, and other sociopolitical complexities. Such a theory of place, I argue, sheds important light on the relationship among modern literature, criticism, and place. In particular, it highlights something that many scholars have demonstrated: that modern literary categories, critical practices, and institutions largely developed as part of nation-centered projects preoccupied with creating and disseminating particular national identities. It also brings to attention the fact that part of this process was the construction of a distinction between literature and what were considered “low” literary practices, so-called “folk” literatures. Since these often varied from place to place and were thus not always readily seen to reflect national experiences, values, or mores, they were generally not considered suitable for inclusion in the category of literature proper. All of this foregrounds the contention of many literary and folklore scholars that, although these processes generally occurred during periods of nation-building, even today, many nation-centered, often romantic, categories and assumptions inherited from earlier periods continue to underpin both disciplines (Abrahams 1993; Corse 1997; Livingston 2001).

Ecocriticism has not yet theorized the foundations of place-based research in relation to these historical connections between literature, criticism, and the nation. In my view, this prevents place-based ecocritics from effectively cultivating critical place awareness and a sense of place in their work. I argue, therefore, that it is imperative for scholars interested in promoting a place-centered approach to literature to radically rethink many of their fundamental assumptions,
including those concerning what kinds of literature they should be interpreting. Place-based critics must seek to understand the particular ways that criticism has been primarily nation-centered and attempt to make it place-centered instead. They must make the “nation” a visible term of analysis instead of a mere “given” or unstated assumption. In particular, I contend, scholars should contextualize and expand the modern category of literature to include, in addition to literature proper (national literatures), local literatures that are usually assigned to the category of folklore or popular culture. This will enable them to engage in critical projects dealing with a greater variety of texts relevant to a particular place. I also maintain that ecocritics interested in place should become more reflexive and seek to make their own work locally relevant by conceiving of it as a means for foregrounding, analyzing, or debating local social and ecological issues. I claim that such reflexivity is perhaps the single most important element left wanting from recent attempts by ecocritics at place-based interpretive projects. These ecocritics tend to indulge in personal narratives about the significance of literary works for themselves, but fail to provide much indication of how their readings seek to contribute to the social and ecological well-being of the place about which they write. I argue that placed criticism should legitimize scholarship that is radically local in perspective without reproducing locally-bounded conceptions of place that tend to degenerate into mere identity politics or phenomenological nostalgia. Thus, placed criticism should strive to focus simultaneously on local and larger-than-local contexts. It should seek to consider both the social/cultural/political and natural/ecological aspects of issues, keeping in mind that “nature,” “society” and “culture” are themselves not givens, but constituted and reconstituted by a variety of processes, including those in which placed criticism aspires to participate. Since the mutual constitution of the nature and culture, as well as of the local and larger-than-local, comprise fundamental concerns for placed criticism, the chapters that follow will explore them in much greater detail.

I conclude Chapter 2 with a discussion of the particular relevance of Crete for exploring further, refining, and putting into practice placed criticism in Chapters 3-6. The Cretan case is striking because there is so much local literary and other cultural activity that makes explicit
reference to Crete. The texts I will examine in subsequent chapters will range from Cretan
cookbooks and Cretan oral poetry (the mandinadha) to nationally canonized novels and
nationalist critical theories. I have selected them for analysis not only to shed light on the general
issue of place and literary culture, but also to bring into focus concrete social and ecological issues
(e.g. farming practices) relevant to the island’s well-being. I will analyze how these texts refer to and
compete with one another in their understandings of place and Cretan culture. Specifically, I will
examine how various authors have depicted, or made appeals to “nature,” “the folk,” and
“traditional place,” in order to put forth certain arguments about modernity, local folk tradition,
nationalism, and regionalism. I will highlight complex intersections between place-based literary
practices in everyday life and regionalist and nationalist literary ideology, between the literary
expression of personal ethics and literature’s complicity in local, national, and transnational
politics. While each of these subsequent chapters comprises a self-contained analysis of a particular
group of processes and issues, I should also point out that, taken together, Chapters 3-5 (along with
Ball 2002) simultaneously provide the necessary discursive context for the climax of my placed
critical interpretation of literary texts: a close reading of Kritikaros’s mandinadhes that I collected
from the gatherings in Crete in terms of such issues as wilderness conservation and food/farming
practices (Chapter 6).

In Chapter 3, I begin interrogating the relationship of place, nature, and national literary
culture. I discuss nation-centered texts that illustrate how literature and criticism construct nature
and culture. My main concern is to discuss how nature and romantic folklore ideology—what I call
“folkism”—contributed to developments in Greek literature and criticism as part of the modern
projects of nation-building and nation-consolidation. Specifically, I analyze in detail the
interrelationship of constructions of “nature,” “the folk,” and “place.” I argue that national culture
represented the folk—the rural inhabitants of particular regions—both as idealized
lovers-of-nature and as wild human beings in need of acculturation, and, consequently, contributed
to constructions of nature as an ambivalent national location and national force. My argument
aims to begin providing the context for further consideration of similar issues in subsequent
chapters (for example, from a regional perspective), but also to illustrate in detail the necessity for placed critics to be reflexive about how their own work contributes to particular constructions of nature and culture.

Having examined folkism as a modernizing nationalizing strategy, and having argued for a critical approach that traces at multiple scales (e.g., regional, national, transnational) the mutual constitution of literary culture and place, I seek in Chapter 4 to come to terms with folkism as a regional strategy. I look at more recent deployments of nature and folkism—this time from the perspective of place—in Cretan cookbooks. I contend that they deploy aesthetic attitudes about nature, folkism, and the discourses of medicine and environmentalism to promote resistance to certain aspects of modernization, nationalization, and globalization that affect local agriculture and food practices. By examining the Cretan cookbooks’ similarities and differences with American cookbooks referring to Crete, I suggest that a degree of local cultural and organizational autonomy regarding food and agriculture is at stake in these texts. The details of my analysis, moreover, turn up certain ambiguities regarding the use of a word like “pure” to signify both ecological purity and cultural purity. Thus, in addition to providing an analysis of regionalist resistance to modernization, this chapter also suggests the need for further consideration of the interrelationship of ecological place awareness and cultural identities. It prepares the way, therefore, for the more detailed explorations of this topic that come in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6.

In the two chapters that follow, I treat “folkloric” and folk literatures in relation to cultural identities and place awareness, taking into consideration their embeddedness in the discourse of folkism. In Chapter 5, I discuss “folkloric” literature (stories and novels known as “ethography” that incorporate collected folklore and/or represent rural Greeks), while in Chapter 6 I deal with texts that have generally been categorized as “folk literature” (the Cretan mandinadha).

In Chapter 5 I take up the issue of the ambiguous relationship between ecological awareness and cultural identity that arose in the context of food in the previous chapter. I begin by examining several examples, beyond the context of cookbooks, of identifying and naming the landscape in terms of place awareness and cultural identities (especially local and national
identities). Then, I explore the issue further through a close reading of Pandelis Prevelakis’s trilogy of novels, *The Paths to/of (the) Creation*. Prevelakis’s trilogy foregrounds individual experiences of nature not only in the context of the local human community, including the folk, but also in relation to the discourse of national literary culture itself. It demonstrates how even the most “direct”—in this case, mystical—experiences of nature and place are mediated by social processes and cultural identities. In light of my reading of Prevelakis, I argue that it is always necessary for placed critics to consider both cultural identities and place awareness (and their relationship) when interpreting texts. I also briefly suggest possible ways this might be done. For instance, I contrast passages from American literature that downplay the embeddedness of place awareness in social processes with an example that foregrounds it instead. Also, I criticize those forms of literary criticism that operate from the perspective of essentialized local identities. I argue that Prevelakis’s trilogy supports the view that literature referring to local nature and local tradition should do so not in order to represent “authentic” regional or national identities (as do many of the texts I considered in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4), but rather to promote a particular “ethos” among contemporary local inhabitants in ways that take local traditions seriously. In other words, Prevelakis makes a literary “argument” against folkism and identitary approaches to literature and criticism, privileging instead “ethical” approaches from the perspective of ethos, understood in a customary, moral, and rhetorical sense. Such an ethical approach suggests certain questions (addressing the relationship of place awareness and cultural identities) that placed critics might want to consider when they approach a text. Indeed, such questions will help to motivate my own close readings of Cretan mandinadhés in Chapter 6.

Before I can get to my close reading of mandinadhés, however, I first need to pause and reconsider the genre’s status as “folklore” in order to legitimate it as “literature” as well. Thus, Chapter 6 begins by summarizing my analysis (found in Ball 2002) where I have already put forth such an argument. The analysis in that work proceeds as follows: I start by examining several of the consequences of the mandinadhá’s having been assigned to the category of folklore, both in Greek folklore, where folkism has largely prevailed in studies of the genre, and in North American
anthropology. Greek folklore, generally ignoring contexts and institutions and suppressing the recognition of individual authors, has studied the mandinadha only insofar as it signifies the existence of an anonymous folk whose expressive culture reflects the ostensibly homogeneous group. (Greek literary scholarship ignores it altogether.) North American scholarship, attributing so much importance to the study of generating meaning in context, has restricted its attention to those cases that seemingly do not involve institutional issues like production, distribution, consumption, and authority. By treating the mandinadha as folk literature, scholars have made it difficult to conceive of it as the regional analogue of national literature. I then survey hitherto ignored printed and published mandinadha texts, arguing that they strive to pose to varying degrees as literary texts, as well as display certain folkist assumptions, concerns, or principles. Finally, I argue that, by considering place as a process, it is useful to conceive of the mandinadha not only as folklore, but also as “placed literature.” In short, Ball (2002) argues that the mandinadha can still be seen as “distinct” from national literature (insofar as it operates primarily on a regional scale), but also as “literary,” and hence worthy of close readings (or any other type of literary analysis).

Thus, I am able in Chapter 6 to return to the Cretan gatherings I described at the beginning of this introduction in order to examine mandinadhes as placed literature. Having sufficiently developed the notion of placed criticism (consideration of locally placed texts in terms of local social and ecological issues) having explored some of its basic concerns (the mutual constitution of nature and culture, the mutual constitution of the local and larger-than-local, the relationship between local place awareness and cultural identities), and having developed various other useful concepts and terms (e.g., folkism, place cohabitation, placed literature), I am in a position to shift my primary emphasis away from formulating/refining placed criticism and toward demonstrating its practice instead. Even so, this chapter—because it deals with the mandinadha—also contributes further evidence to support my claims in earlier chapters that it is necessary for ecocritics to consider “folk” as well as conventional literatures.

I begin my analysis in Chapter 6 by arguing that the Cretan mandinadha, like the Cretan cookbooks, regularly serves as a vehicle for the deployment of folkism as an anti-modernizing
strategy: many mandinadha composers and critics appropriate the mandinadha as a site for engaging in anti-modern place identity politics. My main task, though, is to do a close reading of the mandinadhes of Manolis Kritikaros as “ethical” placed literature. Following the insights of folklore’s “performance theory,” I do so by considering them in their discursive and performative context. Fortunately, my discussions in Chapters 3-5 and Ball (2002) provide much of the necessary discursive context (e.g., folkism, modernization, nationalism, regionalism, changing food/agricultural practices, constructions of the “wild”) for my interpretation. I supply much of the performative context in this chapter through ethnographic description. Interweaving ethnographic description with literary interpretation, I argue that Kritikaros’s mandinadha texts reject the folkism of many of his fellow mandinadha composers and critics. Instead, they seek to reinterpret “Cretan wildness” and “Cretan rebelliousness” in ways that welcome certain aspects of modernization, while resisting others. Specifically, his compositions aspire to teach a particular reinterpretation of rural folk traditions that does not deny urban modernity wholesale. Furthermore, I argue that Kritikaros’s poetry promotes the importance of having a sense of place, of protecting local wilderness, and of making local agriculture more sustainable. Bringing together all of these particular readings, I claim that the overall message of his mandinadhes is a call for an ethic of “the wild.” This ethic combines the stereotype of “wild” Cretan rebelliousness with the philosophical-ecological notion of rootedness-in-place. It promotes proud, anarchic, anomic, and freedom-loving sensibilities and critical awareness of (and thorough attachment and responsibility to) the place one lives. The promotion of this ethic, combining as it does place identity and place awareness, seeks to overturn the disparaging literary associations by nationalists of rural Cretans with wildness (Chapter 3) as well as to reject the romantic place identity politics of Cretan regionalists (Chapter 4). Kritikaros promotes such an ethic in everyday life while holding largely pessimistic views regarding his agency in promoting large-scale progressive changes aimed at preventing further environmental degradation. Thus, I claim that his texts are not so much strategic as they are “tactical,” in de Certeau’s sense, aimed at teaching individuals whose political and economic agency is largely restricted to “guard the wild” in their everyday lives.
In Chapter 7, I conclude by briefly revisiting the idea of “placed criticism” in light of my own analysis, and I consider some of the possible implications for future critical practice in the humanities. I argue that the emergence of place as an important ecological and economic category indicates the need for placed critical approaches in the humanities if the humanities are to remain socially relevant and interesting. I claim that one of the most important tasks of the humanities in the future should be the facilitation of place inhabitation. And, I maintain that the facilitation of place inhabitation requires re-conceptualizing the task of literary studies along interdisciplinary lines. I conclude that the future of the humanities depends on projects, collaborations, programs, and institutions that combine nation-centered literary studies with the work of folklore, anthropology, and cultural studies that has long been studying the complexities of the local.

On the whole, I aim in this dissertation to contribute an innovative theoretical paradigm for, and a practical example of, placed literary criticism to scholars who are committed to place. I especially hope that such a paradigm will enable the field of ecocriticism to expand its boundaries when it comes to place-based scholarship, by encouraging a wider range of texts (especially “folk” literature) to be analyzed, and by encouraging the analysis of such texts to proceed from an interdisciplinary perspective that draws on literary studies, cultural studies, and folklore. In doing so, I also seek to make many other specific scholarly contributions as well. For example, I hope to contribute to ecocriticism a constructivist critique of the topic of nature and nation. To my knowledge, it is the first such nature/nation critique to treat a non-Anglophone literature, and the first to take into consideration the tension between the nation and place/region. I am hopeful, therefore, that it will provide groundwork for future comparative ecocritical studies. To bioregionalists and other place-oriented communitarians in the social and physical sciences, I want to demonstrate that local aesthetic practices are not merely naive forms of “entertainment,” but that they can, and should, play a significant role in local community life. I intend to contribute implicitly to poststructuralist/postmodern folklore’s critique of the “folk” through my investigation of the relationship among “nature,” “the folk,” and “traditional place” with respect to such discourses as nationalism and regionalism, as well as through my treatment of the anomalous
consequences of the literature/folk-literature distinction. I indicate the need for interdisciplinary approaches to even the most “local” of literary issues, suggesting new ways in which folklorists and literary critics are in a position to provide insight to each other’s work. Finally, I hope this dissertation lays some of the groundwork necessary for reconfiguring literary criticism and literary education in the humanities so that it becomes possible, through critical consideration of socio-ecological issues, for particular academic and non-academic institutions to become more responsible to particular places.
CHAPTER 2

PLACED CRITICISM

In this chapter, I begin to theorize “placed criticism,” an approach to literature that seeks to promote place inhabitation through critical consideration of social and ecological issues. It will provide a framework for my subsequent investigation the Cretan case which in turn aims to shed further light on the placed critical task. In formulating placed criticism, I will find it necessary to interrogate even the categories of “place” and “literature” themselves, calling into question many critics’, especially ecocritics’, understandings of them.

At least since the publication of the first anthology of ecocriticism, ecologically-minded literary theorists and critics have been preoccupied with place and place inhabitation. Likewise, essayists such as Scott Russell Sanders have been calling for more place-based art and literature: “For each home ground we need new maps, living maps, stories and poems, photographs and paintings, essays and songs. We need to know where we are, so that we may dwell in our place with a full heart” (1995:8). Indeed, Sanders’s work is a sustained experiment in, and meditation on, the “mapping” of his own Midwestern place. A geographical center is for him a prerequisite for a spiritual one, and both are important for grounding the kind of writing he espouses. Conceiving of stories of place as maps wherein one might understand how “the geography of mind adheres to the geography of the earth” (1993:150), he calls for a literature of inhabitation (1995:50). The writer’s

25Cheryll Glotfelty asked rhetorically, “In addition to race, class, and gender, should place become a new critical category?” (Glotfelty and Fromm 1996:xix)

26See, in particular, the two successive collections of essays Staying Put (1993) and Writing From the Center (1995).
work is to inscribe a place with stories, he maintains, and “[t]he surest way of convincing your neighbors that they, too, live in a place that matters is to give them honest and skilful writing about your mutual home” (1995:163). He also gestures toward the kind of place-based literary criticism that ecocritics have since been developing.27

But what do—and what should—ecocritics mean by “place”? How does—and how should—it relate to literature and criticism? Place can obviously signify a wide variety of geographical and geopolitical locations—from a neighborhood to a region, from a state to a watershed—and its meaning can vary according to context. While some places are popularly conceived of as having exact boundaries (the borders of a state), others are not (“the Midwest”). Also, places are held not only to vary in scale, but also to overlap. Sanders write, “I think of my home ground as a series of nested rings, with house and marriage and family at the center, surrounded by wider and wider hoops of neighborhood and community, the bioregion within walking distance of my door, the wooded hills and karst landscape of southern Indiana, the watershed of the Ohio River, and so on outward—and inward—to the ultimate source” (Sanders 1993:116). Clearly, when critics think of “place” it is important to take into consideration that it signifies a living physical location, geographical and biological, as well as subjective human experience. Moreover, as Neil Evernden (1996) reminds us, place-as-environment and place-as-subjective-experience are equally interrelated, inseparable, and interdependent as are organisms and environments themselves.

---

27He cites, for example, various American authors as “cartographers” of place (1993:168; cf. 1995:50-51), and in “Imagining the Midwest” (1995:22-51), he informally surveys the ambivalence of literary representations of the Midwest by Midwestern writers (which tend to be both nostalgic and harshly critical) in relation to patterns of (self-)exile. One of the things which I find particularly successful about Sanders’s work is that it often takes into account the place identity of the Midwest, without suggesting that some version of “Midwesternness” ought to become the criterion for good writing about that region. On the other hand, one aspect of his work which is for me particularly problematic (or, at least not sufficiently problematized), is the essentializing depiction of nature-as-authentic (read: nature-as-authority), such as when he uses phrases like “true map” (1993:62) and “truest speech” (1993:93), which might implicitly suggest that good place stories—good place maps—are only those which adhere to some notion of “literal reference,” or some kind of realism.
However, does consideration of the interrelationship of a particular environment and subjective human experience provide a sufficient model for inquiry into the issue of literature and place? Apparently, many ecocritics believe this to be the case, and thus their understandings of place rely almost entirely on the phenomenological humanistic geography of such scholars as Edward Relph or Yi-fu Tuan. In this chapter, I will argue that ecocriticism should also borrow from the constructivist views of humanists and social scientists who understand place as a process that constitutes, and is constituted by, interdependent phenomenological and discursive, institutional and other sociopolitical complexities. Such an understanding of place will imply that all literature and criticism is implicated in the construction and negotiation of place—including my own work in this dissertation. This is why I distinguish my own self-consciously place-oriented critical approach by employing the epithet “placed” instead of “local” or “place-based.” By using the participle form of the verb “place,” I intend to make explicit the discursive process involved in contextualizing something locally. I am trying to draw attention to the fact that, for something to be placed, someone must do the placing: I am situating something (“placing it”) in its locale (“its place”). The constructivist view will also imply that how literature, criticism, and place interrelate and affect one another depends largely on the particular sociopolitical context in which they operate.

All of this will have immediate implications for my own study. As the gatherings I described in Chapter 1 make clear, place-based inquiry into the Cretan case entails analysis of both canonical literary texts and widely ignored local literature (the mandinadha) hitherto categorized as “mere folklore.” Yet, institutional and historical constraints make such place-centered analysis difficult. On the one hand, literary studies and folklore are generally considered quite different disciplines. Indeed, my survey of research on literature and place in the previous chapter shows that such scholarship has little to say about local folk or popular literatures. Furthermore, modern literary categories, critical practices, and institutions largely developed as part of nation-building and other nation-centered projects preoccupied with creating and disseminating particular national identities. This raises the question of just how place-centered most so-called place-based literary
criticism is after all. It indicates that a proper study of the relationship of literature, criticism, and place entails problematizing even “literature” and “criticism” themselves at regional, national, and transnational scales.

Apart from providing foundations for my own study, my interrogation of literature and criticism should enable ecocritics to better comprehend their own task in terms of place and the nation. Though it frequently engages in place-based scholarship, ecocriticism has not yet theorized the foundations of place-based research in relation to historical connections between literature, criticism, and the nation. In my view, this unwittingly frustrates ecocritical projects aimed at cultivating place awareness and attachment, not least because it encourages them to dismiss from consideration the plethora of local folk genres that are practiced in the places about which they write (because these genres have not been legitimated as “literature”). Thus, I will argue, place-based literary studies needs to contextualize and expand the modern category of literature to include, in addition to literature proper (national literatures), local literatures that are usually not considered literature at all, but rather are assigned to the category of folklore or popular culture. From a practical standpoint, this implies that placed criticism should be an interdisciplinary endeavor, since techniques for interpreting folk and popular literatures have been primarily cultivated by scholars outside of literary studies. In addition to considering a variety of locally relevant texts, ecocritics interested in place must become more reflexive and seek to make their own scholarship more locally relevant by conceiving of it as a means for foregrounding, analyzing, or debating local social and ecological issues. I will argue that such reflexivity is conspicuously absent from the recent work of place-based ecocritics who tend to indulge in personal narratives about the significance of literary works to themselves, but fail to indicate how their readings intend to contribute to the social and ecological well-being of the place about which they write. I will also maintain that while placed critics should aspire to legitimize radically local scholarship, they should do so without (re)producing locally-bounded conceptions of place that tend to degenerate into mere identity politics or phenomenological
nostalgia. They should strive to focus simultaneously on local and larger-than-local contexts, seek to consider both the social and ecological aspects of issues, and keep in mind that “nature” and “culture” are themselves not givens, but (re)constituted by a variety of processes.

FROM STORIES OF PLACE TO LITERARY COHABITATION

Novelist Leslie Marmon Silko (1996), writing about the central role of place in Pueblo deer hunting stories, makes the following observation:

[H]unting stories were not merely after-dinner entertainment. These accounts contained information of critical importance about behavior and migration patterns of mule deer. Hunting stories carefully described key landmarks and locations of fresh water. Thus a deer-hunt story might also serve as a “map.” (Silko 1996:269)

Silko notes that Pueblo hunting narratives, in addition to whatever other work they might have done, also provided maps of and information about local places. Her observation hints at issues of central importance to placed criticism, including the following question: Does all literature provide information about place, or only that which “refers” to “actual” places? Consideration of the latter possibility brings to mind ecocritical debates about language and referentiality, and such related topics as verisimilitude.28 The former, seemingly extreme yet more intriguing, possibility seems replete with potential implications for placed literary criticism. Silko’s use of the words “merely” and “also” suggest something else about literature as well: a functional distinction between literature’s ability to provide information about place—its “mapping” function—and its ability to do other things, such as entertain an audience. Notwithstanding the possibility that all literature “maps,” this raises the additional question of whether mapping is best conceived of as a distinct function of certain texts or as an inextricable part of human communication that happens to be distilled by Silko’s analysis. Her interpretation of stories of place as containing information can

28See Phillips (1999), especially the second section, “The Claims of Realism,” for an excellent discussion of referentiality and some of ecocriticism’s uncritical acceptance of language-as-representation and the power of realism as guiding principles.
only serve to underscore such questions. (How did Silko’s traditional Pueblos view it?) My point is not to question the validity of Silko’s observation, but to see what else becomes visible upon problematizing it.

Ethnographer-linguist Keith H. Basso’s (1996) extensive analyses of Western Apache language provide examples in which literature’s mapping function appears as more than the mere transfer of information about place in a container. Attempting to come to terms with the cultural context of certain spoken texts from the Cibecue community of east-central Arizona, Basso investigates “how Western Apaches talk about the natural landscape and the importance they attach to named locations within it” (40). His own findings, however, suggest that they do not talk about (around) the landscape, as much as they talk themselves into it, and it into them. This is most clear in his assessment of “historical tales,” tales that always open and close with the naming of the specific place at which the events of the tale occurred. Note Basso’s use of quotation marks around the word “about,” indicating his awareness of the difficulties involved in rendering his findings into analytical scholarly language:

In addition to everything else—places, events, moral standards, conceptions of cultural identity—every historical tale is also “about” the person at whom it is directed. This is because the telling of a historical tale is almost always prompted by an individual’s having committed one or more social offenses to which the act of narration, together with the tale itself, is intended as a critical and remedial response. […] Apaches contend that if the message is taken to heart by the person at whom the tale is aimed, and if, in conjunction with lessons drawn from the tale itself, he or she resolves to improve his or her behavior—a lasting bond will have been created between that individual and the site or sites at which events in the tale took place. (Basso 1996:55)

Such a tale inscribes the landscape on the moral conscience of the person at whom it is directed and simultaneously writes that individual into the landscape, equating his/her behavior with that of the place-based story’s antagonist. Although it is possible to distinguish such a tale’s geographic map from its “moral” map, it seems clear enough from Basso’s analysis that, from the Western Apache’s perspective, the geographic map is the moral map and the moral map is the geographic one. The
“moral of the story” is incomprehensible apart from geography: “We know the names of places where everything happened. So we stay away from badness,” states one of Basso’s informants (38). All of this suggests that place, besides serving as the “setting” of a tale or as a piece of information to be conveyed to the audience, constitutes and is constituted by a text’s meaning (what it is “about”) and its meaningfulness (why it is valid, valued, and sometimes even urgent).

These examples indicate that an adequate place-based theory of literature and criticism ought to make reference to the fact that literary practices always occur among humans-in-place(s). Silko hints at such a theory when she writes:

The narratives linked with prominent features of the landscape between Paguate and Laguna [villages] delineate the complexities of the relationship which human beings must maintain with the surrounding natural world if they hope to survive in this place. (Silko 1996:273)

Silko maintains that the literature in question (hunting narratives) contributes to the survival of the Pueblo because it functions to negotiate a relationship between humans and place that is necessary (“must maintain”) for survival. As it stands, there are some obvious problems with this claim. For example, just because whatever relationship these people have maintained with their place has enabled them to survive thus far does not mean necessarily that they would not have survived had they developed a very different relationship to the land. Furthermore, the question of survival is inherently problematic insofar as it always begs the question: For how long? Capitalist modernity, after all, with its domineering, instrumentalist, and widely destructive relationship to the planet, has thus far contributed to the survival of modern capitalist societies. Finally, the phrase “if they hope to survive” makes it sound as if narratives are consciously directed at the goal of survival, or, at least that their lowest-order function is to try to effect survival, which may or may not be the case. Thus, it seems more prudent to make a more modest claim that the stories facilitate life, if not

29Unfortunately, Basso occasionally compromises the subtlety and complexity of his own findings by using metaphors which fail to do them justice: for example, Basso’s “mnemonic peg” (62) as opposed to the hunting metaphor of “stalking” (60).
survival. Qualifying Silko’s claim, then, I would say that the Pueblo hunting narratives play an important role in the negotiation of their relationship with place in ongoing attempts to live there.

This formulation is suggestive of a place-oriented theory of literature: the practice of literature facilitates living in place(s) just as life-in-place(s) enables literary practices. More succinctly, inhabitation facilitates literature and literature facilitates inhabitation. Such a formulation, however, perhaps privileges the individual too much: an individual life-in-place communicates with another individual life-in-place through literary texts. But “individuals” are part of each other’s “places,” and, at another level, they all live together in, or cohabit, the same place (Arizona, earth, the solar system). Furthermore, as organisms whose lives depend, not only on other organisms and non-living material, but also on other humans, it is because humans live together, interacting, that they can live as “individuals” at all, not to mention that the evolution of language presupposes human interaction. In order to be inhabitants, then, humans must always already be cohabitants. This yields yet another tautology: cohabitation enables the practice of literature and literary practices enable cohabitation. But what is cohabitation if not the interaction of lives-in-place(s)? And are not literary practices just a subset of such interactions? Thus, literature not only enables, but it is an example of cohabitation. To engage in literary practices is to cohabit, regardless of whether it eventually leads to well-being or disaster, to survival or extinction.

Presumably, humans aspire to achieve well-being and to survive, and it is in this sense that if literary culture has an “ultimate” goal, it is not simply to read, write, or criticize texts, but to make place(s) “cohabitable.”

---

30 In order to make sense at the level of generality I am proposing, we need to allow sufficient flexibility for the word “place,” so that it might equally well signify an area of Arizona, the entire planet earth, or the humanly inhabitable universe.

31 Daniel White (1997) makes an interesting move in the “opposite” direction: He looks at cohabitation (actually, ecology) as communication, applying communications theories about information processing to evolution and ecology. Actually, this makes a lot of sense. If communication “is” cohabitation, then models of one ought to yield insights about the “other.”

32 Note: This discussion suggests an alternative term (“cohabitat”) for expressions like “place” and “placed community.” I generally prefer to employ the phrase “placed community,” however, because the participle “placed” can perform two functions at once: it expresses that a community is
Returning, then, to the question I raised at the beginning of this section—Is not all literature “about” place?—my discussion hints that an affirmative answer is likely. In order to proceed, however, I need to problematize place from a socio-ecological constructivist perspective.

PROBLEMATIZING “PLACE”

There are at least two fundamental epistemological paradigms for conceptualizing reality in terms of “nature” and “culture” circulating among scholars in the humanities and social sciences today. The first, largely consistent with most people’s “common sense” as well as with the logic of the empirical sciences and positivism, conceives of “nature” as an actual entity “out there.” Arguably, it has enabled the development of the most technologically refined way for understanding how to build a car, say, or to reduce global warming. In addition, it provides a way for scholars to think about and promote particular relationships between humans and the environment. Many ecocritics, adhering to models provided by phenomenological geography, adopt this paradigm in their work, calling for a focus on the relationship between culture and nature, or by developing strategies whereby culture can give voice to nature. This “realist” (Latour 1993:85, 87) or empirical paradigm also enables, for instance, writers like Silko to conceive of place as an “entity”—no doubt a dynamic one—that people can talk about.

Some discussion is necessary here to clarify in more detail how the human/non-human and life-form/non-life-form distinctions relate to my discussion of cohabitation. I am employing the term here primarily to deal with interactions among life-forms, but do not see any, on the level of physics, say, qualitative difference between cohabitation of life-forms and any interaction of matter whatsoever; the “distinction” is merely a corollary to our interpretive classification of matter into living and non-living. Now, if we restrict our attention to life-forms, it should be clear, no less because of the ambiguities involved with any notion of “place,” that humans do not cohabit merely with other humans. Indeed, we sometimes even communicate (and here I mean the conscious use of verbal language) with some other species. On the other hand, since I am dealing with literature here, not discussions with dogs, I am focusing primarily on intra-species cohabitation. It is important to realize, however, that this focus is in some sense not real, and only a means for dealing with how people cohabit the world with everything else: Exactly because of humans’ interdependence with place, non-human creatures and non-living matter alike, intra-species cohabitation is always already inter-species cohabitation as well. Indeed, that is the whole point of introducing the notion of cohabitation in the first place.
A second paradigm, followed by poststructuralists, postmodernists, cultural studies, and some social scientists, prefers to conceive of even such a seemingly irreducible “entity” as nature as also the product of ongoing interpretive processes. For humans to even conceive of “nature” as

_nature_ presupposes linguistic, discursive, and other processes which construct ideas of “nature” in the first place. In this view, “nature” and “culture” are viewed as a particular scheme that humans use to recognize, categorize, interpret, and even affect the ever-changing flux of “reality.” Such a position posits in a more radical way the inseparability and interdependence noted by Neil Evernden (1996) of person and place, culture and nature. Moreover, in light of some scholars’ claims (e.g. Latour 1993) that the former paradigm has been dominant in modernity, thereby obfuscating when, where, how, and why science and technology are employed (and who is authorized to employ them), this paradigm offers a degree of epistemological reflexivity. In contrast to the phenomenologists, constructivists argue that conceiving of “place”—be it a bioregion, a state, or an island—requires grappling with its phenomenological _and_ its sociopolitical complexity. Place, they contend, is most productively viewed as a _process_. It is not best conceived of as an entity at all—spatial, physical, geopolitical, bioregional or otherwise—but as the product of ongoing social and ecological processes.

Although both paradigms believe there really is “something” out there, they are fundamentally at odds with each other about how best to understand and affect that reality.\(^3^3\) Whereas the empirical relies on one kind of a reductionism (everything that “is” needs to be observed and analyzed), the constructivist relies on another kind of reductionism (everything is interpretation). Thus, empirical truths and discursive truths are of a different quality. Epistemologically incongruent, each paradigm can “explain,” and thus dismiss, the other with utmost consistency. (“Of course there really are trees,” says the former: “Look!” “To recognize and define something as a ‘tree’ presupposes human interpretations; ‘trees’ are socially constructed,”

\(^3^3\)See, for example, Mazel’s (2000:xv-xvi) discussion. I should also note that belief in something “out there” does not prevent constructivists from rightfully interrogating critically the category and concept of “reality” itself, its historical emergence and permutations, the ideological work it does, and so forth.
responds the latter). Yet, the academy can probably not afford to dismiss either paradigm. Despite their mutually contradictory epistemological quality, the sharpest insights of both are probably necessary, pragmatically speaking, for promoting social and ecological sustainability.

Indeed, as a lapsed applied mathematician who used to work on equations modeling fluid flow and microorganism growth, I wholeheartedly support the rigorous adherence of good modern scientists to the empirical paradigm in their research. As a humanist, though, I agree with scholars who view the constructivist paradigm as an important means for coming to terms with the social, political, and economic complexities that are inextricably part of our current ecological predicament, and any possible solutions. I have serious doubts regarding the possibility of a socially and ecologically sustainable future in a world where people, ostensibly following the paradigm of modern science, take empirical reality as the only legitimate source of pragmatic truths.

However, in adopting a constructivist viewpoint and focusing so much on discursive and linguistic constructions of nature, culture, environment, and place, literary scholars need to be especially careful to recognize and situate language and discourse as but one aspect of the ongoing processes of social and material life. Geographer David Harvey (1996), laying the foundations for a study of spatial and ecological difference and justice, has provided one of the most lucid and extensive discussions of a constructivist theory of place.34 Language and discourse, Harvey argues, are always interrelated with beliefs, values, and desires, rituals, institutions, power, material practices and social relations. Moreover, all of these aspects are dialectically interrelated, so that

34Harvey sets out to answer several major questions in this ambitious work whose thesis might be summarized as follows: In a time when social justice and environmental justice are imperative for humanity’s well-being, but when theories of each have been incapable of adequately considering the perspectives and insights of the other, our only hope is to understand the socio-political and the ecological as inextricably interwoven dialectical processes, and to pursue a just social order producing just geographical differences based on such a renewed understanding. And, this renewed understanding must be developed according to the principle that spatial and ecological differences are both constituted by and constitutive of socio-ecological and political-economic processes. This is not the place to go into a comprehensive account of Harvey’s theory, which relies on a dialectical reading of Marxism that can also account for the environment. It should also be mentioned that this work by Harvey lays important foundations for facing “the urban challenge to ecocriticism”
each aspect, or “moment,” participates, through a process of imperfect translation, in the constitution of all the others. He grounds this perspective in a theory of relational dialectics that enables him to deal with the relative concreteness and significance of “entities” without essentializing them. Relational dialectics focuses on processes and relations, understanding the “things” of the world, like “nature” or “identity,” as manifestations of various processes, relations, and flows. It differs from empirical epistemologies that assign primacy to self-evident or irreducible things, and then infer processes by observing and analyzing the way those things change state. Relational dialectics also pays careful attention to “permanences”—to “things”—but it conceives of them as always constituted out of various “contradictory” processes which themselves constitute bounded, structured systems. By “contradiction,” dialectics does not mean a logical contradiction in the conventional sense. Processes are considered contradictory when they simultaneously support and frustrate, or undermine, one another. Systems are bounded because no one thing internalizes everything. Yet, such boundaries—including those of space, time, scale, and environment—are never fixed, and depend on the processes relevant to it. In addition to being considered reducible, things are also conceived of as internally contradictory (constituted by multiple processes) as well as contradictory to each other. Thus, any “one” thing internalizes the variety of contradictory processes and relationships that constitute it. And, any “one” thing is but a mere part of a larger system of things, and so on. Parts and wholes are mutually constitutive of each other, and things can be looked at both as the subjects and objects of processes, as causes and effects interchangeably. Transformative activity, or “creative tension,” that reproduces and restructures

(Bennett 2001), and yet continues to be ignored even by many ecocritics who, belatedly, issue that challenge.

35For readers unacquainted with dialectical thinking, analysis, and argumentation (along the lines of Hegel, Marx, Heidegger, Althusser, Foucault, Ricoeur, or Derrida), he provides a very useful extended discussion of the topic that explains dialectics in terms of, but without reducing it to, eleven basic principles (46-68).

36Harvey calls the mistaken idea that a monad can internalize everything the “Leibnizian conceit,” and criticizes Deep Ecologists for employing it in the notion that the self can internalize the whole of “nature.”
the world arises out of opposing forces. Change is the rule, so dialectics seeks to identify those moments and mechanisms that contribute to the relative stability of certain entities, like the landscape or an identity, as well as those that can produce radical transformation.37

Thus, in the view of Harvey’s relational dialectics, language, discourse, beliefs, values, and desires, rituals, institutions, power, material practices, and social relations are never wholly separable:

Discourses express human thought, fantasy, and desire. They are also institutionally based, materially constrained, experientially grounded manifestations of social and power relations. By the same token, discursive effects suffuse and saturate all other moments within the social process (affecting, for example, beliefs and practices as well as being affected by them)38 (Harvey 1996:80).

Epistemologically speaking, it would therefore be a mistake to privilege any one aspect, such as discourse or material practices, over the all the others.39 At the same time, though, material practices are special in that “they are the moment upon which all other effects and forces […] must converge in order for change to be registered as real (experiential and material) rather than remain as imagined and fictitious” (94). And, discourse, in its own right, is special in that “it is the moment of communicative persuasion or discussion between persons regarding certain lines of action and belief” (82).

37Harvey also points out that dialectical inquiry is neither inductive nor deductive, but educational, an inherently ethical and political undertaking embedded in other processes. Moreover, according to its own assumptions, dialectical inquiry itself constitutes things, like concepts, that are inescapably contradictory and always subject to further analysis.

38This concept of translation should not be conflated with mechanistic notions of causality: “So although I am explicitly not proposing here a causal or circular model (of the sort that says, for example, that those in power set up discourses that shape beliefs, fantasies, and desires so as to regulate practices of institution building that set the stage for material production and reproduction activities that in turn construct social relations that finally return to ensure the perpetuation of power), I do want to recognize that situations may arise in which it seems as if such a causal (and circular) logic is at work” (82).

39Nevertheless, Harvey notes, many do make just this mistake: “Again and again we will find slippages of the sort that convert a dialectically correct statement like ‘there is nothing outside the text’ into false statements that ‘everything can be understood through texts’ (or, worse still, ‘everything is a text and can be understood as such’) and equally false practices that seek to use, say, deconstruction of texts as the privileged (and sometimes the only) pathway to understanding” (80).
The relational dialectical perspective implies that a consideration, for example, of the social/discursive construction of nature, is in fact a consideration of the socio-ecological construction of nature, since discourses are themselves constituted by, among other things, material processes. When humans talk or write explicitly, even “objectively,” about nature, they are both referring to the world “out there,” and imposing, or reproducing, a particular interpretation of that world in terms of a constructed category, “nature.” Such interpretations, in turn, are translated into particular institutions and practices that have material effects on “nature.” Hence, one of the major advantages provided by a constructivist perspective is that it enables the interrogation of such discursive categories as “nature,” “culture,” “place,” “space,” and “time” themselves. Many humanities scholars, especially those adhering to an empirical epistemology, tend to take these terms for granted. As a dialectical geographer, Harvey recognizes that “[s]pace and time are neither absolute nor external to processes but are contingent and contained with them” (53). Moreover, he demonstrates that what and how terms like “nature” and “environment” signify, and importantly, how they are valued by humans, is to a great extent related to the structure and dynamics of the particular socio-ecological formations in which they are constituted. In short, socio-ecological processes are constituted by and constitutive of place, space-time, nature, and environment. Nature and culture are not only interdependent, but mutually constitutive. Place, then, is a social and ecological process in which even “the social” and “the ecological” themselves constitute one another.

Thus, every time humans examine nature critically, they are also examining society, just as every examination of society is inescapably an examination of nature. This is important for ecocriticism that aspires to engage in a critique of human values, discourses, or institutions, because it suggests certain drawbacks that result from failing to problematize basic terms like “nature” and “society”:

One of the most pervasive and difficult to surmount barriers [to radical critique] is that which insists on separating out “nature” and “society” as coherent entities. […] I want to insist that radical critique keep open precisely the way in which [society] gets constituted out of socio-ecological processes. (Harvey 1996:140)
This is consistent with Bruno Latour’s (1993) discussion of a “principle of generalized symmetry” (pp. 94-96). Latour argues that “modernity” signifies a mistaken adherence to an epistemological model that believes only the modern sciences can really tell the difference between nature and culture. Ironically, he claims, this model played a significant role in modernity by enabling “moderns” to integrate “nature” and “culture” to an unprecedented degree, all the while thinking they were able to distinguish and separate them. However, the proliferation of such phenomena as the ozone hole—at once so obviously natural and human-made—has at last made possible the realization that “moderns” never really could tell the difference between nature and culture in the first place. Critique, then, requires problematization of such terms as “nature” and “society” themselves:

Nature and Society do not offer solid hooks to which we might attach our interpretations […], but are what is to be explained. The appearance of explanation that Nature and Society provide comes only in a late phase, when stabilized quasi-objects [hybrids of “nature” and “culture”] have become, after cleavage, objects of external reality on the one hand, subjects of Society on the other. Nature and Society are part of the problem, not part of the solution.40 (Latour 1993:95)

Constructivist theories also underscore the interrelationship of place, personal values, and discursive/institutional power. “Since places are frames of social relations, they become imbued with the values of those relations and therefore help to create the relational values that make up the self” (Lomnitz-Adler 1991:196). Thus, Harvey generalizes Basso’s findings relating place and morals by arguing that place and values are always interdependent: “The production of

40The Latourian perspective has found its way into the work of but a few ecocritics. Eric Todd Smith (1998), rejecting ecocritical models which propose giving voice to nature (making it a subject, instead of an object) or recovering some kind of authentic relationship between humans and nature (re-uniting subject and object), has drawn on Latour’s notion of “mediation,” arguing that “[w]e no longer need to determine whether nature has been unduly altered by culture, or whether culture needs the influence of nature. Rather, we can ask what kinds of mediation [the nature of relationships between entities, but also their constitutive activity] are going on, [and] how we might change them” (36). Molly Wallace (2001) has used Latour’s critique of the nature-culture dichotomy to dispute Frederic Jameson’s theory that culture has absorbed nature in postmodernity (more specifically, that capital’s internalization of outside nature has reached the point that no outside exists and capital itself is naturalized). Bruce Clarke (2001) has invoked Latour as a
spatio-temporalities is both a constitutive and fundamental moment to the social process in general as well as fundamental to the establishment of values” (Harvey 1996:247). Moreover, place and values are wholly implicated in broader sociopolitical processes:

The assignment of place within some socio-spatial structure indicates distinctive roles, capacities for action and access to power. Locating things (both physically and metaphorically) is fundamental to activities of valuing as well as identification. Placing and the making of places are essential to social development, social control, and empowerment in any social order. The processes of place construction therefore interrelate with the social construction of space and time. (Harvey 1996:265)

It is just this inextricable interrelationship of place, values, and broader configurations of socio-political power, moreover, that imply the inevitable inefficacy and injustice of place-based forms of thinking that are “purely” bioregionalist or founded upon a strictly “local” communitarianism. Such ways of thinking fail to take into consideration how “distinctive attitudes to particular environments can become powerfully implicated in the building of any sense of [exclusionary] nationalist or communitarian identity” (Harvey 1996:171). Likewise, they fail to consider the complexities of translating their attitudes and values into institutional practices constrained and conditioned in no small measure by the larger-than-local dynamics and configurations of the market, say, or the nation-state. Cultivation of place attachment should be accompanied by articulating “the social, political, institutional, and economic circumstances that transform such place-bound sentiments concerning a special relation to ‘nature’ into exclusionary directions” (Harvey 1996:171).41

prominent and welcome example of “theory” trying to come to terms with “postmodernist excesses” regarding the issue of theory and science.

41Harvey critiques several understandings of place that are prominent among the environmentally- and ecologically-minded. These are essentially phenomenological insofar as they privilege close, intimate relations with nature and other humans through sensuous interaction in place. He begins with Heidegger’s notion of place as “the locale of the truth of Being” (Heidegger in Harvey 1996:299) which theorizes “dwelling” and “rootedness” as authentic ways of being, as opposed to the inauthenticity and alienation of the market characterized by technology, rationalism, mass production, and mass values. Then he discusses how this perspective figures into many environmentalist theories and movements, pointing out that despite its ability to treat the variety of psychic and social meanings associated with sensuous interaction, it fails to grasp the “broader socio-ecological processes [like the chain of commodity production] occurring at scales that cannot
Consequently, place awareness requires not only intimate local phenomenological knowledge, but also consideration of the wide range of social, economic, political, and ecological processes affecting and affected by place. As Harvey (1996) notes, today’s world is characterized by a tension between “sensuous and interpersonal social relations in place” and an awareness of our material and social connection with people all over the planet (315). Thus, local place awareness requires taking into consideration the larger-than-local context. It requires articulating this context in order to cultivate an understanding of “local life aware of itself,” (Berry 1972:67), to avoid fostering insular, non-reflexive understandings of place that are isolationist or exclusionary, and to safeguard against the mentality of “a stick-in-the-mud” (Sanders 1993:113). Moreover, it requires viewing every local “place” as also always already a larger-than-local—if not global—process that is (re)constituted by a plethora of socio-ecological processes on a variety of scales.

This is something that scholars from a wide variety of perspectives and disciplines have come to realize is necessary for any worthwhile humanistic consideration of place. Latour (1993) discusses the issue in relation to the “scaling effects” of modernity, which tend to privilege globality, using the revealing metaphor of a railroad:

Is a railroad local or global? Neither. It is local at all points, since you always find sleepers and railroad workers, and you have stations and automatic ticket machines scattered along the way. Yet it is global, since it takes you from Madrid to Berlin or from Brest to Vladivostok. However, it is not universal enough to be able to take you just anywhere. (Latour 1993:117)

Ronnie D. Lipschutz’s (1999) social scientific research in bioregionalism confronts the difficult issue of local-global inseparability when dealing with environmental problems, rejecting any form of bioregionalism that conceives of bioregions as strictly bounded, providing concrete examples to be directly experienced and which are therefore outside of phenomenological reach” (Harvey 1996:303). He criticizes the de-politicized notion of “genius loci,” the spirit or essence of a place. He then relates notions of a place’s “distinctive character” to the issue of community, critiquing theories which focus on “the commonality of some public realm within which notions of civic virtue, public responsibility, and the like can be defined” (311). As with human-nature/place relations, Harvey points out that it is wrong to consider only face-to-face human-human relations as authentic. The whole discussion leads him to reconcile the Heideggerian focus on intimate relations with the Marxian focus on universal, capital-mediated, social relations.
illustrate that such perspectives do not generally enable protection of the environment. Mitchell Thomashow’s (1999) theory of “cosmopolitan bioregionalism” is also based on such a local/global dialectic (122). “Global economy requires that bioregionalists explore both the immediate landscape (place) and those larger systems that exist beyond the horizon (space)” (126). For Thomashow, place reinhabitation is never only a local consideration: “Place-based knowledge is meaningful not only as a commitment to understand local ecology and human relationships but as a foundation from which to explore the relationships between and among places” (Thomashow 1999:125). Amy Shuman (1993) examines “local culture” as a concept fundamental to folklore and cultural studies only to find that “we can identify ways in which local culture is always part of a larger-than-local context” (345). Robert Eric Livingston argues for literary and cultural studies that a “glocal” perspective is the best way to understand place and the processes that produce it: “[A] robust sense of glocality can grasp the production of place by a constant, often conflictual, working and reworking of practices, discourses, and more or less durable institutions” (2001:149).

Within the constructivist framework, identity is an important concept for understanding place. But identity entails considering not only the fact that people can identify with a place—that they can have a “sense of place”—but also that the identities of a place are socio-ecologically constructed. Thus, it demands asking such questions as: Whose interests are served by a particular place identity? Whose interests, humans’ and nonhumans’, are marginalized, or silenced? Literature and criticism can express a person’s sense of place, their lack of one, or even an appeal to cultivate one among the audience, but they can also participate in an exclusionary politics of place.

Returning now to the question inspired by Silko and Basso’s analyses—Is all literature about place?—the constructivist dialectical view implies an affirmative answer. It confirms that all literature is a matter of cohabitation, that not only literary practices, but all socio-ecological processes are constituted by and constitutive of place, space-time, nature, and environment. “Some conception of ‘nature’ and of ‘environment’ is omnipresent in everything we say and do” (Harvey 42Livingston uses this English rendering of a Japanese neologism to describe the intertwining and “mutual articulation” of global and local, thereby complicating the simple dichotomy (147).
1996:174, my emphasis). It shows that place and values are always inextricably enmeshed.

Furthermore, it emphasizes that what is ultimately important for scholars is not that all literature constitutes and is constitutive of place, but rather how literature does so has everything to do with the socio-ecological formation—or “ecosocial order” (Newman 2002:18)—in which it operates, and of which it participates in the creation or reproduction. These insights are crucial for considering the stakes of literature and literary criticism when it comes to place, because “[t]he entwinings of social and ecological projects in daily practices as well as in the realms of ideology, representations, esthetics, and the like are such as to make every social (including literary or artistic) project a project about nature, environment, and ecosystem, and vice versa” (189). They indicate that literary scholars should keep in mind that criticism unavoidably involves historically specific practices, discourses, and institutions that produce or reproduce particular conceptions of place. For the placed critic, moreover, they illustrate the urgency of coming to terms with the particular relationships that have been historically constituted among place and conventional literary practices, discourses, and institutions.

PROBLEMATIZING “LITERATURE”

Hence, one of the most important issues critics of place need to contend with is how modern literary culture relates to place. Since literary culture is comprised of texts, discourses, and institutions that are historically implicated in the social and ecological construction of place, the formulation of a placed critical approach requires problematizing even the category of “literature” itself. Yet, despite the many perspectives ecocritics have taken when examining literature with

---

43 As an ecologically-minded Marxist, Harvey’s own overriding concern is examining place and environment with respect to capitalist, and especially late-capitalist (postmodern), socio-ecological formations.

44 Such conclusions motivate Harvey to “put the dialectics of social and ecological change at the center of all human history,” and to pursue the ambitious project of creating a language which is general enough “to capture that dialectical evolutionary movement” (189). Working from the position that all ecological projects are political-economic ones and vice versa, Harvey tries to come to terms with the generally not-so-friendly fit between “social” and “ecological” philosophies,
respect to the environment, nature, and place, no ecocritical or other place-based scholarship has attempted to do this. Ecocriticism has been concerned largely with revising the canon and developing ecologically-sensitive reading strategies. Such goals are no doubt important, but other basic questions need to be addressed: Is there as much at stake for the environment in the content of literary works as there is in the organization of the practices and institutions of literary culture? What theoretical assumptions about place are implicit in the category of “literature”? What are the implications of these for actual places? Admittedly, content and practice are not mutually exclusive concerns, but almost nothing has been said by ecocritics about the latter.

An important conclusion reached by scholars who have examined modern literary culture as a practice is that it is by and large a national institution (Lambropoulos 1988; Jusdanis 1991; Corse 1997). Modern literary categories, critical practices, and institutions largely developed as part of nation-building and other nation-centered projects preoccupied with creating and disseminating particular national identities. From a historical point of view, modern literature “remains bound to the broader [category] of the nation; all literature is national literature, and there is nothing but national literature” (Lambropoulos 1988:9). Furthermore, “even comparative literature does not escape its integrative procedures of nationalist thought. [Its] cosmopolitanism, far from escaping nationalism, becomes a means of asserting nationalism on a supranational scale” (Jusdanis 1991:2). In its formative period, literature is conceived of as a “mouthpiece of the nation,” an instructive means for inculcating national and historical awareness among peoples who are seeking, or who have attained and seek to justify, national sovereignty (Tziovas 1986:6). National elites call upon writers to “chart the course of a new beginning” for their people (Emenyonu 1989:v), or to “chart the [spiritual] destiny of the nation” when “avenues to practical social or political action” no longer seem viable (Debreczeny and Zeldin 1970:vii-viii). Literature plays a public and moral role through its collection, presentation, and dissemination of values and stories. In certain cases, as in Modern Greece, this can even involve engineering some form of cultural and political theories, and projects (see especially “The Nature of the Environment,” pp. 117-204), as he works his way towards a socio-ecological theory of justice.
consensus among the peoples of diverse regions (Tziovas 1994). Criticism often plays a very important role in the development of literature through interpretation and “modes of reading” founded upon nationalistic assumptions (Lambropoulos 1988), through the development of anthologies (Jusdanis 1991) and a literary canon in which works are selected based on their worthiness of the nation (Tziovas 1986; Corse 1997), and through the development and pursuit of a national aesthetic (“American simplicity,” “Greekness”). The development of one of modern literature’s most important genres (the novel) has been explained in terms of its ability to represent “the kind of imagined community that is the nation” (Anderson 1991:25). Furthermore, even when literary culture appears to break loose from its initial function as the mouthpiece of the nation, as when it becomes autonomous and self-reflexive with modernism, for example, it can continue to remain national in less explicit ways: Most of the universities that interpret and profess it, the libraries that house it, the publishers and bookstores that market it, are largely national (and even multi-national) in character. The awarding of literary prizes that operates by positing a realm of pure literariness in fact serves “as an avenue for revisions to the national images created in earlier works and reaffirm the hierarchy of high culture and popular culture” (Corse 1997:17). Universities that teach literature have abandoned their mission to serve localities or regions (Berry 1987) and generally choose to teach literary texts that can produce cosmopolitan national citizens. “[T]he nation, a more general and abstract polity than the neighborhood, town or watershed, is [conventionally viewed as] the correct, enlightened locus of citizen loyalty” (Zencey 1996:16). Most publishers select and aim their books at national and international audiences because it is more profitable to do so (Corse 1997:10). Authors who want to get published generally choose their language (or idiom), let alone their subject matter, in accordance with national and international tastes set by national newspapers and magazines.

It is also important to note here that a crucial component of the construction of modern national literatures was the invention of a distinction between literature and what were considered “low” literary practices, so-called “folk” literatures. Such “low” literary genres often varied from place to place and were not seen to reflect national experiences, values, or mores. Thus, they were
generally not considered suitable for inclusion in the category of literature proper. Viewed as expressions of the “folk,” however, they could be celebrated as integral to national identity after all: folk literature’s extra-literary characteristics could be seen as providing local “organic” glimpses into a transcendent “national soul.” Although this process generally occurred during periods of nation-building, even today, as scholars in both literature and folklore contend, many nation-centered, often romantic, categories and assumptions inherited from earlier periods continue to underpin both disciplines.

Such observations ought to worry critics who want to promote local place inhabitation. Robert Eric Livingston, writing about globalization and literary studies, suggests just how little academic criticism can cater to local needs and issues per se:

Just as local needs are met (and, increasingly defined) by translocal markets, so is literary studies at the local level regulated (less often dictated) by patterns and expectations established elsewhere, on a supralocal basis. The apparatus of professional accreditation, from conferences and publication to tenure and departmental reviews, ensures that local variations circulate more widely and are certified as conforming to professional standards of knowledge. (Livingston 2001:149)

Drawing on work by Geoffrey Hartman, Mikhail Bakhtin, Franco Moretti, and others, he narrates the development of literature and literary studies as having gone hand-in-hand with the rise of the modern nation-state and the capitalist market. A crucial part of this development was the transformation of literature’s early connection to locality qua locality (understood, for example, as “genius loci”), into understandings of the local as merely a primordial part of the national whole. Thus, for example, oral literature was assigned to the category of folklore, and local dialects were united (if not always homogenized) by a standardized national language:

[A] literary canon [is] taken as the vehicle of a cultural heritage, an apparatus for putting parochial loyalties into proper (i.e., national) perspective. Within such a canon, there is room for regionalism and other minor genres (e.g., lyric [we might add “nature” writing and “local color” writing]), but […] national canons exist in an explicitly comparative and implicitly competitive global environment. (Livingston 2001:151)

45In the chapters that follow, I will deal extensively with both national literature and folklore in terms of place and the nation.
Literature was appropriated by specialized professional institutions like the research university which then developed a standard model for partitioning the disciplines which study and administer “the relation among a global high culture (the classics), modern literary practices (the national canon), and popular, folkloric, or oral traditions (the vestiges of cultural heritage and local particularity)” (151). Thus, literary studies participates in the (re)production of a modern—national and capitalist—sense and “scale” of space, time and place.

In its relation to place, the university is an instrument of modernization; but it legitimates its glocalizing effects by foregrounding the orientation toward progress that it facilitates and downplaying its institutional embedding in the locality that it strives to disembed. Having an idea of the university means that communities can be (re)imagined more rapidly than the routines of social life, more recalcitrant, can be changed. What results can be recognized as the temporality of modernity, its defining mixture of impatience and nostalgia. (Livingston 2001:152)

Academic literary critical practices operate largely at the scale of the modern capitalist nation, even when—in Livingston’s view, especially when—they refer to place.

PLACED CRITICISM

So, modern literary culture operates overwhelmingly at the scale of the nation. It was produced by and (re)produces the space-time, place, nature, and environment of nation-centered, capitalist modernity. These observations are enough to make any critic dedicated to place highly skeptical about the possibility of an effective place-based literary criticism, and they should definitely trouble ecologically-minded critics concerned with place, especially those who suspect that capitalism is radically opposed to socio-ecological well-being. Things look even more problematic for ecocriticism considering American literary criticism’s long history of appropriating nature for its own legitimization, and for the legitimization of the nation that it purports to represent (an issue I will address in the next chapter). Are not the assumptions that constitute literary culture as a national discourse largely at odds with the agenda of local place inhabitation? How can they be rethought and perhaps reconfigured from a place-based perspective? How can criticism serve the goals of socially and ecologically sustainable place inhabitation?
After all, it would be absurd to claim modern literary culture, or folklore for that matter, operate exclusively at the scale of the nation, and consequently that place inhabitation through the study of literature is by default impossible. The goal, then, should be to develop an understanding of the relationship between the nation, literary, and folk-literary discourses that is elaborate enough to indicate routes for pursuing discursive and institutional space for a placed critical paradigm. That is, placed criticism should come face-to-face with the literary culture’s connections to the nation in two ways. First, it must seek to understand the particular ways that criticism has been primarily nation-centered, making the “nation” itself a visible term of analysis instead of a mere “given” or unstated assumption. Second, it must also figure out how to become primarily place-centered instead.

In order to make their work radically place-centered, placed critics should do two things: examine locally placed texts and place their own critical texts locally. Examining locally placed texts entails critical discussion of any literature—national, folk, or popular—that is already considered, or is proposed as, “local” in some sense. Perhaps a text is about a place, its author comes from that place, or it raises issues of relevance to that place and/or its inhabitants. Maybe it is a well-known literary text that, in addition to its national or international fame, continues to be—for whatever reasons—closely associated with a particular place by its inhabitants. Or, maybe a particular literary practice just happens to be prevalent there in everyday life. It could even be argued for a literary practice that is highly unusual in a place that its local rarity alone qualifies it as worthy of inquiry. The objective is not necessarily to find literature that is unique to a place, never to be found in other places, but literature that is “special” to that place in some way.

Merely examining locally placed texts, however, is not enough. At best, it can only privilege place as an abstract academic concept because it produces writing about places that is to

---

46 Although it would probably be less absurd than claiming that the issue of nation is insignificant or no longer of relevance to ecologically and/or or locally motivated literary critics.

47 Theoretically speaking, any literature could be proposed as special to a place. The point here is not to argue for some inherent quality that qualifies some literature and disqualifies other. After all, reading literature as locally relevant contributes to its constitution as such.
be read primarily by people who will never have any connection to them. It is therefore equally important that placed critics place their own critical texts locally. Placing critical texts locally entails writing criticism that aims to foreground, analyze, or debate locally-relevant social and ecological issues. This is perhaps the most difficult thing to achieve under the existing constraints of the academy because critics are usually expected to write only for an academic audience that is “anywhere.” (Of course, this “anywhere” is typically understood to signify the United States.) Critics are rarely encouraged to put their “theoretical cosmopolitanism” to work for the well-being of particular locales. Nevertheless, it is crucial that placed critics engage particular placed communities directly by consciously and reflexively analyzing and writing about place in ways that can affect the people there as well. It means critics should not stop at questions like: How does this text represent place?, or: How does this text represent human-nonhuman relationships?, but go on to ask: How might my investigation into such questions negotiate my audience’s relationship to this place? Does it bring to light important socio-ecological issues of importance to its inhabitants? Does my analysis have the potential to effect political or pedagogical changes concerned with the place’s well-being? It also suggests the possibility of some notion of “fieldwork” for the scholar. Presumably, fieldwork could range from something as rigorous as anthropological/folkloric participant observation in the local community and/or naturalist studies of local ecology, to something as informal as a self-conscious attempt to “live-in-place.”

Such reflexivity, the critic’s coming to terms with the local relevance of his or her own critical writings and disciplinary paradigms, is perhaps the single most important element left wanting from recent attempts by ecocritics at place-based interpretive projects. Such ecocritics tend

---

48It is already difficult enough to try to bring a radically placed perspective into the classroom (see, for example, McDowell 1998), let alone into academic research. Of course, it is almost inconceivable that an academic critic might search for a job from a place-based perspective. The critic is generally expected to be willing to work anywhere, anywhere in the nation, that is. Eric Zencey (1996) criticizes the “ethos of rootlessness” which is so pervasive in the modern academy: “As citizens of the cosmopolis, the mythical ‘world city,’ professors are expected to owe no allegiance to geographical territory; we’re supposed to belong to the boundless world of books and ideas and eternal truths, not the infinitely particular world of watersheds, growing seasons, and ecological niches. Most professors get their jobs through national searches, and while we may have
indulge in personal narratives about the significance of literary works to themselves, but fail to provide any indication of how their readings might contribute to the social and ecological well-being of the place about which they write. For example, consider John Elder’s (1998) Reading the Mountains of Home, an interpretation of Robert Frost’s poem “Directive” as a work about Elder’s new home place (Bristol, VT):

“Directive” does more than any other text to illuminate this particular stretch of New England countryside for me. It integrates the narratives of geology, human settlement, and forest succession into a single, ongoing story. Reflecting on this poem has helped me understand how the mountains around our home assumed their present form, as well as what it might mean to identify with such a place on earth. (Elder 1998:1)

At one point in the text, Elder discusses the idea of the “story-map” as a way of “[f]inding our place in the wilderness” (24) and relates it to Native American hunting stories, as discussed by Leslie Marmon Silko (see above). Elder claims that literature of place is the functional equivalent of hunting stories in a literate culture:

How, though, may individuals who do not live in a rooted, indigenous culture, and who do not participate in the living exchange of hunting stories, attain the vital orientation of such a story-map? For me, “Directive” has offered one way to make a start. […] and literature specific to our place may have a special power to connect us, akin to the power of stories in an oral tradition. (Elder 1998:25)

Then he adds:

The hikes that compose this book are my own partial, and necessarily biased, versions of the woods, and of Frost’s poems. Out of the openings and limitations of my own experience, I offer this contribution to what Silko calls the “ancient continuous story composed of innumerable bundles of other stories.” (Elder 1998:26, my emphasis)

He states explicitly that he considers his own text to be a story-map, part of the ongoing “continuous story.” But what he seems to have overlooked is that hunting stories were exchanged by members of their community, of their place. For this text to “succeed” as a story-map, as local cohabitation linking him not only to the land but also to fellow cohabitants of Bristol, Vermont, or our preferences for specific regions of the country, most of us are living wherever we could find work” (15).
even New England, it needs to be exchanged as part of an ongoing local conversation. Yet, his stated intended audience is not local or regional, but exclusively national in scale:

We have come to a moment, as the conservation movement searches for a more inclusive vision, when the land and history of Vermont have a crucial word to say to the rest of our nation. (Elder 1998:4, my emphasis)

I offer these diverse experiments in outdoor reading in a spirit of friendly conversation with other readers, writers, teachers, and householders pursuing wholeness within their own landscapes. (Elder 1998:5, my emphasis)

While he refers to a large segment of the academic literary canon (the text abounds with references to Joyce, Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Dickens, T.S. Eliot, as well as other lesser-known, but (inter)nationally recognized writers like Barry Lopez), Elder makes little reference at all to any aesthetic practices, traditions, innovations, or conversations that may be going on locally or regionally. Are readers to understand that there are none? Are the only “hunting stories” in modern literate culture that matter those of high culture? Neither does Elder seem to be interested, for example, in the reception of Frost by any other local inhabitants. In light of his references to Silko, readers might have at least expected some critical reflection about his reasons for not attending much to his fellow cohabitants. Why does he compare his book to story-maps when it might not be functional as a map to any locals except himself?

A second example of this lack of reflexivity in place-based ecocriticism is provided by Ian Marshall’s book, Story Line: Exploring the Literature of the Appalachian Trail (1998), which deals with a more varied body of texts, including fiction, non-fiction, poetry, and myth, all of it set in the Appalachians. If Elder’s comparison of his own work with story-maps helps to reveal some of its own limitations, so does Ian Marshall’s comparison of his work with Australian aboriginal peoples’ “songlines,” a notion he borrowed from Bruce Chatwin. Marshall explains:

“Songlines” […] are trails walked by the “Ancestors,” who in the “Dreamtime” long ago fashioned themselves out of clay and sang the earth into existence, naming items in the landscape as they progressed on their journeys, recording their paths in songs whose melodic contours echo the geologic forms of the land. To this day aboriginals learn the songs of their ancestors, and every so often they set out on ritual journeys called walkabouts, following in the footsteps of their ancestors and recreating in song the emergence of the land. […] All [the people hiking on the Appalachian Trail], it occurs to me,
will be embarking on an American version of a walkabout, a ritual journey of some sort. The Appalachian Trail is itself a kind of songline, a path of verbal creations on the land. In America, though, these stories of the land are more often recorded in books than in songs. These are my subject—the literary works set in locales along the Appalachian Trail.

(1998:1)

Does it make sense to compare the ritual of an aboriginal group with the flux of thru-hikers, long-distance hikers, and day hikers who, for the most part, “happen” to come together on the AT? It seems that the aboriginal group, with its Ancestors, would already have some sense of shared identity, ethos, and purpose in performing a walkabout. Can the same be said about the AT “community,” if it is even meaningful to speak about it as a community? And, if so, do the hikers themselves have a sense that they are a community? One of the most important things Marshall should have done, were he interested in placing his own text locally, was to reflect on his own role in putting such a community on the map by trying to bring together what remains for the most part a mere patchwork of literary texts and personal narratives occasionally involving other people on the trail. He describes his book as a “guide to the literary history” (5) of the Appalachian Trail, when, as far as I can gather, it is the first such guide to attempt to construct a literary history for the AT. He also could have dealt with the interrelationship of “Appalachia” as a place and the “Appalachian Trail” as a place (of places). In fact, Marshall does not make it clear whether he is writing to literary scholars at large, the AT hiking “community,” or both.49

In light of such attempts at place-based scholarship by ecocritics, I would not be surprised if many literary scholars were to object to the local approach to literature I am advocating, fearing that it would be too provincial. However, according to the relational dialectical theory of place outlined above, places are neither homogeneous nor static. They are constituted by, and constitutive of, a variety of complex, contradictory socio-ecological processes. Thus, questions of identity, gender, ethnicity, class, cosmopolitanism, or multiculturalism should play just as an

49A further criticism might be leveled against Elder’s reference to Native American myth and Marshall’s use of Australian aborigines as non-reflexive tropes for outlining ecocritical projects: Both authors reproduce an ideology of primitivism in which “we in the West have lost what they—the cultural other—still have […] They—primitive man—have retained a respect for nature, and we have lost it” (Marcus and Fischer 1986:129).
important role in placed criticism as they do in nation-centered criticism and comparative literature. Placed criticism ought never to view its focus on place as a miraculous cure-all for social and ecological problems. Rather, it should be seen as a perspective for examining a variety of local and larger-than-local issues relevant to particular places. Without necessarily seeking to support or subvert literary criticism’s conventional national and transnational preoccupations, it should aspire to legitimate critical practices that focus on local concerns, but reject the disciplinary boundaries separating literature proper (and its study) from the plethora of local literatures and local popular cultural practices. It should also reject the reproduction of those locally-bounded conceptions of place that tend to degenerate into phenomenological nostalgia, or into mere identity politics, thereby reproducing the ugly side of nationalist criticism. Finally, it should consider both the social/cultural/political and natural/ecological aspects of issues, keeping in mind that “nature,” “society” and “culture” are themselves not givens, but constituted and reconstituted by a variety of processes, including those in which placed criticism aspires to participate. In short, placed criticism should pay particular attention to the mutual constitution of the local and larger-than-local, as well as to the mutual constitution of nature and culture themselves.

Besides, “cosmopolitan” approaches to literature are also local, just on a different scale (national or transnational). Few seem to object to English department scholars specializing in one nation’s literature, and, even then, often by focusing on a particular “period.” The wholesale rejection of a focus on place would reveal less about the limitations of placed criticism than it would about the fact that modern, nation-centered conceptions of space, time, and place have become so utterly naturalized in academic disciplines that it is almost impossible to challenge them.

THE CASE OF CRETE

In order to examine the relationship of place, literature, and criticism even more closely, as well as to put placed criticism into practice, I will now turn in the remaining chapters to a

50For a sampling of scholarship which attends to place, community, identity, and politics, see the collection edited by Keith and Pile (1993).
consideration of the literature of one particular place: Crete. By focusing on the literature of one place, I endeavor to promote an increased awareness and understanding of that place among its inhabitants and anyone else who is concerned with its well-being, to encourage an active engagement with local culture. In doing so, I also seek to problematize conventional understandings of national literature by focusing on the regional. In fact, I inescapably end up contributing to the construction of a regional literature, although I try to do so in a reflexive manner that does not presume to have dealt with “representative texts.” 51 I do not, for example, wish to unearth the true “spirit” of Crete, promote the dominance of any one Cretan identity, or argue for a “true” or “authentic” Cretan literature. Place construction and place identities ought never to be thought of as neutral or benign ends in themselves, for they, too, are often complicit in social and ecological oppression. Consideration of the “spirit” of a place must also take into account the politics of place. Similarly, any consideration of place politics unaccompanied by inquiry into its role in the lives of the inhabitants remains hopelessly one-dimensional and incomplete. Along the way, I will also pose another question about literature and place (in Chapter 5) that rarely gets asked: What do certain literary texts have to say, not only about a particular place or the notion of place in general, but about the relationship itself between literature and place?

By choosing to focus on a single place in Greece, I do not wish to suggest that what follows is only of significance to those who live there or who study Modern Greek culture. On the contrary, much like the anthropologist who comes back from the field to participate in the construction of academic knowledge about anthropos, by immersing myself in Cretan culture (and nature!) I am also able to participate in and contribute to the theoretical discussions and debates surrounding place-based research, the study of literature and environment, and folklore, cultural studies, and literary theory in general. Thus, throughout my examination of the Cretan case, I will indicate ways that it connects with other nations and traditions, especially the United States, pointing out

51 I should also note that the texts I chose to examine are not meant to be an indication of the diversity of literary culture pertinent to Crete. I will focus overwhelmingly on male authors from the areas of Irakleio and Rethymno. Further placed critical studies of Crete should consider, for
similarities and differences, and suggesting paths for future comparative research. That being said, I am by no means indifferent to my contribution to scholarship on Crete. Whenever possible, I attempt to engage from my own perspective the arguments of specialists in Modern Greek Studies.

The Cretan case is striking inasmuch as it is marked by a conspicuously large amount of regional literary activity. There are, for example, theater groups that perform plays written in the Cretan dialect and dealing with issues relating to specifically Cretan culture and/or stereotypes. Then there are the mandinadhes, oral and written poetry composed in the Cretan dialect that permeate many different facets of personal and community life. The island’s inhabitants regularly appropriate and discuss the Cretan-born authors like Ioannis Kondylakis, Nikos Kazantzakis, Pandelis Prevelakis as quintessentially Cretan writers. Moreover, Kazantzakis and Prevelakis themselves, in their literary output, repeatedly wrote about and identified themselves with the island. Indeed, Kazantzakis, whose writing is so infused with modern European philosophy ranging from Nietzsche to Bergson to Marx, named his ultimate mystico-philosophical vision “the Cretan glance.” Prevelakis has explored the issue of literature and place in some of his novels. There are also already several critical works dealing with these nationally canonized authors from the local perspective of Crete.

Since, as I noted in the introductory chapter, food, literature and criticism often seem inseparable in Crete, I have not attempted to completely separate them in my own analysis. Of course, I could say the same thing about music and literature, but since I am interested specifically in exploring place in social and ecological terms, and food is so conspicuously related to environmental issues, I consider literature and food together. Their interrelatedness in Cretan life, I hope, implies that my own interrogation of one can inform the analysis of the other. Thus, in addition to my core of literary texts, I also consider in detail such works as cookbooks.

This reflects my belief that the most important move that placed criticism should make at this time in order to become more directly relevant to place is to rethink, and remap, the example, other Cretan locales in greater detail. They should consider women authors writing about Crete such as Rea Galanaki, and seek out the many women mandinadha composers.
conventional partitioning of texts and disciplines that occurred in response to modern national concerns. From the perspective of place, distinctions among literature, folk literature, and popular culture are too arbitrary and confining. Regions and communities invariably participate in a wide range of local expressive practices. Such practices, however, are usually only studied by academic scholars in the disciplines of folklore, cultural studies, and anthropology, and have been almost entirely ignored by ecocritics. Yet, it seems that in many cases, local aesthetic practices might make better vehicles for the negotiation of place awareness and of local ecological issues and practices than nationally canonized texts, if for no other reason than they may be more familiar and/or interesting to the local audience. Sooner or later, ecocritics who are primarily interested in local inhabitation will have to take a look around to see what their own neighbors are up to. There is still plenty of room for national literatures and national concerns, but these must be studied in relation to, and put into more dynamic conversations with, local folk and popular literatures, and the particular concerns of particular places.

As is by now obvious, the approach to placed criticism I advocate is, from the perspective of our nation-centered academic disciplines, interdisciplinary. I aspire, in fact, to be as integrodisciplinary as I possibly can, required by the academy to research and write alone as a doctoral student, but dreaming of the day when collaborative education and research in the humanities become the norm instead of the exception. Thus, I draw my means for investigation from the insights, theories, and methodological tools of several discourses, fields, and disciplines. Most importantly, these include folklore and cultural studies, literary criticism, and Modern Greek studies. I adopt, adapt, and integrate whichever methods, tools, and insights seem to have a direct bearing on the issues I am examining. In addition to learning from each of these areas, I hope to

52Kent C. Ryden’s (1993) book, Mapping the Invisible Landscape: Folklore, Writing, and the Sense of Place, is the only attempt I know of that, with an ecocritical sensibility, deals with both “literature” (Thoreau, Lopez) and “folklore” from the perspective of place, drawing a parallel, for example, between the “essay of place” and “place-based folk-narratives” (211). Although his project is, in my view, compromised insofar as it reinscribes such dichotomies as literature/folk-literature, instead of taking advantage of the place-perspective to problematize them, it remains a relatively daring early ecocritical attempt to break deeply entrenched disciplinary boundaries.
contribute to them as well. Interdisciplinary critical explorations of texts from a place-based perspective should no doubt speak to the place they study, but they should also, at least at this stage, try to impact the future course of the humanities in general. The young field of ecocriticism has something to say about nature to folklore, I think, just as ecocriticism has much to learn about place from a long tradition of folklore studies. Modern Greek studies has much to teach ecocriticism about the complicity of “the nation” in literary culture and the process of place, while Modern Greek needs to reassess its own virtual dismissal (lately) of folk and folkloric literatures, and its relative lack of interest in environmental issues. It is to the issues of nature, folk, and nation that I will now turn in the next chapter.
CHAPTER 3

THE NATURE OF NATIONAL CULTURE

In this chapter, I want to begin interrogating the relationship of nature and official literary culture—literature and criticism “proper”—which, as I discussed in the previous chapter, operate primarily at the scale of the nation. I want to examine several examples illustrating how literature and criticism represent nature and society/culture, especially in terms of the nation. I will do so primarily in the context of Greek romantic-nationalism, but will also briefly consider cultural studies criticism as well. Specifically, I will be concerned with how nature and romantic folklore ideology contributed to developments in Greek literature and criticism as part of the modern projects of nation-building and nation-consolidation: Greek romantic-nationalists, in accordance with the idea of national cultural continuity, explained and legitimated the modern Greek nation and its culture through representations of its “folk” variously as benevolent lovers-of-nature or as wild animals in need of acculturation.

On the one hand, my discussion aims to begin developing the context for further consideration of such issues as nature, wild(er)ness, and the folk in later chapters. On the other hand, and in accordance with the relational dialectical view that even “nature” and “society” are themselves socio-ecologically constructed, it provides the opportunity for me to contemplate certain assumptions and consequences of various critical practices. Specifically, it allows me to consider just what they hide from view: namely, an untenable reliance on a nature-culture dichotomy for legitimizing critical practices. Romantic-nationalists invented either an all-powerful nature that determined the “organic” development of national culture, or an ambivalent nature
that legitimated national culture's hegemony but that could only succeed to “blossom” insofar as it cultivated nature’s wilder, more precarious, elements. Social constructivists, on the other hand, in dismantling such processes, have invented—perhaps unwittingly—an all-powerful “society” that appears capable of operating at a national or transnational scale in the context of a passive nature. A major drawback of these approaches is their reliance on an epistemology that purports that nature and culture exist as entities that can be clearly distinguished from one another. Thus, the second major aim of this chapter is to bring into even sharper focus the need for placed critics to keep in mind that literary culture is constituted by and constitutive of social-ecological processes, and therefore is never purely culture after all.

NATION AND NATURE

The emergence of a national literature frequently involves considerations of nature, local places, and even local inhabitants. In modern Greece, intersections among literature, criticism, nation, place, and nature abound from the start. Indeed, facing the absence of a modern institution of literature altogether, yet aspiring to become Greece’s national poet, the Heptanesian Dionysios Solomos (1798-1857) began developing a new poetic idiom that referred to nature and engaged with the history and culture of various Greek-inhabited locales. Crete figured prominently among the places Solomos referred to and relied on, though decades would pass before the island would become part of the Greek nation-state. In addition to looking to European models, he also drew heavily from the “folk” poetry of his Greek-speaking contemporaries (his own first language was Italian), as well as the literature of the Cretan Renaissance (Jusdanis 2002:279). This is probably most evident in The Cretan [Ο Κρητικός] (1833). Here, Solomos combined the 15-syllable rhyming couplets of both Cretan Renaissance poetry and certain genres of Greek folk poetry—including the Cretan mandinadha—together with the figure of an anonymous Cretan singing his

53 Scholars employ the term “Cretan Renaissance” to describe the post-Byzantine period of literary and artistic flourishing influenced by the Italian Renaissance, from the fourteenth century to the Baroque, on the Venetian-ruled island of Crete prior to its fall to the Ottoman Empire in 1669.
woes—suggestive of Cretan impromptu mandinadha singing. In doing so, Solomos was able to
embroider his work onto a larger Greek literary fabric, and thereby played an important role in its
construction as a national tradition.

While he borrowed much in terms of language and form from folk and Cretan Renaissance
poetry, Solomos also distanced himself from it by looking to the sublime of European Romanticism
when it came to his use of natural imagery. Indeed, references to natural phenomena in Solomos
generally differ sharply from those in Cretan poetry, perhaps suggesting a new literary function for
nature in the service of nationalism (Jusdanis 2002:282-283). In Renaissance literature, authors
invoked nature in accordance with the pastoral tradition (Bancroft-Marcus 1991). They generally
depicted nature as a reflection of the moods of their main characters. For example, in the late
sixteenth-century work, The Shepherdess [Η Βοσκοπούλα] (author unknown), when the
narrator-protagonist is in excellent spirits, he finds himself in an idyllic setting where trees blossom,
deer graze, and birds chirp:

'Σ μεγάλην εξορία, σ’ ένα λαγκάδι,
μιαν ταχινήν επήγα στο κουράδι,
σε δέντρη, σε λιβάδια, σε ποτάμια,
σε δροσερά και τρυφερά καλάμια.

Μέσα στα δέντρα κείνα τ’ ανθισμένα,
που βόσκαν τα λαφάκια τα καημένα,
στη γη τ’ δροσερή, στα χορταράκια,
που γλυκοκιλαδούσαν τα πουλάκια

In a big country place, in a ravine,
one morning I went to my flock,
among trees, meadows, rivers,
cool and fresh reeds.

Among those blossoming trees,
where the dear deer were grazing,
in the fresh soil, in the vegetation,
where the little birds were chirping (Alexiou 1979:65)
Upon discovering that his lover has died, however, darkness covers the earth, birds are silent, and living organisms die:

Let no shepherd come out from his cave, let the clouds cover the sun and the vegetation in the meadow freeze, and let no flock come out from its pen.

Let no bird in the woods fly nor the rooster crow at dawn, let the little nightingale sing no more, and let the eagle become blind and no longer hunt.

At night, let the moon not come out, let there be no more fish found in the sea, let the springs and rivers run dry and the fresh reeds dry out. (Alexiou 1979:80)

In contrast, Solomos depicts nature in The Cretan not as a reflection of, but in a variable relationship with, the protagonist-narrator, a Cretan from the countryside who, reduced to the status of a beggar wandering in exile, sings of his adventures. This relationship begins as blatantly antithetical but is subsequently tempered by a mystical experience. The poem’s central action is comprised of the Cretan’s account of his attempt to save himself and his fiancee after a shipwreck. Nature’s tempest impedes the Cretan in his struggle to save himself and his lover:
Three lightening bolts struck, one after the other,  
the seas and the sky echoed in the flash,  
The shores and the mountains with all the voices they had. (Solomos 1986:197)

In the midst of this life-threatening situation, however, the Cretan begins to experience beautiful visions. The sea miraculously appears to grow calm, and nature turns from a threat into a spectacle of beauty:

Κι η θάλασσα, που σκίρτησε σαν το χοχλό που βρύζει  
Η σύρασε και έγινε όλο ησυχία και πάστρα,  
Σαν περιβόλι ευώδης κι εδέχτηκε όλα τ’ άστρα,  
Κάτι κρυφό μυστήριο εστένεσε τη φύση,  
Κάθε ομορφιά να στολιστή και το θυμό ν’ αφήση

And the sea, which was jumping like a snail being boiled in a pot,  
Became calm and silent,  
Like a garden it smelled and welcomed all the stars,  
Some unexplainable mystery made nature  
Become decorated with every kind of beauty, and leave behind its anger. (Solomos 1986:198-199)

During this period of calm, as “the whole creation became a temple shining in every direction” (200), the Cretan sees in front of him an apparition—a beautiful “mood-clad” female. He feels relief as he conveys to her his woes about the Turks who killed his family back in Crete. Then, as the figure disappears, leaving a teardrop in his hand, the Cretan hears “the sweetest sound” (204). It is so sweet, he says, that it cannot be compared to any of the sweet sounds he knows from his days in Crete. He then proceeds to describe those sounds using pastoral language and imagery reminiscent of the Cretan Renaissance: the sound of a mistress in the forest singing about love to nature, the sound of a Cretan nightingale singing to the rocky cliffs with their wild animals, the sound of his own Cretan flute that he would play on Crete’s highest mountain top to forget about his yearning and suffering.54 The Cretan becomes so enraptured by the sublime quality of the image/sound that, in an instant of hope, he grasps in its direction and shouts. As though in a trance, he no longer registers his surroundings—the sky, the sea, the shore, his lover—he only wishes to leave behind his

54Insofar as Solomos contrasts in detail the pastoral beauty of Crete with the sublime sweetness of the sound, one might argue that poet explicitly distanced himself from the pastoralism of the Cretan Renaissance.
flesh and follow the image/sound. As the sound fades, the Cretan becomes aware again of his predicament, and manages to get to shore with his lover where he realizes that, alas, she has died. Solomos, drawing on both Romantic pastoral images and European romantic attitudes toward nature, portrays a rural Cretan capable of experiencing the sublime.

Solomos’s appropriation and representation of high and folk literatures, of nature, and of rural characters introduces some of the interesting intersections among modern Greek literary culture, nation, nature, and place. Moreover, insofar as his texts provide raw material for critical interpretation, they contribute to the multiplication of these intersections. Kapsomenos (1998), for example, interprets Solomos’s treatment of the relationship between humans and nature as representative of modern Greek culture and its values:

The nature-human relationship, which is to say the nature-culture [literally: civilization] relationship, provides a reliable criterion for understanding the basic orientation of any culture. This is because the way this relationship manifests itself (as dichotomy, opposition, equivalence) determines the work’s mechanisms of signification at the level of worldview. Using this criterion, we see that there is a sense of harmony and equivalence between the two poles, characteristic of both folk and learned modern Greek poetry: nature=culture. This equivalence defines the coordinates of a dominant poetic and cultural tradition [in Greece] which differs from the major international models, where the relationship nature-culture generally appears as one of opposition. (Kapsomenos 1998:16)

Kapsomenos discerns in the poet’s approach to nature a uniquely modern Greek cultural phenomenon. He elaborates on this argument by contrasting Solomos’s (read: modern Greek) poetics with those of Schiller (read: non-Greek) and claims that Solomos’s worldview organically synthesizes Hellenism and Christianity into a distinctive “Christian Hellenism” [χριστιανικός
Appeals by critics to something so utterly “natural” and apparently primordial as nature itself in order to demonstrate the legitimacy, distinctiveness, or significance of national culture is by no means unique to the Greek case. In the United States, dubbed “nature’s nation” by the literary historian Perry Miller (Miller 1967), nature played a crucial role in attempts to construct a uniquely American national cultural identity. Indeed, Denis Cosgrove (1995) argues that “[t]he United States was the first nation to define itself primarily in terms of the land, and only secondarily in terms of the people” (40). Specifically, as Roderick Nash argues, it defined itself largely in terms of wilderness:

Creation of a distinctive culture was thought to be the mark of true nationhood. Americans sought something uniquely “American,” yet valuable enough to transform embarrassed provincials into proud and confident citizens. Difficulties appeared at once. The nation’s short history, weak traditions, and minor literary and artistic achievements seemed negligible compared to those of Europe. But in at least one respect Americans sensed that their country was different: wilderness had no counterpart in the Old World. (Nash 1982:67)

American nationalists thought wild nature could be appropriated as a resource for demonstrating cultural distinctiveness. Such distinctiveness, in turn, would provide a cultural grounding for political sovereignty, as well as compensate for the nation’s sense of “inferiority” or “belatedness” vis-a-vis the Old World (Jusdanis 2001:160). Significantly, early Americans carried out this project to a large extent through the “quest” for a national literature: “American nature seemed to offer the firmest assurances of unrivaled literary achievements” (Spencer 1957:47).

Spencer points out several ways that nature was appropriated in the quest for a distinctive American literature: as the most sublime source of inspiration (13), as the most Arcadian source of inspiration (50), as a means of regeneration (47), as a means of cultural purification (28), and as the author’s most authentic inner inspiration (71). Spencer also pointed out how, with the rise of the organic model of a national literature, some critics began to replace (and, in a sense, conflate) the idea of national literature with natural literature, a striking example of which was Charles T. Brooks’s suggestion to typesetters that in their printing proposals for American literature, they should everywhere substitute the word “natural” for “national” (see pp. 197-198).
One would expect that, in light of the historical connection between nature/wilderness and the construction of American national literature, many ecocritics would be preoccupied with exploring its implications for place, ecology, and environmentalism. Yet, although most North American ecocritics operate in the context of a national literary tradition (and more than a few in the context of the nation’s nature writing canon), few have engaged with such issues. Ecocritics, thus far, have shown remarkably little interest in exploring the appropriation of nature in constituting national literary discourse, and, consequently, the role of literary institutions in constructing nature. In order to begin making up for this, I want to continue exploring the intersections of literary culture, nature, and place in the case of modern Greece. If wilderness provides the most conspicuous point of departure for investigating such issues in the context of the United States, Solomos’s poem about a rural Cretan suggests that the “folk” should be added to the equation in the Greek case. Thus, after a preliminary discussion of Greek romantic folklore ideology and nature, I will discuss how nature, folk, and place have contributed to the emergence and development of Greek national culture.

FOLKISM

Romantic nationalist folklore ideology—”folkism” for short—began taking shape in Greece during the nineteenth century, in the early national period. The story of the Greek nation is

---

56To be sure, not all ecocritics have ignored this issue. The opening chapters of Lawrence Buell’s *The Environmental Imagination* provide a case in point. Buell recognizes the long-standing “critical urge to explain [American literature’s] preoccupation [with country and wilderness] in terms of a general theory of American culture” (1995:33). He offers a brief survey of almost a century’s worth of scholarship dedicated to just this issue, discerning a definite critical shift from an hermeneutics of empathy to an hermeneutics of suspicion. Buell notes that most scholars prior to the 1970s (like Perry Miller and Leo Marx) adopted a positive to celebratory stance toward American literature’s preoccupation with nature. On the other hand, the majority of scholars publishing after 1970 have equated the idealization of nature with multiple forms of exploitation. He also observes that more recent work has combined negative ideological critique with a focus on certain particularities which are sources of resistance to dominant ideologies (453).

57Instead of “folkism” I could have used the term “folklorism.” However, the latter term has the disadvantage of conflating romantic nationalist approaches to folklore studies with the discipline of folklore itself, which, in many cases, has become highly critical of folkism. Also, the term “folklorism” (and “folklorismus”) is already used to signify the (problematic) notion of
to a large extent a story about how a particular group of geographic territories inhabited by a variety of Greek- and non-Greek speaking peoples controlled by the Ottoman empire, eventually became known as Greece, and the majority of its inhabitants as Greek (see Clogg 1992). This project of modernization and nation-building required radical changes and developments at the cultural level, including the affirmation, if not the invention, of the notion that there is such an entity as the Greek nation with its own distinctive identity, and a history spanning millennia. Many Greek nationalists saw literature and folklore as the most important vehicles for achieving such cultural goals.58 Indeed, scholars in Modern Greek Studies attribute the emergence of the modern institutions of Greek literature and Greek folklore largely to the nation-building cause (Herzfeld 1986; Jusdanis 1991). Authors, critics, and folklorists alike frequently worked in accordance with the goal of nation-building or nation-consolidation, and their work can be read, on the whole, as an attempt to promote an awareness of, and a sense of belonging to, the nation.

Particular conceptions of nature and the folk, moreover, proved to be crucial ingredients in attempts to represent the new nation. This was not something unique to Greece, either (see Dorson 1966; Wilson 1976, 1989; Dick 1989). The German Johann Gottfried Herder, for instance, had assigned a central place to nature in his proto-romantic-nationalist doctrines. Appealing to the logic of geographical and climatic determinism, he asserted that particular groups of people in specific locations developed their own distinctive cultures in response to the unique natural conditions in which they lived.59 As a nationalist doctrine, this assertion justified the legitimacy of

“secondhand” or “commodified” folklore (see Bendix 1997:176). Another advantage of the term “folkism” (compare with “racism” and “sexism”) is that it reminds us that romantic nationalist approaches to folklore also had/have undesirable consequences for actual people who were/are categorized as “folk” (or “peasants,” “hicks,” or “hillbillies”).

58For a brief introduction in English to the early collection of Greek folklore, see Beaton’s (1980) introduction. For a detailed outline and ideological analysis, focusing on nationalism, of the development of early Greek folklore as an academic discipline, see Herzfeld (1986). For a poststructuralist critique of Greek folklore, see Alexiou (1985).

59Consider the following passages from Herder:

Nature […] has sketched with mountain ranges she formed and with the rivers she made flow from them the rough but definite outline of the entire history of man… One height created a nation of hunters, thus supporting and necessitating a savage state; another,
each particular group’s sovereignty over their own particular landscape, over national “territory.”

Since early Greek intellectuals were steeped in such doctrines, it is no surprise that national literature and criticism in Greece looked to nature and the folk in their attempts to write the nation.

Having solicited the financial and military support of European nations that believed the origins of civilized Europe lay in the ruins of ancient Greece, modern Greeks were able to bring centuries of Ottoman rule to an end and establish the modern Greek nation-state (Clogg 1992). The newly established Greek state, though, was faced with a paradox. On the one hand, the Greeks were ostensibly believed to be both the descendants and heirs of the greatest European civilization ever to have existed. On the other hand, they were a largely rural population, predominantly Christian, whose ways and manners often seemed to have as much in common with the Turks’ as with their supposedly glorious ancestors. This generated many apparent contradictions. For example, the ancient Greeks were pagans; modern Greeks were Christians. The vernacular idioms of most Greeks had undergone changes due to foreign, including Ottoman, influence, and most Greeks had difficulty learning classical Greek, even in its compromised forms (classicizing purist Greek known as katharevousa). To make matters worse, some European scholars, most notably Jakob Philipp Fallmerayer, were determined to prove the impossibility of Greek racial or cultural continuity.

Faced with such difficulties, Greece had to come to terms with the fact that its survival as a modern nation-state depended in large measure “on the premise that its citizens were the same as the long-lost inhabitants of the land” (Herzfeld 1986:6).

The study of folklore, known in Greece as “laography” (laographia), thus came to play a significant role as the scholarly site par excellence for demonstrating Greek cultural continuity.

---

more spread out and mild, provided a field for shepherd peoples and supplied them with tame animals; another made agriculture easy and essential; and still another began with navigation and fishing and led finally to trade... In many regions the customs and ways of life continued for millennia; in others they have changed... but always in harmony with the terrain from which the change came... Oceans, mountain chains, rivers are the most natural boundaries not only of lands, but also of peoples, customs, languages, and empires; even in the greatest revolutions of human affairs they have been the guiding lines and limits of world history. (Herder in Wilson 1989: 24)

60Literally, the “writing of the people.” Michael Herzfeld explains:
Greek folklorists, working according to the romantic assumption that there had always existed an identifiable, organic, essential, Greek tradition, would dig into the past of the ostensibly simple Greek folk—whose history had gone virtually undocumented for centuries—and identify those elements linking classical Greece, through Byzantium and the Ottoman Empire, to the modern nation-state. Owing to the centuries-long sociopolitical organization of Greek peoples into regions, the study of local cultures comprised a fundamental aspect in the project of the Greek folklorists. Place (topos) was, in fact, the basic unit of early folklore research in Greece (Kyriakidou-Nestoros 1977:44), and though it was gradually displaced by a more direct focus on Greek antiquity, even this was accomplished by viewing local Greek folk cultures as multiple refractions of a transcendent, culturally continuous Hellenism (Herzfeld 1986:23). In short, Greek folklore rested on the conviction that modern Greece was comprised of several geo-culturally recognizable places (Crete, Thessaly, etc.), each inhabited primarily by a unique group of authentic, generally rural, Greeks (Cretans, Thessalians, etc.) who could be identified by their “manners and customs” (singular: ethos and ethimo), by their essential character, spirit, and folk culture. Such are the romantic-nationalist ideological convictions, along with their discursive and institutional manifestations and consequences, that I refer to as “folkism.”

The collection and dissemination by folklorists of such folkloric items as descriptions of local manners and proverbs, folk songs, and legends—what many people conventionally think of as folklore’s task—was but one of folkism’s discursive manifestations in Greece. Greek Romantic poets—and consequently their critics—also portrayed the folk, as the example from Solomos

---

Why laography? Ostensibly, folklore entailed the study of the ethnos, the nation, yet ethnografia has never been a very popular term in Greece. Laos denotes the people (cf. Volk), ethnos the nation qua inheritors of the Classical mantle. In order to justify the creation of the state (kratos) in the terms of ideological philhellenism, it was necessary to show that ethnos and laos were one and the same thing, with the sole difference being that the laos did not include the educated elite. This meant that there would have to be an independent discipline concerned with the laos—laography—from which it would be possible to prove that the common people indeed belonged to the Hellenic ethnos. The ethnos did not need a branch of study of its own: it was one of the eternal verities, an absolute moral entity against which the laos could be matched and measured. (Herzfeld 1986:13)
demonstrates.\textsuperscript{61} In addition, a “folkloric” genre of prose fiction known as “ethography” (\textit{ethographia}) developed in which authors combined elements from collected folklore with creative writing.\textsuperscript{62} Often written by the same individuals who collected folklore, ethographic fiction depicted, on the whole, the regional folk and their lives.\textsuperscript{63} In short, Greek folklorists, authors, and literary critics all constructed particular connections among nature, place, folk, and nation in their texts.\textsuperscript{64} Their texts offer many insights into the relationship between national culture and nature-place-folk.

\textbf{INVENTING NATIONAL CULTURE, INVENTING NATURE}

Greek Romantic poems of the nineteenth century are full of idyllic depictions of the Greek folk, as well as of Greek poets themselves, “in nature.” A kleft\textsuperscript{65} “has the mountain as a palace and the sky as his blanket,”\textsuperscript{66} while a shepherd “lies with his herd sprawled among the flowers.”\textsuperscript{67} The

\textsuperscript{61}Scholars do not agree about “defining” Greek Romanticism, let alone Romanticism in general. See, for example, Constantinides (1985b). That this is so is of no consequence to my own study. I do not want to propose a theory of nature in Greek Romanticism, but rather to examine how certain poems that have come to be identified as romantic participate in folkism.

\textsuperscript{62}Scholars do not agree about how to “define” ethography. See Beaton (1994:72), who conceives of it as “folkloric realism,” for a brief discussion of the debate. This is of no consequence to me, since I am not directly concerned with debates over “realism.” My overriding concern is how such authors treat nature, regardless of their categorization as “romantic,” “folkloric,” or “rural,” for example.

\textsuperscript{63}While it is reasonable to approach ethography in terms of its rural/regional aspects, some critics unfortunately turn their analysis into a basis for more general, deterministic schemes for constructing Greek literary history. Vitti’s (1975) useful analysis, for example, explains the development of Greek prose via the (folkist) assumption that literature about rural folk, and its “country lore,” can never be as complex as literature addressing modern urban life. He even states that the “moral and social aims which could be expressed through rural reality” are “limited” (38) and claims that by the twentieth century, the “possibilities of country life had been exhausted in fiction” (38). Ironically, this forces him to imply that Nikos Kazantzakis, Greece’s only internationally renowned prose writer, is an aberration, out of step—that is, behind—his fellow Greek authors. Similar assumptions inform Beaton’s (1994) account of modern Greek literary history.

\textsuperscript{64}As did Greek geographers, historians, and archaeologists, as well (Peckham 2001).

\textsuperscript{65}The klefts (\textit{kleftes}) were brigand-guerrillas who played a military role in the struggle for national independence. Considered as important representatives of the “folk” in Greece, Greek folklorists have even invented a special category for their folksongs (see Herzfeld 1986).

\textsuperscript{66}From the poem “The Kleft” [“Ο Κλέφτης”] by Alexandros Rizos-Rangavis (Meraklis 1977:115).
persona of the poet sleeps “in a bed of laurel and myrtle” or in the shade of “the perfect tree,” and professes his love for “the wild forest, the black darkness of the abyss, its foliage which quietly shudders in the night breeze.” He falls in love with a shepherdess while “they sit in the blossoming greenery” or even wishes to become a shepherd himself:

Πως εσύ βοσκή δεν είσαι, πως βοσκός δεν είμαι εγώ!
και μαζί σου στο λιβάδι
και μαζί σου αρνάκια τρωφερά δεν οδηγώ
ένα εύμορφο κοπάδι!

Λύφησε τας πόλεις, κιέλα, της ψυχής μου φιληνάδα, στην δροσιά, στην πρασινάδα,
και την παπαρούνα βάλε την απλή και χωρική στα μαλλάκια σου επάνω στο ασπρόμαυρο σου στήθος, στο φίλι σου το γλυκό, και στές βρύσες και στα δύση βοσκός είθε να πεθάνω.

How is it that you’re not a shepherd and I’m not a shepherd!
and together with you in the meadow
and together with you that I’m not guiding
a beautiful flock of lambs!

Leave the cities, and come, my girlfriend of the soul,
into the freshness, into the greenery,

And place the simple and peasant poppy
into your hair,

in your lily-white breast, in your sweet kiss,
and in the springs and in the forest may I die a shepherd

Because they circulated in the context of Greek folkism, even such seemingly naive and simplistic representations as these of the folk and nature made a significant contribution to the construction

---

67From the poem “In the Shade of the Pine Tree”[“Στην κουκουναριά τον ιπποί”] by Panayiotis Soutsos (Meraklis 1977:107).
69From “My Tree”[“Το δέντρον μου”] by Georgios Zalokostas (Meraklis 1977:58).
71From “The Kiss”[“Το φιλήμα”] by Georgios Zalokostas (Meraklis 1977:58).
of a modern national literature. To illustrate this point more clearly, I will examine several critical texts that illustrate particular ways Greek nationalist scholars in literature and folklore theorized nature and the folk.

My first example comes from Greek folklore theory. It is an essay by folklorist Stilpon Kyriakidis (1978 [1926]) on the relationship between the folk and nature entitled, “Love of Nature in Greek Folk Songs.” In it, Kyriakidis sets out to answer the question: Is there a love of nature among the Greek folk? He begins with a discussion of what “love of nature” (physiolatreia) means. In describing it as “human love of nature and life in nature, as opposed to the city and life in the city” (130), Kyriakidis suggests that nature signifies the opposite of urban. In other words, nature signifies the nation’s many rural regions. Next, Kyriakidis asserts that the concept of “love” is too vague and he seeks to clarify it by discussing love’s somatic and psychical source:

Ο πρώτος λοιπόν πόθος προς την φύσιν είναι γέννημα διαμαρτυρίας, γέννημα αντιδράσεως της ψυχής και του οργανισμού του ανθρώπου προς μίαν ζωήν ταραχώδη και καταθλιπτικήν, η οποία βαθμίδον φθείρει και τις ψυχικές και τις σωματικές του ανθρώπου δυνάμεις, και επιθυμία ζωηρά προς απολύτως και απολύτρωσιν από τα δεσμά του πολιτισμού και επώνυμον προς την φυσική και πρωτόγονη ελευθερίαν.

The first feeling of desire toward nature is born of protest: a reaction of the human body and soul to a chaotic and depressing life that wears away at one’s spiritual and bodily strength, and a vivacious desire for change and salvation from the shackles of culture [literally: civilization] and a return toward natural and primitive freedom. (Kyriakidis 1978:131)

He then contextualizes the “psychological and biological need” of physiolatreia in terms of history. He states that it arose in antiquity, especially during the Alexandrian and Roman times, waned during the Middle Ages along with the “retreat” of civilization, and rose again and spread to all of civilized humanity by the time of Rousseau and Romanticism. At most, Kyriakidis maintains, such biologically motivated physiolatreia revels in the beauty of such nature as “the open horizon, the calm sea, the sweet sound of a babbling brook and the sparkle of the morning dew, the flowers and birds and the sweet light of the moon, and other elements of a beautiful idyllic landscape” (132). Thus, he distinguishes it from that which also has a “spiritual/intellectual” (pnevmatiko)

72From Panayiotis Soutsos’s “In the Shade of the Pine Tree” (Meraklis 1977:107)
component, from that which takes into account “the feeling of hues of light and the atmosphere which give psychological depth and emotional unity to a landscape, [...] the feeling of the wild magnificence of the tall mountains, of the incredible grandeur of the tempestuous sea and of the storm, and of the unending monotony of the uniform plain and desert” (132). This component of physiolatreia, Kyriakidis argues, comes about historically with Rousseau and the rise of European romanticism, and even Greek romantic poetry. In short, he constructs a linear progression that begins in antiquity with a weaker biological form of physiolatreia. This develops into a stronger biological and spiritual/intellectual form with romanticism that celebrates the whole of nature and is nostalgic for a more “natural, true, and free life” (134).

Kyriakidis then uses this general account of physiolatreia as a basis for his discussion of it among the Greek folk, the ostensible descendants of the civilized ancient Greeks who were out of contact with a European civilization built on a Greek foundation. He claims that he did not expect to find a love of nature among the Greek folk since, as they already live in nature, they have no reason to embrace it as a reaction against the city. Furthermore, he states that his own personal experiences with the folk suggested to him that they have no sense of the landscape’s beauty. Nevertheless, he decides to examine Greek folk song texts as “the expression of [the folk’s] deepest desires and ideals” (137). Upon analyzing the songs, Kyriakidis concludes that, to his surprise, the Greek folk not only have a love of nature, but that theirs is actually greater than that of the romantics. In fact, exactly because the folk’s love of nature does not arise from nostalgia caused by life in the city, Kyriakidis feels justified in claiming that their physiolatreia is more authentic. In a passage referring specifically to the kleits, he argues that their own physiolatreia is “born of life, the

73Kyriakidis’s reference to authenticity aligns him with many of his contemporaries in Europe and America engaged in folklore research: “Folklore has long served as a vehicle in the search for the authentic, satisfying a longing for an escape from modernity. The ideal folk community, envisioned as pure and free from civilization’s evils, was a metaphor for everything that was not modern” (Bendix 1997:7). Throughout this dissertation, I will be discussing examples of folkloric, literary, and literary critical work that associate the folk with various modes of an essentialized notion of authenticity (e.g. anonymous folk poetry as the authentic expression of the nation, folk cultural practices as expression of an authentic relationship to nature). In critiquing such work, I aim to underscore the “constructed and deceptive nature [or culture!] of authenticity” (Bendix 1997:228).
outcome of everyday life” (144). Hence, he characterizes it as a biological—that is, a natural—feeling analogous to that which gave birth to Romanticism in the first place, and differing from it “only in its psychological source” (144).

Continuing his analysis of folk song texts, Kyriakidis attempts to demonstrate that the folk’s love of nature also includes a spiritual/intellectual dimension, analogous to that of the educated romantics, that includes an appreciation of the entire range of nature’s beauty, “from the lovely and idyllic to the magnificent and wild” (150). Thus, he argues, the folk are capable of expressing a feeling that is “much deeper and truer” than the “long-winded and rhetorical romanticism of the educated” (145). Feelings experienced in a natural setting are more authentic among the folk than among the romantics because the “expression of feelings of the folk is completely natural and spontaneous, and those feelings are real, clear, and true” (157).

In short, Kyriakidis connects a cultural group conceived of in national terms—rural, uneducated Greeks—with the rural places they inhabit. He authenticates this connection, moreover, by interpreting it as partly biological and natural. His appeals to nature contribute to the construction of Greek national culture by providing grounds for legitimizing Greek folk culture in the landscapes—the territories—it inhabits. In doing so, Kyriakidis also contributes to the construction of nature, both as a location and as a force. Defined as the city’s other, nature is the sum of Greece’s rural places. Defined as biology and psychology, it is the force that gives birth to the folk’s feelings of love for those rural places. In both cases, moreover, Kyriakidis (re)invents nature as a quintessentially national entity.

In an essay on Greek Romanticism, the nationalist literary historian K. Th. Dimaras (1982 [1946]) contributes to a similar construction of nature. In the essay, Dimaras gives a new spin to Kyriakidis’s essay in order to construct an organicist “literary history” argument. Whereas Kyriakidis invokes romanticism as a way to analyze Greek physiolatreia, Dimaras invokes the Greek physiolatreia established by Kyriakidis in order to understand the status of Greek Romanticism in Greek literary history. He begins by observing that romanticism was a movement so wide in its scope, affecting arts, politics, and life in general, overflowing “like a big river, flooding
all of Europe,” that it was inevitable that it should come to Greece, a nation open to “every kind of Western current” (3). Yet, Dimaras observes, none of the literary and historical preconditions giving rise to European romanticism existed in Greece. These observations motivate Dimaras to undertake a demonstration that Greek romanticism was not simply an “artificial” borrowing from Western Europe, but that, indeed, it did have roots in Greece after all.

Toward that end, Dimaras turns away from “grammatology,” where no Greek precedents can be found, and looks instead to “psychology” (6). He posits several defining characteristics of European romanticism: “natural life” (6), the “love of nature” (7) or a “return to nature” (13), as well as “freedom, spontaneity, belief in the past, in Christianity, melancholic mood, and a pessimistic attitude toward erotic love” (6). Since he takes these characteristics as the essential indicators of the “Romantic psychology,” Dimaras asks whether “Greek psychology” might not possess any of the same elements. (He mentions that he actually thinks all human beings share such characteristics to some extent, so the question is really a matter of degree.) The best textual evidence of “Greek psychology,” Dimaras continues, is found in Greek folk songs. Because, he claims, folk songs are not so much the creation of individuals, but are created and re-created through centuries of oral transmission, they are the most “official” and “responsible” witnesses of the “foundational characteristics of the Greek soul” (6). Dimaras finishes his argument by demonstrating that each of the above characteristics exists in Greek folk songs. In particular, he draws on Kyriakidis’s essay in order to show the parallel existence of physiolatreia among the Greek people and European romantics.

According to Dimaras, then, it is the Greek soul that fosters the natural development of romantic literature in Greece (6). He draws upon the authentic bond between Greek nature and the rural Greek folk posited by Kyriakidis, and uses it to authenticate—it is “physiological”—the development of Greek romantic poetry, and by extension, Greek literary history in general. He legitimizes the bond between Greek nature and Greek romantic poets that Kyriakidis found nostalgic and inauthentic: Though catalyzed by urban experiences or through contact with Europeans, Greek romantic poetry developed from the same psychological source—the same Greek
soul—as did Greek folk songs, indisputably authentic expressions of physiolatreia. Hence, it is an authentic expression of Greek physiolatreia after all. Like Kyriakidis, then, Dimaras (re)invents nature as a quintessentially national location and national force. He also (re)invents culture as national. Regardless of differences between city and country, and regardless of similarities between Greek and European literature (romantic poetry), Greek culture is nevertheless a distinct entity whose rural and urban aspects both share a distinct psychological profile.

Further examples are readily culled from a Greek literary and artistic movement known as “aesthetic nationalism”74 or the “aesthetics of nativeness.”75 Articulated theoretically by Pericles Yannopoulos (1869-1910) and carried out in literature by the Generation of the Thirties, proponents of aesthetic nationalism sought to ground modern Greek culture in Greek nature and Greek folk culture explicitly. Yannopoulos aspired in his texts to teach fellow Greeks how to fulfill their national “duty” to know their “place” (Yannopoulos 1981 [1938]:16). He argued that a particular aesthetic reading of the Attic landscape—with its characteristic line and color—and of the folk who inhabit it—women and young gallants—would enable Greeks to find authentic expression in painting:

Kαι γραμμή και χρώμα είναι τα δύο θεμελιώδη στοιχεία και χαρακτηριστικά μιας ελληνικής ζωγραφικής. Η ελληνική γραμμή είναι απαλή, λεπτή, σφιχτή, ήδωρη, μουσική και πραγματική. Είναι η γραμμή του βουνού, του παλληκαριού, της γυναικός, της κολώνας, της μετόπης. Όπως βλέπουμε εἰς τὴν γύρῳ μας φύσιν και τὴν γύρῳ μας πραγματικότητα, εἴτε εἰς τὸ πρόσωπον βουνοῦ, εἴτε εἰς τὸ πρόσωπον γυναικός, απλουστάτη, ἡμεροτάτη, αγαθή, ὅλη αβρα ἐναπάθεια εἰς τὴν ἑρείαν, σφιχτή καὶ νευρώδης ἐν τῇ κινήσει χωρίς ποτὲ να χάνει τὴν λεπτότητα καὶ τὴν χάριν σαν τὴν ὀρμήν τοῦ παλληκαριοῦ, χωρίς ποτὲ να φθάνει τὴν αγριότητα...

Line and color are the two fundamental elements and characteristics of Greek painting. The Greek line is soft, light, vigorous, sensuous, musical, and bright. It is the line of a Greek atmosphere, full of the cleanest sun, a divine sunbath and purification from Eastern sluggishness” and its “harmony of sparse shapes and colors, an inexhaustible source of cultural energies for Modern Greeks” (77). Theotokas writes about Greece: “It is the land of pure and clean ideas. The goddess of Greece is a redemption from thought, a catharsis of the soul. […] Here everything is simple, so beautiful, so deeply simple, that their simplicity has been named a miracle” (79).

74See Leontis (1995:84-89) for an account of Greek aesthetic nationalism, including “what may have been the first aesthetic approach to topos,” the work of Pericles Yannopoulos.

75See Dimitris Tziovas (1989) on the “aesthetics of nativeness.” Demosthenes Danielidis, for example, wrote about Greece’s “atmosphere, full of the cleanest sun, a divine sunbath and purification from Eastern sluggishness” and its “harmony of sparse shapes and colors, an inexhaustible source of cultural energies for Modern Greeks” (77). Theotokas writes about Greece: “It is the land of pure and clean ideas. The goddess of Greece is a redemption from thought, a catharsis of the soul. […] Here everything is simple, so beautiful, so deeply simple, that their simplicity has been named a miracle” (79).
mountain, of a gallant young man, of a woman, of a column, of a metope. Just as we see in nature and our everyday life, whether in the face of a mountain or a woman, utterly simple, tame, full of goodness, delicately sensual in its stillness, vigorous and spirited in motion without ever losing its refinement and grace, like the dash of a young gallant, never reaching the point of harshness… (Yannopoulos 1981:40-41)

As Artemis Leontis (1995) notes, Yannopoulos “proffers the topio [landscape] of Hellas as a national landscape and the aesthetic of Hellenism as a national aesthetic” (86). Thus, like Kyriakidis and Dimaras, Yannopoulos invents nature as a national location and force. Whereas Dimaras invents culture in terms of a national “psychology,” though, Yannopoulos does so in terms of a national aesthetic.

The so-called Generation of the Thirties was influenced by, and an enthusiastic proponent of, Yannopoulos’s theory. In fact, its two most prominent representatives, the Nobel prize winning poets and critics Yiorgos Seferis (1900-1971) and Odysseas Elytis (1911-1996), each wrote critical accounts of the Greek folk artist Theophilos that echo not only Yannopoulos, but Kyriakidis and Dimaras as well. For Yannopoulos, authentic Greek artistic expression reflects and is grounded in Greek nature and the Greek folk. Seferis and Elytis go one step further by arguing that some Greek folk, because they connect so well with Greek nature, manage to rise above folk art/literature to the level of art/literature proper. Theophilos, claims Yiorgos Seferis (1974 [1947]:463) is a “folk person” who found his way “fumbling along the paths of a highly cultivated group soul [ομαδική ψυχή], which is the soul of our folk [ψυχή του λαού μας]” (462). Yet, Seferis continues:

He might not be skillful, his lack of learning in such things might be great. But this most rare poetic rhythm—what else could I call it?—never before accomplished for the Greek landscape before him: a moment of color and air, suspended there in all its internal vivacity and the radiance of its motion, which connects the unconnectable [συνδέει τα ασύνδετα], holds together the scattered and resurrects the mortal; this human breath which remained

80
in a robust tree, in a hidden flower, or in the dance of a [traditional folk] costume; these things that we yearned for so much, because we missed them so much; Theophilos gave us this elegance [χάρη], and this is not folklore. (Seferis 1974:460-461)

If, in Kyriakidis’s view, Greek folk culture is the closest to Greek nature, it is high culture, according to Seferis, that gives it its most sophisticated—and always authentic—expression. Odysseas Elytis (1986 [1964]) makes a similar case. He recounts Theophilos’s biography, following him “through the unending days of his journey under the chestnut trees of Pilos or among the olive groves of his home ground” (22), and, upon visiting the actual landscapes where Theophilos lived, discovers their embodiment in his paintings:

You would feel the correspondence among the olive trees and the wrinkled faces [of the rural folk], in the little gardens with roses and the seashores smelling of freshly opened watermelon, in the earthenware jars and the [traditional folk] britches, in the rosy mountains and in the quiet, primitive, caiques. And immediately, in the same moment, the correspondence that existed among all of these things and Theophilos’s paintings. True olive groves at last, true people, true things. (Elytis 1986:28)

Such observations enable Elytis to promote Theophilos from folk artist to artist proper:

European historians of art usually characterize the folk artist, the primitive artist, as a chronicler of his age and limit his importance to just that, or, at most, to the freshness which his simplistic viewpoint brings to the space of flexible interpretation of the external world. This is, up to a point, correct. But, no matter how we look at it, this view is insufficient to account for the case of Theophilos. (Elytis 1986:73)

In short, Seferis and Elytis describe a union of artistry and folk artistry, that in turn removes folk artistry from the realm of the folk, and puts it in the realm of high culture. Literary and artistic
Culture are not only grounded in Greek nature via the folk. Rather, folk culture is high culture when it manages to express Greek nature in its full significance. In addition to constructing nature as a wholly national location and national force, Seferis and Elytis also invent culture, even more than Dimaras, as an organic national entity. For Dimaras, national culture's folk and high aspects remained somehow distinct, their shared psychological profile notwithstanding. Seferis and Elytis allow for erasure of the boundary, provided that the artist is a perfect vehicle for the expression of Greek nature and its inhabitants.

This brings me back to the representations in Romantic poetry of shepherds and poets among the trees and flowers that I mentioned at the beginning of this section, or even to the Cretan character in Solomos's poem. Interpreted in light of Greek folkist theoretical and critical discourse—by reading the shepherd, say, as a representative Greek shepherd—these poems clearly contribute to the emergence and development of national literary culture. When literary texts portray the folk expressing physiolatreia or communing with nature, they participate in the construction of a bond between Greek folk culture and Greek nature, between a people and its national territory. Also, insofar as literary texts suggest an interrelationship or overlap between folk culture and high culture—among wandering Cretan singers and published poets proper—they also participate in the construction of a bond between Greek literature—or high culture in general—and Greek nature. Moreover, they legitimize these bonds by suggesting that they are natural. Indeed, the following verse by Zalokostas can be read as a conceit with a perfectly romantic-nationalist message, taking the narrator=representative nationalist, garden=nation, tree=high culture, and apples=the fruits of high culture:

Επόθησα τον κήπον μου με δέδρον να κοσμήσω, 
να ἔχη κλάδους υψηλοὺς και πράσινα τὰ φύλλα, 
εγώ δὲ ὑπὸ τὴν σκιά του δένδρου να καθίσω, 
καὶ να ἴδω κρεμόμενα τὰ κόκκινα τοῦ μῆλα.
I desired to decorate my garden with a tree,
so that it might have tall branches and green leaves,
and so that I might sit in its shade below,
and see its red apples hanging.76

Of course this is not the only way to read such a poem. Yet, insofar as the particular nature-culture
connections in poetry and theoretical nation-centered discourses reinforce each other, such a
nationalist interpretation is by no means far fetched in historical context.

Finally, apart from recognizing how such literary and critical texts ground Greek culture in
nature, a dialectical socio-ecological interpretation of these texts requires noting that they do not
merely “appropriate” nature for the sake of culture, they also participate in the (re)invention of
“nature” and “culture” themselves. First, they construct nature as the physical location of folk
culture, and consequently as the place where high culture is born. Second, they construct nature as
the force behind such developments in culture, through appeals to “psychology,” “biology,”
“physiology,” and the senses (aesthetics).77 Finally, in typical Herderian fashion, they construct
nature and culture as quintessentially national entities: reading Solomos in light of Kyriakidis and
Dimaras suggests the poem represents a distinctive Greek nature (as opposed to Cretan nature, say,
or European nature).78 Still, as far as the project of modernization, urbanization, and
nationalization goes, there seems to be a drawback in constructing the rural as the unequivocal
source of culture. Indeed, as I will argue in the next section, Greek romantic nationalists
constructed nature in more ambivalent ways as well. Ethographers, in particular, invented their
own version of nature as national wild(er)ness.

76From Zalokostas’s “My Tree” [“Το δέντρο μου”] (Meraklis 1977:58).
77Danos (2002) points out that, in Yannopoulos’s case, even “physiology” was more a matter of the
senses than of race:
   It must be emphasized, however, than Yannopoulos’s concept of the “physiology” of the
individual and of the race did no allude to biological—and, by extension, 
   racist—characteristics. Instead, it was a highly aestheticised concept: the understanding of
   racial “physiology” was to be derived from an understanding of—better, an immersion
   into—nature; that is, through an excursion into Greek, particularly Attic, landscape. 
   (Danos 2002:87)
78Neither am I arguing, of course, that they should.
So far, I have argued that theorizations and depictions of the folk’s almost naive closeness to nature served to ground Greek national culture in nature. Nationalist authors and critics constructed nature and the folk in ways that could establish the legitimacy of a modern Greek nation-state with its own territory and culture. But, if the nation’s modernizers saw Greek culture as so firmly rooted in nature, the question remains how they could simultaneously justify their desire to change it, to establish and impose modern western social, economic, and political models and institutions in the new state. Why change what is natural? Of course, the last thing Greek modernizers wanted was to construct an identity for Greece as rural or traditional. Thus, might not such appeals to nature have also undermined their modernizing nationalizing intentions? Turning now to ethographic prose, I will now illustrate how modern national culture could construct nature not only as means for establishing its own legitimacy, but also to justify the changes demanded by the quest for rapid modernization.

Critics have observed that folkist discourses celebrate the folk’s proximity to nature only insofar as the folk express something viewed by the establishment as benign, like a “love of nature” (Mullen 2000). When nature is constructed as “wilderness,” a proximity to nature can also mean the folk are “wild,” uncultured, and uncivilized. As Cosgrove (1995) explains, “[w]ilderness was always correlated with origins and infancy, in the sense not only of innocence, but also of untamed human passions and undisciplined conduct. It also was correlated with Armageddon. The seeds of social development may be located in wilderness, but the wild itself is savage, animal, and presocial” (29). Romance and pathology are intertwined. In this scenario, wild(er)ness—wilderness as location, wildness as the character of its inhabitants—is humanity’s historical and evolutionary origin. It
may continue to serve as a source of nourishment, but it must be tamed within (human behavior) and without (nature).79 Here, nation-centered folkism constructs the folk as national culture’s internal other.

Mario Vitti (1975, 1991) argues that authors with largely nationalist preoccupations wrote ethnographic prose in which rural tradition was portrayed idealistically and sentimentally (e.g. the idylls of Drosinis). Authors of a more cosmopolitan bent, trying to address serious domestic problems that plagued the young nation and attempting to provoke social reform, wrote literature that was critical of the traditional rural Greek community (e.g. works of “naturalism” like Karkavitsas’s The Beggar). Authors portrayed the folk both idealistically and critically. Conceiving of Vitti’s dichotomy as two poles of a continuum, allowing for depictions of the folk ranging from sentimental idealism to scathing critical reformism, it is possible to discern more clearly how the two positions described by Vitti manifest themselves in literary texts. Specifically, I contend that both idealist and reformist aspects can be understood largely in terms of how an author portrayed the folk in terms of nature: as naive inhabitants of nature (in the idylls), as the wild beasts of nature (in Karkavitsas’s naturalism), or some combination of thereof. In short, ethnographers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries addressed their socio-historical situation as a nation by constructing Greek nature as ambivalent wild(er)ness.

To understand exactly how ethnographers accomplished this, it is necessary to consider the particularities of modern Greek folkism and its interpretation of the classical past. In particular, it requires consideration of how Nikolaos Politis, the founder of official Greek folklore studies, retooled Tylor’s well-known evolutionary “doctrine of survivals.” According to Tylor’s doctrine, aspects of the folk not approved of by modern culture (for instance, their wildness) are considered to be survivals of humanity’s primitive past. However, since European elites held Greek antiquity to be culture at its best, not something primitive, Politis turned survivalism on its head, so to speak, thereby rendering it relevant for modern Greek folklorists. Politis viewed the folk as possessors of

---

79Max Oelschlaeger (1991:25-27) argues that, according to history, longing for civilization and abhorrence of wild nature is not necessarily part of “human nature.”
the surviving elements of, not a primitive past, but a classical culture that was subsequently corrupted by the influences of barbaric—wild—foreign conquerors.⁸⁰ In other words, the customs of the Greek folk, bewildered by foreign conquests, possessed traces of Ancient Greek civilization. Thus, ethnographic authors could portray the folk as the legitimate inhabitants of Greek nature (authentic descendants of ancient Greeks), as wild beasts (contaminated by non-Greek, especially Ottoman, conquest) in need of modernizing/nationalizing, or a combination of both.

The specificity of the Greek case can be further understood in relation to the Carolyn Merchant’s (1995) analysis of the American case in terms of a “recovery narrative” of Western culture. By positing the idea of a fallen Eden that needs to be recovered, argues Merchant, Euramericans have legitimated various “civilizing” missions—Christianity, modern science, technology, capitalism—that encourage redemption of both land and human through labor on earth. Eastern wilderness and western deserts must be transformed from their wild states into cultivated gardens. American Indians—the nation’s wild inhabitants—must fulfill their potential by being tamed and participating in the recovery through farming. “The origin story of capitalism is a movement from desert back to garden through the transformation of undeveloped nature into a state of civility and order” (Merchant 1995:136). In Merchant’s view, Americans positioned themselves on a gradual ascent from a post-Fall-from-Eden wild(er)ness toward paradisiacal civilization. Greeks, in contrast viewed their plight as an already successful cultural ascent out of the wild(er)ness that peaked in the Classical period, a subsequent descent into wild(er)ness as they endured successive periods of rule by invaders (Romans, Arabs, Franks, Ottomans), followed by yet another ascent that began with the creation of the modern Greek nation-state and continues with the developments of modern Greek culture that aspires to reach or surpass the level of classical Greece. The Greeks, too, have a “recovery narrative,” but it is not Eden that must be recovered, but “Zion.”

⁸⁰For further details, see Herzfeld (1986:102-104).
My first example of Greek ethography’s construction of wild(er)ness is an example of the reformist, wild-as-bad, approach to ethography, Andreas Karkavitsas’s (1866-1923) *The Beggar* (Ό Ζητινόνο) (1984) (1896). It takes place in the small village of Nychteremi. Karkavitsas portrays the villagers as poor, relatively powerless and not very intelligent, despite their incorporation into the Greek nation-state. Petros Valachas is a customs officer who has been sent to a post there; he hates the place and looks down on all the villagers. The rough and difficult landscape, moreover, serves to increase the distance between himself and the villagers. Tziritokostas, a professional beggar temporarily residing in the village, finds ways to take advantage of the poor villagers. Early in the novel, Valachas becomes upset with Tziritokostas’s begging and beats him harshly (the beating serves Tziritokostas well, though, when he uses it to evoke the villagers’ pity). Karkavitsas describes at length professional beggars in his account of Tziritokostas’s apprentice Mountzouros, as well as a scene in which the beggar takes advantage of the women villagers, especially Magoulas’s wife Kroustallo who is desperate for a male child. (He sells her a dangerous powder which provokes abortion, telling her that it will convert the female child with which she is pregnant into a male.) Later, when Valachas is away temporarily on a smuggling case, Mountzouros dies, and the beggar convinces some of the village women to allow him to put the corpse in Valachas’s place. When Valachas returns, earlier than expected, and some children see him, they think the corpse has turned into a vampire. The beggar takes advantage of the situation for the sake of revenge on Valachas and has the whole village believing that there is a vampire in the building. When officers come to interrogate the villagers about what happened, Tziritokostas disguises himself as a sailor and gets away, while the village men are arrested and taken away, and Kroustallo hangs herself to end the suffering caused by the abortion medicine, which she did not even take according to the directions she was given.

Karkavitsas portrays not a single character in this novel in a positive light. They are all victims of their own stupidity (e.g. Kroustallo), their lot in life (e.g. the beggar), or of each other (e.g. Valachas-Tziritokostas). Read as a Greek example of literary naturalism, the novel can be viewed
as an illustration of the misery and suffering that are an inescapable fact, or law, of nature. The novel's own closing remarks, however, suggest a slightly different interpretation:

Ο άνθρωπος πολλές φορές δεν βρίσκει της υπάρξεως του τον σκοπό. Και όμως τα κρατεί στους κόρμους της η Φύση, θεότης αδιάφορη, ανεπηρεάστη, ίση δείχνοντας αγάπη και στον Κάη τους καρπούς και στα πρωτότοκια του Άβελ.

People often never discover the purpose of their existence. And yet, holding them in her bosom is Nature, an indifferent, unprejudiced divinity, showing equal love for the fruits of Cain and the birthright of Abel. (Karkavitsas 1984:196)

Because nature is indifferent, it is up to culture to help people discover the purpose of their existence, to help them develop forms of association that might relieve them from the misery of their “natural” (outside of culture) existence in rural regions. In other words, The Beggar supports the notion that national culture can save the regions from the state of nature to which they have been reduced. Their wild inhabitants can be cultivated back to civilization; culture can redeem nature. Thus, like the authors and critics I discussed in the previous section, Karkavitsas constructs nature as a national location and a national force. Unlike them, however, he constructs nature as an entity whose wild(er)ness needs to be tamed by culture.

If Karkavitsas focuses almost exclusively on the negative, Drosinis’s (1859-1951) The Herb of Love [Το Βοτάνι της Αγάπης] (1922 [1901]) provides a more balanced example of the ambivalence of national wild(er)ness. It tells the story of a young Greek shepherd named Yannis Karanikos who becomes infatuated, against the conventions of his society, with a gypsy girl named Zemfira, after she supposedly put the evil eye on him while he was dancing at a village celebration. Yannis himself begins to wonder if she has indeed performed magic on him, and when he confronts her about the evil eye she simply responds with a rhetorical question that heightens his infatuation. Later, when he gets together with Zemfira and her father, and the two men eat, drink, and dance, he has an opportunity (after the father passes out) to tell her he is smitten. Yannis is now madly in love, but his love is “unholy, illogical, and pointless” (97), since Zemfira is a gypsy. Yannis’s acquaintances make fun of him when they see him so love-struck, although they do not know with whom. Again he seeks her out, supposedly to buy some “snake-weed” from her, and

88
then she also sells him “the herb of love” (103) which she says will make him and whomever he gives it to madly in love forever. One day he finds a way to sneak some to her, and later they meet in secret and profess their love to each other. Later, however, Zemfyra is upset because she knows Yannios must go away for two years to the army. She accuses him that he got involved with her in this way purposefully, knowing he could escape from the situation using the army as an excuse, and she gives him a charm to wear. When, after two years, Yannios returns from the army, he no longer cares for Zemfyra—who is no longer pretty—and he makes plans to marry another girl, Yannoula. When Zemfyra finds him and he claims that “they aren’t kids anymore” (181), and even goes so far as to blame Zemfyra for everything, she becomes upset. They have an argument, and when Yannios pushes her she falls off a ledge into the sea. The story ends with an official report of the suicide of Zemfyra and the mysterious death of Yannios from a blow to the head, apparently from Zemfyra’s father.

On the one hand, Drosinis packs his story full of the celebratory “documentation” of rural village life typical of Greek folklore studies at the time. There are extended descriptions of rural life and customs, including an entire chapter about “the story of a grain of wheat.” Such descriptions are often accompanied by the introduction of italicized vernacular words that presumably would have been unfamiliar to educated, urban readers of the time [e.g. παζ, χειδιά]. On the other hand, Drosinis also depicts the otherness of the non-Christian gypsies, the cunning and passionate nature of the female, and the absence of restraint in rural life, so that only through death can the unconventional relationship of Zemfyra and Yannios be “resolved.” His narrative demonstrates the as yet still present danger of certain Greeks behaving in a wild and uncivilized manner. Yannios is a Greek, but he is a folk Greek, not a modern one. His Greekness is imperfect, corrupted by the wildness of Greece’s conquerors. The authentic, quaint, idyllic aspects of his lifestyle are worthy of admiration, and can be called upon for evidence of Greek cultural continuity. But, at the same time, he is not sufficiently modern to protect or free himself from wild passion and temptations, the wild sex (female), or a wild race (gypsies). In short, the idyllic aspects of folklife enable the legitimization of Greek culture while its wild dimension justifies the quest to modernize it.
My last example comes from a Cretan-born ethnographer. It is Ioannis Kondylakis’s (1861-1920) novel Bigfoot [Ο Πατούχας] (1983 [1892]), which takes place in 1863 in a Cretan village. It is about an 18-year old Cretan shepherd named Manolis, nicknamed “Bigfoot” because of his big feet, who comes down from the mountains to the village in order to get married. Throughout the text, Kondylakis describes and explains Manolis’s actions through references to his proximity to nature. His proximity to nature, however, is ambivalent.

On the one hand, the author portrays Manolis, especially in the opening parts of the text, as a shining example of the folk who are close to nature, express a love for nature, and are at home in nature:

[…] εἶχε δεξιός από μικράς ηλικίας τόσην αγάπην πρὸς τὴν ποιμενικήν ζωήν, ὡστε μετά δυσκολίας τὸν ἀπέστασεν ο πατήρ του ἀπὸ τα πρόβατά διὰ νὰ τὸν παραδώσῃ[ι] εἰς τὸν διδάσκαλον […]

He had shown from a young age so much love for pastoral life that it was with great difficulty that his father separated him from his sheep in order to turn him over to the teacher. (Kondylakis 1986:6)

Indeed, Manolis hates school so much that he escapes the town and goes back to the familiarity and comfort of his mountain home, where he revels in the natural surroundings he so loves:

Όταν ἔφθασεν εκεῖ ἐπάνω, εν μέσῳ[ι] τῶν γνωρίμων βουνῶν, τῶν γνωρίμων δένδρων καὶ τῶν γνωρίμων ζώων, τῶν μόνων του ἀληθινῶν γνωρίμων καὶ φίλων, τον κατέλαβεν η συγκίνησις καὶ η χαρά του ανθρώπου του επιστρέφοντος εἰς τὴν πατρίδα του, τὴν οποίαν δὲν ἤπειρε να επανάδη[ι].

When he arrived back up there, amidst familiar mountains, familiar trees and familiar animals, among his only true acquaintances and friends, he was overcome by the emotion and joy of a person returning to his homeland, which he never expected to see again. (Kondylakis 1983:7)

Manolis is able to read the book-of-nature, where he sees both the divine:

[…] τὴν βροντήν εθεώρει ὡς τῇ απειλήν τῆς θείας αγανακτήσεως, ὡς εἰς τὴν χαρμονίαν τῆς ανθρωπείας καὶ φωτολουσμένης φύσεως ἐβλεπε το μειώμα τῆς θείας ἀγαθότητος.

He considered thunder the threat of divine indignation, just as in the joy of nature, blossoming and sunwashed, he saw the smile of divine goodness. (Kondylakis 1986:10)
as well as his fellow humans:

Eis twn erphmwn h phantasia tou eixe prorropoihsai ta panta kai symatisei kosmon ximierikon, eis ton opoion dein prothlhse to thn monovn.

In desolate areas, his imagination had personified everything, had formed a chimerical world, in which he never felt lonely. (Kondylakis 1983:11)

He is most at home conversing, not with humans, but with “Thodoris,” the sound of his own echo in a narrow ravine. Manolis is a perfect example of the kind of folk-in-nature that Kyriakidis and Dimaras theorized:

Η αληθινή του οικογένεια ήσαν τα άκακα εκείνα ζώα και τακόμη αγαθότερα δέντρα, και οι βράχοι, και ταγριολουλουδά που του απεφθάνουν, ἐλεγες, φιλικόν χαιρετισμόν, ὅπως εσείοντο εἰς τοὺς κρημνοὺς. Ὅλα ζωντανά και ἄψυχα, τοι εγελούσαν με στοργή, την οποίαν μόνον εἰς το μητρικόν ἰσός πρόσωπον ἔβλεπε. Καὶ αυτοὶ οἱ κόρακες, οἵτινες διήρχοντο κράζοντες ψηλά εἰς τὸν ἀέα, τοι εφαίνοντο φιλοί.

His true family was comprised of those harmless animals, and the even more noble trees, and the rocks, and the wildflowers that would greet him amicably, as it were, as they swayed on ledges. Living and non-living things alike smiled at him with the tenderness that he probably saw only in the maternal face. Even the ravens that few around high in the air cawing seemed to him friends. (Kondylakis 1983:8)

Yet, Kondylakis also suggests that Manolis’s closeness to nature is not an unequivocally positive fact. Manolis is too close to nature. He has been “in” nature too long:

Εἰς τὴν ἐρημίαν, εἰς τὴν σιγήν τῶν βουνῶν και τῶν χειμαδίων, ὁ Μανόλης δὲν εὑράδυνε νὰ εξαγωγῶθη[ι] τελείως. […] Εφοβεῖτο με τὸ δέος τοῦ αγρίου ζού, καὶ, ὅπως τοῦτο, ἀμα ἔβλεπεν ἀνθρώποι, ὦτο ἐτοίμος να τραπῆ[ι] εἰς φυγὴν καὶ να κρυβῆ[ι]. Οἱ μόνοι ἀνθρώποι τῶν ὁποίων δὲν εφοβεῖτο ἦσαν οἱ σύντροφοι του, ποιμένες καὶ τυρόκομοι, ἡμιάγριοι, ως αὐτός.

In the desolate areas, in the silence of the mountains and winter-retreats of shepherds, it didn’t take long for Manolis to become completely wild. […] He would get as scared as a wild animal and was ready to run and hide whenever he saw a human. The only people he wasn’t afraid of were his companions, shepherds and cheese-makers, half-wild like himself. (Kondylakis 1983:9-10)

This is a great source of trouble for Manolis. Though “he could recognize the animals of his flock one-by-one (and there were more than a few)” he is unable to learn the 24 letters of the alphabet (8).

Like his mountain companions, he is a hopelessly uneducated/illiterate [δὲν ἦτο γραμματισμένος]
nervous worriedness and the sparkling eyes of a completely untamed beast [θυρίου ατελώς
dιμασθέντος]" (10-11), make it impossible for him to get close to other people in the village, “who
began to figure out his anthropophobia” (11).

Nevertheless, upon growing into puberty, and seeing a male-goat “jumping” a female (15),
Manolis makes up his mind that it is time to leave the mountains and go down to the village, a
decision that he expresses in terms of wildness: “Am I going to keep living in the mountains like a
wild goat? [Όλο στα βουνά θα ζω, σαν αγριάμη]” (16). His father, of course, is delighted that “his
half-wild son” has begun to show “tame/domestic tendencies” [ημέρους διαθέσεις του ημιαγρίου
υιό του] (17). The time has come for him “too, to join the class of humans” [να ἐμβη κιαυτός εἰς
τὴν τάξιν τῶν ἀνθρώπων] (17), for his “humanization” [ἐξανθρωποποιήσεις] (21). Kondylakis

—Δεν ξαναπάμε μπλιό στα όρη, αυ, Τριαμάτη; Στο χωρίο ’νε καλά… ἐχει και
cουπέλλιες όμορφες. Είδες εσύτο Πηγι, πούχει τσοι βασίλικος και τα μαύρα ματιά;…
Δεν ξαναπάμε στα ωζά, αυ, Τριαμάτη;
—Ο Τριαμάτης όμως δεν εφαινέτο συμμεριζόμενος την ιδέαν του. Αυτός δεν
ηδονίσει να είναι ευχαριστημένος εις τόπον ὅπου εὑρε μόνο εγχρούς.
Καὶ τας θυσίας του κυρίου του εδέχθη μάλλον με κατήθειαν. Οὔτω τουλάχιστον
ἐνόμισεν ο Μανώλης, ὅστις τοῦ εἶπε:
—Πως! δε σ’ ἀρέσει το χωρίο;
Και αφού τον παρετήρησεν επί τίνας στιγμὰς, ὧς να διέκρινε τῶρα πρῶτην φοράν ο
Τριαμάτης δὲν ἦτο ἄνθρωπος, τοῦ εἶπε πάλιν:
—Αν ἔσουνι καὶ συ Μανώλης, θα σ’ ἀρέσε. μα εἰσί συ χορό πεποννε. κυκουμίση!
Εἰναι να σου κάμι χοι!

“We won’t go anymore to the [wild] mountains, okay Triamati? It’s good here in the
village… and there are pretty girls. Did you see Pigi? With her pots of basil [note: basil is
not a wild herb in Crete, but is planted in pots on porches and balconies of village houses]
and her dark eyes… We won’t go anymore to the flocks, okay Triamati?”

Triamati, however, did not appear to be in agreement. He could not be satisfied in a
place where he had so many enemies.

And so he responded to the cajoling of his master with gloom. At least that is what
Manolis thought, who then said, “What! You don’t like it in the village?”

And after observing him for several more moments, until he recognized for the first
time that Triamati was not a human, Manolis told him, “If you too were Manolis [i.e.
human], you would like it. But you’re only a dog, poor old guy! What can I do?” (Kondylakis 1983:40)

The problem, though, is that Manolis is not quite experienced enough [άπραγος, without πείρα] (60) to get married. So, although his father Saitonikolis gives his word to the Pigi’s father (Thomas) that Manolis and Pigi will eventually get married, for now they are not given permission to get engaged and must therefore avoid one another, as traditional custom would not allow them to meet alone. In the meantime, Manolis should help with the building of his and Pigi’s future house, learn how to do farm work—a “less wild” occupation than shepherding in the mountains—and “gain experience in the world” [ναποκτήσης πείρας του κόσμου] (60), and mature.

Manolis, however, is very much unable to harness his wild instincts and urges. Still unaccustomed to village morals, he finds himself constantly violating proper codes of behavior. Thus, although he tells Pigi that he prefers the village to “his animals” (64), his behavior indicates that he thinks he is still in the mountains with his flocks. He repeatedly visits Pigi secretly at her house, sometimes trying, out of control [ακράτης] (124), to kiss her against her will. This leads to serious arguments with and threats from Pigi’s brother and father. To complicate matters, there is another man, Tereres, who is competing for Pigi’s love, and thus threatens to “tie up” Manolis should he pursue his relationship with her. With all the trouble, Manolis only knows how to react in—by village standards—extreme ways. His behavior around the village is “incorrigible” [αδιρθωτός] and scandalous (168-169). Acting as though he has lost interest in Pigi, he starts chasing after other girls in the village, in particular, Zervoudaina’s daughter Margi (or Marouli). Margi is not interested in him, however, and even if she were, it would make little difference since Manolis’s father will not go back on his word with Pigi’s father. As the novel unfolds, there are various incidents in which Manolis gains, loses, and regains interest in each of the two girls, and many arguments between him and his parents about whom he will marry. Also, Zervoudaina tries to get Manolis away from Pigi so that he will want her own daughter, and then later tries to convince him that Margi doesn’t want the “wildman” [αγρινθρώπος] (152). (Eventually, we learn
that Zervoudaina, a widow, is in love with Manolis and wants him for herself.) On many occasions, in his disappointment, Manolis says that he his tempted to give up, “to turn his back on building the house, and take to the mountains” (86).

Throughout the ups and downs of these events (the main action of the text), Kondylakis portrays Manolis’s immaturity in terms of the residual mountain wildness left in him. One of the villagers (Astronomos), for example, observes that Manolis is afraid of the relatively harmless Tereres but not afraid of animals like mules that are, in fact, dangerous. Astronomos explains that “Since he had lived up until now with animals, he was not afraid of them, but he was afraid of people because he was not familiar with them” (118). Manolis does begin to learn, though. Following the advice of his father, he “punishes” (130) Tereres, for example, in a “manly accomplishment” [ανδραγάθημα] (130) by tying him up and hanging him from an olive tree (129).

Now, when in disappointment he thinks of escaping back to the wild mountains, he realizes that it is too late, that he is too connected to his life in the village and, in particular, by his love for Pigi (131). He does consider the possibility that the two steal away to the mountains, but Pigi responds with a characteristic reference to wildness:

Μα με τα σωστά σου το λες να πάμε να κάτσωμε παντοτεινά στσι μαδάρες; Ντα αγρίμια 'μεστά;

Are you kidding me? You want us to go and live forever in the mountains? What, are we wild goats or something? (Kondylakis 1983:137)

Manolis, however, defends his previous life in the wild:

Αι, καλλίτερα 'νε ταγρίμια από πολλούς ανθρώπους σαν τον Τερερέ, σαν… […] Ταγρίμια, εξηκόλοθησε με πικρίαν, δεν παρανοιάζουνε τσ’ ανθρώπους και δεν πειράζουν εκείνους που δεν τα πειράζουν.

Well, the wild goats are better than many people like Tereres, like… […] The wild goats, he continued embittered, don’t call people names, and they don’t bother those who don’t bother them. (Kondylakis 1983:137)

81This is consistent, according to Cosgrove (1995), with nineteenth-century romanticism in general, wherein “[c]hildhood was considered close to chaos, thus requiring the civilizing process” (35).
Pigi’s denial makes Manolis consider taking her against her will and eloping, and when he loses all self-control while making an attempt to kiss her, he whispers the “words of a wild erotic fit” 
[λόγους αγρίου ερωτικού παροξυσμού] (140).

By the novel’s end, Manolis recognizes his own strength vis-a-vis other people, as Astronomos observes (172-73), and begins learning to harness and control it, putting it to more socially acceptable uses. At a village celebration, Manolis, unimaginably awkward up until now, suddenly leads the dance, the “lion of the village” (177), displaying rare bodily strength and robustness, without crudeness [αγροικίαν], among the most beautiful of all the young men in the village (177). When some young Turkish men come and cause trouble at the dance, Manolis is one of the young Cretans who drives them away, thereby becoming a village hero with his “manly accomplishment” [ανδραγάθημα] (183).

His wildness, now-under-control, comes in handy when he is pursued by the authorities, as he runs away “as fast as a wild goat” [με ταχύτητα αιγάργου] (182) to go into hiding in the mountains temporarily. When he comes back to the village, “grown more fully into a man” [ανδροδέστερος] (185), he makes one last “crazy” mistake, attempting while drunk to kidnap Margi (to elope), but mistakenly taking Zervoudaina, who offers no resistance. Upon realizing his mistake, he returns to his family and consents to marrying Pigi as was agreed at the beginning of the story.

Kondylakis portrays Manolis throughout the book in ambivalent terms, as the main character gradually undergoes the transition from total wildness, to a much more restrained—perhaps cultivated, but definitely socially acceptable—masculinity. As the Cretan protagonist of the work, he appears in a largely positive light. He possesses many benign character traits. He is sensitive; his feelings are readily hurt when he is picked on. He is handsome [όμορφος] (59), a “sensible boy” [νοικοκυρσόλο] (78), strong and brave [αντρειωμένος] (78), and seen by many as the “best” (most eligible bachelor) in the whole village (104, 152). He is not “bad” [κακός] (92) like Tereres, and even performs his masculine duty by punishing him. Also, he possesses a true appreciation and love for nature. Simply put, he is a hero with a pure and noble heart, and thus in
possession of the basic personality characteristics—heroism, individualism, gallantry, sensitivity, love of nature—that the modern Greek folk were believed to hold in common with their glorious ancient ancestors (see Herzfeld 1986:41, 50, 58). But, Manolis also appears as the immature boy who must learn to control his wild behavior if he is to become a true inhabitant of the village. By constructing wild(er)ness as ambivalent, Kondylakis tells a story that celebrates the folk but also illustrates their need for acculturation and modernization. In fact, he does more than that, since Crete at the time was still under Ottoman control and not yet part of the Greek nation-state. He allows Manolis to remain more wild than the protagonists of other ethnographic texts that take place in other parts of Greece already part of the nation-state, since Manolis’s wildness enables him, for instance, to strike the troublemaking Turkish boys at the novel’s end. Nevertheless, the novel itself predicts, correctly, that Crete will soon be part of Greece (61), and so it must also begin preparing the way for justifying modernization and nationalization, which, on the whole, it does.

---

82David Mazel (2000), writing about the early national period of the United States, argues that “‘Wilderness’ misnames an anxiety as geography” (23). Similarly, in a text like Kondylakis’s, “wild” misnames an anxiety (about those qualities of the folk perceived as incompatible with western modernity) as psychology attributable to a particular geography.

83This is Peckham’s (2001:110-111) reading of Kondylakis’s novel in terms of “the frontier.” He interprets Manolis’s incorporation into village life as an allegory for Crete’s incorporation into the Greek nation-state. Also, there are analogies with Mazel’s (2000) treatment of wilderness in the United States. Just as the preservation of wilderness in the United States could “prove an effective vehicle for reconstituting the manhood of the new American patriarch” (25), so could positive representations of a degree of wildness in the Cretan folk prove effective in constituting masculine heroes who were able to fight against the Ottoman Empire for Greek national freedom.

84This interpretation of Kondylakis’s work offers itself for comparison with another work by a Cretan author about a “wild” Cretan inhabitant: Nikos Kazantzakis’s Freedom or Death [Kapetan Michalis]. Whereas Kondylakis narrates the gradual domestication of Manolis, Kazantzakis writes about the almost fantastic adventures of Captain Michalis in love and war. Captain Michalis, though, never undergoes a process of domestication at all; he scorns everything domestic. Indeed, it is arguably his wildness that enables him, at the novel’s close, to rush headlong into a battle he knows he can not win, aware that freedom and death are inseparable. In this scenario, wildness is not something to be tamed (nationalized), it is something to be emulated in spirit: Captain Michalis, himself a “beast,” is able to recognize and accept the fact that, at some level, all reality is hopelessly wild (red in tooth and claw), and that no culture can ever hope to deliver humans from this primordial fact. Captain Michalis, then, serves not as an allegory for acculturation or nationalization, but as a “spiritual” example for individuals who strive to achieve some kind of
BEYOND (AND WITHIN!) THE NATION?

Folkism has had profound effects on modern Greek culture, in the collection of folklore, the developments of literary criticism, and the writing of literary texts. The emergence of a national literature in Greece involved literature and criticism themselves (re)inventing particular conceptions of, and intimate relationships among, place, nature, and folk in accordance with the views of folkism and, more generally, romantic nationalism. In the poetry and theoretical texts I examined, authors constructed nature as a national location and as a force that bonded together the land and folk of Greece’s regions in an organic unity, thereby enabling the nation’s high culture to appear as the natural product of such bonds. In the ethnographic texts I considered, authors made such constructions of nature more complex by focusing on wild(er)ness. They constructed both aspects—the location (wilderness) and the force (wildness)—as ambivalent national entities. Cosgrove (1995) notes that: “In Europe wilderness existed in time; in America it could be found in space” (33). My examination of Greece, on the so-called margins of Europe, suggests that a broader consideration of the European case reveals that wilderness was perceived here in time (as a primitive, barbaric force) and in space (as rural, typically mountainous, areas inhabited by shepherds, klefts and other folk). Greek authors did not merely esteem the folk for being organically connected to their habitat, but also presented evidence for the folk’s need to modernize, especially in those regions recently, or about to be, incorporated into the young Greek state. Their characters were vehicles for the expression of whatever ancient Greek virtues had “survived” in the folk’s bosom, but simultaneously indicated the folk’s need to be purified from excess wildness and Eastern contamination, to be cultivated, rehabilitated, modernized, and westernized.

In many respects, the nationalist project has been a success. However, as I will argue in the next chapter, such nation-centered constructions of nature and the folk culture by nationalists have also paved the way for more local constructions of nature by regionalists, whose own goals and aspirations are sometimes at odds with those of the modernizing nationalists. Also, nationalist spiritual salvation that rejects, and lies beyond, the non-existent salvation offered by nostalgic retreats to nature or faith in the deliverance of culture (national or otherwise).
constructions of the folk and their wild(er)ness in terms of specific regions have also provided a context in which later inhabitants of those same regions construct their own versions of such terms, as I have argued in Ball (2002) and will discuss in Chapter 6. Inasmuch as the dialectical view I outlined in the previous chapter purports that nation, nature, and place are socio-ecologically mutually constitutive, this is not surprising.

Yet, few literary critics have aspired to treat even the construction of a national nature by literature and criticism. This is especially true of ecocritics. Although Lawrence Buell (1995) does acknowledge the importance of scholarship on American pastoral ideology—the vision of America-as-nature—his review serves merely as a prelude to his dismissal of the issue altogether. In pointing out pastoral ideology’s historical potential not only for exploitation but for resisting exploitation, he sets out to “develop the case for new world pastoral’s adaptability for ecocentric purposes […] and in turn its capacity to serve as something more than ideological theater: its capacity, in particular, to register actual environments as against idealized abstractions of those” (54). He essentially makes the point that American literary constructions of nature can also be read as representations of literal nature, not only as instruments of national ideology. So, while he recognizes the important relationship between literary constructions of nature and ecological/environmental awareness, he does not learn the importance of problematizing nature itself. He undertakes his own quest for discovering literal nature (and place) in American literature without considering reflexively, apart from a minuscule widening of the national canon, the implications for nature and place that the category “American literature” itself has built into it already. His study of “literary ecocentrism,” therefore, actually functions as a defense of “ecocentric literariness,” that is, as an appropriation of ecological thought—another nature—for the reproduction of the American national literary canon (Thoreau being his central concern). It is little wonder, then, that one commentator has accused Buell of “filling out the details and working out the true consequences of the ‘America-as-nature’ vision” (Phillips 1999:586). In short, Buell
does not acknowledge that the literature he selects to interpret, and consequently his own criticism, contributes to nation-centered constructions of nature. Thus, he perpetuates a critical tradition that conflates the quest for literal nature in literary texts and the quest for a national literature.

In contrast, I have sought in this chapter to interrogate the relationship of nature and literary culture in ways that foreground the latter’s constructions of the former. Thus, my analysis is largely consistent with the “cultural studies” approach to literary culture that strives to dismantle its historical formation and reproduction. Whereas romantic nationalist criticism discerned the forces of nature behind the evolution of national culture, cultural studies critics have striven, in large measure, to do the opposite: to explain how culture—no matter how natural it may appear—is socially constructed. This tradition has its origins at least as far back as the 1950s when Roland Barthes investigated how particular uses of language, which he called “mythical,” function to de-politicize culture, transforming “history into nature” (1972:129). Extending semiological critique beyond language per se, he also argued that the connotative and denotative functions of images in mass advertising work together to make nature seem “spontaneously to produce the scene represented” (1977:45). Barthes provided an early account of how such “nature” facilitates the existence and perpetuation of a bourgeois society. By now, the dismantling of such appropriations of nature by culture is commonplace in comparative literature.85

From the perspective of socio-ecological constructivism, however, there are some epistemological weaknesses inherent in many such cultural studies analyses. For one thing, insofar as they represent nature merely as a given entity or force out there to be appropriated by cultural processes, they often tend to construct nature as if it were a passive resource waiting to be used by an omnipotent society. They fail to acknowledge that those very same processes construct “nature.” As Neil Evernden (1992) writes in The Social Creation of Nature, “the examination of ‘nature’ must entail not simply the objects we assign to that category, but also the category itself: the concept of

---

85Mary Louise Pratt’s (1992) critique of European colonial imperialism provides a well-known recent example. She explores the “systematizing of nature” in relation to the development of a “planetary consciousness” (29) which, among other things, “overwrote local and peasant ways of knowing within Europe just as it did local indigenous ones abroad” (35).
nature, its origins and implications” (xi). At least one ecocritic, David Mazel (1996; 2000), has radically problematized nature from the perspective of American national culture. Inspired by Foucauldian genealogy, Said’s notion of “orientalism,” and Judith Butler’s work on the body, Mazel examines the construction of a gendered and racialized national “wilderness” and “environment,” as well as the constitution of ecological national subjects. He argues that cultural critics should analyze environmentalism, not as “resistance to power,” but as “just one of many potential modes for exercising power […] over the real territories and lives that the environment displaces and for which it is invoked as a representation” (1996:144). By problematizing “environment” itself, Mazel not only examines literature’s discursive power to enable particular human-nature relationships, but also asks how national literature constructs nature itself (as a racialized, gendered national wilderness/environment). In a similar fashion, I have attempted throughout this chapter not merely to dismantle appropriations of nature-folk-place that contributed to the emergence and development of modern Greek national culture, but also to emphasize that such appropriations in fact (re)invent nature-folk-place in particular ways.

Still, from the perspective of socio-ecological constructivism (and not merely social constructivism), simply critiquing the mutual constitution of national literary culture and nature-folk-place is not enough. After all, foregrounding the particular ways national literary culture constructs nature-folk-place, by itself, winds up (re)inventing a conception of society as a quintessentially (trans)national entity endowed with seemingly arbitrary power to construct nature as it sees fit (that is, in accordance with perceived social, political, and economic needs irrespective of material and ecological processes). But, as I argued in the previous chapter, societies are themselves constituted by particular spatio-temporalities and constructions of place (Harvey

---

86To his credit, while he focuses primarily on the largely socially conservative quality of most ecologically progressive texts and discourses, he also discusses less conservative competing visions.

87Insofar as it is assumed that various nations engage in their own constructions of literature, nature, place, etc., the processes I discuss in this chapter are at once national and transnational.
1996:265). Also, the very discourses that (re)invent nature or place are themselves constituted by material processes. It appears, then, that adequate accounts of the discursive construction of nature require mutual consideration of the effects of “nature” on culture after all.

It seems I have come full circle, then, but have gained a more reflexive understanding of literary criticism in the process. Specifically, it has become clear that romantic nationalist and cultural studies approaches to criticism often share an epistemological assumption: namely, a reliance on an absolute nature-culture dichotomy for legitimizing critical practices. Romantic-nationalists invented either an all-powerful nature that determined the “organic” development of national culture, or, an ambivalent nature that legitimated national culture’s hegemony, but that could only succeed to “blossom” insofar as it cultivated nature’s wilder, more precarious, elements. Social constructivists, on the other hand, in the name of critique, have invented—perhaps unwittingly—an all-powerful “society” that appears capable of operating at an exclusively national or transnational scale to construct nature. However, these two approaches—nature explains culture, culture explains nature—are not the only choices critics have. By treating even “nature” and “culture” themselves as constituted by socio-ecological processes, it is possible for critics to avoid both forms of reductionism.

Thus, what began in this chapter as an exploration of the “nature of national culture,” has also turned out to be an attempt to highlight the many different “natures” and “cultures” of modern literary nature-culture in general, which is never only national after all, but constituted by local socio-ecological processes as well. Placed critics should address these observations in several ways. Like Dimaras and Kyriakidis, placed critics should consider the role of physical “nature” in literary developments. Also, like Seferis or Elytis, they should take into consideration the role of the “folk” in such developments. However, unlike these critics, they should not explain such developments in terms of a transcendent nature (geographical location or force), but simultaneously trace literature and criticism’s own role in constructing “nature” and “folk.” Thus, like social constructivists, placed critics should dismantle literature’s appropriations/constructions
of nature. But, unlike them, they should do so without purporting to explain them in terms of a transcendent or omnipotent national culture. Finally, placed critics must avoid engaging in critical projects that end up reinscribing views of culture at a primarily, if not exclusively, (trans)national scale. They must also ask, in other words, how local culture constructs place, nature, folk or wild(er)ness. This requires, above all, taking into consideration texts that are not necessarily even considered “literature” by conventional, nation-centered literary culture. From the perspective of placed criticism, Kyriakidis was right to engage in critical interpretation of the “folk’s” own representations of nature in their song texts, but wrong to view “nature,” “the folk,” and the “nation” as ontological givens or empirical entities. Thus, my own placed critical investigation of Crete would remain conspicuously insufficient if I were to continue in subsequent chapters to provide additional examples and analyses—beyond my reading of Kondylakis—of only national literary texts by Cretan-born authors or Cretan inhabitants. Places are not only constituted by, but constitutive of, national literary culture. Thus, it is imperative that I examine

---

88The term “nature-culture” comes from Latour (1993:7).

89It is probably impossible, or at least of little consequence, to engage in criticism that does not construct nature or culture at all. The point is that placed critics, indeed ecocritics in general, need to be reflexive about this fact in order to avoid the reductionism of romantic nationalist and some cultural studies approaches.

90This is the most important dimension, from a placed critical point of view, that is missing from Mazel’s (2000) treatment of nature and nation in the United States. While his analysis calls into question the “environment,” it does not explicitly problematize the other half of the “literature and environment” pair (that is, “literature”). Still, in taking an issue-centered approach (e.g. he
how place—how local literature—is not only appropriated by, but also appropriates national literature as part of its own engagement with, and construction of, nature and culture. In light of the insights of this chapter on national culture, therefore, I am ready to continue in subsequent chapters to trace and link, at multiple scales (local, national, transnational), mutual socio-ecological constitutions of literary culture and place.

_________________________

considers in detail the construction of national parks), Mazel does consider implicitly many non-canonical, and arguably “non-literary,” texts nevertheless.
CHAPTER 4

THE NATURE OF REGIONAL CULTURE

If the last chapter aimed to illustrate the mutual constitution of national literary culture and the triad of nature-place-folk, this chapter turns to a somewhat analogous exploration from a place-based—namely a Cretan—perspective. Nation-centered constructions of Greek nature and folk culture, in addition to facilitating the project of modernization and nationalization, have also provided a discursive context for regionalists to construct their own versions of them. Folkist ideology not only facilitated the notion that modern Greek culture was rooted in nature, but also set an example for local/regional\(^{91}\) cultural constructions of nature and the folk as well. Invoked by regionalists, folkism even serves as a potential means of resistance to modernization. In this chapter, by asking how local culture participates in the construction of nature-place-folk, I aspire to construct a view of culture that is not exclusively, or even primarily, (trans)national in scale. I intend, that is, to begin tracing at regional and (trans)national scales the mutual socio-ecological constitution of culture and place.\(^{92}\)

Academic analyses of Greece taking into mutual consideration local and national culture are commonplace nowadays. Anthropologists like Michael Herzfeld (1985a), for instance, examine the role and effects of Greek nationalist ideology on the idioms of regional politics, while literary scholars like Dimitris Tziovas (1994) argue that certain developments in Greek national literature

\(^{91}\)I will employ the terms “local” and “regional” interchangeably to signify locales within the nation-state, recognizing that in other contexts they are usefully distinguished from one another.
can be explained in terms of the essential defeat of regional linguistic heterogeneity. Local cultures can appear both antithetical to national culture, and ready to rally in its support. Analogously, at the level of national-international relations, as the Greeks made their transition to the currency of the European Union, they also sent the message that they “are going to take their traditional naps between 4 and 8 and head for the taverna at 9 if the E.U. likes it or not, or if it costs them some growth or not” (Friedman 2001). If the present is any indication of the future, global markets and global concerns—including environmental degradation and the possible spread of certain diseases93—will continue to expand. Accordingly, as local and global discourses—including those of “the local” and of “globalization” themselves—become increasingly intertwined, scholars will need to pay further attention to the multiple and complex ways that the local interacts with national and transnational culture. It is impossible, as I argued in Chapter 2, to understand a particular place without considering its interrelationship to and interdependence on larger contexts (the nation, Europe, the marketplace), just as coming to terms with the larger contexts requires investigation of the places the constitute them.

In addition, as I emphasized at the end of the previous chapter, a socio-ecological analysis of place requires consideration of not merely the social, but also the ecological constitution of culture. Perhaps the most compelling manner in which scholars today can do so is by examining the interaction of the local and the larger-than-local in connection with practices directly connected to and implicated in environmental problems and ecological issues. Food production and consumption is one such practice. On the one hand, “cuisines” are in large measure regional phenomena (Mintz 1996:97, 104),94 just as food production still depends to a significant extent on

92The contents of this chapter are, except for some minor revisions, forthcoming as an article in the Journal of Modern Greek Studies (Ball 2003). I thank the journal and Johns Hopkins University press for allowing me to reproduce my argument here as part of the dissertation.

93Food-related illness is a large topic in itself. See Fischler (1999), for example, for an overview of the local and global cultural ramifications of the “mad cow” crisis.

94Mintz does not believe in national cuisines, but assigns priority to regional cuisines, foods of a place whose size is determined more by social than geographical considerations, although—and see

105
local environmental conditions. At the same time, though, the production and consumption of food is implicated in ever-expanding spheres of agricultural, scientific, regulatory, and other political, economic, and environmental realities. In this chapter, I will trace various interactions and modes of interplay between local and larger-than-local food culture to address issues related to nature, the folk, the environment, and human health. In particular, I will scrutinize the textualized interplay of Greek regional/folk and national identities in the context of such discourses as modern medicine, claims about the legitimacy of science, and environmentalism. My analysis seeks to provide insight into the role of “nature”—as medical science, agriculture, environment, and economy—in constituting local and (trans)national culture, just as my interrogation of cultural identities serves as a means for understanding how they are activated rhetorically within, and become constitutive of, discourses that affect human and planetary physical well-being. Also, by analyzing discourses regarding Cretan foodways, I implicitly continue providing the necessary socio-ecological context for my discussion in Chapter 6 of mandinadhes performed in the context of food.

Because Greece, and Crete in particular, is central to the internationally-publicized “Mediterranean diet,” the Greek case is ideally suited for bringing into focus multiple permutations of this dynamic interplay between identities and discourses of science and nature. The notion of the superior “Mediterranean diet” arose as part of what is known as the “Seven Countries Study,” a large-scale epidemiology project initiated by Ancel Keys, M.D. and his colleagues in the late 1950s. Test groups came from Greece, Italy, Yugoslavia (Serbia and Croatia), Japan, Finland, the Netherlands, and the United States, and “among the most important findings were that the Mediterranean groups had lower mortality rates from all causes together than the northern European and American groups” (Jenkins 1994:4). Researchers have attributed this largely to the

---

95 See also Ohnuki-Tierney’s (1999) study of Japanese food for an argument that the local and global are mutually constitutive processes.

96 See also Ohnuki-Tierney’s (1999) study of Japanese food for an argument that the local and global are mutually constitutive processes.
so-called **traditional** Mediterranean diet, especially to the regular consumption of olive oil, wine in moderation, and limited amounts of red meat. The Greek subjects in this medical research were from Crete. In fact, “The Traditional Healthy Mediterranean Diet Pyramid” jointly issued by the Harvard School of Public Health and the Oldways Preservation and Exchange Trust and later adopted by the World Health Organization (Regional Office for Europe), makes the following explicit statement: “Apparently, for an active person with no weight problem a traditional Mediterranean diet as represented by Crete is compatible with excellent health” (quoted in Jenkins 1994:485). Although the initial medical focus of these studies was on the role of olive oil’s unsaturated fats in lowering the risk of heart disease, it has since expanded to highlight other foodstuffs such as grains, fruits, and wild and cultivated greens.  

To look at the issues I have outlined, I will concentrate on the most fascinating collection of texts about Cretan and Greek food I have ever encountered: cookbooks. The medical community’s praise of the Mediterranean diet has apparently contributed to a surge in the publication of cookbooks in Greece and in the United States dealing with the foodways of Crete; never before has such a rich selection of Greek culinary texts been available to scholars interested in local food. To some, recipe collections might hardly seem fit for critical scrutiny. Indeed, scholars of modern Greek culture have been reluctant to explore any form of print culture that is not “literary” (Ball 2002). In spite of their interest in such disparate cultural activities as folk dance, shadow-puppet theater, carnival, firewalking, food, popular song, and oral poetry, critics have not directed much attention to such widespread publications as regional literary works, magazines, posters, advertisements, or even cookbooks. Yet, printed items like these regularly circulate.

---

96In order to prevent confusion, I should note that an interrogation of the discourse of science itself is beyond the scope of my analysis. I am concerned here with interrogating particular appropriations and consequences of scientific discourses.

97See Helsing (1999:115-116) for the story about how the Europeans after 1962, unlike the Americans, actually ignored this study, with the World Health Organization renouncing the link between diet and chronic diseases altogether, until succumbing to the pressure of consumer resistance groups in the 1980s. See Simopoulos and Robinson (1998) for a summary of research on omega-3 fatty acids in relation to Greece.
widely, are often consumed vehemently, and even become the location of cultural debates. In Greece, print culture is especially important, for example, at the regional level where printers and publishers constantly produce items of significant local interest. Such texts can turn out to be excellent resources for interrogating “local” cultural processes, like “local” food, that are always larger-than-local to begin with. In analyzing cookbooks, moreover, I am able to provide a broader sense of the Cretan print-culture context in which the published mandinadhes I discuss in Chapter 6 (and in Ball 2002) circulate. Turning to cookbooks for now, then, I will resume my focus on Greek and Cretan literary texts in the next chapter.

It is well established among folklorists and anthropologists that cookbooks can provide access to local culture. Angus Gillespie’s (1984) early article, for example, illustrates how the inhabitants of the Pine Barrens of New Jersey purposefully express a strong sense of regional distinctiveness and local patriotism through their foodways. Furthermore, he describes how, feeling threatened by urbanization, these rural inhabitants wrote cookbooks in support of the region’s more traditional aesthetic and value system (164). Cookbooks can also provide insight into the relationship between local and national culture. Arjun Appadurai’s (1988) article on the role of cookbooks in the construction of a national cuisine in contemporary India remains a prominent example. Appadurai takes his cue from Jack Goody’s (1982) comparative study on the emergence of high/low cuisines, where it was argued that most high cuisines have drawn on local [Goody: peasant] cuisines, while simultaneously seeking to distance themselves from them (China and Italy being the exceptions where the regional cuisines are the high cuisines). He demonstrates the emergence of a national cuisine that once again draws on regional/ethnic cuisines but that does not try to distance itself from them (5). By focusing on the interplay of regional specialization and national standardization he is able to propose a model for the emergence of a national cuisine in postindustrial, postcolonial societies in general.99

98David E. Sutton’s (2001) recent work of food and memory in Greece does include a discussion of “US nostalgia cookbooks,” but not of Greek cookbooks.
In what follows, I will survey, contextualize, and critique cookbooks about Greek food, especially those pertaining to Crete, from the perspective of interrelated social and ecological issues. My critique, therefore, is a place-based example of what Michael Bennett (2001) calls “social ecocriticism,” (46) ecologically-sensitive criticism that takes seriously the notion that “local cultural practices are intimately related with economic and political conditions of global proportions” (44). I will begin by examining several early modern Greek cookbooks, including those by the Greek culinary modernizer par excellence Nikos Tselementes (1878-1958). This provides the necessary context for a more detailed analysis of recent works by Cretan authors like Nikos and Maria Psilakis, Myrsini Lambraki, and Manolis Doulgerakis. The authors’ treatment of Cretan foodways, I will argue, draws on and contributes to the Greek romantic nationalist ideologies of folkism and aestheticism, in addition to the international discourses of medical science and environmentalism, and may have important cultural and political consequences for the island. I will then expand my treatment of the larger-than-local context to include a selection of recent American cookbooks on Greek cooking, locating several of their intersections with the Greek works. I will argue that while they draw on similar scientific and ethnographic data, and all of them partially support an antimodern culinary ethos, the Greek and American texts are in many ways at odds with each other, especially in their readings of science and their conception of a national cuisine. This will bring into even sharper focus several of the contests over local, national, and international identities and discourses, as well as the possible implications for food and agricultural practices.

EARLY MODERN GREEK COOKBOOKS

The publicity given the Mediterranean diet is without a doubt the most conspicuous and immediate motivation and pretext for the publication of many Cretan cookbooks, but a more thorough understanding of them requires their further contextualization. Accordingly, I will

---

See also Bower’s (1997) collection for several community-centered studies focused on the “community cookbook” genre.
prepare the ground for my readings of them by surveying several earlier cookbooks published in Greece. My intention is not to present a teleological history of Greek cookbooks, but a selective genealogy that relates them to a variety of discourses, especially that of modernization.

One of the first things that must be considered is the notion of actually publishing cookbooks for the general Greek public. Susie Jacobs (1991) was almost right in her assessment of Nikos Tselementes’s landmark publication *Cooking Guide* when she wrote:

> Until the first publication of this “Cooking Guide” in 1920, there were no published cookbooks in Greece. If women were literate, they recorded their recipes in notebooks that became heirlooms. Otherwise, they passed their culinary knowledge directly to their daughters by demonstrating and telling their methods and recipes. (Jacobs 1991:144)

In fact, though, a book on “geononics” containing information about medicine, dietics, and agronomics by a monk in Crete named Agapios (1979) in the early 17th century was reprinted and circulated in Greece up until the nineteenth century. Much like the contemporary Cretan authors I will discuss below, Agapios justifies his project in the prologue by making appeals to nutrition and health:

> [...] καύματε ὅσα λέγει [τὸ Βιβλίον τοῦτο], ἥγουν φυλάγασθε απὸ τα βλαβέρα, καὶ τρώγατε τὰ ὄφελμα, καὶ ἀναγκαίατερα, διὰ νὰ ζήσετε εἰς τοῦτον τὸν Κόσμον χρόνους πολλοὺς γυνεῖς τε, καὶ ἄνοσοι, καὶ εἰς τὸν μέλλοντα (εάν φυλάξῃς τὰς σωτηρίους Ἐντολὰς τοῦ Κυρίου) νὰ κληρονομησῇς τὴν Βασιλείαν αὐτοῦ τὴν Οὐράνιον, νὰ ζήτῃ ἀβάτατα χαίροντες αἰωνίως, καὶ εὐφραίνομενοι.

Follow what is written in my book in order to protect yourself from the harmful, and eat the most beneficial and necessary things in order to live many years in this World in health, and without illness, and in order in the future (assuming you follow the Commandments of the Lord) to inherit His Heavenly Kingdom, and to live in eternal joy. (Agapios 1979:prologue)

---


101 Greek *women*, that is. The topic of Greek cookbooks, many of which were written by Greek men for use by Greek women needs to be examined by scholars of literacy and feminism.

He supports this with examples of animals that “instinctively” recognize various herbal remedies, including deer and Cretan wild goats that tend to their wounds with the Cretan mint known as dittany. Then he argues that humans, “the civilians and uneducated, who almost behave worse than beasts,” are comparatively ignorant of what is good for them. He also expresses the cosmopolitan spirit of his work by informing us that he collected his information from “erudite and learned people from various countries” and “Italian Books and Greek Philosophers,” and that he intends it for the benefit of all, “clergy and laymen alike” (Agapios 1979:prologue). Agapios includes medicinal information about individual food plants, and sometimes describes how to identify and forage for wild plants like chicory (74). Absent from subsequent modernizing cookbooks, such descriptions have once again become commonplace in works focusing on “traditional” food in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Myrsini Lambraki (2000) even quotes such passages from Agapios in her recent cookbook on edible wild greens as part of the diachronic context of Greek knowledge about individual plants that she provides her readers. In short, Agapios, writing before the Ottoman conquest of Venetian Crete, draws freely on larger-than-local botanical, culinary, and medicinal information, also treats strictly local plants (like Cretan dittany), and does so without explicitly framing discussions in terms of a particular local or larger-than-local identity. His work suggests, therefore, that it was not necessary to justify his advice to his audience in terms of such identities (unlike that of many subsequent authors I will treat below).

In the wake of the modern Greek Enlightenment, with literate segments of the population looking more fervently to Western cultural attitudes and practices than before, the quest to modernize Greece—including its foodways—begins. Once again, this is discernible in the pages of cookbooks. The anonymous translation of an Italian cookbook, Cooking: Translated from Italian [Η Μαγειρική, Μεταφρασθείσα εκ του Ιταλικού], appears to be the first modern cookbook published in Greece (in Syra in 1828). It preceded Tselementes’s famous work by almost a hundred

---

103Compare, though, with my discussion of Potamianos below.
years but remained almost entirely ignored (Matthaiou 1992:v). It does not purport to represent Italian cooking per se, but rather to be an international collection of the most well known Western dishes from all over Europe, primarily meat-based main courses that utilize butter, not olive oil. The author justifies his efforts in a short prologue, and, like Agapios, appeals to the importance of proper nutrition for good health. Questioning the widely accepted view of his time that esteemed the “monotonous” rural diet, he argues that consuming many different foods may not be unhealthy if they are prepared in a healthful manner (Matthaiou 1992:3). This modernizing work, aspiring to modify or overturn Greek rural culinary practices and attitudes with Western ones, and suggesting the need for women to learn “home economics,” was not well-received in its time. As Anna Matthaiou informs us, even as late as the end of the 19th century, such works were thought to contribute to the corruption of the Greek nation (ethnos) (Matthaiou 1992:viii).104 Though it never caught on, it is nonetheless indicative of the processes of modernization that had begun to affect urban centers as early as the 18th century, and that began to transform gastronomy into a matter of prestige and a means for social advancement (Matthaiou 1992: x). In this sense, it resonated with the project of modernizers eager to learn from urban Europe. At the same time, though, it clashed with the accepted wisdom of rural and indigenous culinary practices, as well as the view that such indigenous practices were integral to Greek identity.

Nikolaos Tselementes’s Cooking Guide (1970 [1920]) is without a doubt the first successful modernizing cookbook published in Greece, still evident from the fact that many Greeks “Tselementes” literally means “cookbook” (Jacobs 1991:144). Initially published in 1920, it continued to be expanded and reprinted throughout most of the twentieth century. Tselementes goes to great lengths to provide readers with the most up-to-date information about food preparation that modern Western culinary and nutrition sciences can offer, as well as with modern Western directives about proper practice and behavior. Just a glance at his cookbooks reveals many

104See Bakalaki (1994) on debates over women’s education. Participants in these debates “almost invariably supported their views and recommendations, and legitimated them, by referring to ‘European’ examples. […] The questions of [women’s education’s] form and content were pressing
similarities with those of other modern nations: charts that systematize nutrition data and the measurement of ingredients, weekly menus, descriptions of how to serve wine “properly,” and detailed guides to etiquette. He even adds a defense of canned foods [κονσέρβες], chastising most Greeks for their negative reception of them as “a way for the Americans to send their products to different countries,” thereby impeding them from understanding their “beneficial impact and usefulness” (Tselementes 1970:xxxviii).

Written in accordance with the modern science of nutrition and emphasizing as it did rationalization, systematization and codification, Tselementes’s work is a continuation and expansion of the modernizing and urbanizing project of the earlier anonymous cookbook. Unlike his predecessor, though, Tselementes takes into careful consideration the issue of Greek national identity. He is just as preoccupied with what is Greek as with what is European. In addition to including recipes taken or adapted from European cuisine, Tselementes takes traditional Greek foods and adapts them in accordance with modern Western culinary practices and ideology. In such age-old dishes as chickpea soup and greens pies [χορτάπιτες] he employs standardized measurements, often suggests using butter as opposed to olive oil,105 and encourages the use of industrially canned ingredients like tomato sauce, beer, and powdered eggs.

More explicitly, Tselementes addresses at length anxieties his readers might have about Greek ways being spoiled by foreign influence, Eastern and Western. He includes in the text an essay on “The History of Greek Cooking” that seeks to put to rest any questions about the authenticity of his version of modern Greek cuisine. He accomplishes this through an interpretation of European culinary history, which both problematizes any simple definition of “Greek cooking,” and simultaneously puts Greece at the center of that history. According to Tselementes, the art of cooking [η μαγείρική τέχνη] first appeared in the world during the golden age of Greece and from ones because they constituted an aspect of the desire to move Greek society as a whole in the direction of westernization” (78).

105In fact, in earlier editions, he used to include a “technical study” of “Butters and Olive Oils,” in which he sung the praises of good quality butters and margarine, and accused the majority of Greek
Greece spread to the rest of Europe. Progress in the art was halted by the “invasion of the barbaric peoples of the North into lower Europe” (xliv), causing cooks to retreat to the monasteries until the Renaissance when all the arts were resuscitated. It was then that the renowned tradition of French cooking began, a tradition founded on Greek cooking. Therefore, Tselementes argues, any attempts to modernize Greek cuisine should not be interpreted as the importation of foreign culinary practices. Western cooking is Greek cooking:

Moreover, he says, the modernization of Greek food serves to “purify” it of its ostensible Turkish connection, an issue that preoccupied him at length:

Moreover, he says, the modernization of Greek food serves to “purify” it of its ostensible Turkish connection, an issue that preoccupied him at length:
Συνεπώς η να αναφέρη[1] κανέες μίαν ονομασίαν ενός φαγητού καθαρώς Ελληνικής μαγειρικής, είναι δύσκολο, διότι θα παρουσιάζεται υπό την μάσκαν της εσφαλμένης λεγομένης τουρκικής ή ανατολικής μαγειρικής. […] Το πλήθος των τόσον άλλων εδεσμάτων, τα οποία παρουσιάζονται σήμερα ως τουρκικής ή ανατολικής μαγειρικής, δεν είναι άλλα παρά προϊόντα της Ελληνικής μαγειρικής και τα οποία χρειάζονται μόνο να επανακτήσουν την αρχική τους Ελληνική ονομασία, αλλά και μίαν επεξεργασίαν από μαγείρους ανατολικών μορφώσεως δια να απαλλαγούν τα φαγητά αυτά από την επίδρασιν και φθοράν που έχουν υποστή από τα γούστα ή προτιμήσεις των διαφόρων Ανατολικών λαών […]

It is difficult to come up with the name of a food of purely Greek cuisine because it will appear under the mask of what is mistakenly called Turkish of Eastern cuisine. […] Most of today’s meals that appear to be examples of Turkish or Eastern cooking are nothing other than the products of Greek cooking, and simply need to recover their original Greek name, as well as to be reworked by cooks of the highest learning to remove from them the influence and corruption of the tastes and preferences of various Eastern peoples. (Tselementes 1970: xlv)

Tselementes’s early contribution paved the way for subsequent modern cookbooks in Greece (The cookbooks by Skoura 1957; Paradeisi 1958; Alexiou 1961; Alexiadou 1995 [1980] are some of the most well-known). He and his followers generally left behind such “rural” topics as agriculture and foraging, and paid scant attention to regional variations in ingredients or dishes.

Tselementes constructs nature in at least two ways, then. First, he constructs it in accordance with the modern physical sciences, as an entity that can be studied empirically and objectively, explained, and systematized. Second, as a romantic nationalist like Kyriakidis or Dimaras, he constructs it as a transcendent nation-centered force guiding the organic development of national culinary culture.

that after the fall of Constantinople Greek cooks were forced to refer to their dishes in the Turkish language; that is why they are thought of as preparations of Turkish culinary art. (Tselementes 1959:8)

and in the cookbooks of others:

With the aid of the friendly Zoodopoulos of the Tourist Ministry, I sought out Kyrios Tselementes. This native of the island of Siphnos was famous throughout Greece, not only as a distinguished chef but as the author of the best modern cookbook published in the Balkans. His first words to me, after the preliminaries of politeness, were about the strange idea abroad that there is no such thing as a Greek national cuisine. Most people seem to think, he went on, that all so-called native Greek dishes are of Turkish origin. [examples] These dishes considered as Turkish, said Kyrios Tselementes, were really the fruit of the Cuisine Grec. They had been vulgarized, drowned in grease—no pun—and outrageously seasoned. They thus appeared on the menus of Turkish and Armenian restaurants throughout the world and were therefore considered to be Turkish dishes. (Macdougall 1942:V)
Like most who have constructed an urban national cuisine (Goody 1982; Appadurai 1984), the Greek modernizers succeeded in doing so by ignoring local particularities within the nation: They helped make it possible to identify particular foods, like mousaka, with the entire nation. The success of Tselementes’s project was facilitated by his meticulous and comprehensive treatment of cooking, but no doubt also by the careful attention he paid to issues of national identity in relation to Western and Eastern cultures. Cultural, economic, technological and political modernization in Greece were intertwined, but it was cultural modernization that largely paved the way (Jusdanis 2001:111). No doubt, then, by focusing on issues of cultural identity in texts about the culture of food, Tselementes’s project resonated with the broadest intentions and developments of the modernization of Greece.

CRETAN COOKBOOKS

Modern national cookbooks have continued to retain their space on the bookshelves of more than a few Greek households. Just the same, in the 1980s a whole new wave of Greek cookbooks began to take the notion of national cuisine into new directions. Focusing even more intensely than did Tselementes on modern Greek food as Greek, these often include such phrases as “traditional Greek food” or “authentic Greek recipes” in their titles. Moreover, consonant with the folkist view that authentic traditional Greece resides in the regions, this period has given rise to many cookbooks that emphasize regional variations within traditional Greek national cuisine as a whole pointing out that “every corner of Greece, from north to south and from east to west, has a unique surprise of its own” (Souli 1989:5; see also Lykeio Ellinidon 1991). In this respect, they differ from the modernizing cookbooks that sought to present a coherent national cuisine that took no account of regional variations. Since that time, and especially since the 1990s, a seemingly countless number of cookbooks have been published—often by local publishers—which deal exclusively with
one regional cuisine. The proliferation of cookbooks by Cretan authors, then, should be seen in the context of this resurgence of interest in traditional and regional Greek cuisines and not only as a response to modern medicine’s approval of the traditional Cretan diet.

Maria and Nikos Psilakis’s best-selling *Cretan Traditional Cuisine* (1997 [1995]), published in Irakleio, Crete, remains the most significant Cretan cookbook, with new expanded editions continuing to be published. Like all the texts I have examined so far, it begins with a series of prologues arguing that changes in everyday culinary practices and consciousness are imperative for health reasons. In contrast to the modernizers, however, the authors here believe modernization is to blame for many current health problems. In the book’s first preface, Nikos Skoulas discusses a paradox. He argues that Western Europeans and Americans have been working hard to preserve their own traditional cuisines, whereas Greeks do just the opposite:

I became convinced that we in Greece are tending to abandon our nutritional habits which go back centuries. Bowing to the rage of homogenization and fast food imposed upon us by the fast pace of modern life and imported habits, we, the nation which authenticated “living well” and harmony, are giving in like crazy to processed and pre-manufactured foods, all for the sake of easy profit. (Psilakis 1997:7)

This is an ironic scenario, he continues, since it is happening at the same time urban Europeans and Americans are turning toward Mediterranean flavors and cuisine. Skoulas proposes an explanation—though he admits it is probably a partial one—for how Cretans have arrived at this paradoxical historical moment: It is the result of “the almost complete lack of knowledge among modern Greeks about our rich gastronomic heritage” (Psilakis

108There have also been cookbooks focusing strictly on a particular ethnic group, like Stravroulakis (1986) on the Greek Jews.
He illustrates this ignorance further by echoing Tselementes’s arguments about French and Turkish cuisine:

The inconceivable becomes infuriating when the savory creations of Atheneus’s deipnosophists that were passed by the Byzantines into the food of the nomadic people of the Ottoman Empire, thereby helping it acquire flavor, appear today in our vocabulary as Eastern delights with Turkish names. […] We just as readily consider the sweet and sweet-and-sour sauces that predominated in Ancient Greece and Byzantium as inventions of French high cuisine. (Psilakis 1997: 7)

The problem is no longer simply ignorance of correct nutrition, but ignorance of national culinary “history,” conceived of as heritage. Skoulas’s diagnosis of the problem immediately suggests a possible solution: educate the public about its “unbroken historical continuity from classical Greece of the 4th Century BCE, through the Hellenistic period, Byzantium, and up until the grandmother in Crete, in Smyrna, in Epirus, in Macedonia, and in Thrace” (Psilakis 1997:7). Like Tselementes, Skoulas would like to see Greek cuisine purified and preserved, but in contrast to him, contends that it is found in its most authentic form at the hands of regional grandmothers, not of expert chefs.

Such remarks make a fitting prologue for a cookbook that employs a variety of rhetorical strategies to represent Cretan cultural continuity, drawing on the techniques of early Greek nationalist folklorists working to establish and maintain the modern Greeks’ position as “quintessential Europeans” (Herzfeld 1986:13). As I have discussed, the folklorists, working according to the assumption that there had always existed an identifiable, organic, quintessential, Greek tradition, would study the Greek folk’s past and identify those elements linking classical Greece, through Byzantium, to the modern Greek nation-state. Moreover, by assuming a cultural continuity that denied the possibility of evasive complexity or discontinuities, folklorists had “an organizing principle for the collection, classification, and ranking of all ethnographic items” (Herzfeld 1986:10). This is exactly the principle that has guided Maria and Nikos Psilakis in
organizing their cookbook’s historical narratives. Each section of recipes begins with “background” discussions providing the opportunity for affirming Cretan cultural identity and historical continuity. These generally begin with references to Minoan Crete and ancient Greek civilization, continue on through Byzantium and the period of Venetian rule (1204-1669), only touch briefly on the period of Ottoman rule (1669-1898), and end with discussions of the modern period up until the present. Some examples are in order.

Claims of regional cultural continuity are implied, for instance, by photographic material. The authors’ inclusion of three very similar illustrations of a farmer with his plow and oxen within the space of just a few pages—an eleventh century painting depicting a Byzantine farmer, a black-and-white photograph of a the twentieth century farmer, and the reproduction of a postcard from 1900 showing a farmer in his traditional Cretan costume—connotes the continuity of traditional food production during the last thousand years. Even more of the book’s illustrations emphasize Cretan tradition during the last century or so. The authors include some fourteen “folkloric” photographs depicting Cretan men and women from the early twentieth century dressed in traditional Cretan garb. Often these pictures have nothing to do with cuisine, and seem to be included simply as a reminder of more authentic—that is, less modernized/Westernized—Cretan life in the not too distant past. They also have many folkloric photographs portraying contemporary but rural scenes (shepherds, fishermen, farmers, etc.). In the numerous photographs of actual foods, dishes are often displayed with other folkloric items of material culture, like handmade clay plates and utensils, traditional Cretan weavings, and hand-crafted Cretan baskets. The cookbook’s numerous illustrations, reflecting the rhetoric of the text, signify regional cultural continuity and authenticity.\(^{109}\)

Strategic quotations of Cretan literary and folkloric texts also support the authors’ representation of regional cultural continuity. For example, they state that Crete’s famous

\(^{109}\)Roland Barthes (1977), in his essay, “The Rhetoric of the Image,” provides semiotic tools for understanding how images of food can connote cultural authenticity. See also Barthes (1979) for further discussion of food’s ability to signify national cultural continuity.
mountain snails occupy a special place in today’s most popular form of traditional Cretan poetry (mandinadhes), and quote several examples. Since the mandinadha has roots that can be traced back at least as far as medieval times, and is very similar in form, style, and language with the literature of the Cretan Renaissance, references to it recall not only contemporary tradition, but earlier periods as well.

Maria and Nikos Psilakis are careful to treat periods of non-Greek rule consonant with the norms of nationalist history. The Venetian period, for example, much like the Minoan, occupies a relatively unique position in the perception of cultural continuity in Crete. Crete was one of the few areas of Greece to fall under Venetian rule, a presence that was not welcome by many Cretan Greeks of the period. Nevertheless, today’s popular perception of the Venetian period of Cretan history is rather positive,110 no doubt in part because of the flowering of Cretan vernacular literature during the Cretan Renaissance. Maria and Nikos Psilakis include numerous excerpts from the works of Cretan Renaissance literature scattered throughout the text that give readers information about the foodways of the time. The emphasis is not on Venetian influence, however, but on the continuity of Cretan foodways:

The names of various kinds of preserved meat which come up in medieval texts are not unknown to today’s inhabitants of Crete, especially in agricultural areas. They have been preserved in such an amazing way, proving that the gastronomic tradition of a place can survive, even when that place undergoes successive conquests. (Psilakis 1997:30)

When the authors do mention Venetian influence, they downplay its significance:

Πολλές από τις ονομασίες υποδηλώνουν επιρροή της κρητικής κουζίνας από την ενετική, μια και οι Ενετοί κατείχαν την Κρήτη από το 1211 ως το 1669. Ακόμη κι αν

110Herzfeld (1991), in the context of his treatment of Cretan architecture, has made similar observations, arguing that “the rehabilitation of the Venetians thus fits the rhetoric of modern Greek nationalism. It also, not just coincidentally, fits the present political and economic absorption of Greece into the European Community” (57).
The authors associate the Ottoman period, still popularly viewed as a period of great oppression and of cultural stagnation, with the Cretans’ love of freedom, struggle for independence, and acts of undaunted heroism under the most brutal of circumstances (e.g. p. 116). They acknowledge no Ottoman influence on the development of Cretan cuisine whatsoever:

Cretan cuisine does not appear to have been influenced at all during the following centuries by Turkish cuisine [...] Historical circumstances contributed to the preservation of the Doric simplicity of Cretan cuisine as well as the survival of many habits which had become consolidated during the immediately preceding centuries. (Psilakis 1997:36)

Reflecting the prestige generally accorded Minoan Crete in Greek, and especially Cretan, history, the authors refer to this ancient period in a positive light:111

It should be noted that, while food and agricultural historians have traced the continuity of certain practices in Greece—like the use of wheat and barley—back even earlier than the Minoan period (see, for example, Zohary and Hopf 2000), this is not treated by the authors. This reflects the organization of nationalist histories of Crete (e.g. Detorakis 1994) which usually start with the non-Greek Minoans whose “civilisation is surely the greatest achievement of Crete, and the most important of the bronze age cultures within the Greek world as a whole” (Detorakis 1994:4).

111It should be noted that, while food and agricultural historians have traced the continuity of certain practices in Greece—like the use of wheat and barley—back even earlier than the Minoan period (see, for example, Zohary and Hopf 2000), this is not treated by the authors. This reflects the organization of nationalist histories of Crete (e.g. Detorakis 1994) which usually start with the non-Greek Minoans whose “civilisation is surely the greatest achievement of Crete, and the most important of the bronze age cultures within the Greek world as a whole” (Detorakis 1994:4).
Even in older times, the sweets of Crete were based on exactly the same principles, as researchers of that period support. The sweets of the Minoans were brushed with plenty of honey, sesame, and saffron [...]. (Psilakis 1997:269)

Cretan flora, so rich in variety, always made it possible to have inexpensive foodstuffs in the Cretan household. Minoan frescos clearly show the particular relationship which these old Cretans had with nature and her crops, since they depict many plants which play a very important role in everyday life and worship [...] The Cretan sacred trees transmit throughout the centuries amazing testimony about the relationship between the Cretan-Minoan and nature. And it is not at all by accident that dozens of such holy trees, which play a role in folk worship, still exist today in Crete. (Psilakis 1997:170)

A sense of continuity with the Cretans’ oldest cultural ancestors is established through shared foods, shared ideas about food (“same principles”), and food-related customs which have apparently been passed down through the years (“characteristic customs”). The authors join the modern Cretan with the ancient Minoan inhabitant of the island by means of a shared reverence for the land, a human-land relationship described as a continuous cultural transmission. Also, they use the word “Cretan” throughout the book to signify both Greek Cretans and the racially distinct Minoan Cretans, but never the island’s Venetian or Ottoman inhabitants who are popularly regarded as invaders.

The argument of cultural continuity dating back to Minoan Crete suggests implicitly that the Cretan tradition is the superlative example of Greek tradition, insofar as it appears as the oldest indigenous tradition. Explicit appeals to modern medicine’s esteem for Cretan diet comprise a second strategy for demonstrating regional superiority. Other strategies are employed as well, but here I will refer to a particularly colorful example from a promotional booklet about Cretan wine, Cretan Wine: The Nectar of the Gods for 5,000 Years [Οίνος Κρητικός: 5,000 χρόνια το νέκταρ των θεών] by Manolis Doulgerakis (1997), whose rhetorical strategies largely parallel those of Maria and Nikos Psilakis.
The example I have in mind is a clever assertion of Cretan uniqueness. It is well known that in antiquity, Greeks would often dilute their wine with water before drinking it. Indeed, it was this practice which led to the replacement of the ancient word for wine, οίνος [οίνος], with the word κρασί [κρασί], which is derived from the word κράσις [κράσις], meaning “mixing” or “blending.” After citing an ancient Greek text that mentions how in Crete men would drink their wine without diluting it with water, Doulgerakis states, “And the tradition remained intact… Cretans, unlike other Greeks, refuse now and have refused for many centuries, to put water in their wine” (Doulgerakis 1997:2, author’s emphasis). The full impact of this statement comes from its allusion to the very common idiomatic expression for “compromising”: “I put water in my wine” [βάζω νερό στο κρασί μου]. The author’s literal statement of fact claiming the uniqueness of the Cretan drinking tradition thus signifies something else as well: [Authentic] Cretans are even more uncompromising than other Greeks, and, consequently, have been better equipped to resist the inroads of modernization and preserve their culinary tradition.112

As all these examples illustrate, the authors have drawn upon the techniques of Greek nationalist folklore, but have done so in order to represent regional cultural continuity. They are not so much preoccupied with demonstrating the continuity of Cretan tradition as Greek so much as foregrounding the continuity of Cretan tradition as Cretan using nationalist arguments on a regional scale. Actually, this is not something new. As I discussed in the previous chapter, the “local” has always been enmeshed in Greek folklorists’ notions of cultural continuity. Kyriakidou-Nestoros (1977:44) has argued that place was the basic unit of early folklore research in Greece until a more directly nation-centered perspective focusing on Greek antiquity gradually displaced it. Even then, the importance of the local never entirely vanished. In fact, by viewing regional loyalties as a matter of concentric loyalties, Michael Herzfeld (1986:21-23, 69-74) has shown that folklorists exploring their own region actually contributed to the demonstration of the continuity of national culture and its quintessential Europeanness:

112Compare this discussion with Gefou-Madianou’s (1999:425-428) treatment of Messogites’ re-appropriation of retsina as “authentic Greek” in counter-hegemonic discourse vis-a-vis Athens.
[L]ocalist rivalries are also evidence of a wider, transcendent unity. The folklores of various regions are set in competition with each other to determine which of them best approximates pure Hellenism. Local scholars seek evidence [...] that their respective regions [...] have preserved the ancient customs and values better than any other. (Herzfeld 1986:23)

Indeed, the general presumption of Maria and Nikos Psilakis’s and Doulgerakis’s work appears to be that Crete is the quintessential (oldest, most uncompromising) example of Greekness, and by extension Europeanness, since they read French cuisine as built on ancient Greek cuisine.113

It is equally important to note, though, that localist preoccupations can also resist the national.114 Dimitris Tziovas (1994) addresses this tension in his discussion of regionalism in Greece, employing a Bakhtinian dialogical perspective to depict the urban, centralizing state and the rural region as two forces in a struggle against each another (Tziovas 1994:96). Indeed, I have already shown these oppositional forces at work in the struggle to modernize Greek cuisine in the anonymous Italian cookbook and that of Tselementes. Today, the tension between regional and national is of a different nature. As the monological importance of Greek antiquity seemingly wanes “in the educational system as well as through an increasingly diverse intellectual reappraisal of the received historiographic wisdom” (Herzfeld 1997:98), local Greek folklores are no longer consistently treated as “multiple refractions” of a homogeneous nation. In Herzfeld’s (1997) words, there is a “well-concealed but ever-present lability of Greek political entities. Today’s localism could become tomorrow’s separatism” (87). By constructing the image of a complex, age-old uniquely Cretan foodways tradition, the authors might be doing more than complicating the construction of an apparently homogeneous national Greek cuisine as put forth by the likes of Tselementes: They might also be insinuating to their fellow Cretans that the time has come for them to take their island’s agricultural and culinary future more enthusiastically into their own hands.

113This is also confirmed by the subtitle (on the title page, not the cover) of the English translation of Psilakis: “Cretan Cooking: The most delicious and wholesome cooking in Greece” (Psilakis 1995:3).
This is not as inconceivable as it probably sounds. There is already evidence that the environmental crisis has increased the significance of de-centralized institutions and governments in Greece (Close 1999). Taking into consideration the importance of agriculture in Crete, and the importance of the environment to agriculture, it is not difficult to imagine cultural representations of Cretan food as Cretan coming into play in future Cretan struggles vis-a-vis both the Greek state and the European Union over the regulation of agriculture and/or food. Indeed, Gabriella Lazaridis (1995:120) argues that the top-down Common Agricultural Policy established by Europe has not succeeded in supplanting certain “rival” traditional institutions and practices in rural Crete. Furthermore, she attributes this at least partially to “the unwillingness of people to give up ‘traditional’ occupations and adapt to new forms of life” (108). With agriculture more important in Greece than any other Southern European nation (Lazaridis 1995:113), it is not improbable that regional cookbooks not only reflect but might also already be having an impact on developments in this sphere.

Generally speaking, then, by participating in the already well-established discourses of regional and national cultural continuity, as well as that of modern medicine, the authors attempt to make a particular combination of food items and practices more meaningful to their local Cretan readers, regardless of explicit political consequences. In addition, their discussions of food history and seasonal eating, together with the illustrations of plowing and other local “folk” who

---

114Thus, in more recent works, Herzfeld replaces the idea of “concentric loyalties” with a theory of “segmentation” that accounts for the shifting of loyalties (e.g. from the local to the national or European and vice versa) (Herzfeld 1987:156).

115See also Dove (1999) on local ideology’s effects on the development of agriculture.

116The environmental impetus for increasing local cultural and/or organizational self-governance becomes evident in many regionally produced texts lately. Consider, for example, the following postscript to an article on sustainable tourism circulated over the Internet by the Cretan magazine Stigmes:

To date, there are no specific national strategies or EU directives pertaining to sustainable tourism in Greece—and no management body to oversee current or proposed programs. Environmental and local groups have stressed the urgency of implementing an action plan—not to maintain annual visitor quotas, but to protect the island from rapid, irreparable damage. […] The underlying message is that Crete’s inhabitants, whether
contribute to the food supply, promote awareness of the connection between food and agriculture. In other words, the folkist approach not only constructs nature and folk culture as authentic—though local—entities, but also promotes food practices that run counter to the dominant trend of modern “industrial eating” (Berry 1998:56). Of course, just how romantic are the practices they propose is open to debate. Also, the book’s exclusion of illustrations or discussions of contemporary fossil-fueled agricultural equipment, the rampant use of pesticides and fertilizers, or reliance on low-paid migrant workers, hides from view widespread contemporary practices in much local food production, including those contributing to environmental degradation, and the fact that many seemingly traditional foods are actually made from ingredients imported from all over the world. Therefore, this cookbook could equally well be interpreted as romanticizing nature-human interrelationships—constructing nature and local/folk culture in organic harmony—or as arguing for environmental awareness.

In other recent cookbooks by Cretans, the focus on tradition even generates explicit assertions about regional inhabitants that are uncritical and romanticizing. Niki Goulardi, in the prologue of Myrsini Lambraki’s book on olive oil, writes that “[t]he future of the world, on a global scale, will remain indefinite and uncertain, if we do not draw on the powers of resistance from those stages of history when humankind lived in balance with nature and when the local natural environment met its needs” (Lambraki 1999:23). While there is something important to be understood here about humanity’s changing relationship to the environment throughout history, Goulandi grossly oversimplifies the issue by invoking an Eden-like age characterized by “balance,” an image that is not supported by contemporary ecology. In conjunction with the many photographs of rural inhabitants that usually fill their pages, these cookbooks promote the folkist

permanent or temporary, must play an active role in preserving her rich cultural history and natural beauty. [emphases mine] (Rose 2001)

117 Compare with my remarks about Gillespie (1984) on New Jersey at the beginning of this chapter.

118 Still, Lambraki’s (1999:201) remark that “Ecologically speaking, the olive tree protects against erosion during periods of heavy rain,” indicates explicitly a non-romantic, scientifically-oriented, preoccupation with the implications of traditional agriculture on the environment.
notion that native inhabitants are somehow automatically and ideally adapted to their environments. They participate in an ideology that Liisa Malkki calls the “ecological immobility of the native” (Malkki 1997: 59), reinventing an authentic bond among nature, folk, and place: “Tree-place-human, in a tight embrace, walk along together for more than 5,000 years, creating a highly aesthetic civilization: the civilization of the olive” (Lambraki 1999:33).

The reference to “aesthetic civilization” in the above quotation is revealing. Many Cretan-authored cookbooks appeal not only to folkloric cultural continuity but to the ideology of aesthetic nationalism as well.119 Consider the following passage from Myrsini Lambraki’s book on olive oil:

Ολιβανόλαδο είναι ο μάγικος χρυσαφένιος φυσικός γεμίζος που μας συνδέει με την παρελθόν της ίδιας της ύπαρξής μας, με τα ιερά σύμβολα του πολιτισμού μας, μας τρέφει και μας εκπομπεί αργά στην υπάρχουσα γέννηση. Την απλή, καθαρή, αφοπλιστικά λιτή και μαζική πλούσια γέννηση μας και μόνο σταγόνας ελαιόλαδου!

Olive oil is the magic golden natural juice which connects us to the past of our own existence, to the sacred symbols of our civilization, which nourishes us and slowly introduces us to the superlative flavor. The simple, pure, disarmingly frugal yet rich flavor of even a single drop of olive oil! (Lambraki 1999:21)

Descriptions of olive oil evoke idealistic images of clarity and the sun (golden), natural purity, simplicity, and combinations of frugality [λιτότητα] and richness. No doubt such characteristics contribute to the pleasures of eating, but these aesthetic ideals are often presented in conjunction with the notion of Greek cultural continuity, which at times is almost sacralized:

Στα καταστήματα αυτά, που με κάποια υπερβολή θα χαρακτηρίζαμε ως “ναιός” της ελληνικής κουζίνας και τις σπίτια σήμερα είναι λίγα στον αριθμό, τα λαδέρα φαγητά έχουν μια μοναδική ισορροπία: ευωδιές έξωσιμιά, τα υλικά διατηρούν όλες τις γεύσεις τους και το χρώμα τους, η λαδέρη σάλτσα είναι διαφάνης και φωτεινή με ένα ελαφρύ χρυσαφένιο χρώμα, η ντομάτα, το λεμόνι και τα μπαχαρικά χρησιμοποιούνται πάντα με μέτρο.

119Vassilis Lambropoulos (1987: 20-21) has pointed out ways in which the construction of Greek national identity has been relentlessly pursued according to aesthetic principles, appealing to such notions as organicism, purity, uniqueness, and eternality. He argues that identity-as-aesthetics renders politics invisible, and suggests a demythologizing project of sorts: “approach identity not as a metaphysical human need or an aesthetic requirement for unity but as a relative and flexible local political strategy” (Lambropoulos 1987: 24).
In those eating establishments, that with some hyperbole we might characterize as “temples” of Greek cuisine and which today are few in number, the olive-oil foods [τα λαδέρα] have a unique balance: they are incredibly fragrant, the ingredients maintain all of their own flavors and colors, the oily sauce is transparent and luminous with a light golden color, with tomato, lemon, and seasonings used always in moderation. (Lambraki 1999:127)

In the “temples” of Greek cuisine, one experiences harmony, moderation, simplicity, color, clarity, and light. All of this brings to mind the modern Greek aesthetic discourse initiated by aesthetic nationalist theorists like Pericles Yannopoulos, and adopted by the writers of the Generation of the Thirties, that I discussed in the previous chapter. Many of the qualities of the Greek landscape which Yannopoulos and his followers harnessed appear in recent cookbooks in descriptions of such things as “ash-pale fluttering of olive tree foliage, the god-sculpted trunks of age old trees” and their “minuscule white blossoms” (Lambraki 1999:201). “The olive is a beautiful tree, sometimes austere, robust, at other times playful and spare” (Lambraki 1999:201). Niki Goulandri makes the connection between aesthetics and landscape even more explicit when she writes, “The olive is the form of Mediterranean nature most strongly tied to the land, representative of the power of its soil, in an aesthetic combination of rhythm, harmony, and time” (Lambraki 1999:23).

Passages like these are strikingly similar to texts written by those who—in the wake of Yannopoulos—developed what Dimitris Tziovas (1989: 77-79) calls an “aesthetics of nativeness.” This is food, an aesthetic experience able to engage all of the five senses—all five aestheses [αισθησίες]. However, there is a risk implicit in aestheticizing a cuisine in such a manner. What is at stake in a statement such as the following: “Pure traditional ingredients which come from local production, and authentic flavors combined with beautiful local customs and local culture are what characterize the traditional cooking of Crete” (Psilakis 1997:11). Are “pure traditional ingredients” those that merely agree with aesthetic criteria like “color” and “taste”? Or, for example, those that

120 The entire passage in Greek is as follows: Στα “μάτια” αλλά και στην ψυχή όλων εκείνων που μεγάλωσαν σε ελαιοπαραγωγικές περιοχές έχουν αποτυπωθεί τα μοναδικά σταχτόχλωμα [sic] παιχνιδύναμτα του φυλλάδιου της ελιάς, το γόνιμο “φαντάσμα” του ενός και μοναδικού καρπού, οι θεογύπτεις κορμοί των γέρικων δέντρων, τα μικροσκοπικά λευκά άνθη… Η ελιά είναι
have been grown without the use of synthetic pesticides and fertilizers? Are the “local customs”
cited “beautiful” merely because they are local and familiar, or for other reasons as well? Are
ingredients from “local production” still “authentic” when they are grown from genetically
engineered seeds? This is not to say that “authentic” Cretan food must be certified organic, but
that as long as the discussion remains in the domain of aesthetics, it is not even possible to consider
such issues. A more precise interrogation into and reassessment of specific context and political and
ecological meanings of such notions as “local authenticity” are necessary for this to become clear.
In short, these cookbook authors often engage in an aesthetic rhetoric that is ambiguous enough to
be interpreted both in romantic nationalist terms, as well as from the perspective of celebrating
“eating locally” in the sense of health-consciousness or environmentalism.

At this point, I have analyzed Cretan/Greek cookbooks on the Cretan diet in comparison
with several other cookbooks published in Greece, and have critiqued them in terms of a variety of
processes and discourses. Like their pre-modern and modernizing predecessors, they argue for
changes in food practice by appealing to the importance of nutrition for good health. Like
Tselementes, they frame their work in terms of an authentic Greek cultural identity and continuity,
but unlike him, they celebrate regional distinctions and distinctiveness, they do not embrace
wholeheartedly the products of modernity, and they are not so reticent when it comes to food’s
connection to agriculture. They construct nature as a regional location and force that may or may
not be contradict its construction as national. They also construct nature as “scientific” (i.e., in
accordance with the modern physical sciences) and sometimes even as “environment.” Furthermore,
in light of the changing relationship between “region” and “nation” in Greece, these texts arguably

121See, for example, Psilakis and Kastanas’s (1999:194) and Lambraki’s (1999:199-201) discussions
of organic olive oil.

122Compare with Hazucha’s (2002) assessment of Wordsworth: “[W]e should read his work not only
as an alarmist call for a more sustainable local ecology but an exercise in nationalistic rhetoric”
(71).
promote food practices, from agriculture to eating, that run counter to modern sensibilities, their romanticizing portrayal of the Greek landscape and its inhabitants notwithstanding. In order to further extend the larger-than-local context of these works, and to consider yet more ways in which they resist the processes of modernization, I will now turn to a selective examination of American cookbooks referring to the Cretan diet and cuisine.

AMERICAN CONNECTIONS: KNOWLEDGE, MARKET, ETHOS

Cookbooks on Greek cooking have a long history of publication in the United States, but it is only lately that these have begun to focus in any detail on such issues as the healthfulness of the Greek and Mediterranean diet, and not until the publication of Diane Kochilas’s (2001) recent cookbook that a serious engagement with Greece’s regional foodways—including the Cretan diet—started becoming a major concern. Even a cursory examination of such works suggests that they lie at the crossroads of several prominent concerns in contemporary American culture.123 Specifically regarding cookbooks on Greek and other ethnic foods in the United States, one of these is the ethnographic trend in which authors provide a great deal of description, more journalistic than academic, of cultural “others.”124 Another prominent concern, no different from that in Greece, is a sustained attempt to address health issues through diet. Both of these are evident, for

---

123 For example, with more people working outside the home long hours, and with cooking know-how arguably on the decline, cookbooks like these can be viewed as part of an attempt to inform certain segments of the public (presumably the book-buying, “health conscious” middle class) about “new” ways of cooking. More cynically, the proliferation of contemporary cookbooks might indicate a trend in which the anxiety generated by a consciousness of the decrease in actual home cooking and kitchen know-how is being dealt with through the experience of consuming books on the subject (buying them, putting them on the coffee table, and maybe consulting them once in a while). For example, Cooper (2000:74) observes, “Fewer people are cooking for themselves these days. In fact, National Restaurant Association Research shows that 50 percent of American food dollars are spent in food service establishments; one out of every four meals is eaten outside the home, and 19 percent of all meals are eaten in cars.” Considering how little home cooking gets done in America these days, it does seem that the cookbook sections of the major corporate bookstores are disproportionately large. In this sense, such cookbooks articulate the tension in consumer society between the desire for healthful and meaningful food practices, and the desire to go shopping for books instead of staying home to cook. See also McIntosh (1999), who argues that there is not yet enough data to determine the effects of globalization on the family meal.
example, in Paula Wolfert’s (1998) cookbook *Mediterranean Grains and Greens*, through her inclusion of “Two Turkish Folk Stories” as an introduction to the book’s first major section on greens:

During the reign of sultan Abdulhamid II (1876-1909), a doctor was appointed to a medical posting in Crete. The doctor took the assignment, but nobody turned up at his surgery claiming that he or she was sick. After a time the doctor sent a message to the palace in Istanbul: “Your Majesty, in Crete everybody is his own doctor. The people here eat only greens, herbs, and olive oil. As a result they don’t need me. Please assign me somewhere else.” (Wolfert 1998:2)

Since “oral transmission” remains a cornerstone in defining “folk-knowledge” in the popular imagination, Wolfert’s use of a “folk” story about the healthfulness of the diet of Crete is consonant with her own assessment of “authentic” Mediterranean food as that whose “knowledge is passed down through generations, mother to daughter to granddaughter” (xii). It also raises questions about how people know, or who is the authority regarding, what is healthful. Wolfert’s audience knows that modern medicine approves of the Mediterranean diet. This passage, however, suggests that such recent findings are old news for people in the Mediterranean. But her inclusion of this anecdote, one that does not apparently contradict state-of-the-art medical science, ends here. This is

---

124 This ethnographic focus on “others” should be distinguished from the Greek “folkloric” focus on the nation’s internal others that I discussed in Chapter 3.

125 Sutton (2001:143) points out an important paradox here: “what is nostalgically longed for—the oral community and all the embodied knowledge that comes with it—is being preserved through writing, and these cases [nostalgia cookbooks] through writing in its most commodified form: the mass-market cookbook.”

126 The issue of who is an expert arises in Diane Kochilas’s recent book about Greek food as well: I was lucky to find the best guide, the most knowledgeable person on the island, if not in Greece, when it comes to greens: Zaharias Kypriotakis, a slight man with professorial gray hair and beard and serene blue eyes, who happened to have just completed his Ph.D. on the flora of Crete’s rocky mountain crevices when I met him. (Kochilas 2001:395) Kochilas’s use of the phrase “the most knowledgeable person” indicates more than just the respect and recognition that Kypriotakis deserves, it also reveals a preference for a particular way of evaluating knowledge based, for example, on how comprehensive such knowledge is in specialists’ terms. No doubt, such criteria could be partially at odds with those of non-specialists, of those “traditional” Cretans whose cuisine Kochilas believes in so dearly. This points to some important questions: What will count as knowledge about edible greens in the future? Species identification? Nutrient content of the local soil? Method of preparation? Taste recognition and preferences? Also: Who will possess such knowledge and how will it be transmitted?
not the case, however, in the Cretan-authored texts published in Greece. Doulgerakis explicitly negotiates the issue of traditional Greek wisdom and the findings of modern science, submitting that “[w]hat is important is that today, after many hundreds of years, Science which is finally advanced (contemporary research) comes and verifies all that the doctors of antiquity already recognized about the unique beneficial effects of Cretan wine on human health” (Doulgerakis 1997:6). Sorting out the possible implications of a statement like this one is not easy. It obviously expresses resentment toward modern science for taking so long to espouse the positive dimensions of the Cretan diet that Greeks apparently knew all along. In light of the influence of culinary modernizers like Tselementes, though, it is also a reaction to the scientific rationalism that dismissed folk belief about nutrition and medicine, and hence as the expression of internal disenchantment (Mullen 2000:120): We Greeks were too quick to accept the findings of modern science in the past, abandoning the wisdom we had acquired over centuries, and now science’s own revisions are showing us how uncritically eager we were to change. In other words, it can be viewed as some kind of paradoxical “double” belated modernity,127 in which the Greeks realize that they should not have so quickly modernized/Westernized before, and yet defend this view by appealing once again to modern Western scientific research. Latent in the critique of modern science might also be concerns regarding the negative environmental effects of everything from the shift to monocultures, like the failing raisin industry, to industrial fishing of the Mediterranean.

Ethnographic cookbooks like Wolfert’s are permeated by a certain humanistic touch absent in other (modernist?) American cookbooks that concentrate on the mechanization of the kitchen or various gimmicks geared toward quick and easy culinary results. But, just as in the Greek folkloric cookbooks, this sometimes comes as a result of romanticizing the culture being explored:

A warm clear spring day in Crete. Mirsini Lambraki has taken me into the hills about an hour’s drive above Heraklion, to an abandoned vineyard that she has described as a paradise because it contains everything one could possibly want in the way of wild edible

127On the concept of “belated modernity,” see Jusdanis (1991). Jusdanis (2001) provides numerous examples from Greece and many other nations to illustrate how nations compensate for their military, economic, and technological belatedness by emphasizing their national—or, in this case regional-as-national—cultural uniqueness and/or superiority.
greens. The place is magical—a tangle of broken stone walls, a ruined church, the remnants of neglected old grapevines just starting spring growth. We collect a gallon of greens—a mix of chard, wild carrot, Roman pimpernel, anise, salsify greens, poppy greens, fennel anise, chicory, bryonia, dandelion, sorrel, purslane, and wild spinach—that Mirsinis’s mother will bake into the little crescent-shaped pies the Cretans nickname “scarfs.” (Wolfert 1998:55)

No doubt the experience Wolfert describes was, indeed, “magical.” It is by no means unfamiliar to the modern sensibility that ruins can be an unending source of aesthetic pleasure. But, one of the reasons there are so many broken walls, ruined churches, and remnants of grapevines in the first place is the rapid urbanization that led to the decline of rural life. Furthermore, these are exactly the processes that have made knowledge and use of wild greens an endangered art among contemporary Cretans! Moreover, Myrsini Lambraki, the Cretan cookbook author who took Wolfert foraging, had already lamented over this fact in her own cookbooks (Lambraki 2000:19). All of this suggests that an ethnographic cookbook like Wolfert’s, or for that matter, a folkloric one like Lambraki’s, articulates the tension between the desire to preserve certain rural practices and the continuing elimination of these practices by urbanization. Ironically, urbanization has been complicit in the rapid and widespread loss of foraging know-how both in Crete and America, as well as in the development of the industrial and market conditions which allow books that celebrate foraging to be published and circulated.129

Wolfert’s reference to Myrsini Lambraki is only one of multiple “intersections” of Greece and the United States in cookbooks. Many of Lambraki’s books (e.g. Lambraki 2001), as well as the seminal contribution of Maria and Nikos Psilakis (see Psilakis 1995), have been translated into or published exclusively in English and are available over the Internet to customers world-wide. Diane Kochilas and others publishing Greek cookbooks in the United States have drawn on the

128Robert K. Henderson states colorfully: “The coming of the steam engine spelled the end of foraging as a practical skill. As urban society supplanted rural as the cultural ideal, traditional activities were suddenly viewed as backward. Grubbing for roots and weeds in the dirty outdoors was decidedly uncool. From useful if potentially dangerous specialists, foragers were busted down to unlettered, feeble-minded hillbillies” (Henderson 2000: 2).

129Thus, they can be read as examples of what Rosaldo (1989:68) calls “imperialist nostalgia,” the longing of people for that which they themselves have destroyed.
work of Lambraki and Psilakis in making their own. All of these authors share more than an interest in the Cretan diet: they are competing for a share in the global marketplace. And it must be noted that, while a Wolfert or a Kochilas probably never achieved the breadth or depth of understanding of Cretan food that a Lambraki or a Psilakis does, the American authors, through their connections to major publishers, will surely always have access to a much larger audience whenever they do write about it. At the same time, some Cretans—including both those who are simply proud of their heritage, as well as those who want to export local products like olive oil or wine—are satisfied just knowing that non-Greek major Western publishers are publicizing the Cretan diet. In fact, some, like Doulgerakis, might view it as a necessary corrective to the modern West’s over-confident deployment of science and technology in the past, at its own expense and the expense of others. They might even see it as an underdog response to the inroads made by American and multi-national corporate culinary cultural imperialism such as fast food.

Several of the cookbooks published in both countries have in common the promotion of a culinary ethos that resists the highly systematic and rationalistic approach to cooking of the early modernizers, and which promotes sociability and “consciousness of what is involved in eating” (Berry 1998:60). Returning briefly to the ethnographic cookbooks, their ethnographic sensitivity occasionally enables them to do more than seek out precise and authentic recipes. For example, they often tell a story that reveals something about the character of the individuals they encounter. Wolfert writes, “My friend Myrsini Lambraki from Crete is a confident cook whose dishes often probe the culinary edge” (Wolfert 1998:45), and “Victoria Athanassiady never lies. She tells me as much the moment we meet. ‘I say what I think and think what I say,’ she says. ‘If I tell you how to make a dish, you can rely on my words’” (Wolfert 1998:35). Wolfert conveys to her readers the special combination of everyday confidence and creativity that she deems important for a cooking ethos. Themos S. Potamianos, a fisherman and Greek author of minor stature, had espoused

130See also Kremezi’s (2000) acknowledgment: “[Many thanks] [t]o Nikos and Maria Psilakis, who have collected an unbelievable number of recipes from all parts of Crete in both their books, Traditional Cuisine of Crete and Olive Oil: The Civilization of the Olive Tree, and to my dear friend
similar notions of creativity and “passion” (or “spirited engagement:” meraki) as early as 1943 in one of his little known Greek cookbooks:

Young cooks [μάγειροι] should be separated into two categories. There are those who throw some food into the pot and “whatever happens.” They don’t have the time or inclination to occupy themselves with cooking and are satisfied with a simple, makeshift, and usually tasteless food. Then there are others, the zealots of art, the fanatics, the demanding, those who cook with high expectations and passion, the artists of cooking. Bitter enemies of routine, they constantly search for something original, they experiment, they break new ground, they create, they invent. (Potamianos 1943:8)131

Kochilas also writes about Cretan cuisine in a way that suggests that actual recipes are secondary to certain attitudes and principles:

In Crete the cuisine moves like a fugue; the same ingredients play off each other in endless combination, and the same, typically simple techniques apply to many dishes. It is always fascinating to see how Cretan home cooks “build” on a certain theme. [...] In other words, simplicity is taken to the nth degree in Crete, and ingredients are appreciated for what they are, without much need of embellishment. (Kochilas 2001:391)

Myrsini Lambraki, author of The Wild Greens and Olive Oil: 5,000 Years of Taste and Civilization.”

131It is just this approach that makes Potamianos’s cookbook a refreshing change of pace from contemporary rationalizing/modernizing works by the likes of Tselementes. There are no charts whatsoever to be found here, and all the recipes are presented in narrative form. He even celebrates the fact that the difficulties of the Second World War at least have had the positive effect of restoring the importance of certain nearly forgotten local foods of various regions. In addition to proposing a particular cooking ethos, he also employs his witty literary style to suggest a particular approach to shopping for food (see Potamianos 1943:54) which is not a matter of following a set of charts and rules, but a matter of cultivating a particular ethos.
In a passage like this, “simplicity” expresses more than mere abstract aesthetic principles. It tries to capture and promote the practice of a particular attitude toward food preparation that defies the logic of tablespoons and measuring cups.\footnote{Defiance of the logic of recipe can also be connected to issues of sociability. For example, without a written recipe, transmission of the knowledge and skill required to prepare certain foods may entail people cooking together in an apprentice-like relationship. See, for instance, Sutton (2001:125-126)}

In contrast to the modernizing focus on mere measurement and preparation of ingredients, Potamianos also promotes an ethos of awareness of their physical origin, and is perhaps the only modern Greek cookbook author to make ample reference to the use of wild greens before the recent proliferation of Cretan cookbooks. In his 1965 book, \textit{33 Greek Recipes} [33 Ελληνικές Συνταγές], he describes in detail and promotes the use of local ingredients.\footnote{See, for example, his recipe for Spanish oyster plant, p. 25} Potamianos’s recipes promote an attitude toward cooking that presupposes and celebrates knowledge about the origin and quality of ingredients, even to the point of requiring the reader to know how to forage for wild greens.

Returning to Wolfert’s description of her foraging encounter with Myrsini Lambraki (mentioned above):

“Our pies are always green and small,” Mirsini tells me, “and are usually fried in olive oil. We mix ten or fifteen types of greens and boil them in lots of water, keeping them submerged so they’ll retain their vitamins and their color. On the western side of the island, we salt the greens before putting them inside pies, while on the eastern side we stew them with onions and olive oil after boiling.” Since there’s no way for me to reproduce these elaborate wild green fillings in America. [sic] I’m sorry not to be able to present a recipe. But I know I mustn’t let this opportunity slip by without mentioning these fabulous “scarf” pies. (Wolfert 1998: 55)

This narrative-without-a-recipe can be read as a mere decoration, or as a way to tell the reader she is not worthy of the recipe,\footnote{Defiance of the logic of recipe can also be connected to issues of sociability. For example, without a written recipe, transmission of the knowledge and skill required to prepare certain foods may entail people cooking together in an apprentice-like relationship. See, for instance, Sutton (2001:125-126)} but it can also be interpreted as challenging the modernizing norms of systematization which demand detailed instructions. Instead of a recipe, Wolfert provides readers with a description of a culinary ethos demanding knowledge of the local environment (they must know their way around the hills and be familiar with the history and quality of the soil there),
knowledge of the local flora (they must know how to recognize the greens they should collect, those
they should not, and those they should never even touch!), an aesthetic sensibility (they must have a
idea of the proportions of each species to include), and knowledge of proper cooking techniques (so
as not to lose essential nutrients).

Opposing the stance of modern cookbooks aimed, for instance, at the individual looking
for a fast and efficient way to get dinner over with, some of these works explicitly promote
sociability instead. In the section on bread starters in Maria and Nikos Psilakis’s book on Cretan
cuisine, the authors add a parenthetical piece of advice: “At this point we should remember to keep
a small ball of dough to use as a starter the next time we make bread, or to lend it to another
housewife, who will return it to us when she makes bread” (Psilakis 1997:233). Passages like this
one promote an ethic of culinary sociability, of sharing with one’s friends and neighbors, as
opposed to consumer convenience. The fact that this cookbook is comprised of recipes collected
from various Cretans whose names and hometowns are included in the text need not be interpreted
only as a strategy for demonstrating traditional authenticity, but also as proposing an ethos of
sharing—of the recipes and other knowledge—mediated by print. Indeed, the publication of this
work can be seen as a way to facilitate the exchange of cooking knowledge among members of the
Cretan community and beyond. Back in the United States, Diane Kochilas’s ethnographic
descriptions promote an ethos of sociability as well:

Around the still stood a handful of village men, cups in hand, stooping every so often to
catch some of the warm liquid spirit as it came sputtering out. Whether it’s had straight
and warm or, later, from the bottle, raki is the stuff of machismo posturing. But even in
Crete, where men sport pistols and mustaches with equal ease, and where blood feuds are a
matter of everyday justice, no man dares drink raki without simultaneously settling his
stomach with some food. (Kochilas 2001:386)

---

134 As does John Thorne (1992:313).
Here an almost stereotypical portrait of Cretan men also suggests a drinking ethic which is social (in this instance the annual ritual of making raki with family and friends) and restrained (as the drinking is tempered by the eating that accompanies it\textsuperscript{135}).

The intersections of the American- and Greek-published cookbooks are many. Frequently, they are at odds with each other. The American celebrates the beauty of the rural ruins that are indicative of the loss of traditional ways the Cretan seeks to restore. Cretan texts like the one by Doulgerakis seek to undermine the prestige of modern medical science by pointing out its belatedness, but nevertheless justify their own endeavors to systematize an organically indigenous Cretan diet by appealing to science’s recent findings. American texts like those by Wolfert and Kochilas, on the other hand, reassert the validity and superiority of modern medical science by illustrating how adept science is—along with modern ethnography—at discovering, translating into its own idiom, and systematizing knowledge from all over the world. They also end up contributing, regardless of intentions, to the American ideal of multiculturalism by providing yet one more example of a “world” cuisine (Mediterranean, Cretan) that can be readily absorbed into a radically heterogeneous American cuisine\textsuperscript{136}—prevalent everywhere from ethnic restaurants to the ubiquitous potluck—without subverting American cuisine’s overall logic. They do not, in other words, interpret the scientific findings, as do the Cretan authors, as a wake-up call for rewriting their regional or national cuisine along Mediterranean lines. Each tries to outsmart the other in the realm of identity, as well as in number of sales in an international marketplace. At the same time, though, all these authors share certain common visions, like the systematization through recipe collections of healthful foods and the commodification of these collections in the marketplace. They also promote an antimodern culinary ethos sensitive to the origin of ingredients, as well as to the caring and sociable manner in which they are prepared, served, and consumed.

\textsuperscript{135}Compare with Damer’s (1988) observations about drinking practices in western Crete.

\textsuperscript{136}See Chapter 8 of Mintz (1996).
CONCLUSION

The analysis of Greek cookbooks proves a fruitful endeavor for investigating how rhetorical strategies focused on local practices and cultural identity become intertwined with not only national and transnational culture, but also the global marketplace, the discourses of medicine and environmentalism, and the ethics of everyday life. The findings of a transnational study by medical science are welcomed and appealed to in Greece and the United States, but given a different spin in each national context. Medicine is combined with Greek folklore to argue for a return to the lost wisdom of the Cretan past, but with American ethnography to pursue the best local foods the world can put on its multicultural table. Cookbook authors on both sides of the Atlantic launch their assault against the modern culinary sensibility by promoting creativity and experimentation, sociability, and a more conscious awareness of food production. For Crete, all of this could signify growing demand for more regional culinary autonomy and organizational control over agriculture vis-a-vis the Greek state, the European Union, and American fast-food chains. (Or is it just the response to the impending loss of what little regional autonomy still exists?) It suggests that one of the most pressing questions Cretans face today is not should they “eat local,” but how can they?

Such tensions between nation and place, between the quest to modernize and a desire to preserve local traditions, are constitutive of much contemporary Cretan culture, not only cookbooks (see, for instance, Ball 2002), and I will continue to explore these issues in Chapter 6. In the meantime, my analysis of Cretan cookbooks, apart from suggesting the general local and larger-than-local complexity of place as a process, has also foregrounded the potential relationship—and the resulting confusion—between environmentally-minded place awareness (pure-as-organic) and cultural identities (pure-as-quintessentially-Cretan/Greek). In other words, it brings to attention the interrelationship of constructions of nature as a regional and/or national location and force, and constructions of nature as “environment.” In the next chapter, I will return to the realm of national literature to consider this relationship between place awareness and cultural identities at greater length.
CHAPTER 5

PLACE, IDENTITY, AWARENESS

Throughout this dissertation, I have been making the case to critics interested in ecology and place that it is imperative to contextualize and expand conventional views of literary culture in accordance with a socio-ecological constructivist theory of place. In the preceding two chapters, I argued that national and regional texts constitute, and are constituted by, various conceptions of nature (as rural place, as the force behind culture, as the discursive product of culture, as “scientific,” or as environment) and folk (as close to nature, as wild beasts, or as bearers of healthful and environmentally-friendly practices). Insofar as I relied disproportionately on critical and theoretical texts—from the scholarship of Kyriakidis and Dimaras to the prologues of cookbooks—I fear that my own representation of literary culture up till now has the unintended effect of portraying more conventional literary texts as relatively unimportant to the consideration of the assumptions and issues I have been discussing. I intend to rectify this imbalance by focusing to a greater extent on literary texts in the chapters that remain. In fact, in this chapter I want to examine how a national literary text can itself offer a theory of literature in terms of place, nation, nature, and the folk. In addition, I will consider reasons for learning from such a theory when it comes to doing the work of placed criticism. Indeed, this theory will point out certain questions I should consider in my subsequent reading of mandinadhes in Chapter 6.

At the same time, I intend this chapter to serve as much more than a mere corrective to my portrayal of literary culture. In the last chapter, my analysis of cookbooks brought attention to the overlap of constructions of nature as environmental and as regional—to the tensions between
agriculturally- or ecologically-minded understandings of local culture, on the one hand, and the cultural identity of a place, on the other. The idea of “pure” Cretan food, for example, could both connote the practice of organic agriculture and purport the authenticity of regional folk culture. Yet, it was unclear if the latter referred strictly to a Cretan folk practicing pre-industrial—and hence organic—agriculture, or also included those contemporary yet “traditional” Cretans whose food might include synthetic pesticides. Taking my cue from this ambiguous relationship between place awareness and regional identity, in this chapter I want to continue exploring the issue of place awareness with respect to cultural identities, for it is not something that arises merely in the context of food. By continuing to explore the many possible connections between place awareness and cultural identities, I intend to suggest that careful consideration and analysis of such connections should be of central importance to all manner of placed critical projects. Indeed, in Chapter 6, one of my primary concerns will be to examine how one poet appeals to his audience’s identity as Cretan in order to promote place cohabitation.

In short, this chapter explores what I think should be one of placed criticism’s central concerns: examination of the interrelationship of cultural identities and ecological place awareness/projects of place cohabitation. At the same time, because I deal mostly with Crete, it continues to flesh out the discursive context for the mandinadhes I will interpret in Chapter 6. Moreover, because the central literary text I have chosen to interpret (by Prevelakis) also yields a literary theory of its own that is relevant to place, this chapter (through that theory) suggests certain additional questions (e.g., regarding ethics and rhetoric) to consider when I undertake my readings in Chapter 6.

IDENTIFYING PLACE

The ambiguities of place awareness and cultural identity are manifest in something even as ostensibly simple as the use of language to identify the landscape, its flora and fauna or natural

137Compare this, for example, with Bendix’s (1997) discussion of local American folklore societies’ search for regional authenticity in the “pure culture” of Native Americans (131).
phenomena. After all, language itself is constituted by a variety of contradictory social processes and issues. In the case of Greece, the contested quality of such processes is especially evident due to the centrality and continuing visibility of the so-called “language question” in the modern nation’s history.\textsuperscript{138} Upon establishing the modern Greek state on the grounds that it was the continuation of an ancient Greek nation, modernizers were forced to confront the issue of language. First, nationalization implied imposing a single language on a nation characterized by linguistic heterogeneity wherein the folk of different regions spoke recognizably different Greek idioms. Second, it raised the issue of which Greek language or idiom most legitimately represented the new state, so that it might be codified, employed officially, and taught in schools. Should modern Greeks be represented by one of the spoken vernaculars, so-called demotic Greek, replete with Turkish and other “foreign” words? Should the classical Greek language of antiquity be revived? Or, should the nation adopt a classicizing hybrid language in which the demotic is purified of Turkish and other “inauthentic” characteristics (katharevousa) according to classical Greek? Even today, prescriptivist linguists in Greece continue to argue in the newspapers, on television, and in their books over the proper use of contemporary Greek with respect to spoken conventions, ancient Greek “rules,” and foreign influences (especially those from English). Thus, whenever a text in modern Greece names the environment, it does so in the context of—and therefore implicitly participates in—debates over Greek regional and national linguistic identities.

For example, in the works of ethographic fiction I examined in Chapter 3, authors regularly employ unusual, often only locally known, vernacular words, thereby documenting Greek folklife and folk culture as a means to legitimate national culture. When Drosinis writes in \textit{The Herb of Love} about the use of “snake-weed” [φιδχορτο] to cure snake bites (70), or when Kondylakis writes in \textit{Bigfoot} about the use of “jug-thorn” [στανγκθι] (that is, coast chicory, \textit{Cichorium spinosum}) to close jugs (43), the authors participate in nation-centered folkist discourse not simply at the level of documenting folk practices and folk medicine but at the level of language

\textsuperscript{138}For an introduction in English to the language question in Greece, see, for example, Bien (1970).
itself. Kondylakis uses one of the several Cretan vernacular words that refers to a local species of wild chicory widely used, and still eaten today, by Cretans. Moreover, the word is etymologically derived wholly from ancient Greek [στάμνα+άκανθα]. Thus, its use in the novel contributes to the project that I discussed in the previous chapter of nationalist folklorists trying to prove that their own region best preserves and represents classical antiquity. In the wake of the ethographic movement of the late 19th- and early 20th-centuries, many prominent authors have continued the project of “collecting” local vernacular words in their literary texts. Indeed, one of the distinguishing features of Nikos Kazantzakis’s modern Odyssey, with its many references to nature and the folk, is its intention to serve as a “repository” of the Greek vernacular (Bien 1972:204).

The poetry of Odysseus Elytis, drawing on the vernacular as well as Classical and Byzantine Greek, also participates in debates over national identity through its use of a “topographic” idiom full of references to the Greek landscape and nature. Leontis (1995) has discussed this in terms of Elytis’s own poetic theory of “orthography” [orthographia], in which “[l]anguage […] finds for each physical element its natural location in culture” (199). Naming the environment serves to legitimate a particular Greek identity and culture:

[T]he image of a culture rooted in the generative “soils” of Hellas allows Elytis to derive the rules of modern art from Hellenism’s natural orthografia, as he imagines it. Because Elytis […] links the landscape so inextricably to the fate of the Neohellenic people, [he] can argue that harmony with nature follows directly from an artist’s understanding of the people. Elytis consistently places “the needs of the people” alongside the forces of nature—”the bare rocks, the light, the winds” in an unspecified contiguity. (Leontis 1995:178-179)

While Elytis frequently expressed the wish to discover the orthografia ‘correct spelling’ of a self-sufficient cosmos, his aim was not only to produce an autonomous semiotic system but also to reproduce an integrated, transhistorical Hellenic world. (Leontis 1995:181)

139 I have been a witness on several occasions to Cretans who—after living in Athens and then visiting or returning to Crete—eat foraged coast chicory for the first time after many years. To this day, I am not sure to what extent their obvious enthusiasm for the green was a result of pure and simple flavor, nostalgia for their youth, or a sense that they were reenacting or reconnecting with an identifiably Cretan aspect of their sense of self that was essentially unavailable in Athens.
The topographic strategy reaches its most dramatic expression in the final “Gloria” section of his most renowned poem, *The Axion Esti*. In it, Elytis celebrates the Greek landscape, and, by extension, the Greek nation:

**ΑΞΙΟΝ ΕΣΤΙ** το χόμα που ανεβάζει
μιαν σημή κεραυνού σαν από θεία
του βουνού ο πυθμένας όπου θάλλουν
οι νεκροί άνθη της αύριον
[.........]
Το κρίνο, το Τριαντάφυλλο, το Γιασεμί
ο Μενεζές, η Πασχαλιά, ο Υάκινθος
το Γιουλί, το Ζαμπάκι, το Αστρολούλου (Elytis 1989:78-79)

PRAISED BE the soil that raises
a smell of thunder as though from sulphur
the floor of mountains where the dead
blossom as the flowers of tomorrow
[...]
Lily, Rose, Jasmine
Violet, Lilac, Hyacinth
Carnation, Narcissus, Aster (translation Keeley and Savidis 1991:82-83)

By simply listing the names of the flowers of the physical world, Elytis celebrates the glory of the cultural world of modern Greece.

Taking a different point of view, Mimika Kranaki, in her postmodernist epistolary novel *Philhellenes* (Φιλέλληνες) (1998), refers to naming the environment in order to critique romantic-nationalist renderings of Greek identity. Her novel explores the issue of Greek identity through letters written by and about the experiences of Greeks living in France. There is an explicit reference to naming the environment in one of the letters to Markos, a student who went to France during the Greek Civil War, written by Markos’s former mentor back in Greece, Kyriakos Oikonomou. Kyriakos’s letter implies to the reader that Markos must have written to him about his lack of a sense of place in France, something he blames on the French people’s lack of awareness of nature and which implicitly suggests that Greeks are, by contrast, close to nature:

Σε πληγώνει, Μάρκο, με το δίκιο σου το ότι δε θα μάθεις ποτέ τ’όνομα του δέντρου που βλέπεις χρόνια ολόκληρα απ’τ’ο παράθυρό σου, ποι συμμετέχει τη ζωή σου. Αφού ούτε ο Γάλλος το έξερε. Για πες μου, στην Ελλάδα ήξερες σύμπαν την εθνική χλωρίδα και πανίδα ονομαστή; (Αφήνω που τα ονόματα αλλάζουν κατά περιοχές.)
Markos, you’re hurt, and rightfully so, by the fact that you will never learn the name of the tree you have been seeing for so many years outside your window, the tree with which you have shared your life. After all, not even the Frenchman knows its name. But tell me Markos, when you were in Greece, did you know all the national flora and fauna by name? (Never mind that the names vary in different locales.) (Kranaki 1998:179)

It seems Kyriakos thinks that Markos wrongfully attributes his lack of a sense of place to questions of national stereotypes—Greeks are close to nature, the French are not. In this case, Kranaki provides an implicit critique of earlier folkist literary representations of Greek national culture as rooted in nature: However aware of place the Greek folk of yesteryear may or may not have been, today’s Greeks are ignorant of the environment. Or, perhaps Kyriakos simply thinks Markos is wrong to use questions of place awareness as a means for perpetuating such stereotypes, in which case Kranaki makes an almost explicit critique of grounding national culture in nature. In either case, Kranaki’s text foregrounds the intimate relationship between naming the landscape and questions of national identity. To summarize, Greek literature ranging from ethographic and modernist celebrations of the nation to postmodernist critiques of it, often portrays, and inescapably participates in, the issue of naming nature or the landscape in the context of discourses on national identity.140

In apparent contrast to such literary works, other texts that circulate widely focus on naming more for the purpose of promoting biological or ecological place awareness among readers. Field guides, like Sfikas’s (1995) Wildflowers of Crete, that taxonomize flora or fauna according to scientific principles for purposes of identification and appreciation provide an obvious example. There are also explicitly pro-environmentalism texts that attempt to raise awareness about native species of plants or animals that are rare or endangered. A national newspaper supplement (Traiou 2000) about Crete’s highest mountain Psiloreitis, almost certainly aimed at promoting ecotourism in Crete, is one such example. In it, there are many descriptions and accounts of the mountain’s natural life. There is an article on “Geological and animal treasures” (Paragamian 2000a), one on “Native and rare plants” (Kypriotakis 2000), one on a rare vulture (Paragamian 2000b) and
another on a rare wildcat, probably brought by humans to Crete from Africa (Paragamian 2000c), and one about the Cretan mint dittany (Origanum dictamus) [διχτάμος] (Avramidis 2000). They discuss native species ranging from dittany to the Cretan wild goat (Capra aegagrus cretica) [αγρίμ] that are rare, endangered, or extinct, and generally include scientific names, pan-Greek names, and local Cretan idiomatic names in their descriptions and appeals for environmental awareness:

Στα δάση του βουνού κυρίαρχο είδος είναι ο πρίνος, ενώ η αμπελιτσά (Zelkova abelicea) είναι σπάνιο είδος και οι βοσκοί το λένε “ανέγνωρο δέντρο”.

In the forests of the mountain, the most prevalent species is the holm-oak, whereas the abelitsa (Zelkova abelicea) is a rare species that the shepherds call “unrecognizable tree.” (Kypriotakis 2000:13)

Κοκάλας είναι η τοπική ονομασία για τον γυπαετό (Gypaetus barbatus) ονομασία πολύ ευέστοχη μιας και το πουλί αυτό τρέφεται σχεδόν αποκλειστικά με κόκαλα. Ο κοκάλας είναι το σπανίωτερο είδος γύπα στην Ευρώπη και ο συνολικός πληθυσμός του δεν ξεπερνά τα 100 ζευγάρια. Ύστερα από συστηματική μελέτη του είδους σε όλη την Ελλάδα από το Μουσείο Φυσικής Ιστορίας Κρήτης και την Ελληνική Ορνιθολογική Εταιρεία στο πλαίσιο του κοινοτικού προγράμματος LIFE, διαπιστώθηκε ότι στην Κρήτη υπάρχουν λιγότερα από 30 ζευγάρια, ενώ έχει πρακτικά εξαφανιστεί από την υπόλοιπη Ελλάδα. […] Αν ο επισκέπτης του Ψηλορείτη δεί τον γυπαετό που απέμεινε ας τον παρατηρήσει όσο περισσότερο μπορεί. Μπορεί να είναι η τελευταία φορά.

Kokalas [literally: “bone-eater”] is the local name of the bearded vulture (Gypaetus barbatus), a pertinent name for a bird that is nourished almost exclusively by bones. The kokalas is the rarest species of vulture in Europe, and altogether its population is at most 100 pairs. After a systematic study of this species in all of Greece by the Museum of Natural History of Crete and the Greek Ornithological Association in the context of the communal program LIFE, it was determined that in Crete there are fewer than 30 individuals, while it has practically disappeared from the rest of Greece. […] If the visitor to Psiloreitis sees the one bearded vulture that has remained [on this mountain], let him/her observe it for as long as possible. It might be the last time. (Paragamian 2000:17)

Once again, in the mere act of naming, the question of environmental awareness raises the issue of cultural identities. In light of the folkism of Greek nationalists and—perhaps more importantly—of Cretan regionalists, this lamenting of the passing of a bird at home in the Cretan mountains has an uncanny resemblance to the laments and appeals of the regionalists—like the cookbook authors—about the loss of Cretan folk culture. Many “traditional” Cretans have made their home

---

140I should also mention that the notion of “folk naming” has even been formalized by some
in the mountains and, in the folkist view, are in the process of becoming “extinct” at the hands of modernity as well. Preservation of Crete’s species, like its traditional foodways, would be beneficial even beyond the island itself: “Psiloreitis is considered, institutionally too, one of the most important regions of the European Union regarding birds” (Paragamian 2000:13). Crete’s mountains are home both to wild folk like Kondylakis’s Manolis who possess rare and distinctively Greek virtues, as well as to rare and distinctive wild plants and animals: “There are many fauna native to Psiloreitis. More than 30% of the species there are native to Crete and many of these have a very limited distribution” (Paragamian 2000:12). “Psiloreitis is characterized by a great diversity of bioregions which are home to rich and interesting flora. The value of its flora is due not only to the large number and great variety of species, but also to the distinctiveness [or, uniqueness] of some of these” (Kypriotakis 2000:13). Indeed, the authors of these texts sometimes refer explicitly to the interrelationship of ecological discourse and the preservation of distinctive cultural identities.

Few plants in Greece have come to be identified so much with a place as dittany has been identified with Crete. Dittany (Origanum dictamus) is a native plant of Crete and grows wild on virtually every mountain of the island. Every one of its many names—Erontas, Stomachochorto, Malliarochorto, Stamatochorto, Artemidion—tells one of the many stories that accompany this plant. […] The persistent [diachronic] popularity of Dittany was, in addition, the reason why its populations today have been significantly reduced. In the Red Book of Plants of Greece it is characterized as “rare.” Today it is grown commercially, primarily in the village of Ebaro, thereby providing an opportunity for its natural populations to recover and allowing Dittany to continue to remain the symbol of Cretan nature. (Avramakis 2000:31)

folklorists as a particular genre of folklore. See, for example, Brunvand (1968:32-35).
In the last sentence of this paragraph, the preservation of a species serves as a means for reproducing a symbol of local cultural identity. It also provides a context for interpreting the mandinadha included at the beginning of the same article:

Δύο φυλλάρικια Δίχτυμο από τον Ψηλορείτη,
Βάνω στο μπέτι και γροικώ την μυρωδία σου Κρήτη.

I put two little leaves of Dittany from Psiloreitis on my chest and I can smell your scent, Crete. (Avramakis 2000:31)

In light of the article, this mandinadha promotes ecological preservation and folk cultural preservation alike. The mandinadha—as an example of folk literature—is a cultural vehicle analogous to the dittany that is nature’s vehicle, for keeping alive the distinctive nature and culture—the “scent”—of Crete.

Authors regularly invoke even scientific taxonomy in ways that blur or intertwine social and ecological boundaries, cultural identities and scientific facts. The following heading from a newspaper article, for instance, illustrates how a loss of ecological diversity is regularly expressed seamlessly in terms of a loss of Greek traditions: “Greek flavors are being lost: 95% of traditional varieties of fruits and vegetables have disappeared” (Tratsa 2002:A39). Naming the landscape, even in the context of science or of raising environmental awareness, is caught up in issues of cultural identity. Thus, Petros Vlastos’s (1991 [1931]) dictionary of demotic Greek lists the vernacular Greek names of plants and animals, but is ordered in accordance with the family-genus-species taxonomy of botany and zoology (419-477). Vlastos “folkifies” and “nationalizes” a transnational scientific taxonomy and “scientificizes” the national vernacular.141 Drosinis’s Herb of Love, in its portrayal of the folk in close proximity to nature tells in detail the “story of a grain of wheat” which “is not as simple as city dwellers think it is” (94), somehow anticipating the ecologically-minded exhortations of writers and farmers like Wendell Berry: “What can city people do?” “Eat

---

141By including the vernacular names from various regions of Greece, moreover, he also nationalizes the regional vernaculars.

142It comprises an entire chapter, an interlude of sorts.
responsibly,” I have usually answered. [...] Eating ends the annual drama of the food economy that begins with planting and birth” (1998:54). Myrsini Lambraki’s (2000) cookbook on wild greens, much like a field guide, discusses plants species by species, includes photographs, and describes how to recognize and collect them. Like environmental texts, it discusses Crete’s flora as especially interesting, with many unique species despite the island’s deceptive barrenness, and deals with issues such as plant hormones and fertilizers. Yet, in aspiring to convince contemporary Greeks to put wild greens back into their diet, to get them to give up some of their modernity, it also seeks to revive selective folk practices. Echoing Vlastos’s dictionary, Lambraki lists and preserves various vernacular words for the plants from various Greek regions together with the genus-species names of science. Also, consistent with Greek folkism in general, she claims that the ancient Greeks and the Greek folk were closer to nature than the Greeks of modernity, and that, among all Greeks, the Cretan folk ate the most and greatest variety of wild greens. In short, whether explicitly, or in terms of the discursive context in which they circulate and are read, a wide variety of texts that deal with naming the landscape do so both in terms of science and/or ecological awareness as well as regional and national identities.

I should mention that, in making these observations, I do not intend to trivialize or undermine the ecological urgency of many of the aforementioned authors’ texts. Rather, I wish to emphasize some of the concrete similarities, and arguably cross-fertilizations that occur, between folkist and ecological discourses. After all, each occurs in the context of the other in contemporary Greece. I would argue that it is difficult indeed for many Greeks, especially Cretans, already steeped in Greek and Cretan folkist ideology, to read such environmentally-oriented passages without also feeling that the world’s ecology is at stake in the loss of Greek/Cretan rural folk culture.

---

143 That it does not consider such topics, common in American books on wild edible greens, as nitrates, safe amounts to eat, and poisonous look-a-likes might be attributed to the fact that, compared to the United States, many Greeks still possess enough knowledge about such issues for it to be considered within their “common sense.”

144 These features regarding identity seem even more prominent if we compare the text with most American books about wild greens. American books, while they deal with wild greens that grow in America, rarely ascribe explicitly any cultural significance to that fact.
Analogously, as I will emphasize in Chapter 6, it might be increasingly difficult for Greeks to contemplate the “loss” of traditional rural folk culture without simultaneously considering the negative environmental consequences that accompany such loss.

“THE POWER OF NAMES”

In order to appreciate the implications of this for placed criticism, I turn in the remainder of this chapter to literature. In particular, I want to consider how literature can highlight the cultural dimensions—especially in terms of cultural identities—of local place cohabitation. To do so, I will consider the trilogy of novels, *The Paths to/of (the) Creation* [Οι δρόμοι της δημιουργίας], by the Cretan-born, nationally canonized author Pandelis Prevelakis. It is particularly interesting because it foregrounds individual experiences of nature and place not only in the context of the local human community, including the folk, but also in relation to the discourse of national literary culture itself. Because of its combined emphasis on place and literary creativity, indicated already by the dual connotation of the word “creation” [δημιουργία] in the title, Prevelakis’s work ought to be of particular interest to ecocritics. Insofar as Prevelakis asserts the importance of place awareness in literary creativity, his work intersects with explorations by American authors—Wendell Berry, Gary Snyder, Scott Russell Sanders—of literature and place inhabitation. In Prevelakis, even mystical experiences of nature and place are mediated by regional folk culture and elite national culture. Moreover, as I will argue, one of the clearest messages of Prevelakis’s trilogy is that modern national literature that refers to local nature and local tradition need not—indeed, should not—do so as a means for establishing cultural

---

145For my own purposes, I will treat the three novels as if they were three volumes of a single work. The names and publication dates of individual novels are *The Sun of Death* [Ο Ήλιος του Θανάτου] (1959), *Medusa’s Head* [Η Κεφαλή της Μέδουσας] (1963), and *The Bread of Angels* [Ο Αρτος των Αγγέλων] (1966). The first is written most like a conventional novel. The second is more like a novel of ideas in which, much of the time, a plethora of philosophical and political positions and arguments are outlined in the context of conversations among the characters. The third has a minimum of plot and reads almost like a series of essays by the narrator.
authenticity and legitimacy. Rather it should interpret and negotiate present ethical beliefs and practices among one’s cohabitants in ways that take local traditions into serious consideration. Thus, Prevelakis’s work can be read as a literary argument against folkism and essentialist “identitary” approaches—nation-centered and region-centered alike—to literature and criticism, and in favor of certain “ethical” approaches (that I will mention below) instead. Indeed, insofar as Prevelakis is considered one of Greece’s last “ethographers,” his trilogy suggests that ethography should not be viewed as writing (graphe) that preserves an authentic ethos, but as writing that negotiates the ethos of one’s cohabitants, where ethos is understood in a customary, moral, and rhetorical sense.

The trilogy is the account of the intellectual and spiritual development of a Cretan writer named Yiorgakis, narrated by Yiorgakis himself. The first volume begins during the first world war with 13-year old Yiorgakis living in a Cretan town and ends in 1923. Aunt Rousaki takes Yiorgakis, upon the death of his father and the suicide of his mother, to her rural, mountain village home where she will raise the orphan, teaching him a variety of rural and Christian ideas, customs, and wisdom. As Decavalles (1985) argues, Prevelakis portrays Rousaki’s relationship to nature in a way that is consistent with those folkist ethographic representations that have Greece’s rural folk living in harmony with nature: “That which she teaches Yiorgakis is the importance of a close relationship with the living world of nature [ευρύχωμένο κόσμο τῆς φύσης]” (55). Rousaki’s own son, a gallant young man named Lefteris, is off fighting in the war and, it is learned, has killed Ilias, the son of one of Rousaki’s co-villagers. According to the Cretan custom of the vendetta, Ilias’s family—specifically, his brother Michalis—is expected to serve justice by killing Lefteris. When it is learned, however, that Lefteris is no longer alive, the vendetta turns to Yiorgakis instead. In the meantime, Yiorgakis comes into contact with the European educated Loizos and a girl named Aliki. When Yiorgakis and Aliki are returning from a secret outing to the sea, Yiorgakis in a panic of

---

146 It compliments them, as well. These American authors generally discuss art and literature within the context of an overriding concern with place inhabitation, whereas Prevelakis’s main concern is literary creativity.
sorts drives the horse off the cliff and Aliki is killed. Subsequently, Loizos, the self-proclaimed
placeless/rootless spirit, declares that he will become Yiorgakis’s mentor and turn him into a worthy
and capable writer. Yiorgakis then discerns that he is not a rural villager/peasant after all—that he
is not one of the folk—and that he must become a poet. Ilias’s death is finally avenged, not by the
death of Yiorgakis, but by that of Aunt Rousaki, who manages to protect the orphan by putting
herself between him and the bullet of his would-be assassin.

The second volume, covering the 1930s and 1940s, represents Yiorgakis’s experience
beyond his home island of Crete and his contact with the “cosmopolitan” world of ideas. It opens in
Athens, where Yiorgakis is now a university student, and both he and Loizos pursue the truth and
high ideals. In addition to his mentor Loizos, Yiorgakis’s group of acquaintances includes various
other characters that represent various recognizable modern experiences, worldviews, philosophies,
or ideologies. There is Stefanos, a sculptor married to a non-Greek whose art and artistic ambitions
were cut short by the war, who ends up committing suicide. There is Andreas—nicknamed “Karl”
after Marx—a would-be poet and committed communist who, according to Loizos, was allured
away from “tangible things” by abstract, fundamentalist leftist politics and bureaucratic rhetoric
(1971:23). Finally, there is the sensitive “Saint” Yannakos, an employee of the Department of
Justice. The pain and suffering Yannakos experiences through his empathy with others, says Loizos,
is “the salt that will prevent the world from spoiling” (1971:73). Among these characters, Yiorgakis
not only comes into contact with, but is alternately attracted, confused, and repelled by the various
competing, often antithetical, views they express. He seems unable—so far anyway—to “find
himself,” or at least decide what path he should follow in his life with self-assurance. Eventually,
Loizos and Yiorgakis decide to get away from it all, or so it seems, by moving to the neighboring
island of Aegina. Here, Loizos sets to work almost single-mindedly clearing the field of rocks
around the house they are renting so he can plant a garden. To Yiorgakis’s surprise, although
Loizos apparently knew all about it, Karl was already on the island, jailed for his leftist activities,
and Saint Yannakos was in charge of the jail. Karl eventually escapes and hides out with Yiorgakis
and Loizos, where Karl and Loizos have numerous ideological disagreements in the presence of Yiorgakis. One day, Karl is assassinated in the house, again in the presence of Yiorgakis. Yiorgakis then has various escapades, including erotic encounters, with the sisters who move in next door. All events contribute to an arousal of Yiorgakis’s “appetite for creation” and so he begins to do some writing. As Yiorgakis learns more about the various political scandals in which Karl had been involved, and later about Stefanos’s suicide, he realizes that even on Aegina, he and Loizos have not escaped modern problems, that they are still “touched by the century” and in the midst of “Medusa’s Head,” the brute reality that life is futile. Yiorgakis therefore suggests that the time has come for them to leave. Loizos, however, insists that it is time for Yiorgakis to become more independent. Yiorgakis has a dream that his Aunt Rousaki tells him he will find Crete again, and his desire to be creative continues to awaken within him. He realizes he still carries within himself the memories—the “treasure”—of his life in Crete as a young boy with her, and feels that this gives him “a place to stand.” He plans to return to Crete after “cleaning his soul.”

The third volume, which takes place some twenty years later, after the second world war and the Greek civil war, begins with Yiorgakis’s return to an unrecognizable Crete. Indeed, Yiorgakis never refers to the island by its name in the third novel, but rather by the nostalgic Odyssean expression “my Ithaca,” and he refers to his hometown as “Penelope.” He stays in his mother’s father’s old, unsafe house, and arranges to get a table and an oil lamp so that he can begin writing. He has difficulties writing and adjusting to his surroundings because he perceives how different he is from his Cretan cohabitants. He has several disagreements with the local bishop and is chided by other townspeople. Eventually, he happens upon the funeral of a soldier killed by rebels in the mountains (despite the fact that the civil war is, in fact, over). At the funeral, he finds Loizos dressed in a military uniform delivering a pompous—yet, for those who can actually understand his use of the purist Greek, farcical—address “praising” the soldier. Loizos’s quest for the truth and high ideals has led him, if not to give up hope, to accept the utter loneliness [οναξία] of radically rebellious idealism, and to adopt an ironic stance toward humanity. Upon facing the only apparent logical outcome of such a quest in his mentor, Yiorgakis becomes sick. He recovers, however, upon
undergoing a mystical experience while in the garden outside of Loizos’s Cretan house. Yiorgakis
realizes that Loizos’s life-quest did not result in fostering his own or anyone else’s well-being, nor in
any creative output. Decavalles (1985) explains:

For both teacher [Loizos] and student [Yiorgakis], that which would be able to stand
between them and Medusa’s Head with its power to petrify, was their creation, the poetry
that would spring from their home ground, the work of art: a “statue.” But such creativity
requires the warmth of some kind of belief [or faith], the standards of a set of customs and
an ethos alongside the aesthetic standards [κανόνας ενός έθους κ' ενός ήθους δίπλα στον
αισθητικό κανόνα], and of those things Loizos had been deprived. (Decavalles 1985:59-60)

Unlike Yiorgakis, Loizos drew all his energy from his own mind and from within himself. Loizos
dies, and, while Yiorgakis does not really want any priests involved in his burial, he finally allows
them, since Loizos, though faithless in any conventional sense, was probably the only person who
searched so incessantly for God in his life. Yiorgakis plans, once again, to leave the island, but
suddenly falls in love with a woman named Ariadne. He tragically discovers, however, that she is
his half-sister. Thus, his home island makes him realize once again the imperfect, as well as the
non-insular, quality of life even there.

What is most interesting about Prevelakis’s trilogy from the perspective of place awareness
and cultural identities is that Yiorgakis narrates the story of his development as a writer not only in
terms of his contact with various people and ideas, but also with respect to his relationship to nature
and place. He begins describing his awareness of nature when he leaves his coastal, comparatively
urban, hometown to accompany Aunt Rousaki to her mountain village of Pigi. As they make their
journey by donkey, Aunt Rousaki celebrates and points out to Yiorgakis the beauty of blossoming
wildflowers—”donkey thistles” [γαϊδουράγκαθα]—and Yiorgakis observes the flora—honesuckle,
wild roses, basil, and yellow jasmine—that decorate the yards of rural homes (1968:40). As they
continue, Yiorgakis grows curious about other wildflowers he sees and asks Aunt Rousaki if she
knows what they are. She expresses her shock to learn that her nephew does not know what mallow
[μολόχα] is, one of the wild greens most widely used by rural Greeks for food and medicine.
Yiorgakis attributes his ignorance to his education:
I didn’t know [mallow], even if my spirit/intellect [πνεύμα] had an insatiable appetite. For each and every one of the earth’s “little stars” that I had asked the teacher in town about, she told me, “It’s a little flower.” “What little flower?” “A little flower!” I always remained with my hunger. (Prevelakis 1968:41)

Yiorgakis contrasts the folk’s knowledge of Crete’s wildflowers with the comparative ignorance of a schoolteacher in town. He indicates that he discerns a connection between awareness of the landscape and the possession of a language for distinguishing and naming its features.

Yiorgakis’s rural education under Aunt Rousaki continues throughout the first volume. For example, he begins learning about many of the processes involved in food production and consumption. Yiorgakis volunteers to take over the gardening and other rural chores that Rousaki’s son was responsible for before he left for war. She teaches him “outdoor chores” [ξωτικές δουλειές] (1968:61), how to harvest grapes, prune trees, and sheer sheep. She tells him about the importance of the living earth, that he should kill not even an ant when there is no purpose for doing so. She explains how various animals mate to reproduce, and rejoices that the birds eat some of the fruit that people grow for themselves. At one point, she mentions something about being “out foraging for vrouves,” using the Cretan idiomatic word for wild mustard greens. Yiorgakis can not understand what his aunt has to do with vrouves until she explains that she herself goes around collecting them from the wild. Again he comments on his ignorance:

O κόσμος που είχα να γνωρίσω μ’έκανε κιόλας να σαστίζω. Τις ήξερα τις βρούβες, είχα μωρίσει το μέλι που ξεχύνουν όταν τις βράζουν. Μα πως πηγάνουν οι γυναίκες πλαγία και τις μαξέψουν, δεν τό έχει βάλει ο νους μου. Θαρρούσα πως τις κηπεύουν σαν τα λάχανα.

Subsequently, Aunt Rousaki tells him he still has a lot to learn about food. She lures him into a trap by asking him if he knows what tree looks like the tree that potatoes grow on. Presumably,
Yiorgakis is aware of the purist Greek word for potato, *geomilo* [γεωμηλό], literally “earth-apple,” because he responds to her with confidence, “Like the apple tree!” Aunt Rousaki smiles and tells him that “the potato is grown from seed and taken from the ground with a hoe” (1968:37). In this instance, Yiorgakis expands his apprehension of the connection between place awareness and language by learning that knowing the names is not, by itself, sufficient for understanding actual processes. Also, he learns the notion of humans as stewards, as opposed to masters, of the earth:

> For her, the earth was a living creature: it caught cold, it got fevers, it grew fast and big in other times a plowman and a person who sows, and at other times a harvester and a gatherer. (Prevelakis 1968:264-265)

Aunt Rousaki teaches Yiorgakis not only about the earth below but also the sky above. She teaches him the names of, and how to recognize, various constellations by narrating their associated myths:

> —*Ητανε μια φορά ένας ξενιάς που είχε δυο καματερά. Δυο κλέφτες πήγαν και του τά ήλεγαν. Μα εκείνος τούς παίρνει την κυνήγιο, ακλονύτα καταπόδι η γυναίκα του, με το μωρό τους στην αγκάλη της, και παραπίσω ο υπηρέτης… Τους βλέπεις που τρέχουν εκεί πάνω;*  
>  
> *Μου έδειχνε στο μεσουρανό ένα συμπεθεριό άστρα, όπου ξεχώρισα το ξενιάς τα καματέρα, τους δύο κλέφτες, αποπίσω το ξενιάς με τη γυναίκα του (μα το μωρό δεν το ξεχώρισα), και παραπίσω τον υπηρέτη.*  
>  
> —*Αυτά τ’ άστρα, παιδί μου, τα λέμε Εφτά Αδέρφια. Μα τα λέγουν κι Αναποδοκάραβο, γιατί αν κοιτάξεις μόνο τα μποτιτήνα, μοιάζουν με καράβι αναποδογυρισμένο. Τα λέγουν κι Αλετροπόδα, γιατί μοιάζουν και με αλέτρι… Βλέπεις τη χερολάβα, το σταβάρι και το ποδάρι του αλετρού;*  
> —*Αυτά βλέπω.*  
>  
> —*Τα λέγουν κι Αμάζι του Δαμιά, επειδή μοιάζουν και με αμάζι. Το βλέπεις το τιμόνι και το κηπόνι; Ζερβά είναι το τιμόνι, δεξία το αμάζοκουτι.*  
> —*Ναι! Ναι!*

> “Once there was a plowman who had two oxen. Two thieves went and stole them from him. But he started chasing them, with his wife following right behind him, with their baby in her arms, and behind them the servant… Can you see them running up there?”  
>  
> She showed me a bunch [συμπεθεριό] of stars, in which I could make out the pair of oxen, the two thieves, and behind them the plowman with his wife (but the baby I couldn’t make out), and behind them the servant.
“We call those stars, my child, the Seven Brothers. But they also call them Upside-down-ship, because if you look only at the front ones, they look like a ship turned upside down. They also call them Plowshare, because they look like a plow… Can you see the plowtail, the beam, and the plowshare?”

“I see them.”

“They also call them David’s Chariot, because they look like a chariot. Can you see the steering pole and the box? The steering rod is on the left and the box on the right.”

“Yes! Yes!” (Prevelakis 1968:143)

Later, however, Loizos Damolinos challenges Yiorgakis’s folk education with a modern point of view. He teaches Yiorgakis the scientific names of the stars as a means of “correcting” what he learned from his aunt:

—Εἶπες πρωτύτερα, ξακολούθησε ο Λοίζος, πως έβλεπες τα Εφτά Αδέρφια, τον Αποστέρηση, το Βοσκό και την Αίγα… Είναι η μόνη φορά που θέλω να διορθώσω το μάθημα της θείας σου. Τα ονόματα που σου έμαθε—ας είναι νόστιμα σαν το ψωμί!—μετατρέπουν τον ουρανό που έχουμε αποσάμω σας. Τον κάνουν κομμάτι από τη Γη μας. Θα θέλει να ξέρεις τ’άστρα με τα ονόματα που τους δίνει η Επιστήμη· αυτά έχουν το μυστήριο! Τα Εφτά Αδέρφια να παρέχουν μεγάλη Αρκτό, τον Αποστέρηση Αφροδίτη, τον Ιορδάνη Ποταμό Γαλαξία, το Βοσκό με την Αίγα Αλταιρ και Βέγα… Τι σημασία έχει; θα μου πεις. Τιν πιο μεγάλη, αν θες να μπεις στην ψυχή της γλώσσας! Κάθε πράμα έχει ένα όνομα. Αν σκούπες και του το ψηφικό, ανοίγει σαν λουλούδι, σκάζει σαν όριμος καρπός. Λυτρώνεται, λυτρώνει!

“You said before,” continued Loizos, “how you saw the Seven Brothers, the Evening Star, the Shepherd and the Goat… This is the only time I want to correct your aunt’s lesson. The names she taught you—even if they are as tasty as bread!—make the sky we have above us small. They make it a part of our Earth. I would like you to know the stars with the names which Science gives them; they hold the mystery! Call the Seven Brothers Ursa Major, the Evening Star Venus, the Jordan River the Galaxy, the Shepherd with the Goat Altair and Vega… ‘What difference does it make?’ you will ask. The greatest, if you want to get into the soul of language! Every thing has one name. If you bend down and you whisper it to it, it opens like a flower, it bursts like a ripe fruit. It is liberated [λυτρώνεται] and it liberates!” (Prevelakis 1968:239)

The most important lesson here for Yiorgakis, though, is not the names of the stars. Loizos’s attempt to “correct” Rousaki teaches him the greater lesson that place awareness, insofar as it is cultivated or expressed in terms of human languages, is a contested issue. If his encounters with Aunt Rousaki made him aware of the difference between a more general (“little flower”) and a more detailed (“mallow”) knowledge of landscape, his discussion with Loizos reveals to him that not all versions of specific knowledge are in agreement with—or even necessarily tolerate—one another. Furthermore, such differences are replete with their own contradictions. The nation’s educated elite,
drawing on the modern discourse of science, dismisses not only the views of, but also the names used by, local folk regarding place. Yet, Greek national culture simultaneously embraces the folk’s vernacular as an authentic language. Loizos’s remarks continue to illustrate this contradiction clearly to Yiorgakis. Upon dismissing Rousaki, Loizos elaborates on the importance of recognizing things with their most authentic names, praising language as “the most respectable divinity” and claiming that the names of the stars are more worthy of worship than are the stars themselves. “Without language,” he says, “the creation [πλάση] would remain mute […] Whoever could stand on this terrace, day or night, and name everything in sight, I would call my teacher” (1968:240). Yet, although he just dismissed the local vernacular in the name of modern science, Loizos now praises it as well:

Loizos tells Yiorgakis that to be a poet is to make people recognize things by their true names, but he does not indicate any criteria for such “truth”:

Thus, Loizos’s simultaneous criticism and adoration of the vernacular in his lecture on the importance of names exposes Yiorgakis to national folkism’s ambivalent stance toward the local folk. Thus, from this point forward, Yiorgakis will realize that place awareness, insofar as it is
constituted by and constitutive of language, is never simply a matter of individual place awareness—of a socially unmediated relationship between human and nature. The words he will later choose as a writer to name the Cretan landscape, for example, will also connote something about his identification with various groups or discourses. In particular, it will speak to his identification, or not, with his various Cretan cohabitants.

Even as an adolescent, Yiorgakis is plagued by the question of whether he identifies with “tradition” or “modernity.” In terms of place, this translates into the question of whether he imagines himself in terms of a rural Cretan folk identity, or in terms of a “cosmopolitan” urban identity. This is especially evident when Loizos’s city-bred niece Aliki comes to stay in the mountain village. Unlike village girls, Aliki has reddish blond hair, wears pants, keeps her blouse open all the way to mid-breast, and behaves in accordance with European decorum. When she speaks Greek to Loizos she freely uses French expressions like “Bonjour,” and Loizos calls her by the French Alice [Δήλις] instead of Aliki. When she meets Yiorgakis for the first time, she asks him if he too is from the city. In part because he wants to tell her what she does not want to hear, and in part because he feels within him that it is true, he tells her he is not from the city, but that he is a “villager” (or peasant) [χωριτής] (1968:152). When Loizos reminds him that he has in fact only been in the village for a very short time, Yiorgakis stubbornly insists that he is a villager, and states that his father was descended from Pigi. In the very same meeting, however, Yiorgakis reveals that he still feels that he partly identifies with his urban roots. When Aliki uses a very modern-sounding phrase, Yiorgakis feels both annoyed and “overjoyed” at the same time (1968:153). Indeed, Yiorgakis himself will soon speak to Loizos in the polite second-person plural that cosmopolitan Greeks adopted in imitation of the French:

—Επιτρέψετε να σας ρωτήσω τι κάνει η ανησυχία σας;
—Μπράβο! Βλέπω δε λησμόνησες τους τρόπους της πολιτείας…

“Would you permit me to ask you how your niece is doing?”
Nevertheless, Yiorgakis tries to prove to Aliki that he truly is a villager by showing her his flock. She is uninterested, though, and is preoccupied with her own abstract thoughts. When Yiorgakis gets angry at her indifference, she tells him that if he were not a villager [χωρικός] he would understand. He grows angry and tells her that it is she who can not understand his world, because she is from the city. His “learned” manner of speech, though, almost betrays his city roots to her, and she asks him, “Are you really a villager?” (1968:158). When she sees him dressed in the traditional rural clothing of Aunt Rousaki’s son, though, she tells him, “You really are a villager” (1968:178). On a later occasion, when a village woman tells Yiorgakis that village men should be like stallions, and that love is supposed to be like the fiery sex of a stallion and a mare, Yiorgakis decides that perhaps he is not a villager: “I, who had once told Aliki with pride, ‘I’m a villager!’ I saw now that I was of a different race after all” (1968:262). This realization, moreover, makes him think that the only thing left for him to do is to become a poet.

If during his adolescent years in Crete, Yiorgakis realizes and begins negotiating his connection to nature and place in terms of a regional folk identity, then as a young man in Aegina, together with his mentor Loizos, he is increasingly exposed to an approach to place in terms of national identity. Prevelakis builds on earlier references to working in the fields and gardening as a means for conveying this. Upon attempting to escape the corruption of the university and politics in Athens by moving to Aegina, Loizos—now in his fifties—begins taking care of a pine tree. When Yiorgakis finds Loizos pulling out the dry needles from the only pine tree in the field around their house, he interprets it as “the act of a sage who becomes connected [μοσφοσται, literally: becomes brothers] with his new environment” (1971:82). He sees it as an act of individual place awareness. As more than a week passes and Loizos is still taking care of the tree, Yiorgakis reinterprets his mentor’s behavior in terms of a sense of fellowship with nature—love for the tree—but also in terms of an exercise in patience “which would put him right into the island’s slow pace” (1971:83). In other words, he now begins to see Loizos’s place awareness in terms of cohabitation, insofar as Loizos is trying to connect with both nature and the rhythms of local life. Finally, though, Loizos reveals his intentions to Yiorgakis explicitly in terms of a nation-centered
pedagogical project. Loizos says that the modern world operates at scales of time and space that are of an unprecedented magnitude, and that are of a larger order than the operations of the human body. He implies that his exercise in patience is meant to resist such larger-than-human scales, and then says that he is collecting, “needle by needle, a few thoughts on Greek nature” (1971:84). He tells Yiorgakis that, as his mentor and as a substitute for the professors he left behind in Athens, he will tell him what those thoughts are once he has finished collecting them together. Yiorgakis, however, is overwhelmed by Loizos’s plans and wishes to retreat from such an abstract project. He wishes instead that he could recover “the forthrightness and sincerity of the senses, the innocence of a child” (1971:88).

Yet, the pine tree is but the first step in Loizos’s project. Here, “on the margins of society” (85), Loizos sets out to plant a garden in the manner of that of Alcinous in Homer’s Odyssey, because referred to there “are the trees that are suited to our place and which, all year long, give us the gift of their fruit” (1971:106). Loizos seems to conflate a local ecological awareness with national identity. He conflates the essentially political notion of “our place” [ο τόπος μας] as a national geographical designation with biological-ecological facts regarding which trees grow there. He also announces to Yiorgakis some of his “thoughts on Greek nature.” Loizos says that the reason he loves Greek nature, apart from the fact that it gave birth to him and nourished him, is that it is not characterized by extremes:

Η ελληνική φύση δε γνωρίζει τα μεγάλα σαρκοβόρα, τα κάτι, τα ερπετά και τα έντομα της λόχιμος. Η πανίδα της αποτελείται κυρίως από κατοικίδια, και τον επίφοβο λύκο, η φυσική οικονομία τον έκαμε να υποτεθεί σ’ εξυπνάδα.

Greek nature knows nothing of large carnivorous beasts, lizards, or insects of the thicket. Its fauna is comprised mainly of the domesticated, and the natural economy has made the formidable wolf lacking in intelligence. (Prevelakis 1971:109-110)

In romantic-nationalist fashion, moreover, he explains that by wandering in nature, he rediscovers the source of his ancestors’—the ancient Greeks’—culture. He appreciates the myths for interpreting nature they bequeathed to him because they illustrate and explain the eternal “tame”
characteristics of Greek nature (1971:109). Loizos emphasizes, moreover, the diachronic
distinctiveness of Greek nature by alluding to one of its reflections in culture, Homer’s *Odyssey*:

> Αν ήθελα να δείξω με μιαν εικόνα ποιός είναι ο βίος του Ελλήνα, θα διάλεγα κείνη την αρχαία αγγειογραφία που παριστάνει το σφηνογένος Δίωνυσον να έρχεται με το καρπισμένο κλήμα για παιδί. Κι αν ήρθεται στον νομό ένας άγιος περίπλοκος του Οδυσσέα, το δικό του να καράβε—μην το γεχνάς!—θαλασσοδέρνεται μακριά από τα νερά της Ελλάδας. Ο πολυπλάνητος χτυπείται ανάμεσά στους Κίκονες και τους Λαστρυγόνες, κι από και στους Κύκλωπες, στους Λαστρυγόνες, στη νησί της Κύρικης… Αλλά μόλις πατάει ελληνικό χώμα, στη χώρα των Φαιάκων, τα τέρατα εξαφανίζονται, και κάτω από τ’ απολλόνια φώτα, προβάλλει να τον υποδέχεται η βασιλοποιόλα Ναυσίκα, ανθρώπινη και θνητή, που κάνει την μπουγάδα της στην άκροποταμιά.

If I were to illustrate with one image what is the life of a Greek, I would choose that ancient vase painting that shows wedge-bearded Dionysos sailing with a fruiting grape vine as his sail. And should the wild circumnavigation of Odysseus come to your mind, don’t forget that his ship was sea-beaten far away from the waters of Greece. The great wanderer gets knocked around by the Cicones and the Lotus Eaters, and then by the Cyclops, and by the Laestrygonians on the island of Circe… But as soon as he steps on Greek soil, in the land of the Phaecians, the beasts all disappear, and below Apollonian lights, out comes the princess Nausicaa to welcome him, human and mortal, doing her laundry on the edge of a river. (Prevelakis 1971:110-111)

Loizos’s largely pedagogical goals for the garden entail building on a phenomenological understanding and appreciation of Greek nature. On the one hand, Loizos wants his garden to serve in the future as a means for teaching all of this to future children who will encounter it. It should possess all of the right qualities for teaching them about Greek identity through an awareness of and sense of connection to harmonious Greek nature:

> Εκείνοι που θα μια διαδεχθούν σ’ αυτό το σπίτι θα περισυμβάλουν κάτω από τις απόδειξες και τις ρογδιές, τις μπλές, τις σκιές και τις ελιές. Θα καληφερίζουν εμάς τον τοιχώμα. Αυτή θα είναι η ιδανική αμοιβή μας… Αν αποκτήσουν παιδία, τα παιδία τους θα τα παιδεύει ο κήπος μας, προτού καταστρέψουν τα πρώτα τους λογάκια. Γιατί θα έχει τη δύναμη να παιδεύει τα παιδία ο κάλλος γειτόνων του σιτιού με την οικιοτήτα, με την απουσία κάθε μιστηρίου, και με την ταξιά του. Αν ο κήπος μας μελέτη να ξαφνιάζει κάποιο-κάποι τα παιδία με τα μικρά του θαύματα, αυτό δε θα τα διώχνει από κοντά του; το ενάντιο, θα τα τραβάει να τον ξαναβρίσκουν καθημερινά.

Those who will occupy this house after us will walk among the pear trees and the pomegranates, the apple trees, the fig trees, and the olive trees. They will salute those of us who planted them. That will be our ideal reward… If they have children, our garden will educate them, even before they have learned to say their first little words. Because the good neighbor of the house will have the power to educate the children: with its familiarity, the
absence of anything mysterious, and with its order. If our garden ends up surprising the
children every now and then with its little miracles, this will not push them away from it.
On the contrary, it will pull them even closer so they can continue discovering them every
day. (Prevelakis 1971:106-107)

Thus, Loizos intends his garden to contribute to the nationalization of future children. Not only
will it provide them with their first encounters with “the plants and animals of the homeland,” its
demonstration of ecological interconnectedness will ensure national patriotism (1971:107). In other
words, it will serve as a living model of the romantic-nationalist notion that a people are organically
connected to their territory:

—Αρμονία με τη φύση, σύνδεση των εμψύχων με τα ύψωμα! Η οικειότητα με τη φύση, η
tέλεια σύνδεση του φυτού με το χόμα που το τρέφει, προετοιμάζει τον Έλληνα να γίνει
ο υπερασπιστής της πατρίδας του θα μπορούσα να πω, να υψωθεί από τη Φύση στην
Ιστορία.

Harmony with nature, the union of the living and the nonliving! Familiarity with nature,
the perfect bond of the plant with the soil that nourishes it, [all] begin to prepare the Greek
to become the defender of his homeland, to ascend, I could say, from Nature to History.
(Prevelakis 1971:111-112)

Like a work of art, the garden’s “comfortable orderliness” will have an impact on the young
Greek’s spirit/intellect by making “him understand little by little the organic fate of living beings,
their internal determinism [την οργανική μοίρα των πλασμάτων, την εσωτερική τους
νομοτέλεια]” (1971:108). This understanding, in turn, will prepare the child to pursue artistic
creation.

In the meantime, Loizos wants his garden to serve Yiorgakis as a means for cultivating him
as a national literary artist. Echoing the exhortations of Yannopoulos and other Greek aesthetic
nationalists, he encourages Yiorgakis to take the distinctive characteristics of the garden as the
source of his work:

Κοίτα τούτη τη φτεινή γη! Ξεχωρίζεις τα κόκαλα και τα νεύρα της; Ο ήλιος έχει
κατακάψει τη σάρκα της. Κοίτα τα ταπεινά βουνά! Θαύμασε τη σαφήνεια και την
πνευματικότητα της δομής τους. Μελέτησε τα χαμόδεντρα και τ’ αγριολούλουδα!
Look at this flimsy earth! Can you tell the difference between its bones and its nerves? The
sun has burned up its flesh. Look at the humble mountains. Admire the clarity and the
Greek nature, as represented by the garden, should provide the starting point for Yiorgakis’s “noble” quest to become an author who will portray the nation’s identity.

Loizos’s plan for his garden to inspire Yiorgakis succeeds, but only in part. Loizos’s discussions about the garden and Greek nature indeed arouse ecstatic feelings in Yiorgakis about his relationship to the physical environment, as he achieves “a united consciousness of the outside world and of [himself], a hitherto unknown feeling of affliction and at the same time bliss” (1971:114). But they also wake in Yiorgakis vivid memories of Crete and, especially, his time in rural Crete with Aunt Rousaki. Furthermore, all of this helps Yiorgakis realize that he has a deep emotional attachment to the island of his childhood:

 [...] at that moment, I had truly returned to myself, rediscovering Crete. My soul, like a rainbow, had one limb stepping on the island which gave birth to me and the other on the island that welcomed me. Beneath the multicolored arched bridge that symbolizes the reconciliation of the Creator with his creation, the world I had abandoned was boiling like sinful Babylon. (Prevelakis 1971:116)

Yiorgakis agrees with Loizos that a return to nature can serve as a means for sparking his future literary creativity. He is grateful to Loizos for helping him find himself, for helping him “throw off the corruption [μόλεμα] of the city” (1971:171). But, at the same time, Yiorgakis does not simply embrace the dream of becoming a national writer. After all, he realizes that he feels that he belongs to and is inspired specifically by Crete: Crete gives him a “place to stand” (1971:266). Moreover, in recollecting the down-to-earth spirit of his Aunt Rousaki, Yiorgakis senses that Loizos’s abstract, idealistic hopes for him to become a national author may harbor other dangers as well.

This is not the only instance in which Yiorgakis’s needs and preoccupations differ from Loizos’s obsession with national culture. For example, in the wake of his early discussion with
Loizos about the stars, Yiorgakis’s realization that place awareness is not wholly a matter of individual place awareness does not prevent him from also contemplating the creation in such terms. Yiorgakis sees the stars one night and senses that, in addition to being named by human languages, they also have their own language. They appear to him to possess an “enigmatic” language, (1971:196), a “secret/mystical language [μυστική γλώσσα] all their own” that he desires to read or interpret (1971:170). Unlike Loizos, for whom the stars themselves are insignificant compared to the “true” names given to them by humans, Yiorgakis allows for moments in which an individual human might “communicate” with them without human language, without the linguistic mediation of regional, national, scientific, or any other discourse. On another occasion, while swimming in the sea and experiencing an epiphany, Yiorgakis privileges the “things” themselves over the names given to them by humans:

Αυτό ήταν πραγματικότητα! Μέσα στο διάφανο νερό, ξεχώριζα τα ψάρια που διαβαίνουν, τα ήχερα τα περισσότερα με τα ονόματά τους, όμως ο νους μου τ’ αγνοούσε.

This was reality! In the transparent water, I would make out the fish swimming around, I knew most of them by name, but my mind ignored them. (Prevelakis 1971:172)

Loizos, on the other hand, would become ecstatic reading the names of fish on a price list in a local newspaper, and would try to keep conversations going with local fishermen for as long as possible because of his “insatiable appetite for words” (1971:173). “If he didn’t know how to baptize a thing with its name,” states Yiorgakis, “he would not recognize that it had life: His reality began with nomenclature” (1971:173). For Loizos, reality itself begins with the social experience of language. For Yiorgakis, it begins in non-linguistic—even mystical—experience of things. Thus, Yiorgakis sees himself as using “the power of names” as an author to resurrect the things of the world (1971:173).

These experiences give Yiorgakis hope, moreover, that he might escape—by returning to Crete—or transcend—by communing with nature—the hopelessness and alienation generated by the social and political realities of his age, and that he might express this all this in his writing. In this respect, he appears not unlike Loizos who wants to transcend such realities cognitively and who
strives to distill some national essence from his experiences and in his teachings. Yiorgakis’s hopes in coming to Aegina were, after all, a matter of escaping contemporary socio-political realities, the “horror [φρίκη] of [his] century” (1971:233). Now, he hopes that by returning to Crete he can relive and resurrect his earlier experiences with Aunt Rousaki. He aspires to do what Aunt Rousaki “says” he will in a poem he writes:

Θα ξαναβρε την Κρήτη, θα πετάξεις το αταύριστο λαζάρι στους ανέμους· και σαν την πεταλούδα από τη λάσπη την ξερή που την έκλεισε, θ’ ανοίξεις φτέρο στο φως, εκεί που το πρωτόδες!

You’ll find Crete again, you’ll throw off the unbecoming cocoon to the winds and like the butterfly from the dry mud that closed it in, you’ll open a wing to the light, there where you first saw it! (Prevelakis 1971:265-266)

Even Loizos recognizes that the “irresistible images” of Aunt Rousaki that are crystallizing in Yiorgakis’s imagination are unimaginable except in the context of Crete and predicts his eventual return to the island (1971:233). Yiorgakis’s return to Crete is driven in part by nostalgia for a lost time and place that was in his estimation better than the contemporary world. It is also driven by recognition that neither truths nor falsehoods but rather “Myths” provide the best foundation for the cultural development of a young person (1971:239). From this perspective, Yiorgakis hopes not merely to escape to, but also to learn from Crete—its myths and its symbols—in which he places more faith than he does Loizos’s rationalism. Yiorgakis’s nostalgia for place encourages him to participate as a writer in the construction of contemporary myths by drawing on those lived in another time and place. In other words, his nostalgia for the “lost Paradise” provides a foundation for literary cohabitation in the present (1971:262).

References to place, nature, and the act of naming make it clear that Loizos cannot save Yiorgakis—let alone himself—by finding a path for transcending contemporary socio-political alienation and hopelessness through philosophy, enlightenment, and absolute clarity [αιόλου τη διαφάνεια] (1971:239). Also, they illustrate the difference between Loizos’s repeated failure to
convince himself that artistic creativity is not futile, and Yiorgakis’s enduring faith in the value of literary pursuits. Yiorgakis has achieved some kind of place awareness: agriculturally and ecologically as Aunt Rousaki’s adopted child, and spiritually during moments of mystical experience. Loizos, on the other hand, “who had never planted a single seed in his whole life,” has only recently become interested in nature and gardening, and only insofar as it can serve as a means for his larger nation-centered quests (1971:176). Working in the garden does not appear to be significant to Loizos in terms of an agricultural awareness, say. At best, it provides him with an organic metaphor for understanding Yiorgakis’s need to feel rooted in place, “to seek soil in which to take root” (1971:244). Because Loizos approaches place awareness exclusively in terms of identity, only upon leaving Aegina does he realize the futility of his grand plans for the garden. After working maniacally for weeks to clear the field of rocks and after planting seedlings, he ends up in dismay. He realizes that once he leaves the island, “it won’t take more than two weeks for [the garden] to dry out completely” (1971:245). So much for Greece’s future children. Loizos was so focused on the socio-political significance and purpose of his garden that he never stopped to consider seriously the simple fact that it would not even survive physically. Nor does Loizos become attached to the garden as an end in itself so as to decide to stay and nurture it. How could he? As Yiorgakis suggests, it is merely further “proof” to him of life’s meaninglessness:

Η πρόσφατη αφοσίωσή του στην κηπουρική μπορούσε να παραπλανήσει κανέναν. Αλλά η μετριωροσονή ίσα-ίσα των σκοπών του έδειχνε, σε μένα που τον ήξερα, πόσο αβιάσταχτος ήταν ο πόνος του και πόσο μεγάλη η μηδενιστική του μανία.

His temporary dedication to gardening might have fooled many people. But it was exactly the unpretentiousness of his plans that indicated, to me who knew him, just how unbearable his pain was and how great his nihilistic mania. (Prevelakis 1971:252)

His national rhetoric notwithstanding, Loizos is a modern, displaced/placeless example of alienation par excellence, an “expatriate” and an “exile” even in his own nation and on his own island (1968:215), an individual for whom all places are the same (1971:267). Thus, his garden becomes just one of his many failed attempts at achieving philosophical, not to mention national, transcendence.
In contrast, Yiorgakis—again in a garden—comes to his fullest realization of his purpose as a writer through a particular experience of place awareness. When both men are back in Crete years after their time on Aegina, Yiorgakis undergoes a mystical experience in the garden outside of Loizos’s house. (It is not clear if this garden is actually the work of Loizos.) On his way to visit Loizos, the sight of rural Cretans working the fields and the scent of wild fig trees on the edge of a vineyard remind him of his happy childhood. As he nears the house, he takes the path among the prickly pears. His feet sink “into a soft land, half soil and half sand” and he notices the chirping of cicadas and the screeching of sparrows all around him (1968:168). Standing at the gate of a vegetable garden, he begins to enter a moment of ecstasy:

And a tame trust—perhaps because it was the hour of sundown, perhaps because of the quietness of the place—made me flutter. A sudden love, love without an object, unless love itself was the object, uplifted my being. (Prevelakis 1966:168)

Yiorgakis enters through the gate into the “Mystical Garden” overwhelmed by “ineffable joy [ανείπωτη ευδαιμονία], as if [he] had before him an archetype of the heavenly world” (1966:168-169). He observes the vegetables, irrigation ditches, and sunflowers, and notices the soil sizzling and a colony of ants almost drowning from the irrigation water. At once, though, he also becomes preoccupied with understanding the significance of language and naming. Using the word logos, which signifies both the linguistic “word” and the rationalistic “reason,” he asks, “What logos can contain you, Mystical Garden? What language can express you, unique elation?” (1966:169). In the next moment, he finds himself uttering the vernacular words of the vegetables—eggplants, beans, tomatoes, peppers—that he sees in the garden. He then comes to his most important realization in the entire trilogy about language and place. He understands that the names are “the means by which to identify with things, as the tools for penetrating their skin and getting into their flesh” (1966:169). He no longer simply privileges the “things themselves” over the names. Nor does he understand the experience of mystical communion with nature as a wholly
non-linguistic, individual experience between himself and his surroundings. Even communion with
to master the language of the folk, and mastering this language requires worshipping the things it
nature can entail identifying with it through the social construct of language—in this case the local
language of his cohabitants. He discerns “the power of names” to connect the local to the infinite,
visible to the invisible:

O ταπεινός κόσμος που είχα μπροστά στα μάτια μου μού προξενούσε έναν ιλίγγο σαν
απέραντος Γαλαξίας. Τα φωτά βυθίζανε στο θάμμος, αποκαλύπτοντας τ’ αόρατα. Όπως
το στάρι που συλλέξαμε στους τάφους αποδείχνει με το φύτρο που πετά την αθάνατη
ζωή του, έτσι και το κάθε όνομα. Μόλις το τριγύρισα με χώμα και νερό, μόλις το
παράδοσα του ήλιου, η δύναμή του έσπασε το τσόφλι του. Είχα βρεθεί μπροστά σε μιαν
ακατανόητη επιγραφή, και νά σου! από έναν καλότυχο συνδυασμό των σημείων, είδα να
πηδούν μπροστά στα μάτια μου άλογα και λεβέτια, καράβια και πολεμιστές, θρόνοι και
θεοί. Αυτή είναι η δύναμη των ονομάτων!

The humble world that I had in front of my eyes made me dizzy as if it were a boundless
Galaxy. The visible things sunk into the daze, revealing the invisible. Just like the wheat we
collected at the graves [of antiquity] proves there is eternal life with the seed it sheds, so
does every name. As soon as I covered it with soil and water, as soon as I gave it over to the
sun, its power broke through its husk. I had found myself in front of an incomprehensible
epigraph, and voila! Through a fortuitous combination of signs, I saw jumping before my
eyes horses and dixies, ships and warriors, thrones and gods. This is the power of names!
(Prevelakis 1966:170)

Yiorgakis’s experience gives him a temporary sense of confidence and certainty, as well as
spiritual and psychological peace. Reflecting upon it, he reaches certain conclusions about his work
as a writer. First, he decides that enlightenment is a matter of intuiting a hidden reality behind all
things, from a loaf of bread to a rock or a plant. Second, he understands that his native language
(the Cretan idiom), because it reflects the world as he and his cohabitants experience it, can serve as
a “source” [δεξιμενή] of his writing (1966:176). He then formulates a position on language as a
poet with respect to both his cohabitants and phenomenological place awareness. The poet’s job is
to master the language of the folk, and mastering this language requires worshipping the things it
signifies:

Η άσκηση της τέχνης μου μ’ έκαμε ικανό να εννοήσω το παράγγελμα του ποιητή:
“Υποτάξου πρώτα στη γλώσσα του λαού, και αν είσαι αρκετός, κυριεύει την.” Υποταγή
καμώνουνται οι περισσότεροι, αλλά πόσοι γνωρίσαν στ’ αλήθεια τη γλώσσα του λαού;
Δε μιλώ για το μηχανισμό της ή τον πλούτο της, αλλά για την ψυχή της. Στην ψυχή της
λαϊκής γλώσσας εισχωρείς, μόνο όταν έχεις λατρέψει τα αισθήματα.
The exercise of my art made me capable of understanding the calling of the poet: “Subject yourself first to the language of the folk, and if you can, conquer it.” Most people just pretend to subject themselves to it, but how many of them really know the language of the folk? I’m not talking about its mechanics or its richness, but its soul. You get into the soul of the vernacular language only when you have first worshipped the things themselves. (Prevelakis 1966:181)

For Yiorgakis, true appreciation of a place requires trying to penetrate the language of its inhabitants. Also, true appreciation of the language has less to do with its syntax, grammar, or even its “richness” than it does with appreciation of the tangible entities and processes it signifies. In other words, Yiorgakis values the local vernacular not so much because it is an authentic expression of a continuous cultural tradition, but because the people who use it to name that place actually inhabit and are ostensibly concerned about it. He discovers that something was missing from Loizos’s earlier directive to him to worship each name: an equally necessary and interrelated need to worship the world itself that is being named. Appropriately, Yiorgakis’s account of the “Mystical Garden” ends with his going to sleep outdoors in the sand while continuing to name things:

Ο νους μου είχε πάψει να δουλεύει, όμως φρεινόμουν ένα θάμμος απ’ όλη την κλίμακα του μπλέ. Σταχολούλουδα, μολόχες, στροφολίθοι και αμέθυστοι γυρίζαν αποσάνοι μου καθώς τροχός. Κι ένα άτρεμο αλόνι τον περίζωνε ολοτρόγυρα, κίτρινο σα ζαφορά…

My mind had stopped working, yet I was rejoicing in amazement at the whole scale of the color blue. Woundworts, mallows, slate, and amethyst were rotating above me like a wheel. And a firm threshing floor encircled it, yellow like saffron. (Prevelakis 1966:182)

If Loizos’s first garden in Aegina serves as a failed exercise in national identity and cognitive purity, the garden in Crete, experienced in Loizos’s absence, serves to teach Yiorgakis the interrelated importance of the names of things and the things themselves. It provides him with enough confidence and sense of purpose to pursue his mission as an author. Alienated by the “abstract” nation-centered cultural aspirations of those around him, including Loizos, and still enamored by the “concrete” experiences of his childhood in a Cretan village, Yiorgakis finally discovers that his own goal is to appreciate both the abstract (the power of names of things) and the concrete (the things themselves), and to combine them into a literary product about that which he knows best—“the place that gave birth to [him]”—and directed at his fellow Cretan townspeople.
He decides he should not write literature aimed at expressing Greek identity, as he originally thought he should under Loizos’s influence. Instead, he should write texts that engage his Cretan cohabitants in a negotiation of contemporary values, attitudes, and practices. In light of the solidarity he feels with his fellow townspeople, he should “atone for [their] general lack of concern, and perhaps manage to wake them up from the lethargy into which they had sunk since they forgot about God” (1966:13). He should become “an example to [his] fellow-townspeople and to stand by them in their fate as mortals” (1966:156). He should do so, moreover, in a way that takes into serious consideration local traditions—the past customs of the rural periphery. By drawing upon the memories of his childhood years in Crete with Aunt Rousaki, he can “make the dead teach the living,” and reveal to himself and others “the purpose of life” (1966:10).

Unlike the romantic nationalists, Yiorgakis does not perceive his goal as holding up local traditions as examples of authentic local or national culture, nor as a means for critiquing its wild(erness) to facilitate modernization. Rather, he wants to show that the lives of the local folk can serve as models worth emulating. Like these modernizers, Yiorgakis does want to change the lives of his local cohabitants, but unlike them he takes into serious consideration the importance of certain local rural practices, attitudes, and values. He resembles, therefore, in many respects the Cretan regionalists who promote resistance to modernity in the cookbooks. Insofar as a character such as Loizos represents the corruption of local ways by modern influences, there is a sense in which Yiorgakis also engages in a politics of regional identity by appealing to the rural Cretan folk. Yet, by emphasizing that Aunt Rousaki was an exceptional example of the folk of his childhood, Yiorgakis also indicates that he does not exactly subscribe to the regionalist folkism that would view Cretan villages as organic communities worth emulating on the whole. In short, Yiorgakis’s narration of his development as a writer reaches its climax when he articulates his particular approach to poetry in terms of language, nature, place, and the folk: He should master the language of the folk, which for him entails worshipping the local environment signified by that language, and use it to engage with a local audience about their contemporary values and practices.
Notwithstanding Yiorgakis's rather climactic understanding of the relationship between literature and place, Prevelakis’s trilogy does not end with a sense of closure. Yiorgakis’s self-assurance and tranquillity continue to be disturbed and challenged by further experiences. In fact, he indicates that his cohabitants no longer take his writing seriously or understand his intentions, and in the trilogy’s last few pages, he expresses a renewed desire to leave Crete. Thus, in considering Prevelakis’s portrayal of Yiorgakis’s development as an artist in terms of nature and place, it is important not to conflate Yiorgakis’s theory of literary creativity with the theory of literature and place suggested by the trilogy as a whole. Prevelakis does not, in fact, leave readers with such a convenient theory relating language, nature, the folk, and literature. Rather, he brings to readers’ attention the inescapable and ongoing operation of various processes relating literature, place, nation, folk, and nature, implying that contemporary authors and critics should take them seriously.

Prevelakis’s theory of literature as it appears in this work can be summarized in terms of two main points. First, he establishes the inescapable and contradictory interrelatedness of place awareness and local and larger-than-local cultural identities in literary culture. Second, he implies that the unresolvable quality of their interrelatedness should serve as an inspiration to authors to negotiate ethics among their local cohabitants in ways that take local traditions seriously. In providing an account of Loizos’s and Yiorgakis’s contrasting experiences of awareness of nature and place, Prevelakis foregrounds the ways their “individual” experiences constitute, and are constituted by, various social imaginaries, including the Cretan folk of Rousaki’s village, the contemporary Cretan community that Yiorgakis takes as his primary audience, and the modern Greek nation. Loizos’s experience of nature in his garden in Aegina, for instance, is largely constituted by the discourse of national culture, and Yiorgakis’s mystical experience of the garden in Crete is constituted as much by his formative experiences among the Cretan folk and their vernacular as it is by the senses or divine inspiration. Yiorgakis’s personal experiences, in turn, provide the impetus and the raw material for his public negotiation of values and practices with his cohabitants, including, no doubt, his promotion of valuing the physical world “itself” (first learned
from Aunt Rousaki and then rediscovered in the garden in Crete). Yet, such negotiation falls for the most part on deaf ears. Thus, Prevelakis also seems to suggest that it is important for individuals to struggle in their personal lives to live through and attempt to come to terms with the unending, unresolvable tension and interplay between cultural identities and place awareness, but also to negotiate that interplay through the social—indeed, the cohabitory—process of literary creativity. After all, Yiorgakis not only pronounces in theory the importance of writing literature for the benefit of his cohabitants. As the trilogy’s first-person narrator, he has actually “written” such literature himself.

IMPLICATIONS FOR LITERARY CRITICISM

Prevelakis’s trilogy suggests something about place and literary criticism as well. First, it implies that since different cultural identities—e.g. regional, folk, urban, modern, Leftist, Christian—are always constitutive of the literary creative process, critics ought to consider them when they examine literary texts. For placed critics, in particular, it implies the importance of contemplating or analyzing literary representations or advocations of ecological place awareness in relation to local or regional cultural identities. Second (and conversely), the trilogy implies to literary critics that examinations of local or regional cultural identities ought to take into consideration place awareness as well. I will conclude this chapter by briefly elaborating on each of these implications. I can imagine, of course, critics taking any number of approaches when it comes to considering the interrelationship of cultural identities and place awareness. I do not intend, therefore, to provide an exhaustive account of the possibilities, but to begin pointing out a couple of

---

147I should note here that in the trilogy, Yiorgakis says that one of the early works he wrote was one about his hometown, “Chronicle of a Town.” Prevelakis, in fact, wrote a work with the exact same title that, in fact, does critique at one point contemporary local fishing practices that seem thoughtless from an ecological perspective. I mention this not to suggest that Prevelakis’s trilogy should be read as an autobiography, but simply to point out that if, in certain places, the distinction between the character Yiorgakis and the person Prevelakis is blurred, some of my basic claims about place awareness and place identity apparently still make sense.
practical consequences of this perspective. In Chapter 6, in my analyses of mandinadhes, I will have occasion to examine in more detail yet another way in which the interrelationship of local cultural identity and place awareness can come into play in literary texts.

I will elaborate on the first implication by referring briefly to some American writing. Keeping in mind that literary representations of ecological place awareness are interwoven with cultural identities, it is possible to compare the way many authors portray place awareness as a more-or-less socially unmediated experience between an individual and nature, whereas some others promote place awareness while also foregrounding local cultural identities. I should point out that my purpose here is not to admonish authors who portray place awareness as a socially unmediated experience and congratulate those who do otherwise. I merely wish to suggest to critics the importance of considering such aspects of literary texts. A few brief examples will illustrate what I mean.

Edward Abbey closes a chapter in his Desert Solitaire with a description of place awareness that, not unlike those of Yiorgakis, borders on the mystical:

Through half-closed eyes, for the light would otherwise be overpowering, I consider the tree, the lonely cloud, the sandstone bedrock of this part of the world and pray—in my fashion—for a vision of truth. I listen for signals from the sun—but that distant music is too high and pure for the human ear. I gaze at the tree and receive no response. I scrape my bare feet against the sand and rock under the table and am comforted by their solidity and resistance. I look at the cloud. (Abbey 1968:135)

Abbey describes a spiritual longing for transcendent truth. On the one hand, his desire is left unsatisfied: the distant sun is unattainable and the nearby tree remains silent. Still, he does receive some kind of truth: that of the real, sensed, desert landscape in which he has immersed himself. Then, in a progression of thesis-antithesis-synthesis, the “solid truth” of the sand and rock (antitheses of the sun and tree) is resolved by the cloud, which is closer than the sun, more fluid than the tree, but less tangible than both the rock and the sand. Like Yiorgakis, Abbey receives through the senses, if not the conventional transcendent truth of pure light, the truth of the landscape he inhabits. Unlike Yiorgakis, however, he does not foreground any relationship between his experience of place awareness and questions of language.
Annie Dillard, in Pilgrim at Tinker Creek, offers a likewise highly sensorial description of place awareness when she describes her encounter with a frog fallen prey to a giant water bug:

As I walked along the grassy edge of the island, I got better and better at seeing frogs both in and out of the water. I learned to recognize, slowing down, the difference in texture of the light reflected from mud bank, water, grass, or frog. Frogs were flying all around me. At the end of the island I noticed a small green frog. He was exactly half in and half out of the water, looking like a schematic diagram of an amphibian, and he didn’t jump. (Dillard 1999:7)

Whereas Abbey’s experience borders on the mystical, Dillard’s borders on the scientific. She represents her place awareness in terms of detailed observations of the landscape’s elements (mud, frog), characteristics (texture), and processes (reflection of light). She also supplements her own immediate observations with scientific knowledge obtained from books:

I had read about the giant water bug, but never seen one. “Giant water bug” is really the name of the creature, which is an enormous, heavy-bodied brown bug. It eats insects, tadpoles, fish, and frogs. Its grasping forelegs are mighty and hooked inward. It seizes a victim with these legs, hugs it tight, and paralyzes it with enzymes injected during a vicious bite. That one bite is the only bite it ever takes. Through the puncture shoot the poisons that dissolve the victim’s muscles and bones and organs—all but the skin—and through it the giant water bug sucks out the victim’s body, reduced to a juice. This event is quite common in warm fresh water. The frog I saw was being sucked by a giant water bug. (Dillard 1999:8)

Dillard represents place awareness as primarily a matter of the individual observer and the observed. She does not, for instance, emphasize the embeddedness of such awareness in the socio-ecological discourse of science (let alone its contested nature) as does Prevelakis.148

Barry Lopez, in Arctic Dreams, after describing an evening spent with a retired geologist and painter, states:

If I were a painter, I, too, would be taken with the fullness and subtle quality of the light here. You have the color balances from all twenty-four hours from which to choose, the sweeping lines of crisp desert vistas under huge prairie skies, and the rarefied air with which to work. Ice and water push the light up beneath cliffs and into other places where you

148 Indeed, the sense that scientific knowledge is universal and objective gives Dillard’s literary depictions of scientific place awareness an atomocentric hue: In order for humans to become collectively “guarantors of the reality of nature” (Evernden 1992:85), it is posited that any individual observing nature with empirical disinterest has potentially equal access to the same universal facts.
would expect to find shadows, and back into the sky where it fills the air. At certain hours the land has the resolution of a polished diamond. (Lopez 1986:226)

Thinking of the arctic landscape from the point of view of the artist, Lopez describes an aesthetic experience of place awareness. Once again, his text, like Abbey’s and Dillard’s, portrays place awareness primarily in terms of an unmediated relationship between the individual observer and the observed. Lopez does not foreground, for example, the social assumptions embedded in a painter’s particular aesthetic categories (“fullness,” “subtlety,” “resolution”). Nor does he suggest any possible or necessary connections between the landscape and a particular discourse of art, as does Loizos by promoting aesthetic nationalism.149

In contrast to Abbey, Dillard, and Lopez, some American authors do represent the experience of place awareness more explicitly in terms of social processes and cultural identities. Indeed, some describe place awareness in terms of a local cultural identity. Scott Russell Sanders’s account of an approaching tornado in his collection of essays Staying Put provides a clear example. Sanders, his wife, and two of their friends are eating outdoors on the porch of his home as the tornado nears:

Two friends arrived at our house for supper one May evening along with the first rumblings of thunder. As Ruth and I sat talking with them on our front porch, we had to keep raising our voices a notch to make ourselves heard above the gathering storm. The birds, more discreet, had already hushed. The huge elm beside our door began to sway, limbs creaking, leaves hissing. Black sponges of clouds blotted up the light, fooling the street lamps into coming on early. Above the trees and rooftops, the murky southern sky crackled with lightning. Now and again we heard the pop of a transformer as a bolt struck

149My purpose in citing these passages is not to develop a taxonomy—mystical, scientific, aesthetic—of literary representations of place awareness. The distinctions I have outlined here are rather crude and can not begin to do justice to the larger projects of each their authors. Moreover, the “categories” I have discerned in fact overlap: Lopez’s aesthetic awareness, for example, develops in a later passage into something closer to a mystical awareness:

The land retains an identity of its own, still deeper and more subtle than we can know. Our obligation toward it then becomes simple: to approach with an uncalculating mind, with an attitude of regard. To try to sense the range and variety of its expression—its weather and colors and animals. To intend from the beginning to preserve some of the mystery within it as a kind of wisdom to be experienced, not questioned. And to be alert for its openings, for that moment when something sacred reveals itself within the mundane, and you know the land knows you are there. (Lopez 1986:228, my emphasis)
the power lines in our neighborhood. The pulses of thunder came faster and faster until they merged into a continuous roar. (Sanders 1993:97)

Words and expressions like “supper,” “fooling,” and “now and again” seem to suggest the author’s identification with a regional American culture. The passage that follows makes this explicit:

We gave up on talking. The four of us, all Midwesterners teether on thunderstorms, sat down there on the porch to our meal of lentil soup, cheddar cheese, bread warm from the oven, sliced apples and strawberries. We were lifting the first spoonfuls to our mouths when a stroke of lightning burst so nearby that it seemed to suck away the air, and the lights flickered out, plunging the whole street into darkness. (Sanders 1993:98)

Sanders implies that their collective reaction to the thunderstorm is to sit down to eat anyway because they are Midwesterners. Also, most of the (probably local) food he mentions (cheddar, apples, strawberries) reinforces this image of the group as Midwesterners. As the four realize that the thunderstorm is really an approaching tornado, they reconsider their course of action:

“Maybe we should go into the basement.” Ruth suggested.  
“And leave this good meal?” one of our friends replied. 

The wail of a siren broke the stillness—not the lesser cry of ambulance or fire engine or squad car, but the banshee howl of the civil defense siren at the park a few blocks away. 

“They must have sighted one,” I said. 

“We could take the food down with us on a tray,” Ruth told our guests. 

“It’s up to you,” I told them. “We can go to the basement like sensible people, or we can sit here like fools and risk our necks.” 

“What do you want to do?” one of them asked me. 

“You’re the guests.” 

“You’re the hosts.” (Sanders 1993:98)

The individuals express their ambivalence in a conversational idiom that readers might identify with a particular region as well (e.g., Indiana, the Midwest): the slightly ironic but thoroughly polite “And leave this good meal?,” the expression of hospitality’s ambiguity in “You’re the guests” and “You’re the hosts.” Sanders portrays their reaction to nature’s tornado not as mere individuals, but as local cohabitants. He depicts place awareness as a locally culturally mediated experience. Whereas Abbey, Dillard, and Lopez represent themselves as connecting to or identifying with the
landscape as individuals, Sanders represents himself and his guests as relating to the landscape as regional inhabitants. Like Yiorgakis who comes to identify so strongly with Crete, Sanders foregrounds place awareness in terms of regional identity.

In short, literary representations of place awareness foreground local cultural identities to varying degrees. While an analysis of the potential consequences of this particular observation are beyond the scope of this dissertation, the aforementioned examples at least begin to suggest some important questions placed critics (and ecocritics in general) might want to consider: Does literature that foregrounds local identities have a greater potential for capturing a local audience? Is it in a better rhetorical position to cultivate a local audience’s sense of place? (I will begin to consider this issue in Chapter 6.) Or, does literature that downplays such identities have a potential for capturing a larger (non-local) audience? Might literature’s foregrounding of local identities (which can be essentialized) distract readers from ecology as a “scientific” project and instead promote exclusionary (localist, regionalist) attitudes and practices?

This last question brings me to the second important implication of Prevelakis’s trilogy for placed critics. In addition to indicating the importance of critical consideration of cultural identities

---

150 This is not to say that atomistic and social representations of place awareness reflect a distinction between some kind of “actual” atomistic place awareness and another kind of “actual” collective place awareness, respectively. From the perspective of the dialectical socio-ecological constructivism that I discussed in Chapter 2, all “individual” experiences of place awareness are constituted by discursive, institutional, linguistic, and other social processes, just as such social processes are constituted by the particular experiences, values, and actions of “individuals.” Thus, Abbey’s mysticism draws upon poetic traditions aspiring or purporting to represent the unrepresentable; Abbey identifies with the landscape as mystic. Dillard’s representation presumes a scientific community that constructs scientific knowledge (and the notion of “objectivity”); she relates to the environment as scientist. Lopez’s reading of the landscape appropriates (and reinscribes) certain aesthetic sensibilities that have been legitimized by art and literary culture; he connects with the landscape as artist. They can not, at least not once they use language to express themselves, relate to place strictly as individuals after all. Nevertheless, these authors do not foreground this fact, just as they do not appear to represent themselves—at least as far as these examples go—as members of a local human community, as human cohabitants of the West, Appalachia, or the Arctic, respectively. (As a corollary, there is no point in striving for or promoting one “type” of place awareness over another, either.) Rather, the brief examples I have examined simply illustrate the difference between literary texts that downplay the social aspect of place awareness and those that foreground it instead. Specifically, in the case of the latter (that is, in Sanders), the author foregrounds place awareness as, at least in part, a matter of “place identity,” consisting of the (interrelated) identity of a particular group of humans who identify and/or are identified with the place as well as the identity “of” the place in general.
in literary representations of place awareness, Prevelakis’s trilogy also shows that, considerations of identity alone remain insufficient. Indeed, Loizos fails as Yiorgakis’s mentor insofar as he does not recognize any value in nature or place beyond questions of (primarily national) identity. Yiorgakis, on the other hand, at least has the potential to succeed as a place-based writer because he recognizes value in the Cretan folk (and their language), his fellow Cretan cohabitants, and the Cretan landscape itself. The contrasting characters of Yiorgakis and Loizos serve, then, as an “argument” to place-oriented critics that literature ought to be considered in terms of both cultural identities and place awareness, since these are inescapably interrelated. Recognition that cultural identities are constructed can never “excuse” the promotion of some “pure” or “objective” place awareness in or through literary practices. Yet, many writers and critics interested in place cast their projects in just this way. Wendell Berry (1972), for example, writing about the version of regionalism he promotes, states that “[i]t would tend to substitute for the myths and stereotypes of a region a particular knowledge of the life of the place one lives in and intends to continue to live in” (67). But who decides—and how—what is a myth and what is knowledge? As David Mazel (2000) notes, taking issue with the awareness/ideology dichotomy in the context of environmentalism: “Certainly environmentalism will get nowhere in the absence of an informed consciousness. But insight can also be blindness, and there is always the danger that such an “elevation” of consciousness will abet the false awareness known as ideology” (Mazel 2000:27). Instead of privileging place awareness over cultural identities or vice versa, placed critics should interrogate the role of literature in representing and constituting local knowledge and local myth and in promoting sensorial, aesthetic, mystical, scientific or any other kind of place awareness. Placed critics should trace the interrelationships and implications of both of these aspects of human cohabitation in literary culture.151

151Moreover, as I argued in Chapter 2, placed critics should recognize the role of their own work in cohabitation. They should consider how their own texts participate in the negotiation of place awareness and cultural identity.
Interestingly, then, Prevelakis’s trilogy can be read as an argument against the subsequent place-oriented literary criticism of his own interpreters! Several critics of Cretan-born authors such as Prevelakis interpret their work strictly in terms of identity. Such criticism relies exclusively on the notion that Crete possesses its own distinctive identity. For example, Manousakis (1968) describes what he maintains are the essential characteristics of Cretan identity by mining Prevelakis’s texts as largely accurate depictions of the island and its people in various periods of history. He interprets Prevelakis’s major writings as “photographs” of Crete’s true character and identity. Critics examining Nikos Kazantzakis’s work with respect to Crete have adopted similar approaches. Elizabeth Constantinides (1985), for example, writes the following about Kazantzakis’s novel *Freedom or Death* (Kapetan Michalis):

> There is no doubt, however, that for the most authentic presentation of the “Cretan glance” we should look at Kazantzakis’ one work that is truly Cretan, whose protagonists live in Crete and are engaged in that most characteristically Cretan of all activities, struggling for their freedom. That work is *Kapetan Michalis* [...] (Constantinides 1985:33)

Constantinides takes freedom fighting to be a quintessential Cretan activity in order to assert that this particular novel is “truly Cretan.” Moreover, she assumes that because Kazantzakis has named his ultimate vision the Cretan glance, it must be most authentically portrayed in this “truly Cretan” work. Yet another example comes from Levitt’s (1980) extensive reading of Kazantzakis with respect to Crete. He treats Kazantzakis’s fiction and his *Odyssey* as modernist masterpieces that are distinct from other modernist works because Kazantzakis himself was a Cretan. Levitt adopts a static, stereotypical view of what Crete is and claims that this Crete is the determining factor behind Kazantzakis’s unique modernism: “Inevitably we return to his Cretan heritage: it must be both starting point and end of any study of his fiction, the metaphor around which all of his art and his life developed” (3).

In criticism like this, Cretan identity is reduced to a static caricature of folk tradition that does little justice to the complex issues surrounding local life. As folklorists and anthropologists have argued, and as I have attempted to demonstrate in the previous two chapters, folk traditions...
are usually invoked for particular political purposes like nationalism or regionalism (see also Handler and Linnekin 1984). Similarly, the idea of writing place-oriented literary criticism in terms of essential place identities has lost its purchase in the wake of poststructuralism and postmodernism. Perhaps the most vocal expression of this comes from Roberto Dainotto’s (2000) treatment of “literature of place.” Dainotto contends that place functions in literature negatively as ideology. He argues that a regionalist approach to literature is no better epistemologically than a nationalist one, insofar as it “hypostatizes all over again those values that were relativized by recent theory by making them seem natural to certain places” (13). Consequently, he criticizes all literary attempts to engage in place identity politics since they ground the legitimacy of their heterotopic resistance to a dominant center in terms of their local authenticity:

One should be careful in giving credence to the rumors that portray regionalism as a recuperation of “minor literature” and “marginal” voices. […] Regionalism, in a sense, is the erasure of the other, which is rewritten to fit all the expectations of a dominant culture—rewritten, namely, as “the other.” (Dainotto 2000:72)

He rails against the literature of place because it takes the question of identity away from politics, imposing identity as an absolute rooted in the authentic local (33).

As my own readings in this dissertation indicate, I agree with Dainotto’s critique of literature for its ideological perpetuation of violence insofar as it purports the rootedness of particular values. What Dainotto does not consider, however, is the notion of rootedness as a value. Prevelakis’s trilogy does not suggest so much the notion that Crete possesses a particular set of timeless, distinctive values (although we suspect that Yiorgakis wishes it did). Rather, it narrates the development of an author who struggles to come to terms with the place and community to which he feels attached: it celebrates the fact that Yiorgakis does not simply abandon that place, even though in many ways it torments him. Moreover, it knowingly values such a local approach to literary activity at a time when it is clear that legitimate literary activity is, on the whole, directed at more straightforwardly nation-centered projects or other larger-than-locally-centered political
movements like Communism. It values the fact that Yiorgakis, as an individual, feels connected to a
place and its inhabitants and consequently seeks to engage them not in a celebration of local
authenticity, but in a critique of their current ways of life.

In a sense, then, Prevelakis gives new meaning to the word “ethography,” implicitly
rethinking and problematizing what is signified by the prefix “etho-” from the word “ethos.” First,
he retains the Greek folkloric sense of ethos as “custom” or “customary practice,” especially in the
first part of the trilogy, by focusing on Aunt Rousaki and life in the mountain village. Much as in
Kondylakis’s depiction of Manolis in Bigfoot, Prevelakis celebrates the rural folk’s close proximity
to nature (e.g., farming, shepherding, respect for living organisms) and critiques its “wild” side (e.g.,
the customary vendetta). Unlike Kondylakis, though, Prevelakis also focuses on ethos in the sense
of ethics: ethos as the moral character of individuals. Kondylakis’s Manolis is merely the product of
his age group and life in the mountains, and can therefore be made to mature simply by relocating
to a town with less wild social norms. Prevelakis’s characters, however, also act according to their
own individual moral fabric. Both Loizos and Yiorgakis have experienced rural Crete and urban
modernity. Both are exposed to the “Medusa’s Head”—life’s tragic futility discernible through
reason—that ultimately lies behind every socially constructed myth and work of art. However, only
Loizos, the hyper-rationalist, never finds a viable moral center for overcoming such futility.
Yiorgakis, whose character makes him susceptible to sensuous and mystical experiences, repeatedly
redisCOVERS that he has a moral center, “a place to stand.” Ethos no longer simply designates what
the customary attitudes, values and practices of a group are, but also, for individuals who
ostensibly belong to a particular group, what they should be. Thus, Prevelakis’s trilogy is as much
about individual character as it is about characteristic customs. Furthermore, inasmuch as
Prevelakis focuses on naming and language, his work is also about ethos in a rhetorical sense.
Baumlin (1994) describes, for instance, a Platonic rhetorical conception of ethos as follows:
“[E]thos describes the inner harmony among language, character, and truth—in Platonic fashion,
ethos defines the space where language and truth meet or are made incarnate within the individual”
(Baumlin 1994:xiii). This account of rhetorical ethos describes perfectly Prevelakis’s portrayal of
Yiorgakis during his mystical experience in the garden, in which he discovers the power of the vernacular language to communicate to his cohabitants certain truths. Yiorgakis’s quest on the “paths to literary creation” is in large measure the gradual discovery of a Platonic rhetorical harmony among his own moral character, the truths he seeks to express to his audience, and the language appropriate to their expression. Prevelakis suggests that equally important to Yiorgakis’s discovery that he should write about Crete to Cretans, is his discovery of an appropriate rhetorical vehicle—mastery of the vernacular—for doing so. In short, by conceiving of ethos in a customary, moral, and rhetorical sense, Prevelakis’s trilogy provides the opportunity for rethinking conventional notions of ethography. It problematizes folkist conceptions of ethography as writing about the customs of regional, rural Greeks, without dismissing the notion of local customs altogether. By focusing on the interrelationship of cultural identities and awareness, moreover, it promotes a place-based view of ethography that entails consideration of the social assumptions and implications of humans’ ecological relationships to place, just as it foregrounds certain ecological assumptions and implications of human social life.

Prevelakis’s trilogy also suggests to placed critics, therefore, one particular way (that should by no means be construed as the only, or necessarily even the best, possibility) for conducting literary interpretation: namely, in terms of a place-based “ethical”—that is, ethos-centered—approach from the perspective of these three interrelated aspects of ethos. Critics might ask how an author strives to change the customary practices of a place by representing them in terms of individuals’ behavior and then promoting alternative notions of good character. Critics might seek to understand how an author positions him/herself rhetorically vis-a-vis both a place and its people. It could also examine how notions of moral character or local identity, say, are constituted by particular local discourses and customary practices.

Questions like these will help to motivate my readings of yet more literature relating to Crete in Chapter 6. There, I will continue to focus on the connection between place awareness and cultural identity, but will analyze a different permutation of this connection. Namely, I will examine one author’s appropriation and negotiation of local identity and local notions of moral
character (ethical virtues) as a (rhetorical) means for raising ecological place awareness among an audience comprised of local inhabitants. For this, I will turn from the national literature of Prevelakis to the Cretan mandinadhes of Manolis Kritikaros.
CHAPTER 6

GUARDING THE WILD

PRELUDE: THE MANDINADHA AS “PLACED LITERATURE”

In Chapter 2, I argued that one of the most important steps literary criticism needs to take in order to become more radically place-based is to examine “locally placed texts” in considering social and ecological issues of local relevance. Toward that end, in addition to considering novels about Crete by Kondylakis and Prevelakis, I examined the cookbooks of Cretan regionalists in Chapter 4 and briefly considered related newspaper articles in Chapter 5. But I also argued in Chapter 2 that perhaps the most important thing placed critics need to do is rethink the conventional, nation-centered distinction between literature proper and “folk literature.” This will allow placed criticism to trace at (trans)national and local scales the mutual socio-ecological constitution of literary culture and place, and to consider not only how national literatures appropriate local folklore, but how local literatures appropriate the (trans)national.

Hence, in this chapter I turn from considerations of national literature that portrays the folk, to discussions of a genre folk literature itself: the Cretan mandinadha. My ultimate goal is to be able to examine texts that are conventionally viewed as folklore, but to interpret them in terms of locally relevant socio-ecological issues just as I would any other conventional (i.e. national) literary text. Indeed, I will endeavor below to provide a “close-reading” of the mandinadhes—of the poetry—of Manolis Kritikaros (culled from the Cretan gatherings in which I participated) from the perspective of socio-ecological place cohabitation. Before proceeding to that task however, I first need to reconsider the mandinadha’s status as “folk.” I must find a way to legitimate the
mandinadha as literature before dedicating the remainder of the chapter to a reading of just one author’s mandinadha texts. (Chapter-length or book-length treatments of a single national author are perfectly acceptable to conventional literary critics. Sadly, the same cannot always be said of interpretations of a “folk” author.)

In Ball (2002), I have made such an argument.\textsuperscript{152} I examine there several of the consequences of the mandinadha’s having been assigned to the category of folklore, both in Greek folklore, where folkism has largely prevailed in studies of the genre, and in North American anthropology: Greek folklore, generally ignoring contexts and institutions and suppressing the recognition of individual authors, has studied the mandinadha only insofar as it signifies the existence of an anonymous folk whose expressive culture reflects the ostensibly homogeneous group. (Greek literary scholarship ignores it altogether.) North American scholarship, attributing so much importance to the study of generating meaning in context, has restricted its attention to those cases that seemingly do not involve institutional issues like production, distribution, consumption, and authority. By treating the mandinadha as folk literature, scholars have made it difficult to conceive of it as a local/regional analogue of national literature. I then survey hitherto ignored printed and published mandinadha texts, arguing that they strive to pose to varying degrees as literary texts, as well as display certain folkist assumptions, concerns, or principles. Finally, I argue that, by considering place as a process, it is useful to conceive of the mandinadha not only as folklore, but also as “placed literature.” Once again, I use the epithet “placed” instead of such words as “local” or “regional” in order to signify both the self-consciously local aspect of contemporary mandinadha production/performance and the fact that I am contextualizing—“placing”—it locally (Ball 2002: 165). In summary, in Ball (2002) I argue that the mandinadha can still be seen as “distinct” from national literature (insofar as it operates primarily on a regional scale), but also as “literary,” and hence worthy of close readings (or any other type of literary analysis). Having thus legitimated the mandinadha as placed literature, I can now turn to a close-reading of mandinadhes in terms of socio-ecological issues of interest to many Cretans.
A PLACED CRITICAL READING OF PLACED LITERATURE

Hence, I arrive at last at the climax of my placed critical project: a close reading of literary texts (this time, placed literature) that aims to highlight socio-ecological issues relevant to Cretan inhabitants, thereby indicating these texts’ role in promoting place sense and place awareness—in facilitating place inhabitation—among a local audience. In other words, the fundamental goal of this chapter is to provide a relatively self-contained demonstration of what a placed critical interpretation of texts might look like. By now, I have elaborated in sufficient detail the basic idea of placed criticism (examination of locally placed texts in terms of locally relevant socio-ecological issues). I have explored many of placed criticism’s central concerns (the mutual constitution of nature and culture, the mutual constitution of the local and larger-than-local, the interrelationship of place awareness and cultural identities). And, I have proposed and discussed many of the concepts and terms that I find useful for placed criticism (e.g., folkism, place cohabitation, placed literature). Thus, I am in a good position to put less emphasis on developing placed criticism as a perspective, and I am ready to focus more on the actual practice of placed critical interpretation of literary texts. Nevertheless, because the particular “locally placed” texts I have chosen to examine herein are mandinadhes, my readings in this chapter, on the whole, also contribute something implicitly to my overall argument in favor of placed criticism: they show that “folk” literature is indeed an excellent site for literary place cohabitation.

At this point, I have explored in detail the historical relationship between literature and place, and between literature and the “folk,” especially in terms of the socio-ecological construct “nature,” and with respect to the inescapable relationship between place and nation, and between ecological place awareness and local identity. I have examined how the conventional category of “literature” has been complicit in marginalizing local literary practices that are typically viewed as “folklore,” and have argued that these be legitimzed as “placed literatures” for the sake of local

---

152Thus I have not reproduced the entire analysis here out of consideration for copyright concerns.
place cohabitation. In short, I have largely concluded my inquiry into conventional modern literary culture from the perspective of place and place cohabitation, and have essentially made my argument in favor of placed criticism. In many respects, insofar as I interpreted several literary texts along the way, my inquiry served not only as a journey for discovering, but also for demonstrating, placed critical interpretation and its principles. I should acknowledge, however, that up until now my examinations of literary texts “primarily” (or at least “immediately”) served to shed light on particular aspects of my theoretical task (the formulation of placed criticism and some of its fundamental concerns/principles). In this chapter, in contrast, my “primary” concern will be interpreting literary texts in terms of socio-ecological issues of relevance to Crete, and my “secondary” concern the corollary that follows as a result: folk literature matters for place-oriented ecocriticism.

I have put quotes around the word “primarily” above because—to be completely honest—in my readings in previous chapters, I was in fact careful to have examined texts that would also provide a great deal of context for the close reading I undertake in this chapter (and in this sense, this chapter is not at all a “self-contained” interpretation). In other words, in the previous chapters, by outlining and analyzing in detail the discursive, institutional, and ideological relationship of place and literature, I simultaneously provided much of the discursive context pertinent to a consideration of a particular set of mandinadha texts: As part of the project of modernization, Greek literary culture regularly appropriates and constructs nature, place, and the “wild” folk in national terms. In contrast, Cretan print culture, perhaps most notably in its cookbooks, constructs Cretan nature and folk culture largely along the lines of a regionalist-traditionalist project that opposes wholesale modernization but which is nonetheless folkist. Moreover, their constructions of nature and the folk become interwoven with constructions of nature as “environment” and of the folk as ecologically responsible as textual representations of agriculturally- or ecologically-minded local place awareness intersect,
interrelate, and are conflated with cultural identities. Simply put, literature and place function as vehicles for, or discursive representations of, a variety of local and larger-than-local social, economic, and political agendas.

Yet, as Prevelakis’s trilogy illustrates, literature can also facilitate place awareness or a sense of place among particular individuals in specific places. Moreover, as I hope to make evident in this chapter, one way it does this is by referring to and negotiating the meanings and stakes of its own discursive context. Even without portraying the complexities of the local environment, say, or promoting a host of deep ecological principles, authors of placed literature can modestly promote place inhabitation by using it as a discursive site for getting locals to take local social and ecological issues more seriously in the first place. This is an important point for ecocritics to consider. It suggests the possibility that placed literary texts that can arouse an interest in socio-ecological issues among locals might be able to do more (because of its relative familiarity and accessibility) to facilitate place inhabitation than national environmental literature. In this chapter, specifically, I will examine how an author can appeal to the Cretan identity of the audience in order to promote a more ecologically-minded awareness of place. Thus, I am guided by the notion of place-based “ethical” criticism I discussed at the end of Chapter 5: using a rhetorical mode deemed appropriate for communicating with cohabitants (the Cretan mandinadha), the author struggles to change local customary practices through the promotion of a particular ethic by negotiating the interrelationship of place awareness and social identities (Cretan identity).

My main task in this chapter is to interpret several out of the hundreds of mandinadhes of Manolis Kritikaros, most of which were composed or recited in the context of the gatherings I discussed at the very beginning of Chapter 1. I want to examine how in the context of everyday life Kritikaros’s mandinadhes reject the folkism of both modernizing national culture and traditionalist regionalism by negotiating tradition and modernity. As Ball (2002) illustrates, the mandinadha is certainly an appropriate site for doing this. It is still widely viewed as a traditional Cretan folk
literary form on the one hand, yet it is recorded, published, criticized, and circulated much like
modern literature (and music) on the other. The tension between “traditional” and “modern” can
be negotiated not only in the content of mandinadha texts, therefore, but also through the ways it is
practiced and performed. I am particularly interested in how Kritikaros’s mandinadhes refer and
relate to both Cretan placed literature and to Greek national literature, and I want to explore their
re-interpretation of Cretan rebelliousness and their engagement with Cretan identity and ecological
place awareness. Specifically, I want to argue that Kritikaros’s mandinadhes, through a particular
reading and “ecologization” of the discourse of tradition vs. modernity, of Cretan placed literature,
and of the writings of Nikos Kazantzakis, promote an ethic of “the wild” combining
“rebelliousness” and “rootedness-in-place.” They promote proud, anarchic, anomic, and
freedom-loving sensibilities and critical awareness of and thorough attachment and responsibility
to the place one lives. This promotion of a wild ethic putting regional identity in the service of
environmental responsibility rejects both the disparaging associations of the folk with wildness that
I discussed in Chapter 3 and the place identity politics of other Cretans that I discussed in Chapter 4.
I also claim that by promoting this ethic in everyday life while holding largely pessimistic views
regarding his own agency and that of his audience regarding large-scale changes aimed at
preventing environmental degradation, Kritikaros’s texts are “tactical.” They teach individuals
whose political and economic agency is largely restricted to “guard the wild” in their everyday lives,
to keep such an ethic alive should opportunities arise for facilitating large-scale transformations in
the future.

Once again, this chapter especially intends to be of significance to Cretan critics and other
Cretan inhabitants by participating in ongoing local debates about such issues as Cretan identity
and ecology. It also intends to have other academic implications. It demonstrates that attempts to
interpret at least some genres of placed literature, even while legitimated and examined as literature,

153 In arguing that Kritikaros attempts to negotiate tradition and modernity, I certainly do not mean
to suggest that Kritikaros represents a transition from tradition to modernity, which would
reproduce the tradition/modernity dichotomy of modernizers and traditionalists alike.
still benefit from the insights of scholars in folklore studies. Especially when it comes to genres like that mandinadha that often have a performative aspect, it supports folklorists’ call for examining expressive cultural texts in discursive and performative context. (Thus, I interweave textual interpretation with ethnographic descriptions of the performative context.) This chapter also illustrates why ecocritics should consider national and placed literatures, and even their potential interrelationship. It implies the need for scholars in modern Greek Studies to take folk literatures more seriously. Above all, it brings my attempt to put placed criticism into practice to a conclusion, illustrating that placed critics concerned with socio-ecological issues should take into consideration locally-relevant and locally-practiced literatures which, ideally, have a unique potential to speak meaningfully to local audiences.154

BIографICAL SKETCH AND BACKGROUND OF PERFORMANCE

Most of the mandinadhes I will consider in this chapter were composed in the latter half of the 1990s by Manolis Kritikaros, a male Cretan in his fifties. He has never published them, but this does not prohibit me from examining them as placed literary texts. In fact, that he has not even tried to publish them is, in itself, significant to my interpretation of them. Kritikaros usually performed these mandinadhes in everyday life at home or at family gatherings, surrounded by friends and relatives. He performed them for an audience that knew a great deal about him, his life, his personality, and his beliefs. For this reason, I need to include some biographical and other background and contextual information. My intention in doing so is neither to construct a biography of the poet in the spirit of conventional literary criticism, nor to provide a thorough ethnography in the spirit of anthropology. It is crucial to my own interpretation of these mandinadhes that I recognize that Kritikaros typically assumed his audience interpreted them in light of their knowledge of him, that he and his audience took consideration of the personal context to be an integral part of textual interpretation. Indeed, when Kritikaros believed his audience

154Several sections of the analysis that follows appear in Ball (2000)
misinterpreted his mandinadhes, he typically responded by admonishing, “You don’t know me well” [Δε με ξέρεις καλά]. The poised and self-confident manner in which he would utter this statement indicated to the audience that they should work even harder to understand the messages he wanted to convey. Thus, I will supplement the discursive context outlined in the previous three chapters and Ball (2002) with more personal and local background information, thereby following the insights of performance folklore theory regarding the importance of the performative context to the interpretation of text. At the same time, I do not claim that my interpretations necessarily describe the author’s intentions. After all, I am presenting my interpretation of texts in light of my understanding, description, and analysis of the context.

Kritikaros was born in 1941 and raised in a small farming village in the district of Malevizi, about ten miles outside of the island’s capital city of Irakleio. His paternal grandfather had moved down there from one of the larger mountain villages on Psiloreitis (Mt. Ida). Left fatherless by the Second World War, he was raised “barefoot” in the village mainly by his mother and his father’s brother. Though he also has an older brother and sister, he is the only one of the three siblings to have finished high-school.

In the 1960s, Kritikaros got married and became the father of two daughters. In addition, he passed into the teaching academy and became an elementary school teacher appointed at various times to different villages in the area between the city of Irakleio and the town of Rethymno. During our many conversations he often became nostalgic about the time he spent in one particular village high in the mountains (on Psiloreitis) where the people were, according to him, extremely proud and endlessly hospitable. He also enjoyed retelling stories about how he and the doctor appointed to a neighboring village would stay up all night smoking, discussing and debating each other’s interpretations of Kafka and Kazantzakis—copies of which he would obtain secretly since they had been banned by the military dictatorship of the time—and eating “whatever there was,” even if that meant a scanty meal of boiled greens and lentils.

---

155 On folklore’s performance approach, see Bauman (1978), Ben-Amos (1976), Paredes and Bauman (1972).
In addition to practicing his career as a teacher, Kritikaros also continued working with his hands, living the life of the professional agriculturist as well. He cultivated and sold olives for soap, and grapes which he made into raisins. As a public employee who never got involved with Crete’s tourism industry, who persevered through the grape-growing crisis caused by phylloxera (a North American plant lice), and who insisted that his wife not work outside the home and family agriculture, Kritikaros has never come to be considered one of Irakleio’s nouveaux riches [νεώπλουτοι]. Nevertheless, through his and his wife’s hard work, his family has obtained a respectable level of financial stability.

By the time I had first met Kritikaros in 1992, he was nearing retirement as the principal of an elementary school in Irakleio. He and his family lived in their own house in Irakleio (they also had an older house in his wife’s village that was used mostly during the harvest season). In addition to his schoolteacher position and his agricultural responsibilities, he had also recently taken up the hobby of fishing, taking advantage of every free moment he could find in order to go fishing with his friends, invariably bringing home the catch for his family and guests to enjoy.

Like many other Cretans, Kritikaros enjoyed using the mandinadha as a form of expression ever since adolescence, and likewise never composed them professionally. When he was a boy, it was still customary in his village for young men to parade around at night going from house to house performing kandadhes (serenades), singing mandinadhes to the accompaniment of a mandolin, often outside the home of a young girl with whom one of the boys was enamored. He often recalled nostalgically stories about the kandadhes and even remembered some of the more interesting mandinadhes that were composed during them. His wife (from a neighboring village) once showed me several pages of mandinadhes that he composed for her describing their courtship in a style that was (I assume intentionally) reminiscent of Kornaros’s Erotokritos, the Cretan Renaissance work that continued to circulate among Cretans as oral literature at least until the twentieth century. This was one of the rare cases in which Kritikaros actually recorded his mandinadhes on paper. He never wrote down or recorded, nor could he recall, the vast majority of mandinadhes he composed.
A small number of the mandinadhes that I collected from Kritikaros were composed while he was alone working in the olive groves, vineyards, preparing his longlines [παραγωγό] for fishing, or while driving back to Irakleio from the village. Usually unable or unwilling to write these down somewhere at the time of composition, he would repeat them to himself many times so as not to forget them. On a few occasions, he jotted them down on a piece of paper or on the inside of a cigarette box. When he did record or could remember them, he would recite them to me the next time we would meet, or would perform them in the context of various gatherings.

I collected the vast majority of Kritikaros’s mandinadhes on the many occasions when there was a small, informal gathering [παρευρέω] or a larger celebration [γλέντι] of some sort. At these gatherings, it was often my place to provide the musical accompaniment appropriate for improvising mandinadhes, standard Cretan melodies (kondylies) on the mandolin, and so recording mandinadhes was not easy. Therefore, on a few occasions I used a cassette recorder to record them. However, since the presence of a cassette recorder seemed to be too conspicuously out of step with the often spontaneous and largely ephemeral quality of the gatherings, in many cases I asked other individuals present who were not much involved in drinking and performing to transcribe them onto paper the moment Kritikaros improvised them. Alternatively, I tried to remember particularly interesting mandinadhes and scribble them onto paper napkins in between my playing of the mandolin. I should also mention that as I learned to “read” the subtleties of the progression of Kritikaros’s high spirits [κέφο], as well as the psychological effects of the various sequences of melodies on him and other participants, I was eventually able to contribute myself to the development of the mood of the gatherings through the choice of the music I would play. Indeed, on many occasions, Kritikaros noticed my attempts to “manipulate” the mood through the music and he would “warn” me—though in fact he was encouraging me—that I was
“prodding” him [“Εδώ με τσιγκλάζεις”]. When in high spirits and sufficiently prodded by my music and the mandinadhes of others, Kritikaros could improvise over fifty mandinadhes in the course of a single evening.156

At the time, I was not recording these for explicitly ethnographic purposes. Aware that Kritikaros’s mandinadhes were unusually preoccupied with philosophical questions, I wanted to preserve them simply because I liked them, and, as an aspiring mandinadha composer myself, because I could learn from them. For, while Kritikaros composed anywhere from one to fifty or more mandinadhes in an evening, he invariably forgot them all almost immediately, and most certainly by the next day. On many occasions when there was no recording, he would finish improvising ten or more mandinadhes, pause to eat a bite of something and refill his wine glass, and say to those of us in the gathering, “How did I say that one?” recalling only a couple words or a partial phrase of one of the mandinadhes he especially liked. We would then all try to remember and reconstruct it. In light of his inability to remember his own compositions during moments of high spirits, Kritikaros was pleased by the fact that I would insist on recording in one form or another as many of them as I could.

Occasionally, I would transcribe the mandinadhes recorded on cassette tapes, napkins, cigarette packs, and memo-pads and give them back to him to read. He would remark to me about which ones he especially liked and which ones he considered failures in that he was unable at the moment of improvisation, due to the constraints of time and the requirements of form, to express exactly what he intended. He eventually also began memorizing some of his favorite compositions and used them as his own personal repertory in future gatherings, singing them in an early phase before the wine and the high spirits took hold and he reached the point where he felt he was “in

---

156This raises the question of how much my own presence was an influence on Kritikaros’s mandinadhes. As I discuss further below, his overall subject matter, techniques, and methods of performance, were probably not influenced very much by my presence: before he met me and in my absence he was known to compose similar mandinadhes. On the other hand, the volume of his compositions increased dramatically. My presence afforded many more opportunities for improvising when I played music and for more regular critical discussions. I should also mention that, in the opposite directions, Kritikaros’s improvisations exercised a large influence over the development of my own mandinadha compositions.
form” [σε φόρμα] to begin improvising. Sometimes, he would even revise the printed versions of his mandinadhes, in order to improve the phrasing or to express his intended meaning more clearly or exactly. On some occasions we would discuss the wording together, and in a few instances he preferred my own suggestions about a word or phrase better than his own ideas and actually incorporated them into future performances.

Thus, in contrast to Cretan traditionalists who insist that good mandinadhes should be improvised orally, in the manner of “authentic” Cretan folk, Kritikaros was among those who view it as a written genre as well. He has even composed mandinadhes that are about writing mandinadhes, expressing a romantic frustration about his (or language’s) incapacity to express ineffable feelings or experiences, and, at the same time, the necessity of trying to do so:

Τις λέξεις ψάχνω, δεν μπορώ να βρω να ξεδιπλώσω σ’ ύστερο χαρτί τις σκέψεις μου, μήπως και ξαλαφρώσω.

I search for the words I can’t find, to unfold my thoughts onto white paper, so that I might at last feel relief.

Όλοι οι προγόνοι μέσα μου μερονυχτού φωνάζουν, να τσι στερώσω στο χαρτί να μην αναστενάζουν.

All my ancestors call out within me day and night to fix them on paper, so they can stop their sighing.

The latter mandinadha, in both its subject matter and its use of the word “fix” [στερώνω], alludes to the writing of Nikos Kazantzakis: “You will never be able to fix in word/reason [λόγος] what you live in ecstasy. Nevertheless, battle incessantly to fix it in word” (Kazantzakis 1985:61). Many Cretans compose mandinadhes that refer to Kazantzakis, and Kritikaros is among the few whose work focuses on the philosophical content of Kazantzakis’s works, instead of on the man and his reputation. Other examples can be found on Kostas Mountakis’s LP recording, Report to Kazantzakis [Αναφορά στον Καζαντζάκη], which includes such mandinadhes as:

157Compare this with my discussion of Dermitzakis’s texts in the previous chapter. On the issue of orality and writing in a related genre of Cypriot poetry, see Syrimis (1998), and in Greek folklore in general, see Alexiou (1985).
Φρόνιμοι και νοικόκυροι δε ζουν στον Ψηλορείτη, μα οι κουζουλοί τής εκάμενε αδάντη την Κρήτη.

Sensible people and householders don’t live on Psiloreitis [Mt. Ida], rather, Crete’s crazy people made Crete immortal. (Mountakis [n.d.])

This mandinadha was inspired by the following passage in Kazantzakis’s novel *Freedom and Death*:

Δε φεύγουμε. Εδώ θα πεθάνουμε, κουρμπάνια για την Κρήτη. Ας τους αυτούς να λένε· πιο καλό θα κάνουμε εμείς που θα πεθάνουμε παρά αυτοί που θα ζήσουν· γιατί η Κρήτη δε θέλει νοικοκυράιος, θέλει κουζουλούς σαν κι εμάς. Αυτοί, οι κουζουλοί αυτοί, την κάνουν αδάντη.

We aren’t leaving. We’re going to stay here and die, sacrificing ourselves for Crete. Let them say what they want, those of us who die will do more good than those who live, because Crete doesn’t need householders [having the connotation of submission to duty and domesticity], it needs crazy people like us. These crazy people are the ones who make Crete immortal. (Kazantzakis 1981b:535)

By alluding to the content of national literary texts, mandinadha composers such as Kritikaros emphasize the legitimacy of Crete’s placed literature as writing. I am not arguing that Kritikaros simply adopted a vocabulary or a metaphysics from Kazantzakis, any more than I would argue that the main reason he admired Kazantzakis was that in him he found his own vocabulary and metaphysics embodied. Rather, I am interested in recognizing how, in alluding to or incorporating Kazantzakis’s work in his own, Kritikaros situated his own texts in terms of national literary culture. In a way, then, his texts participate in the construction of a literary culture that welcomes and connects both placed literature and national literature.

The mandinadhes of Kritikaros that I will discuss in this chapter are all in their edited form. Either Kritikaros left them unrevised after seeing them written, or he revised them by crossing them out on the transcripts and writing a new version in their place. This might strike some purists as a move away from some kind of oral authenticity, but since the contemporary mandinadha is equally at home in the pen of the composer as it is in the tongue, I insist that it is not. I am not only

---

158Note that this mandinadha suggests an attempt to reverse the disparaging associations of Crete’s folk with wildness by singing their praises. It reads Kazantzakis’s novel literally: Captain Michalis
interested in studying the process by which Kritikaros improvised, but his overall textual attempt to engage his audience in a discourse of ideas and values. Therefore, I prefer to concentrate on the mandinadhes in the form that he himself felt was best representative of his position. In most cases, Kritikaros performed the revised texts in subsequent gatherings, highlighting even further the “complex interaction” of what is “oral” and “written,” and indicating ways that each can “recontextualize” the other (Gundaker 1998:6).

Kritikaros’s mandinadhes certainly qualify to be studied from the point of view of performance theory. Richard Bauman points out:

It is part of the essence of performance that it offers to the participants a special enhancement of experience, bringing with it a heightened intensity of communicative interaction which binds the audience to the performer in a way that is specific to performance as a mode of communication. Through his performance, the performer elicits the participative attention and energy of his audience, and to the extent that they value his performance, they will allow themselves to be caught up in it. When this happens, the performer gains a measure of prestige and control over the audience—prestige because of the demonstrated competence he has displayed, control because the determination of the flow of the interaction is in his hands. (Bauman 1977:43)

When Kritikaros improvised mandinadhes at a gathering, or simply retold them to others, he was aware of his own prestige and that he exercised control over his audience. In nearly every context I observed him performing, he was the most educated of the people present of his generation and older. Even when there were others present who had more formal education than he did, they were always considerably younger, often his children and their friends, nieces and nephews. When discussing beliefs and values with those younger than him, he spoke with the authority of a “wise elder.” This is not to say that he was condescending or uninterested in the opinions of others, on the contrary. But Kritikaros was, after all, a professional teacher. As a performer of mandinadhes, he also became a “folk teacher” seeking to impart wisdom to his audience, especially to future generations (Mullen 1992:270). Of course, in addition to any prestige he already had as a teacher is not an allegory for the human soul’s tragically insatiable appetite for freedom, but an example of a great Cretan man responsible for making Crete great.
and as an elder, Kritikaros earned even more by demonstrating his competence in mandinadha performance.

This is important for considering Kritikaros’s engagement with mandinadhes that he heard on commercial recordings (audiocassettes and compact discs). In contemporary gatherings and celebrations in Crete in which there is no live music, cassettes are often played for background music or for dancing to. At times, Kritikaros, upon hearing a mandinadha sung on an audio recording, would “respond” with a mandinadha of his own. The logistics of such a performance indicate that Kritikaros sought to promote a synthesis of traditional and modern performance modes. Before the commercial recording of music, or at least before its widespread availability, such a verse-duel would take place between individuals who were physically present. Nowadays, there are gatherings and celebrations in which the only mandinadhes performed by participants are those sung along with commercial recordings. Face-to-face improvisation and verse-dueling in Crete are arguably on the decline. By engaging in “virtual” verse-duels with pre-recorded mandinadhes, Kritikaros implied to his audience that verse-dueling need not be a face-to-face practice, but can incorporate modern technology and contemporary practices in an interesting way.\textsuperscript{160} He demonstrated that it is not necessary to choose between tradition and modernity—between face-to-face folk practices and technology-mediated interactions—but possible to welcome both. Rather than simply giving in to modern technology by sitting back and listening passively to previously recorded material, and rather than rejecting it altogether, contemporary Cretans can creatively respond to recordings with original verses. In addition to demonstrating the acceptance of modern technology for engaging in a traditional practice, Kritikaros’s practice of virtual verse-dueling also seems pedagogical. Responding to an absentee performer (who can not retort)\textsuperscript{159}Often including myself, who was not only younger, but also, as an American, an outsider in certain respects.

\textsuperscript{160}Cassettes and CDs have become important mechanisms for the transmission of folk poetry around the world. See, for example, Heston (1991) who discusses the role of cassettes and other twentieth-century recording technologies in the transmission of folk poetry in Pakistan. Also, Manuel (1991) describes the reorientation of Indian urban music beginning in the 1980s as catalyzed by the “vogue of cassettes” (355).
hardly qualifies as “winning” a verse-duel in a traditional sense. But it does allow the
mandinadha composer to teach a particular point of view to the audience present. Just as Plato
promotes the Socratic view to readers by providing the illusion of a dialogue between the sage and
his ideological opponents, so Kritikaros promotes his views by performing as if he were involved in
a traditional Cretan verse-duel.

The mandinadhès I will consider demonstrate a concern with Cretan identity, tradition,
and values. Sometimes the texts make this explicit. Often they do not. The context makes it clear
nonetheless. Indeed, Kritikaros regularly suggested to his audience that his texts were not merely
the expression of personality, personal beliefs, and personal values, but also expressions of what it
meant for him to be Cretan and of his respect for and engagement with the wisdom of “Cretan folk
philosophy” [η λαϊκή φιλοσοφία της Κρήτης]. For example, I once discussed with Kritikaros the
following passage about Cretan values and identity in Nikos Kazantzakis’s Report to Greco:

The love of freedom, not deigning to enslave your soul, not even for paradise; a valiant
game over love and pain, over death; the destruction of old molds, even the most sacred,
when they no longer can contain you—these are the three big voices of Crete.

In Crete, a soul that doesn’t deign to deceive itself or others, stares face to face, like
nowhere else, at the one-breasted goddess who doesn’t do favors and who sits on the lap of
neither god nor human: Responsibility. (Kazantzakis 1982:436-437)

Kritikaros emphasized to me that he agreed with Kazantzakis and we subsequently engaged in a
series of philosophical discussions about ethics, primarily about the particular virtues each of us
considered important in life. Throughout our discussions, Kritikaros insinuated that his own views

161A traditionalist might argue that Kritikaros does, in fact, win by undermining modernity’s
economic authority and technological capability to put a particular performer’s message in many
were consistent with those of “Cretans of old times” [παλιούς Κρητικούς]. In order to begin coming to terms with what he meant by this, and also to begin considering how his own interpretation of “Cretan folk philosophy” diverges from those of modernizers and traditionalists, I will now recount a conversation we had that indicated to me his understanding of such concepts primarily as an issue of ethics.

When I lived in Crete, many Cretan acquaintances who knew of my interest in the Cretan idiom, the mandinadha, and Cretan music assumed that I was equally interested in any and every aspect of what is conventionally labeled as Cretan “tradition” or “folklore.” I grew weary of people recommending that I visit various museums, collections, and performances re-enacting Cretan customs of the past, many of which were actually of only marginal interest to me at the time. I told Kritikaros about this situation one evening and said, “I am very interested in specific areas of Cretan tradition, but I am not that interested in every aspect of the overall Cretan tradition.” As I explained, he kept nodding his head “no.” This puzzled me. After all, who knew better than me what I was interested in. Then he explained, “Cretan tradition is philoxenia [hospitality]” [Η κρητική παράδοση είναι η φιλοξενία]. To this I responded by asking him, “But what about all the other traditional things, like weaving, dress, farming equipment, and so on?” With a look on his face implying that I had completely missed the point, he repeated the same sentence, “Cretan tradition is philoxenia.”

I think I eventually understood his point. For Kritikaros, many things conventionally thought of as “traditional” and “folkloric” were, for him, inessential, albeit interesting, details. The essence of the Cretan tradition was simple: it was philoxenia. At various times, he would reiterate the importance to Cretans of philoxenia in more detail. On several occasions he mentioned the ancient Greek concept Xenios Zeus [ξένιος Ζεύς]: Zeus, the Cretan-born god, as the protector of the rights of hospitality. He also pointed out to me a relevant passage in Kazantzakis’s Report to Greco:

people’s living rooms: The recorded performer’s message is immediately rendered ineffectual by a traditional performer because the recorded performer has no opportunity for rebuttal.
Την άλλη μέρα βραδιάστηκα κοντά σ’ ένα χωριό πενότα, ήμουν κουρασμένος
ολημέρα να περπατώ στα καταβραχιά δε γνώριζα κανένα στο χωριό και μήτε κάτερα τ’
όνομά του. Μά ήμουν ήσυχος ή ήξερα όπου πόρτα κι αν χτυπήσεις σε κρητικό χωριό, θα
σου ανοιξείς θα στραθεί για το χωτήρι σου τραπέζι και θα κοιμηθείς στα πιο καλά
σεντόνια του σπιτιού. Ο ξένος είναι ακόμα στην Κρήτη ο άγνωστος θεός κι όλες
μπροστά του οι πόρτες κι οι καρδιές ανόιγουν.

The next day night overtook me when I was near a village; I was hungry and tired from
walking all day on the rocky ground; I didn’t know anyone in the village, or even the
village’s name. But I was at peace; I knew that whatever door you knock on in a Cretan
village, it will open for you; the table will be laid out for you and you will sleep in the best
sheets of the house. The xenos [stranger/visitor/outsider] is still the unknown god in Crete;
and all doors and hearts open before him. (Kazantzakis 1982:307)

During many gatherings and celebrations Kritikaros would sing in a pious manner the well-known
Cretan folk song (rizitiko) “Mother, if my friends should come” [Μάνα κινέ ώρθουν οι φίλοι μου] in
which a deceased son requests from his mother that when his friends visit, she not tell them he has
died until after they have eaten, have gotten a good night’s sleep, and are about to continue on their
way.

What I want to emphasize here is that, regardless of whether other Cretans would agree
with him, Kritikaros systematically promoted a view of Cretan tradition as a particular virtue that
has been, and should continue to be, customarily practiced by Cretan people. The cultivation of this
virtue takes precedence over specific practices or cultural items typically conceived of as traditional
by Greek folklorists—modernizers and traditionalists alike. For the purposes of this chapter, I am
not so much concerned with Kritikaros’s concept of philoxenia per se (as this is not one of the issues
addressed by the mandinadhes I will examine). Rather, I am interested in the fact that Kritikaros
conceived of tradition as a relatively abstract notion: a (diachronic) ethical virtue that motivates, or
should motivate, certain (changing) customary practices. I want to consider the manner in which he
strove, as a self-conscious folk teacher—as an “active tradition-bearer”—to draw on the past in
order to teach and encourage new practices and ways of thinking in the present, especially among
those younger than himself (Mullen 1992:2). Also, I am interested in the fact that he expressed his
convictions about Cretan tradition by referring to both literature (Kazantzakis) and folk literature (the rizitiko). He read both (trans)national and placed literatures as superlatively representative Cretan texts.

This brief biographical sketch and discussion of the background of performance indicates clearly the importance of considering the performative context when it comes to interpreting placed literary texts such as the mandinadha. Kritikaros’s mandinadhes seek to engage Cretan oral tradition and “Cretan folk philosophy,” but they also incorporate a concern with writing, with national and placed literature, and with modern technologies. They are both ephemeral and edited. Finally, they are the stuff of everyday life and a means for promoting among fellow cohabitants particular virtues and customary practices. I will now continue to elaborate on this context by considering various positions maintained by contemporary Cretans regarding the proper aesthetics of good mandinadha composing. This will shed further light on Kritikaros’s engagement in the mandinadha with Cretan identity.

COMPETING CRETAN AESTHETICS

Taking as my point of departure a discussion I witnessed, I turn to three overlapping, but also competing conceptions regarding what makes a good mandinadha. The discussion occurred during one of the many outdoor, daytime, extended family gatherings I attended in Kritikaros’s wife’s village, such as those which are held on Easter and May First. Kritikaros was present, as were two of his wife’s brothers, Michalis and Yiorgos, both of them accomplished mandinadha composers themselves. At some point during the early afternoon, Michalis requested that I start playing the mandolin so that he, Yiorgos, and Kritikaros might sing some mandinadhes. But this was one of those afternoons when there were not quite enough high spirits to get them soaring into improvisation and verse-dueling. Rather, several critical and theoretical discussions broke out among them, usually started by Michalis.
Authentic Cretan Folk Tradition

Michalis, on this occasion and others, expressed concern over the lack of folk authenticity in the mandinadhes and Cretan music of the younger generations of Cretans, in particular of those professionals from Irakleio. Actually, all three men were concerned with this issue, but Michalis consistently brought it up for discussion. That particular day, he contended that a good mandinadha is one that has “beautiful words” [ωραίες λέξεις]. He disputed the quality of a mandinadha he recently heard because it contained the non-Cretan-folk-vernacular word “money/currency” [χρήμα] and another composed by Yiorgos that employed a clock metaphor for the heart:

Έχω μια κουρδιστή καρδιά, ρολόι […]
I have a clockwork heart, a clock […]

Michalis then proceeded to provide examples of what he considered excellent mandinadhes that were rich in the (ostensible) idiom and imagery of the most rural of Cretans. For Michalis, the essence of a good Cretan mandinadha was the use of language and images that showed little or no signs of modernity. Good mandinadhes painted pictures similar to the nostalgic and folkist photography of Cretan cookbooks: all donkeys and horses but no fossil-fueled tractors or plastic containers.

The position that Michalis expressed is, in fact, representative of the regionalism of many Cretans who support the notion of preserving or recovering a distinctive Cretan folk culture. As I discussed in connection with the cookbooks, some Cretans categorize as “modern” all manner of imported foreign (Western) models and products affecting negatively everything from agriculture to local values. Modernization implies for them the homogenization of local differences brought about by the formation of the Greek nation-state as an autonomous geopolitical unit. In contrast, they construct “tradition” as a rich heritage of “human(e)” [ανθρώπινες], medically- and ecologically-sound values and practices that originated in Cretan and Greek antiquity. They view such traditions as having “survived” among the Cretan folk while being threatened by history’s
invaders (Arabs, Venetians, Turks, Germans). They see Cretan traditions as currently endangered both by a modern lifestyle [τρόπος ζωής] that revolves around money [το χρήμα] and by northern and western Europeans who purchase Cretan land and open up businesses on Cretan soil. They express their traditionalist regionalism in texts ranging from cookbooks to Cretan music and placed literature. The following text, for example, is narrated in a theatrical manner over musical accompaniment on a popular commercial recording of Cretan music from the 1980s:

And the merchants come down [to the island] every once in a while with foreign goods and set up their stands in our markets and proclaim the coming of our salvation in towns and villages with studied criers. And we have our lyra players and our singers fine-spinning our troubles and our passions on our very old rag. And we cry then, because our neighborhoods and our beaches have become filled with tin cans and electric guitars. Will they wipe us our like that? Or will they send us to the museum? No! Our holy and sacred things will not be rescued by honorable and subdued discussions. Wake up! We’ll be left out I tell you! And no one, not even our own, will hear us. Get mad, say, “What is he saying?” Just don’t become complacent. Come on people! Make an effort! The loom and the thread, you! The weavers, yours! The peddlers and criers, yours! You, bandits and pirates! You, gendarmes! You, lawmakers! You… women and men! We won’t let others play with our life! Us! Us! (Skoulaς n.d.)

Bad imported modernity (their tin cans and electric guitars) is opposed to and threatens good native folk traditions (our lyra players and singers). In short, many Cretans perceive the island’s future as being at stake in the outcome of the ostensible contest between “tradition” and “modernity.”162 I

---

162Not surprisingly, some Cretans equate a bright future for Crete with the island’s successful modernization and nationalization. I am dealing primarily with the opposite point of view because wholehearted supporters of modernity over tradition are generally not interested, for obvious reasons, in participating in the regional discourse I am discussing. A published example of an
am not sure just how many inhabitants of Crete would deny wholesale the benefits of modern life, but a significant number of them do argue rather one-sidedly against the modern in favor of Cretan folk tradition.

The liner notes on another popular commercial recording by the same artist, written by the professional mandinadha composer Yiorgis Karatzis who composed the album’s lyrics (mandinadhes), expresses the same traditionalist view of language as Michalis:

"My dear friends, with this album we tried to express a purely traditional message, with all the simplicity and truth which this attempt presupposes. [...] And as far as language goes [...] I do not hide that the insistence on Cretan language orthodoxy [i.e. use of the Cretan idiom], also comprises one form of defense against modern [σύγχρονος] linguistic recklessness/debauchery [εκτραχηλισμός] and the hopeless undermining of means of expression." (Skoulas 1986)

Karatzis justifies his extensive self-conscious use of the Cretan idiom in the mandinadha as a way of resisting the modern in favor of tradition. Many mandinadha composers, in addition to employing Cretan folk language and imagery, privilege folk tradition explicitly in their texts:

"Ωστε να στέκει ο Ομαλός και ο γερο-Ψηλορείτης, δεν έχουν φόβο να χαθούν τα έθιμα της Κρήτης."

As long as Omalos and Psiloreitis [tall mountains] still stand, the folk customs of Crete have no fear of being lost. (Papadaki-Lambaki 1992:221)

They express nostalgia about a lost traditional past:

"Στην εποχή μιας μπλιό δε ζεί με τον καινούργιο τρόπο το μερακλήκι των παλιών αμάλαγων ανθρώπω."

Nowadays, with the new way of life, the high-spirited behavior of the pure people of yesteryear no longer exists.

"Οι μερακλήδες οι παλιοί πο από τότε που σχολάσαν τα μερακλήκια τα καλά εσβέσαν και περάσαν."
Ever since the good-natured enthusiasts of yesteryear knocked off, the real high-spirited behavior has vanished and gone away. (Skoulas [n.d.])

Consistent with the folkist view that the mountains are the purest bastions of folk tradition, they describe Psiloreitis (Mt. Ida) as “the hideout [or: retreat] of honor, as well as the soul of Crete [λημέρι της τιμής μα και ψυχή της Κρήτης]” (Karatzis 2000:87). Whereas nationalists such as Kondylakis suggest the need for the wild mountain folk’s acculturation, regionalists celebrate them for not being spoiled by the corruption of modernized towns and cities on the coast:

I’m a child of the highlands, born and bred in the mountains, and the river’s current is unable to take me [with it down the mountains]. (Karavitis [n.d.]; cf. Riginiotis 1997)

Bird of the lowlands, come on up to the high places, where the water is clean, and the air is cool.

I’d rather be alone in the mountains, in the rainstorms and snow, than in the town’s cozy and comfortable salons.

I’d rather be in the mountains alone, in the forest with the holm-oaks, than in a garden with lots of untrue white lilies.

The Cretan traditionalist-regionalist view maintains that good mandinadhes, like the aforementioned, celebrate, explicitly or implicitly, the Cretan folk idiom, rural imagery, and folklife.
Figures of Speech

If Michalis expressed a point of view centered on idiom, imagery, and folk tradition, Yiorgos focused on figures of speech. He disputed his brother’s concern with “beautiful words” and claimed that really good mandinadhes are those that have successful “metaphors.” He provided an example of one of his own mandinadhes comparing a woman to a beautiful rose, whose beauty draws him closer, but whose thorns sting him whenever he gets close. Though he did shun the use of words from purist Greek, Yiorgos was unconcerned about adhering to a strictly Cretan folk idiom and rural imagery. His large personal repertory covered a breadth of “traditional” and “modern” subjects. The most conspicuous aesthetic characteristic of the mandinadhes I heard him perform was the use of figures of speech including metaphor, simile, synecdoche, and personification.164

The Cretan Spirit

Kritikaros expressed yet a third perspective on the subject of good mandinadh composition. He dismissed the views of his brothers-in-law as overly concerned with the mandinadha’s “surface” επιφάνεια, that is, with considerations of language and poetics. Kritikaros alleged that the “essence” ουσία of a good mandinadha is the “expression of the Cretan spirit” εκφράζει το πνεύμα του κρητικού. Kritikaros’s criterion is more vague than those of Michalis and Yiorgos. Indeed, for some mandinadha composers, the expression of the Cretan spirit or the Cretan soul is not opposed to, but in harmony with, traditionalist assertions of Cretan language orthodoxy:

[Tsouderos] When, in your opinion, is a mandinadha correct? σωστή
[Spandoudakis] When it meets the requirements ανταποκρίνεται of the Cretan folk muse κρητική λαϊκή μούσα
[Tsouderos] And when is that?
[Spandoudakis] When all its words are in the Cretan dialect, it has rhyme, and it expresses the thought and soul of the Cretan. (Tsouderos 1989:19)

164 Yiorgos’s view warrants further investigation. I have the impression that mandinadha composers from (or influenced by those from) certain villages on Psiloreitis tend to use metaphors and similes
However, as I have already indicated, Kritikaros did not adhere to the regionalist view that mandinadhes be associated exclusively with the continuation or preservation of folk traditions (in the conventional sense). He welcomed everything from national literary texts to virtual verse-dueling in his performances, preferring to negotiate the ostensible antithetical quality of “modernity” and “tradition” perceived by many fellow Cretans.

Just what, then, did Kritikaros mean by Cretan spirit and what are the implications? I will now consider in more detail Kritikaros’s mandinadhes in relation to such notions as Cretan identity, spirit, and values. (Throughout my analysis, I will continue to illustrate his engagement with Cretan placed literature as well as the writings of Nikos Kazantzakis.) I will make the case that his mandinadhes promote an ethic of “the wild” by considering the term “wild” from two perspectives: wild-as-rebellious and wild-as-ecological. Thus, the close reading that follows is divided into two major sections that are subsequently brought together in the end. First, in the next section, I will argue that Kritikaros’s mandinadhes, especially in terms of certain ethical virtues, re-interpret for “modern” Cretans the notion that “traditional” Cretans are a rebellious people. Second, in the section following that, I will argue that Kritikaros’s texts “ecologize” various aspects of Cretan discourse and culture. In light of my readings in each of these two sections, I will at last discuss how Kritikaros’s emphasis on “the rebel” and “the ecological” combine to promote an ethic of “the wild” among his Cretan cohabitants.

CONSTRUCTING THE CRETAN REBEL

I will now begin to establish the first aspect of Kritikaros’s promotion of “the wild” by considering his reinterpretation of the notion of Cretan rebelliousness. By negotiating particular tensions between tradition and modernity from the point of view of ethical virtues, Kritikaros

more than those from other parts of the island, but have not yet been able to connect such an observation with any particular historical or discursive developments.
strives to ascribe contemporary significance to the idea of being a rebel. Once again, because I am dealing here with mandinadhës that are often performed in a face-to-face setting with an audience that knows Kritikaros, I will need to elaborate on the performative context.

I once accidentally provoked a relevant conversation about Cretan identity by unintentionally misrepresenting a passage in the third chapter of Michael Herzfeld’s book The Poetics of Manhood: Contest and Identity in a Cretan Mountain Village. The passage discusses how Cretan mountain villagers negotiate disagreements in terms of Cretan identity: “Supporters of each position imply that their stand represents the only true embodiment of Cretan values, and local history and folklore become resources to be disputed and redefined through intense argument” (Herzfeld 1985a:95). Herzfeld offers an example of Cretan men arguing about a political issue and describes how each supports his own position by appealing to concepts of Cretan identity and manhood. I had vaguely recalled this passage as having to do with the fluidity of Cretan identity insofar as its appropriation could support opposing political positions. But, I had forgotten—luckily for me, as this provoked a most interesting discussion—Herzfeld’s most important caution: “Note, however, that both sets of attitudes entail resistance to authority as the hallmark of Cretan manhood. The divergence does not concern the principle of Cretan distinctiveness and independence; it concerns the forms that these should take” (Herzfeld 1985a:95). Even when they disagree about its implications, Cretan mountain men tend to agree, according to Herzfeld, that Cretan identity is essentially about rebelliousness.

One afternoon, I was eating lunch with Kritikaros, his sister’s husband (a Cretan in his late sixties), and several other female relations of theirs. I heard someone mention something about a person behaving or not behaving “like a Cretan.” With the passage from Herzfeld’s book vaguely in mind, I interrupted the conversation and said something along the lines of: “Who knows what ‘Cretan’ means? People interpret it differently in order to support their own opinions and views.” Kritikaros’s (up until then) reticent brother-in-law suddenly spoke up, seemingly more than a little disturbed, though not angered, by my relativist comments about Cretan identity. He told me: “You
said that ‘Cretan’ can mean anything anybody wants it to. But that’s not true. The ‘Cretan’ is stout-hearted [παλικάρι], hospitable [φιλόξενος], generous [χουβαρντάς], a good-natured enthusiast [μερακλής].”

Regretting having offhandedly dismissed the issue of Cretan identity without first considering the fact that I was conversing with people who took their identity as Cretans seriously, I backpedaled and told him with deference, “I believe that’s the essence.” But Kritikaros disagreed. Echoing Herzfeld’s observations about resistance to authority, Kritikaros calmly interjected with self-assurance: “No,” he said, “‘Cretan’ means [a] revolutionary/rebellious [person]” [Όχι... Κρητικός θα πει επαναστάτης], responding as much to his brother-in-law as to me. Kritikaros’s statement provoked a minor discussion among all the individuals present. Most of them claimed, especially the women, that “Cretan” doesn’t mean only rebelliousness. Kritikaros refused to defend his position analytically, but continued repeating in his poised and confident manner, “‘Cretan’ means revolutionary/rebellious.” In light of Herzfeld’s discussion, this begs the question: how exactly did Kritikaros interpret rebelliousness? What kind of resistance to authority did he profess? He did not clarify analytically his beliefs regarding the implications of Cretan rebelliousness. However, not surprisingly since he claimed that good mandinadhes should express the Cretan spirit, he did clarify his position poetically, in his mandinadhes.

Kritikaros’s mandinadhes interpret Cretan rebelliousness by attempting to reconcile various aspects of tradition and modernity. As I mentioned in Chapter 1, Cretans are often and stereotypically associated with an unbridled passion for freedom and the rebellious spirit ostensibly required to win or to maintain that freedom. This view is closely linked with the islanders’ many insurrections against their Venetian and Ottoman conquerors, and their resistance to the Germans in the Second World War (Herzfeld 1985a:9). External conquerors appear to be less of a threat than they used to be, however, and representations of Cretan rebelliousness turn elsewhere. As Herzfeld (1985a:26-33) argues, for instance, Cretan mountain villagers perform a rebellious Cretan identity by putting on display their resistance to the modern state, its bureaucracy, and its police. In fact, such resistance has been prevalent in many or all areas of the island, whether it be in the form of tax
evasion, shooting off guns in the air during parties, or simply taking pride in ignoring traffic regulations. From the point of view of nationalist modernity—of the “official world” (Herzfeld 1985a:32)—such local “wild” behavior continues to be frowned upon as primitive, irrational, and uncivilized.

In his mandinadhes, Kritikaros seeks to reconcile this tension by suggesting that it is possible for Cretans to be “modern” and “civilized” and simultaneously retain their identity as rebels. By interpreting such notions as rebelliousness, pride, and bravery in a particular romantic way, he insinuates that it is possible to be both a good citizen and a freedom-loving revolutionary: Cretans today need not rebel against foreign conquerors, the Greek state, or even the European Union per se, but rather against the exclusive authority of the mind and rationality. The heart rebels against the mind:

Ο νούς μου πάντα προπατά ανθρώπου πεζοστράτης, μα η καρδιά δεν ακλουθά γιατί ναι επαναστάτης.

My pedestrian mind always walks,
but my heart doesn’t follow it because it’s a rebel.

Ωςον αντάρτισσα καρδιά πως να σε μανταλώσω,
μέσα στον νου τη φυλακή για πάντα να σε χώσω;

Oh, rebel heart, how can I lock you up?
and stick you forever in the prison of the mind?

In the gatherings, Kritikaros regularly quoted passages from Kazantzakis’s Saviors of God that employ the same metaphorical imagery, and which often served as a point of departure for his improvisation of mandinadhes such as those above:

Ο νους βολεύεται, έχει υπομονή, του αρέσει να παιζεί μα η καρδιά αγγιέει, δεν καταδέχεται αυτή να παιζεί, πλανάται και χημάει να ξεσκίσει το δίχτυ της ανάγκης.

The mind gets comfortable, it has patience, it likes to play; but the heart gets mad, it doesn’t condescend to play, it chokes, and rushes to rip necessity’s net. (Kazantzakis 1985:15)

Ο νους: “Γιατί να χανόμαστε κυνηγώντας το αδύνατο; Μέσα στον ιερό περίβολο των πέντε αιστήσεων χρέος μας ν’ αναγνωρίσουμε τα σύνορα του άνθρωπου.”
The mind: “Why should we get lost chasing after the impossible? Within the sacred precinct of the five senses, it is our duty to recognize the borders of humankind.”

But another voice within me (let’s call it a sixth power, let’s call it heart) resists and yells: “No! No! Never recognize the borders of humankind! Break the boundaries. Deny whatever your eyes see! Die and say: Death doesn’t exist!” (Kazantzakis 1985:17-18)

“Καρδιά, απλοϊκή καρδιά, γαλήνητης κι υποτάξου!”
Μα η καρδιά ανατινάζεται και φωνάζει: “Είμαι ο χωρινός και πηδώ απάνω στη σκηνή κι επεμβαίνω στην πορεία του κόσμου!”
Δε ξυγαίω, δε μετρώ, δε βολεύομαι! Ακολούθω το βαθύ μου χτυποκάρδι.

[The mind:] “Heart, naive and innocent heart, calm down and resign yourself to me!”
But the heart springs up and yells: “I am the peasant and I jump onto the stage and I interfere in the course of the world!”
I don’t weigh, I don’t measure, I don’t get comfortable! I follow my deep heartbeat. (Kazantzakis 1985:18-19)

In numerous mandinadhés, Kritikaros expresses the heart’s rebellion against the mind by drawing on more conventional mandinadhá imagery and figures of speech. On one particular occasion, he was in particularly high spirits over a mandinadhá he heard a Cretan musician sing at a marriage celebration:

Καράβι κάνω την καρδιά, την πεθυμά κατάρτι,
και απλώνω σίγουρο πανί το νου μου τον αντάρτη.

I make my heart a ship, my desire a mast,
and I raise the faithful sail of my rebel mind. (Skoulas 1986; Karatzis 2000:60)

I recognized the mandinadhá and told him on which commercial recording it had appeared many years before. He was enthusiastic about its clever use of insurgent imagery, but criticized it for reading the mind as the rebel. Several days later, he told me two new mandinadhés of his own that draw on the ship metaphor but in accordance with his own beliefs:

Καράβι κάνω το κορμί, το νου πυξίδα βάνω,
και στο τμήμα την καρδιά αντάρτη καπετάνιο.

I make my body a ship, my mind its compass,
and at the helm I put my heart, the insurgent captain.
The mind, an unerring compass, determines my course, but the captain heart recognizes no boundaries.

The immediate context of the gatherings in which Kritikaros improvised many of his mandinadhes served to intensify their rebel-heart message. Indeed, such gatherings provided perhaps the only context in which he could realize for himself what he was expressing in verse. On the whole, Kritikaros actually struck me as a very intelligent, rational, responsible, and self-disciplined person. Friends, family, and colleagues repeatedly sought him out to ask for his advice about their work, business ventures, personal problems, and even political projects and ambitions. It was clear, though, that he viewed the gatherings in which he composed mandinadhes as opportunities to “free himself” from reason and rationality through singing, dancing, and the consumption of wine. He regularly emphasized the important role that wine played, not in getting drunk or totally losing self-control, but in taking away the mind’s inhibitions. Perhaps paradoxically, whenever he achieved a particular level of intoxication at which he felt his heart was in control, he would claim that he could see things in a “clear-headed/sober” fashion [τόρα τα βλέπω όλα νηφάλια]. This led some of his peers to criticize his behavior as excessively “wild” and inappropriate for a man of his education, age, and status. Kritikaros regularly responded to such criticism in his mandinadhes by suggesting certain connections between rebelling against the mind’s authority and rebelling against some people’s social conventions. For example, he responded to his family’s criticism of his drinking and loud singing by alluding to the free-spirited character of Zorba, from Kazantzakis’s Zorba the Greek (1981a):

'Ήθελα νά μουνα Ζορμπάζ, μα οι άλλοι δε μ’ αφήνουν, κι ό,τι κι αν κάνω στη ζωή, αυτοί το κατακρίνουν.

I wish I was a Zorba, but others won’t let me, and they criticize whatever I do in my life.
Many of his mandinadhes celebrate “craziness” or “madness” using the word kouzoulos. This Cretan idiomatic word differs in connotation from the standard Greek trelos in that, for many Cretans, kouzoulos can also have a more positive connotation than trelos:

Τον κουζουλό τον άνθρωπο άλλοι δε σχολιάζουν, και στα καλούπια τη ζωής ποτέ τους δεν τον βάζουν.

People don’t criticize the crazy person, and they never restrict him to life’s molds.

Γι’ αυτό ζηλεύω κουζουλούς και κουζουλός θα γίνω, οι άλλοι να με κρίνουν ποτέ μη τους αφήνω.

That’s why I envy crazy people and will become crazy myself, so as to never let others judge me.

Kritikaros’s mandinadhes promote a rebellion of the heart against the mind itself and the overly restrictive moral authority it imposes on one’s own behavior and the behavior of others.

His mandinadhes are also preoccupied with the psychological and emotional struggles entailed by trying to live out such a perspective in everyday life. Another component of Kritikaros’s interpretation of the Cretan rebel concerns rebelling against the tendency to express one’s pain and to complain about one’s problems. The motif of having the strength of character to resist expressing one’s pain in front of others is commonplace in mandinadha literature, and can be found in some of the oldest collections available:

Είναι στιγμές που ο πόνος μου γίνεται πιο μεγάλος, κάνω τη λύπη μου χαρά, να μη με νιώσει ο άλλος.

There are times when my pain really grows, but I turn my sadness into joy so others won’t catch on.

Το να πονείς και να το λέεις, αυτός δεν είναι πόνος, μα να πονείς και να μην κλαίεις και να το ξέρεις μόνος.

To hurt and to say so isn’t really pain, only to hurt, to not cry, and to be the only one who knows. (Aerakis 1994)

Kritikaros makes this an explicit matter of pride and uses a metaphorical idiom suggesting rebellion by using the word “battle”:
Είναι γνωστό ότι η θάνατος του κύκλου να κλαίει αυτά τα ανθρώπινα
να μάχεται γεννήθηκε τον ήλιο και το χιόνι.

It is shameful for the eagle to cry like a nightingale,

it was born to battle the sun and the snow.

In a sequel, moreover, he attributes his strength of character to the rebel heart:

Το χιόνι το συνήθισα και πια δε με μαργώνει,

το σώμα ίσως κρούσταλλιά, μα η καρδιά το λίώνει.

I got used to the snow and it no longer chills me,

my body might freeze, but my heart will melt it.

Once again, Kritikaros turns rebellion for the contemporary Cretan into a matter of emotional

expression and personal pride.

To summarize, Kritikaros takes up the notion that Cretans are rebels and interprets it in a

way that negotiates certain tensions between tradition and modernity. He holds on to the belief that

traditional Cretans are rebellious, but suggests taking it in new directions. Unlike his

regionalist-traditionalist peers, he does not react against modern language and imagery but freely
draws on and refers to modern literary texts. Unlike Herzfeld’s mountain villagers, he does not put
on display resistance to the state, but rather to certain moral inhibitions and prohibitions imposed
by his own mind and by other people. He celebrates Cretan “folk philosophy,” not as a nostalgic
return to an idealized past, but as particular ethical virtues like pride, hospitality, and emotional
expressiveness that, in modernity, require the war-like efforts of a rebel to be kept alive and put into
practice.

ECOLOGIZING CRETAN “TRADITION”

Challenging modernizers and traditionalists alike to rethink the implications of the

modern/traditional dichotomy, Kritikaros’s mandinadhes express a particular identity for Cretans

as virtuous rebels, thereby establishing the “rebel” half of an ethic of “the wild.” His mandinadhes
are preoccupied with more than local identity, however. I will now argue that they are also concerned with promoting a sense of place, place awareness, and an ecological sensibility. That is, they pronounce the importance of the “ecology” half of an ethic of “the wild” as well. I divide my argument into four main sections. First, I claim that Kritikaros’s texts negotiate the “social” context of the gatherings in terms of their physical location. Second, I maintain that they negotiate the “social” context in terms of food/drink consumption (and production) as well, thus foregrounding its socio-ecological quality. Third, I contend that they “place” the national literature of Nikos Kazantzakis. Finally, I discuss how they re-interpret conventional Cretan placed literary invocations of the “wild” (as a literary figure of speech) from an ecological perspective. Collectively, these four assertions indicate Kritikaros’s attempt to “ecologize” the practices and discourse of Cretan tradition. It probably goes without saying that as I continue my close reading of texts, I will continue not only to refer to intertextual connections to other literature, but also to describe the performative context. Indeed, in the following two subsections, I will be concerned with ways that Kritikaros’s mandinadhes themselves foreground particular aspects of that context.

**Place as Context**

Kritikaros, his wife and two daughters, and I were gathered one summer evening on the terrace of his house in Irakleio for dinner and plenty of wine. After dinner, I played Cretan melodies on the mandolin to which he improvised mandinadhes. At some point, quite late into the evening, when his high spirits reached a climax of sorts, he looked up at the sky and sang the following mandinadha:

Πάντα θαν είμαι δυστυχής, γιατί το θένε τ’ άστρα,
και να πορθήσω δεν μπορώ καρδίς ανθρώπων κάστρα.

I’ll always be miserable, because the stars demand it,
and I’m unable to capture the hearts of people because they are castles.

On the one hand, the phrase “because the stars demand it” connotes an astrological metaphor for fate. However, taking into account the context of Kritikaros’s performance, that he appeared
inspired by his looking up at the actual stars in the sky, they also announce an awareness of his surrounding environment. His use of a castle metaphor for human hearts signifies the physical location of the performance as well: his house is adjacent to, and his terrace overlooks, the Venetian castle walls that enclose the old city of Irakleio, and for which the city used to be called “Castle” (Kastro) or “Big Castle” (Megalo Kastro). After several minutes, Kritikaros composed yet another mandinadha expressing awareness of his immediate surroundings. Once again, he referred to both the skyscape and the landscape:

Απόψε, θε μου, θα γενώ το άστρο η Αφροδίτη, για να θερφω απο ψηλά το γερο-Ψηλορείτη.
Tonight, my God, I will become the star Venus, so as to see from high above old-Psiloreitis [Mt. Ida].

The star Venus serves as a metaphor for being “high” but it also expresses a feeling of oneness with the actual stars. It brings to mind Prevelakis’s character Yiorgakis and his descriptions of mystical communion with the stars, the fish, and the vegetable garden. (Kritikaros had, in fact, encouraged many of us in the gatherings to read Prevelakis’s trilogy several times.) The invocation of the mountain Psiloreitis brings to mind its widespread use by mandinadha composers as a metaphor for masculine Cretan strength, endurance, and pride: it signifies Cretan identity. However, taking into consideration that Psiloreitis is actually visible from Kritikaros’s terrace, it also expresses Kritikaros’s sense of place.

The insights of performance theory in folklore studies underscore the significance of Kritikaros’s references to the actual place of performance. Notwithstanding disagreements about language and imagery, figures of speech, and expressions of “the Cretan spirit,” local aesthetic theories governing mandinadha improvisation require that a good mandinadha, if nothing else, “match” the context in which it is performed. Panopoulos (1996) describes the three-fold idea of matching [tairiasma] as follows:165

---

165 Panopoulos studies the distichs of Naxos, but his remarks apply equally well to Cretan mandinadhes. See also Ball (2002).
[...] the singers’ ability to improvise well-rhyming songs [...] the singers’ ability to sing the right song at the right moment [...] and [...] the singers’ ability to communicate with one another, and, ultimately, utilize the social context of singing for the construction and expression of the gendered emotion of kefi [high-spirits]. In the local aesthetics of singing, [...] a good singer is the one who knows how to match songs well. (Panopoulos 1996:62)

From this perspective, Kritikaros demonstrated that he is a competent performer because his mandinadhès “match” the context in all three ways. But they do something more: they implicitly negotiate the idea of context to include not only the social context but the physical context as well. As Briggs (1986) discusses regarding verbal performances (his own particular concern is interviews), “contexts are not simply situational givens, they are continually renegotiated in the course of the interaction” (25). The physical context was “there,” but Kritikaros gave it meaning as context through the references and metaphors he employed. His compositions thus indicate that the literal as well as the figurative landscape matters to him. Knowing where he is is important. He could have performed competently, and even included any number of standard landscape metaphors that are typical of the mandinadhà genre, without making any references to the actual location of his performance. However, by drawing upon their immediate surroundings to construct metaphors and imagery, his texts foreground the importance of humans being aware of their environment. Since the audience already has expectations regarding tairiasma, Kritikaros’s mandinadhès not only reflect his own place-sense, but also teach the audience to become sensitive to their own physical surroundings and place-sense as well.166

Food and Drink as Context

Kritikaros composed most of the mandinadhès I am considering in the context of gatherings characterized by the consumption of food and drink, including his own homemade wine. Moreover, during the gatherings, he regularly discussed a variety of topics related to food and drink. For instance, like many other contemporary Cretans, he often boasted about the manner in which
he made his wine. He not only grew grapes for professional purposes, but also reserved a small corner of his vineyard for grapes and wine for consumption by his family and friends. He frequently mentioned that he was able to tell first-hand that Cretans’ use of various pesticides in previous decades had actually increased the pests that plagued the village’s crops compared to when he was a youngster. Nevertheless, he refused to use synthetic chemicals on the family garden, the family orchard, and the family grapes. He said he favored leaving them to chance and preferred a less abundant organic harvest to a non-organic one. Although unable for economic reasons to take the same chance on the grapes he raised for selling as raisins, he expressed his efforts to use the least amount of synthetic chemicals he thought possible for staying in business, and admonished Cretans who did otherwise as irresponsible. Each year when he made his household wine, he refused to follow “safe” procedures involving the addition of sulfites and commercial yeast (and even water or sugar) to the grape must. He bragged that a professional oenologist once candidly confirmed to him what he already knew—that such modern chemical procedures were unnecessary, provided care was taken regarding the harvest time the grape’s sugar content and the “cleanliness” [καθαριότητα] of the wine-making procedure. Kritikaros loved to boast that he would rather end up with a barrel full of pure vinegar than be guaranteed wine full of chemicals.

The concerns Kritikaros expressed extended to food in general. The meals he and his wife served to their guests consisted of, to the extent they could manage it, organic produce from their own garden, wild herbs from the outskirts of Kritikaros’s paternal village that he himself collected and dried annually, wild greens that his wife collected from the backyard of their village home, and fish that Kritikaros caught in his spare time. Almost systematically, Kritikaros would tell his guests where the various foodstuffs of particular meals came from, and frequently showed his disappointment over those items he could not trust because he was unsure of their place of origin or their grower’s trustworthiness. He would brag about leaving the produce he raised for household

166 Incidentally, this example reinforces the insights of performance theory. Without considering these mandinadhes in their performative context, it would be impossible to recognize their signification of the importance of place sense and place awareness.
use “to chance” in order to avoid causing further harm to the environment. He told everyone how he fenced in part of the garden with chicken-wire to raise snails on wild greens and discussed his plans for converting his olive groves into a place for raising free-range chickens for family use. He constantly complained about the fishermen who violated environmental regulations and who would throw their trash into the sea instead of bringing it back to shore. He repeatedly admonished one of his brothers-in-law for claiming the tomatoes he was selling were organic when in fact they were not. In the context of everyday life, then, Kritikaros participated in the Cretan discourse about “pure” food that I discussed in Chapter 4. In contrast to many of the Cretan cookbooks, though, he did so primarily in agricultural and environmental terms, not with respect to the continuity of Cretan folk culture. His primary concern was not the construction of a historically authentic and superior Cretan folk cuisine, nor the discovery of aesthetic qualities in Cretan food that might best represent Cretan culture. Rather, he was concerned about the health and well-being of the environment in which food was grown and of the people who consumed it.167

This is relevant, moreover, to the mandinadhes Kritikaros composed because some of them refer to food and drink. For example, one evening, after a discussion over wine about wine-making and the potential emotional, intellectual, and spiritual benefits of drinking wine, we re-read some excerpts from Kazantzakis’s Zorba the Greek:

Όταν χτες καθίσαμε απόξω από την παράγκα κι ήπιε ένα ποτήρι κρασι, στράφηκε και με κοίταξε τρομαγμένος:
—Τι ’ναι πάλι αυτό το κόκκινο νερό, αφεντικό—δε μου λέες; Ένα παλιοκούστουρο πετάει βλαστούς, κρέμουνται κάτι ξινά μπιχλιμπίδια, κι ο κατσός περνάει, ο ήλιος τα ψήνει, γίνονται γλυκά σαν το μέλι, και τα λέμε τότε σταφύλια τα παπούμε, βγάζουμε το ζεσμί τους, το βάζουμε στα βαρέλια, βράζει μοναχό του, το ανοίγουμε του Αι-Γιώργη του Μεθυστή τον Οχτάβη, και βγαίνει κρασί! Τι θάμα είναι πάλι αυτό; Το πίνεις, το κόκκινο αυτού ζουμί, κι η ψυχή μεγαλώνει, δεν τη χωράει πια το παλιτόμαρο, αντροκαλιέται με το Θεό να παλέψουν. Τι ’ναι αυτά, αφεντικό, δε μου λέες;

When yesterday we sat out and drank a glass of wine, he [Zorba] turned and looked at me in shock:
“And what is this red water, boss? Won’t you tell me? A wretched old stem sprouts, some sour doodads hang there, and the time goes by, the sun bakes them, they become

---

167I should emphasize that my intention here is not to assess the scientific accuracy or political correctness of Kritikaros’s agricultural practices or pronouncements about food, but merely to consider how he brings the issue of ecology to the table.
sweet like honey, and then we call them grapes; we step on them, we get out their juice; we put them in barrels, it boils [ferments] all by itself, we open it on St. George the Drunk’s day in October, and out comes wine! And what miracle is that? You drink it, this read juice, and the soul grows, the wretched old hide can no longer contain it, it picks a fight with God.

What is all that about, boss? Won’t you tell me? (Kazantzakis 1981a:63)

Για πρώτη φορά στο ακρωγάλι ετούτο χάρηκα τη γλύκα του φαγιού. Όταν [...] αρχίζαμε να τρώμε και να κουτσοπόνουμε και να φουντώνει η κουβέντα, ένωθα πως είναι και το φαϊ μια ψυχική κι αυτό λειτουργία, και πως το κρεας, το ψωμί και το κρασί είναι οι πρώτες ύλες απ’ όπου γίνεται το πνέμα. [...] — Πες μου τι κάνεις το φαϊ που τρως, μου είπε κάποτε, και θα σου πω ποιός είσαι. Άλλοι το κάνουν ξύγκια και κοπριά, άλλοι το κάνουν δουλεία και κέφι, και άλλοι, έχω ακουστά, το κάνουν, λέει, θεό.

For the first time on this [Cretan] shore I enjoyed the sweetness of food. When [...] we started to eat and drink and the conversation began to swell, I felt that even the meal is an operation of the soul, and how meat, bread, and wine are the raw materials out of which spirit is made. [...] “Tell me what you do with the food you eat,” he once told me, “and I’ll tell you who you are. Some turn it into fat and manure, others into work and high spirits, and others, so I hear, turn it into god.” (Kazantzakis 1981a:78-79)

Kritikaros, inspired by these passages, improvised several mandinadhes:

Πίνω κρασί και η ψυχή, θε μου, πως μεγαλώνει, τσι φτέρουγές της μονομίας σ’ όλο τον κόσμο απλόνει.

I drink wine and the soul, my God, how it grows, suddenly it spreads its wings over the whole world.

Πίνω κρασί, τρόγω φαϊ, κι αντιριέγει η ψυχή μου, φτέρουγές βγάνει, δε χωρεί μπλιδό μέσα στο κορμί μου.

I drink wine, I eat food, and my soul becomes stronger, it sprouts wings, it no longer fits in my body.

Όποιος μπορέσει το φαϊ και το κρασί να κάνει πνεύμα, θα μείνει αθάνατος, ποτέ δε θα ποθάνει.

Whoever can turn food and drink into spirit will remain immortal, will never die.

On another occasion, he composed the following mandinadha about Cretan wine:

Πνεύμα το κρητικό κρασί, να γίνει στην καρδιά μας, στα υφάνια να πετάξουμε μαζί με τ’ όνειρά μας.

Let Cretan wine become spirit in our heart, so we can fly in the heavens together with our dreams.
On the one hand, these texts express high spirits and euphoria. Taking into consideration once again the context of their performance, though, they signify something else as well. Kritikaros repeatedly performed these mandinadhes and others like them when he and much of his audience were drinking his own homemade Cretan wine. They signify, therefore, that the food and drink consumed at the gatherings was an integral part of the social context of the gatherings. Just as allusions to a performer’s physical location connote the importance of a sense of place, mention of food and wine in the mandinadha suggests the importance of an awareness about the act of eating and drinking. Once again, Kritikaros’s references contribute to the creation of the communicative context “in the course of interaction” (Briggs 1986:108) that has a physical/ecological aspect. Indeed, in light of the agricultural and environmental views Kritikaros so often expressed, the references to food and wine in his mandinadhes teach the audience to be aware of eating and drinking as an “agricultural act” (Berry 1998:54). Thus, by emphasizing the importance of physical location and of agriculturally-environmentally “pure” food and drink, Kritikaros’s mandinadhes demonstrate that the social context of the gatherings is, in fact, a socio-ecological context. By bringing the ecological more squarely into view among the audience, his mandinadhes ecologize not only the gatherings, but the notion of Cretan tradition itself: Insofar as Kritikaros’s mandinadhes are considered expressions of the “Cretan spirit” and “Cretan folk philosophy,” they suggest that to “be” a Cretan is not merely a question of identity (e.g., Cretan=rebel), but also a matter of local place awareness. If regionalist-traditionalists preoccupy themselves with the distinctiveness, continuity, authenticity, and superiority of Cretan folk culture in order to practice place identity politics, Kritikaros refers to and participates in Cretan folk culture to explore the interrelationship of Cretan cultural identity and place awareness.

168 Also, since some of Kritikaros’s mandinadhes relate food and drink to other emotional or spiritual topics, they also suggest that some kind of ecological awareness is an important aspect of spiritual achievements, including the composition of mandinadhes. This is reminiscent of Prevelakis’s portrayal of Yiorgakis and Loizos. On Aegina, for example, Loizos suggests that intimate knowledge of Greek nature should be a prerequisite for Yiorgakis’s development as a
Placing Nikos Kazantzakis

Kritikaros’s ecologization of Cretan culture in his mandinadhes has important implications for their celebratory allusions and references to Nikos Kazantzakis’s literary texts. Kazantzakis himself assigns a prominent role to Crete in several of his literary texts. For example, the narrator/boss of Zorba the Greek is a Cretan whose adventures with Zorba occur in the context of Cretan culture. Freedom or Death (Kapetan Michalis) takes place entirely in the context of late nineteenth-century Crete’s uprisings against the Ottoman Empire. Minoan Crete (Knossos) is the setting for several important episodes in his modern Odyssey. The work in which Kazantzakis makes his connection to Crete explicit, however, is the semi-autobiographical Report to Greco.169 Here, Kazantzakis describes his formative experiences, journeys, and struggles aimed at achieving spiritual and intellectual enlightenment and a “vision” of truth. About two thirds of the book’s chapters take place in Crete. Crete is the context of most of Kazantzakis’s childhood years and the home ground to which he returns on several occasions. In addition, he repeatedly contemplates and theorizes the significance of Crete in his own personal development as an intellectual and a writer.

Like ethographers, Kazantzakis includes Cretan mandinadhes in his text, but unlike them, he offers them as advice or morsels of wisdom for the reader to consider in conjunction with his quest for truth:

—Θές να ξεπεράσεις τον Τιτσιάνο και τον Τιντορέττο; Μην ξεχνάς την κρητική μαντινάδα: “Πολλά ψηλά τη χτίζεις τη φωλιά και θα σου σπάσει ο κλώνος…”

“You want to outdo Titian and Tintoretto? Don’t forget what the Cretan mandinadha teaches: “You’re building your nest too high and the branch is gonna break on you…” (Kazantzakis 1982:504)

Greek writer. Whereas Loizos promotes awareness of Greek nature’s distinctiveness, Kritikaros promotes awareness of the relationship between local agriculture and ecology.

169I am conceiving of Kazantzakis here as the authorial persona signified by his own literary text that overlaps with the actual person. In other words, I am interested in considering the implications of Cretans reading Kazantzakis’s “autobiography” as a transparent representation of his life. Of course, the “accuracy” of the literary representation of Kazantzakis with respect to the “facts” of his biography is not even an issue here.
Even as a child, Kazantzakis understands Crete as a “force” within him yet superior to him that keeps him going even when he is ready to give up (1982:70). He also submits that Crete is simultaneously an “inhumane” [απÜνθρωπο] force that makes the life of every Cretan a struggle (1982:433). He discerns a “flame” [φλÜγα] or “soul” [ψυχή] in Crete that is more powerful than life or death, and characterizes Cretan identity in terms of such virtues as “pride [περφυνια], obstinacy [το πείσμα], and gallantry [παλικαριά]” (1982:83). Kazantzakis’s Cretan sense of self motivates him to behave in accordance with particular conceptions of Cretan identity:

Κι αληθινά, από φυλότιμο, από την ιδέα πως είμαι Κρητικός κι από φόβο του πατέρα μου, κατάφερα από παιδι να νικήσω το φόβο.

Indeed, out of a sense of honor [philotimo], the idea that I am Cretan, and out of fear of my father, I managed to overcome fear even as a child. (Kazantzakis 1982:70)

Kazantzakis, not unlike Kritikaros, tries to expand the boundaries of Cretan identity as well. Describing how on those rare occasions that a “weakling” [μαραζάρης] is born into a tough Cretan mountain family they make him into a schoolteacher instead of a shepherd or warrior, Kazantzakis suggests that even a school teacher can wage an intellectual war:

Εγώ, αλίμονο, ήμουν ο δάσκαλος της γενιάς μου. Γιατί ν' αντιστέκουμαι; ας το πάρω απόφασή, κι όσο κι αν με καταφρονούν οι πρόγονοι, εξω κι εγώ τ' άρματά μου, θα πολεμήσω.

Alas, I was the school teacher of my generation [in my family]. Why should I resist? I should just make up my mind. Even if my ancestors scorn me, I, too, have my weapons and I’ll fight. (Kazantzakis 1982:238-239)

Kazantzakis writes that many of the most crucial moments of his life occurred in Crete and/or were motivated by the wisdom of the Cretan folk. For instance, he describes the day Crete was liberated from the Ottomans as one of the two “supreme” days of his life because of the essential optimism about humanity that it instilled in him (1982:107). It was in a “decisive moment” [κρίσιμη στιγμή] in Crete, during his last summer vacation as a university student in Athens, that he learned how writing could bring relief to his spiritual anguish and intellectual struggles (1982:144). Also, he asserts that Cretan folk narratives had a remarkable influence on the direction of his life:
Beyond that, he discerns something about Crete’s particularity (its history, its spirit, etc.) which has, he argues, significant implications for humanity in general.

In the most decisive moment of life—when a young man chooses only one of many possible roads in life, identifying his fate with it as he enters manhood—at that moment three Cretan incidents saved—or, not saved—attempted to save my soul. Perhaps they can save the souls of others, and for this reason please forgive me for recounting them here. They are very simple, with a think, peasant rind, but whoever can break through this rind will taste three mouthfuls of lion brain. (Kazantzakis 1982:433)

He interprets not only the events of his own life, but the world at large, in explicitly Cretan terms:

The world is bigger than Greece, the world’s pain bigger than our pain, and the desire for freedom is not something reserved just for Cretans, but an eternal struggle of all humankind. Crete didn’t disappear from my mind, but the whole world opened within me and became a giant Crete […] By turning the whole world into Crete, I was able to feel the struggle and pain of humankind during my early adolescence. (Kazantzakis 1982:98)

Beyond that, he discerns something about Crete’s particularity (its history, its spirit, etc.) which has, he argues, significant implications for humanity in general.

My duty was clear: to take whatever Crete was crying out over the centuries—through its people, its mountains, its foamy seas, with its whole body and soul, in sleep and in waking hours—and to synthesize it into a message. Am I not Crete’s son? Am I not Crete’s soil? Was it not Crete—the moment I faced its oldest splendor—that ordered me to figure out the secret meaning of its struggle, why it was crying out for so many centuries, and what Cretan message it was battling to tell humankind? (Kazantzakis 1982:452)
Kazantzakis views himself as ideally positioned, because he happens to be Cretan, to bring a message to humanity. He also names his life’s ultimate vision, the culmination of his experiences, travels, and struggles, “the Cretan glance” and explains it with a metaphor drawn from Minoan Crete (1982:476). Throughout the text, Kazantzakis asserts that his life entails a dual responsibility. He is responsible to humanity in general and to Crete in particular. It the latter duty that motivates his framing of the work in the title, prologue, and epilogue as a “report” to his Cretan “grandfather” El Greco, whom Kazantzakis constructs as having had the same sense of belonging to Crete (and the same rebellious Cretan spirit):170

“It is interesting to note how various Cretans artists have followed and drawn on Kazantzakis’s example to assert the diachronic continuity of Cretan culture by writing a contemporary work as a “report” to his “ancestor” El Greco. The Cretan musician Kostas Mountakis, considered by many Cretans the greatest lyra player of the twentieth century, released an album inspired by Kazantzakis entitled, Report to Kazantzakis. This album implies that Mountakis makes his own contribution to Crete’s diachronic spiritual-cultural struggle through the island’s musical traditions. Subsequently, Vassilis Skoulas (1989) released an album entitled, Report to Crete, that suggests a reconfiguration of this process: Reports are no longer made by one remarkable Cretan individual to another, but directly to Crete as a whole.

An etymologically literal translation of the adjective patriki would be “paternal.” However, because the association with fatherhood has generally become opaque in modern Greek, a more accurate translation semantically speaking is “home.” Hence, “to patriko spiti” refers to “the family house,” not necessarily to “the father’s house.” Similarly, patridha brings to mind notions of the “homeland,” rather than the specifically paternal “fatherland.” Also note the difference between patriki vis [home ground] and patridha [homeland]: The former emphasizes a specific geographical place, whereas the latter signifies the symbolic nation more than its particular
I came back to my home ground to face our mountains, to see the old warriors with their large drooping fezzes and wide smiles, to hear about freedom and wars again, and to step on my home ground to gain strength. (Kazantzakis 1982:301)

The first of several stories he relates about his time in Crete, and what he thinks he learned from them, is about an old man nearing death whom he happened to encounter while walking in the mountains. The story begins with a description of the man and the setting of their meeting:

One afternoon in the mountains I came upon an old man, dry, thin, with very white hair, patched breeches, and worn out boots, and with his cane between his shoulders, in the typical manner of the Cretan shepherd. He was slowly going up, rock by rock, and every so often he would stop and look for a long time at the mountains around him, down below at the plains, and beyond, through a ravine, at a strip of sea. (Kazantzakis 1982:302)

Apart from describing the setting for conversation that will follow, the tall mountains of Crete, dry with little or no vegetation, also perform a “symbolic doubling” (Buell 1995:254), accentuating the man’s old, worn-out body and perhaps even Kazantzakis’s own spiritual weariness or ascetic yearnings. Moreover, as the conversation between Kazantzakis and the old man unfolds, the Cretan landscape becomes a focus of the discussion:

—Ωρα καλή, παππού! Τον φόναξα από μακριά· τι γυρεύεις εδώ ολομόναχος;
—Αποχαιρετώ, παιδί μου, αποχαιρετώ…
—Ποιόν αποχαιρετάς στην ερημία; Δε βλέπω κανένα.
Ο γέρος δήμοσια τίναξε το κεφάλι:

territory. Kazantzakis himself distinguishes between patriko homa/patrika homata [home soil/home-land] and patriida [homeland]:

The soul knows very well, even if it acts many times like it has forgotten, that it has to justify itself to its home ground. I don’t say homeland; I say home ground. Home ground is something deeper, more modest and low-key, made up of age-old broken bones. (Kazantzakis 1982:432)
—Ποιά ερημιά; και δε θωράζει τα βουνά, δε θωράζει τη θάλασσα; Γιατί μας ἔδωκε ο ᾿Αρχόν τα μάτια; Δεν ακούει τα πουλιά από πάνω σου; Γιατί μας ἔδωκε ο ᾿Αρχόν τ’ αυτία; Ερημιά το λέει αυτέ; Αυτέ έμενεν οi φίλοι μου; τους μιλά και μου μιλούνε, ρίγωνο
φωνή και μου αποκρινούνται δύο γενεές γορίζων με τη συντροφιά τους, βοσκός κι ήρθε
η ώρα να χωρίσουμε… Βράδυ πια…

“Hello, old man!” I yelled to him from afar. “What are you looking for here all alone?”
“I’m saying good-bye, my child, I’m saying good-bye…”
“Who are you saying good-bye in this desolate place? I don’t see anyone.”
The old man became angry. He shook his head:
“What desolate place? You don’t see the mountains, you don’t see the sea? Why did
God give us eyes? You don’t hear the birds above you? Why did God give us ears? You call
this desolate? These are my friends. I talk to them, and they talk to me. I call out and they
answer me back. For two generations I walked in their company as a shepherd, and now
it’s time for us to part… Night has fallen at last…” (Kazantzakis 1982:302)

In addition to echoing romantic ethnography’s portrayals of the Cretan folk as close to nature, this
passage also suggests a critique of cosmopolitan modernization.172 The young Kazantzakis who has
studied in Athens and traveled abroad observes the mountain landscape and perceives only
desolation. The old shepherd, in contrast, not only perceives the same landscape as rich, but as alive.
The shepherd challenges Kazantzakis’s apprehension of the landscape, and perhaps of nature in
general. The shepherd reinforces his challenge as the two prepare to part and Kazantzakis asks the
old man his name. The shepherd responds, “There, bend over, take hold of a rock, ask it and it will
tell you: ‘It’s old Manousos from Kavrohori,’ it will tell you” (Kazantzakis 1982:303). The
shepherd emphasizes his intimate interdependence with the local environment by personifying it:
not only does the shepherd recognize the rocks, but also the rocks recognize the shepherd. The
primary moral Kazantzakis draws from his encounter with the shepherd concerns humankind’s
ability to overcome the fear of death. He attributes the shepherd’s courage, moreover, to his having

172Much as in ethnography, Kazantzakis’s representations of the rural folk are ambivalent. He
follows this story with yet another in which he gains wisdom from a peasant. This time, it is not a
wise shepherd, but the equivalent of a dirty old man who, at 100 years, “smelling of tobacco and
piss,” with “a running nose, saliva dripping from his mouth,” is still “thirsty” for pretty young girls
and the “cold glass of water” of life (1982:303-4). Here the peasant’s “wisdom” is simply his
relentless biological instinct that Kazantzakis can invoke as a metaphor for spiritual instinct.
spent much of his life in the mountains: The shepherd has learned wisdom from the landscape he inhabits. The passage as a whole, therefore, suggests the importance of discerning the hidden meaning or value of even the most “desolate” of places.  

Nevertheless, for all of his emphasis on debt and duty to his Cretan ancestry and home ground, and in spite of his celebration of the wisdom of the Cretan folk, Kazantzakis’s consistent response to Crete is to leave it. He repeatedly reports that he feels the island is too confining. As a youngster, he feels both his family home and his hometown of Irakleio growing too “narrow” (1982:80). Weary of the provincialism of his father, whose assessment of contemporary theater is that it is all “shameful frolics” \[\text{ασκαραλίκια}\] and “hot air” \[\text{αρεάς κοσανιστός}\], Kazantzakis is allured by the distant lands he reads about in literature (1982:78). As a university student in Athens, he returns to the island only to be disappointed that his Cretan high school friends have abandoned their youthful idealism in favor of enjoying local life—drinking, singing, marriage—and working in a local factory (1982:142). After graduation, his closest university friend plans to return to Crete to open a law office. Kazantzakis, however, enamored by the glory of Crete’s “deep mystery” (1982:147), the “age-old Cretan secret” of antiquity (1982:151), gives up on his contemporary Cretan peers and goes traveling elsewhere in search of the truth:

Μεγάλη η χαρά μας; ο φίλος μου έκανε σχέδια ν’ανοίξει δικηγορικό γραφείο στην Κρήτη και να πολιτευτεί, κι εγώ χαιρόμουν γιατί άνοιγε μια πόρτα να φύγω.

Our joy was great. My friend made plans to open a law office in Crete and get into political life, and I was overjoyed because a door was opening for me to leave. (Kazantzakis 1982:156)

Even after traveling to Italy, Mt. Athos, Jerusalem, and Mt. Sinai, he returns briefly to Crete only so that he can restore his own strength:

Καλή η Κρήτη, μα μονάχα για να πάρεις φόρας υστερα από λίγους μήνες δε χωρούσα πια οι δρόμοι στένευαν, το πατρικό σπίτι μικράνε, οι βασιλικοί και οι κατιφέδες της αυλής του έχασαν τη μυρωδιά τους· κοίταξε τους παλιούς φίλους πος είχαν βολευτεί και τρόμαζε· δε θα κλειστό εγώ ποτέ σε τέσσερις τοίχους, σ’ένα γραφείο, ορκίζομουν, δε

173Compare this, for example, with the first sentence of Edward Abbey’s Desert Solitaire. Referring to the Utah desert, he states: “This is the most beautiful place on earth” (Abbey 1990:1).
Crete is good, but only for regaining momentum. After a few months, it wasn’t big enough for me anymore: the roads became narrow, the family house became smaller, the basil and marigolds in the yard lost their aroma. I would see how my old friends had settled down and I become scared. I would swear that I’d never let myself be closed in by the four walls of an office, that I would never give in to necessity. I would go down to the harbor and look at the sea—it appeared to me like a gateway to freedom. Let me open it so I can leave! (Kazantzakis 1982:309)

As persistently as Kazantzakis identifies with Crete socially, historically, psychologically, and culturally, he also insists on pursuing his quest for freedom and truth elsewhere. Paradoxically, his sense of obligation to Crete is largely responsible for his leaving it. He might respect the Cretan folk’s deep appreciation of the Cretan landscape, but prefers himself to reside abroad. From the perspective of place inhabitation, Kazantzakis hardly seems to qualify as a Cretan inhabitant at all.

Kritikaros’s mandinadhes complicate such an assessment of Kazantzakis by referring to his texts. Kazantzakis celebrates the virtues and wisdom of the Cretan folk together with the likes of Buddha, Christ, and Nietzsche. In other words, he uses national literature to legitimate “Cretan folk philosophy” as “high” culture. Analogously, by incorporating and alluding to Kazantzakis’s writings in mandinadhes that ostensibly express the “Cretan spirit” and promote “Cretan folk philosophy,” Kritikaros uses placed literature to legitimate Kazantzakis’s philosophy as Cretan “folk” culture. Kritikaros “re-localizes” the nomadic Kazantzakis, turning the (trans)national author into a Cretan author. Moreover, since Kazantzakis emphasizes the importance of duty to his Cretan home ground, Kritikaros’s mandinadhes implicitly re-interpret the author in socio-ecological terms: Kritikaros’s mandinadhes celebrate Kazantzakis’s worldview, which includes assertions about duty to one’s home ground. Kritikaros, however, an inhabitant of the island, promotes a sense of place and ecologically-minded place awareness. Thus, Kritikaros insinuates that Kazantzakis’s call for responsibility to one’s home ground should be interpreted in

---

174 Peter Bien has observed a similar theme in Kazantzakis’s Odyssey: “The language is rich in metaphors drawn from nature, from the most basic experiences of the Greek peasantry. Yet at least half the poem is about Odysseus’s rejection of the soil, flight from the rootedness implied in peasant life, and final belief that nothing is real except the imaginings of the mind” (Bien 1972:222).
social and ecological terms; he “ecologizes” Kazantzakis’s message. Kritikaros turns Kazantzakis’s
decision not to inhabit Crete into a means for subsequent Cretans such as himself to promote place
inhabitation: Kazantzakis’s duty was to travel and explore, but also to write in such a way—by
celebrating Crete as a force and responsibility—as to enable other Cretans (like Kritikaros) to
articulate the socio-ecological responsibility of the island’s inhabitants through a Cretan-centered
intertextual engagement. By re-localizing and ecologizing Kazantzakis—by “placing”
him—Kritikaros translates the author’s allegorical invitation to readers to be responsible to their
home ground into a literal call for Cretan inhabitants to become socially and ecologically aware of
their island. Kazantzakis’s episode with the old shepherd no longer merely suggests that humans in
general should discern the value of even “desolate” places. It becomes an explicit invitation (from
its most famous intellectual) to Cretan inhabitants to recognize their interdependence with the
Cretan landscape.

Ecologizing Cretan Placed Literature

Kritikaros’s mandinadhes re-localize and ecologize the literature of Cretan-born author
Kazantzakis in order to promote place awareness among his cohabitants. In a similar fashion, they
also ecologize Cretan placed literature, turning conventional metaphors into literal messages about
nature and wilderness. Many mandinadhes circulate among Cretans that treat a variety of themes
about love, sex, and courtship using "wildflowers" as a metaphor for women. Typically, the
metaphorical use of wildflower signifies that a woman’s “unruliness” makes her more difficult for a
man to conquer erotically yet also more attractive to him than “tamer” women who are symbolized
by cultivated flowers:

Μπορεί μια βιόλα του μπαξέ στην ομορφιά να μηρίζει,
μα τσ’ αγριας η μυρωδια το νου τ’ ανθρώπου αγγίζει.

A flower in the garden might smell beautifully,
but the aroma of the wild flower really touches a person’s mind. (Skoulas [n.d.])

Λαγρια βιόλα τση κορφής στην ομορφιά σου επάνω,
δέκα μπαξέδω τσ’ ακριβούς ανθούς δεν παραβάνω.
Wildflower of the mountain top at the height of your beauty,
the precious flowers of ten gardens are no comparison to you. (Skoulas [n.d.])

Other mandinadhes suggest the comparative fragility of less unruly women who become involved
with wild men:

Σ’ άγριο τόπο εφύτρωσες τ’ ονείρου μου ανεμόνα,
και σπάσαν τα κλεινάρια σου οι μπόρες του χειμώνα.

Anemone of my dreams, you took root in a wild place
and the storms of winter broke your shoots. (Haimidhes 1993)

During one of the most exciting gatherings at which I was present, the following
mandinadha using the flower metaphor for a woman played on a commercial recording:

Η κάθε βιόλα στο μπαζέ εχει την ομορφιά τζη,
μα σαν την κοψεις χάνεται κι αυτή κ’ η μυρωδιά τζη.

Each flower in the garden has its own beauty
but when you cut it, both it and its aroma are forever lost. (Ksilouris 1990)

Kritikaros, in high spirits, engaged the recording in one of his virtual verse duels. Modifying the
wording of the recorded mandinadha, he responded with one of his own:175

Η κάθε βιόλα τση κορφής με του μπαζέ δε μοάζει
για δεν την κόβει άνθρωπος και μένει η μυρωδιά τζη.

No flower on the mountain peak resembles that of the garden,
for no human cuts it and its aroma lives on.

Kritikaros’s mandinadha suggests that the recorded mandinadha was at least uninspired, if not
downright sexist. It shows little enthusiasm for its portrayal of women as needing to be looked after
(“in the garden”), passive, or dependent. It seeks to undercut the masculine pride of the performer
who boasts about going into the garden and “cutting” the flower (connoting marriage and/or sex),
let alone the implication that once a flower has been “cut,” its value (“aroma”) is lost. By invoking
the mountain peak as a foil for the garden, Kritikaros suggests that such gardens are associated
with the lowlands. He invokes a conventional aesthetic code among mandinadha composers that associates the mountains with strength and heroism and the lowlands with weakness and corruption.\(^{176}\) From the perspective of folk-traditionalist mandinadha composers, Kritikaros subversively suggests that Cretan women, as well as Cretan men, should be strong and independent.

No human can “cut” her. The word “cut” acquires more general connotations. She will not be dominated, suppressed, or held back by others. She retains her natural good essence.

Subsequently, Kritikaros launched into one of his many bursts of improvisation wherein—even in the absence of any response in the spirit of verse-dueling—he composes a whole series of mandinadhes, each inspired by the previous one. The mandinadhes he improvised are as follows:

\[
\text{Tsi βιόλες δεν τσί κόβω εγώ, στη φύση τους να ζούνε, στον κόσμο αυτό τον άχρωμο άρωμα να σκορπούνε.}
\]

I don’t cut the flowers, let them live in their natural state, to spread their scent in this colorless world.

\[
\text{Η βιόλα που ’ναι στο μπαξέ ο άνθρωπος την κάνει, λιπάσματα και κοπριά συνέχεια της βάνει.}
\]

Humankind grows the flower in the garden, constantly putting fertilizers and manure.

\[
\text{Μα η βιόλα που ναι στο βουνό ζει μεσ’ στο φυσικό τση, το άρωμα απού σκορπά είναι μόνο δικό τση.}
\]

But the flower which is on the mountain lives in its natural habitat, the aroma which it spreads it all its own.

\[
\text{Βλέπω τη φύση κι απορώ οι ανθρώποι πος μπορούνε, να την παραβιάζουνται να τη λεηλατούνε.}
\]

I see nature and I wonder how people can violate it and pillage it.

\(^{175}\)See Herzfeld (1985a:143) for a discussion of the performative significance of responding to a mandinadha by modifying the wording of the one being responded to.

\(^{176}\)This code reflects the prejudices of many inhabitants of Cretan mountain villages. See Herzfeld (1985a:40-43).
What apparently began as variations on the theme of the woman-as-wildflower gradually turns into—especially in the last mandinadha—a polemic against humanity’s disregard for and destruction of wild nature. Indeed, the last mandinadha evoked an interesting response from Kritikaros’s brother-in-law Yiorgos, who—up until then—was probably enjoying Kritikaros’s masterful use of the metaphor: “What, are you an ecologist now?” [“Οικολόγος είσαι τώρα;”]

Yet, in light of Kritikaros’s fifth, explicitly environmentalist mandinadha, the four preceding ones all yield ecological interpretations! Kritikaros ecologizes a conventional Cretan metaphor by ascribing it literal significance. Or, more accurately, he translates a metaphor for a woman’s wildness into a metaphor for the wilderness. Kritikaros simultaneously celebrates independent women and promotes the preservation of wilderness.177

In view of Kritikaros’s ecologization of the mandinadha’s conventional metaphors, the mandinadhes of other composers acquire an ecological significance. Praise for wildflowers or gardens run wild are as much about the beauty of plants as they are about women:

Μπαξγουακορφόγητε, όποιος σε ιδεί, τα χάνει,
γιατί χυλάδες μυρωδιές κάθε σου βιόλα βγάνει.

Unkempt garden, whoever sees you loses it,
because all your flowers gives off thousands of scents. (Stavrakakis 1984:33)

The following mandinadha connotes not only an unhappily married woman, say, but also the wrongfulness of humankind’s mindless domination of other species:

Ένα πουλί μες στο κλουβί, που λευτεριά στεράται,
σαν κελαηδεί, δεν κελαηδεί, μόνο παραπονάται.

When a bird in a cage, deprived of freedom,
chirps, it doesn’t really chirp, it complains. (Hairetis 1996:48)

Birds in cages can signify people in jail cells or a need for animal rights:

177Ecofeminist scholarship often explores the feminization of the landscape. Kritikaros’s translation of a metaphor for women into a metaphor for nature deserves to be looked at from an ecofeminist perspective but is beyond this scope of this dissertation.
Σα ιδώ πουλί μες στο κλουβί, ό,τι πουλί κι αν έναι, δεν ξέρω, τι παθάινουν τα μάθιμη μου και κλαίνε.

When I see a bird in a cage, no matter what kind of bird it is, I don’t know what happens to my eyes but they start crying. (Stavrakakis 1984:17)

Hunters who kill birds and people who pick flowers signify men chasing women while they simultaneously indict the mindless or needless killing of living organisms:

Φτωχό πουλί κι ανήμπορο στον πρίνου το ξεράδι εσένα πάλι ο κυνηγός έβαλε στο σημάδι;

Poor, weak bird on the branch of a holm-oak tree, the hunter set his sights on you again? (Manolis Kalomoiris in Loudovikos 1988)

Ανάθεμά σε, κυνηγέ, που σκότωσες τ’ αηδόνι, και μαυροντύθηκ’ η αυγή και άργει να ξημερώνει.

Damn you, hunter, You killed the nightingale and now the dawn has dressed in black and daybreak is late to arrive. (Michalis Stavrakakis on Loudovikos 1988)

Η χέρα ντου να ζουγλάθει, που σ’ έβαλε σημάδι κι είναι, πουλί μου, δίχως σου τώρα ο μπαζές ρημάδι.

Let the hand of he who put you in his sights be maimed for now, my bird, without you the garden is but a wasteland. (Stavrakakis 1984:12)

Απάνω πού ‘βγανεν αθούς μια βιόλα να μυρίτει, ήρθε τση μοίρας η ζουγλή χέρα να τη μαδήσει.

Just when a flower began to blossom and smell, the careless hand of fate came to pluck it. (Stavrakakis 1984:12)

Kritikaros ecologizes Cretan placed literature, teaching his audience to approach the metaphors of Cretan mandinadhes in a new way. His own compositions teach a form of interpretation that extends the significance of many conventional metaphors from human life to living things in general. This act of extension itself teaches a deep ecological way of thinking by demonstrating the need to replace anthropocentric attitudes with ecocentric ones. In addition, by drawing on and employing the traditionalist Cretan mythology/stereotype that privileges the island’s “desolate” mountains its “wild” village inhabitants, Kritikaros turns the mandinadh into a rhetorical mode for promoting wilderness preservation. He reverses the romantic appropriation of
nature-for-culture. In Chapter 4 and Chapter 5, I discussed the mixing of cultural identities and place awareness. I argued that the contemporary discourses of ecological preservation and folk culture preservation in Crete intersect and overlap, and pointed out how lamenting the extinction of species unique to Crete echoes the laments of traditionalists fearing the “extinction” of Cretan folk culture. In Kritikaros, the construction of nature as regional and nature as environmental also interrelate, identities and awareness overlap, though in a slightly different manner. Kritikaros utilizes a Cretan folk tradition (the mandinadha) to deploy a particular Cretan identity (wild mountains/mountaineers as proud, strong, and independent) in order to argue for ecological place awareness: He ecologizes Cretan “tradition.” He teaches his audience to become more aware of the geographical and agricultural aspects of their “social” context and to perform their duty to their home ground, which includes respecting and preserving wilderness.¹⁷⁸

AN ETHIC OF “THE WILD”

Kritikaros’s approach to the “Cretan spirit” and “Cretan folk tradition” differs from the traditionalist identity politics of Cretan regionalists. He is less concerned about promoting the distinctiveness and superiority of Cretan identity and traditional customs than he is with teaching those who already identify with Crete, because they identify with Crete, that they should cultivate a sense of place and agricultural and ecological place awareness. His mandinadhes do not purport to demonstrate what Crete “is” so that it can be nostalgically revived or preserved, but negotiate the ethical responsibilities entailed by inhabiting the island. In this way, he provides his ecological message with a certain rhetorical thrust: Rational and empirical arguments for the necessity of ecological practices and sustainability already circulate among Kritikaros’s cohabitants. If arguments alone could change Cretans’ practices presumably they would have already. Kritikaros seeks not to reiterate such arguments, but rather to convince his cohabitants that they should take

¹⁷⁸I should note that I do not mean to imply, therefore, that Kritikaros’s construction of nature as environment is ecologically “pure” or politically “innocent.” Nevertheless, a critique of his particular construction of the environment in terms of gender, say, is beyond the scope of this dissertation.
them more seriously, and he does so by appealing to their sense of self, to their identity as Cretans. He strives to turn ecology into a moral imperative for anyone who considers him or herself a Cretan.

In order to more fully understand the message of Kritikaros’s mandinadhes, I now return to my discussion of his re-interpretation of Cretan rebelliousness, taking into account my analysis of his ecologization of Cretan culture. As my discussion of the novels of Kondylakis and Prevelakis indicate, one of the most usual national literary metaphors for the Cretan folk’s wildness—and the culinary delight of Cretan hunters until the twentieth century when it almost went extinct—is the Cretan wild goat, the agrimi. The modernizer Kondylakis portrays Manolis as a wild goat to demonstrate his need for acculturation. Prevelakis has Loizos’s city-bred niece Aliki implying much the same about Yiorgakis when she makes a similar comparison. Cretan placed literature also refers to the agrimi. In fact, two of the most well-known and locally canonized Cretan rizitika—mountain “folk songs”—are “My wild goats and baby wild goats” [Αγρίμια κα Αγριμάκια μου] and “The wild goat stands on the ledge” [Τ’ αγρίμι στέκει στο τζουγκρι]. Because philologists have established that these songs have their roots in the Byzantine Empire, contemporary interpretations of them see the wild goat as a metaphor for the heroic Byzantine border guards (Apostolakis 1993:50):

“Αγρίμια και αγριμάκια μου, λάφια μου μερομένα, πέτε μου πού ν’ οι τόποι σας και πού ν’ ας χειμαδία σας.”
“Γρεμίνα ν’ εμάς οι τόποι μας, λέσκες τα χειμαδία μας, τα σπηλιαράκια το γρεμινό είναι η κατοικία μας.”

“My wild goats and baby wild goats, my tame deer, tell me where your places are, where your winter retreats are.”

179Kazantzakis also refers to the metaphorical significance of the wild goat for Cretan identity when a cardinal tempts the adolescent Kazantzakis to travel with him to Rome to convert from Orthodoxy to Catholicism:

―Θες νά ‘ρθεις μαζί μου; με ρότησε. […]
―Πού; έκαμα ξαφνιασμένος εγώ ‘μαι Κρητικός. […]
―Το ξέρω, το ξέρω, είπε; όλα τα ξέρω. Είσαι Κρητικός, δηλαδή αγριοκάτσικο […]

“Do you want to come with me?,” the cardinal asked me.
“Where?” I asked taken by surprise, “I’m a Cretan!”
“I know, I know,” he said, “I know everything. You’re a Cretan. In other words, a wild goat [αγριοκάτσικο]” (Kazantzakis 1982:101)
“Ledges are our places, cliffs are our winter retreats, the caves of the precipices our places of residence.” (Apostolakis 1993:53)

The wild goat is standing on a ledge and the dogs in chains, and Myriolis is having a good time at a two-door taverna, at a two-door, at a three-door, in one covered-with-silver. “Taverna keeper, pour wine for the thirsty to drink, for me and my horse to drink too…” (Apostolakis 1993:95)

Contemporary traditionalist mandinadha composers adhering to a mandinadha aesthetic grounded in Cretan language orthodoxy and folk imagery use wild goats to keep their compositions “authentic.” Wild goat imagery makes mandinadhes aimed at personal emotional expression appear genuinely Cretan in tone, as in the following examples from Karatzis, where the agrimi signifies “freedom” and a hunter’s “prey” respectively:

Καλλιά ἵχα αγρίμι νὰ μουνε, στα ὅρη να γυρίζω, τὴ ζήση μου ὅπως πεθυμὼ κι ὡς θέλω ἵνα νὰ πηζω.

It would better if I were a wild goat, to wander around the mountains, to control my life how I desire and want. (Karatzis 2000:90)

Πο γύρου-γύρου οι θέμησες μ’ ἔχουνε κυκλωμένο κι ἐγὼ στη μέση ανήμπορο αγρίμι λαβώμενο.

My memories have me surrounded on all sides, and I am in the middle like a helpless wounded wild goat. (Karatzis 2000:28)

Kritikaros refers to the Cretan wild goat as well. In his mandinadhes it becomes a metaphor for the heart that rebels against the mind:

Αγρίμι η αντάρτισσα καρδιά και σε ζυγό δε μπαίνει κι απὸ τη φυλακή του νου εἶναι στιγμές που βγαίνει.

The rebel heart is a wild goat and doesn’t succumb to any yoke, and even from the prison of the mind there are times when it breaks free.

Αγρίμι, θε μου, κάνε με, και στο τζουγκρά σπάςο χορό να σέρνω την καρδιά, ίσως να ποθάνω.
Make me, by god, a wild goat, to lead a dance of the heart
on top of a ledge until I die.

In this manner, Kritikaros associates Cretan rebelliousness with the wildness of a species unique to
the island. Taking into account his ecologization of the mandinadha, moreover, together with the
fact that this species is very much endangered, the Cretan wild goat signifies both Cretan wildness
and Cretan wilderness. The agrimi becomes the perfect symbol of Cretan wild(era)ness. Using it,
Kritikaros can appeal to his audience’s sense of Cretan identity to promote a wildness of heart and
the preservation of wilderness.

To conclude, then, Kritikaros’s mandinadhes teach his audience of Cretan cohabitants to
preserve their wild(era)ness: to preserve wild, uncompromising, rebellious human emotional
practices that resist certain rational and social norms and to preserve nature’s wild flora and
fauna.180 The overall ethical message of Kritikaros’s mandinadhes is the promotion of an ethic of
“the wild,” the promotion of a Cretan “agrioculture.” This ethic combines “rebelliousness” with
“rootedness-in-place.” It promotes freedom-loving sensibilities reminiscent of the wild Cretan
stereotype and of radical ecology’s “anomic” and “anarchic” spirit (Smith 2001). And, it promotes
a sense of place, ecological place awareness, and a duty to one’s home ground, reminiscent of the
views of bioregionalists such as Gary Snyder and Wendell Berry. In fact, by combining both of
these aspects, Kritikaros comes close to advocating what Mick Smith (2001) calls “an ethics of
place,” a kind of bioregionalism that refuses to concede to the tyranny of modern rationality:

Reductive bioregionalism remains hampered by both its obsession with boundaries and by
its undertheorized and uncritical notion of place. Place isn’t reducible to bioregion—or any
other kind of region. Places are the particular products of unique combinations of social

180 Although it beyond the scope of this dissertation, it would be interesting to engage in a
cross-cultural comparison, for example, of Kritikaros’s mandinadhes and Thoreau’s famous
proclamation that “The West of which I speak is but another name for the Wild; and what I have
been preparing to say is, that in Wildness is the preservation of the World.” Cosgrove reads
Thoreau’s statement as “a characteristically American mode of mapping the socioenvironmental
geography of nationhood” and as an articulation of “key elements of a far broader discourse about
chaos and order, identity and otherness, in which European culture has been engaged throughout
the evolution of modernity. It is a discourse as much geographic and cartographic as it is
environmental, as much social as it is natural, and as much about nation and empire as it is about
An ethics of place is not a call for a return to rootedness, it is no more limited by topography than it is by modernity’s formal rationality, or than it was by the walls of the ancient Greek polis. Everywhere and in all ages those in authority attempt to call ethics to (their) order, to make it serve the needs and promulgate the ideology of the powerful. But ethics always resists, it always subverts, because it is that anarchic excess, that love that refuses to be contained. (Smith 2001:215)

Kritikaros’s ethic of the wild rejects both the disparaging associations of the folk with wildness as well as the reactionary place identity politics of traditionalist Cretan regionalists who celebrate wildness as a given character trait of the Cretan folk. Instead, it seeks to describe and cultivate a particular conception of wild(er)ness that can serve as a corrective to certain aspects of the ongoing processes of modernization.

It is significant, moreover, that Kritikaros promotes his ethic of the wild at home and other sites of his everyday life. David Mazel (2000) notes the existence of an “alternative environmentalism” in American literature that begins in the home:

In this tradition ecology begins in the home and moves outward to a concern with the community and finally the wilderness. In this alternative tradition—whose contemporary luminaries include women ranging from Lois Gibbs to Terry Tempest Williams—the links between ecology, home economics, and domestic fiction are not coincidental at all, but quite logical (Mazel 2000:139).

My assessment of Kritikaros’s mandinadhes suggests the possibility that such a tradition appears as “alternative” because literary critics take the category of “literature” to mean only “national literature.” If literature is allowed to signify the placed literatures of everyday life—such as Kritikaros’s mandinadhes—as well as national literatures, perhaps the domestic approach to literary environmentalism will be found to be more widespread and full of vitality than critics now realize.

My discussions with Kritikaros convinced me that he is largely pessimistic about his own potential for contributing to large-scale progressive changes aimed at social and ecological sustainability. This leads me to believe that Kritikaros’s texts are more “tactical” than “strategic.” Michel de Certeau (1984) distinguishes between “strategies” and “tactics” as follows. Strategies always have a discursive and institutional “base”: 
I call a strategy the calculation (or manipulation) of power relationships that becomes possible as soon as a subject with will and power (a business, an army, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated. It postulates a place that can be delimited as its own and serve as the base from which relations with an exteriority composed of targets or threats (customers or competitors, enemies, the country surrounding the city, objectives and objects of research, etc.) can be managed. (de Certeau 1984:35-36)

For example, Greek nationalists who collected folklore or wrote ethnographic fiction enacted strategies aimed at modernization from the newly formed cultural institutions of folklore studies and literature. Likewise, Cretan regionalists operate strategically insofar as they promote “tradition” over “modernity” within such (often local) institutions as cookbook publishers, record companies, and the publishers of mandinadhes. As I argued in Chapter 4, the work of recent Cretan cookbook authors is a counter-strategy in relation to the strategies of the modernizers, but a strategy nevertheless.

In contrast to strategies, tactics do not operate from an organized discursive and institutional base of power and legitimacy:

[A] tactic is a calculated action determined by the absence of a proper locus. No delimitation of an exteriority, then, provides it with the condition necessary for autonomy. The space of a tactic is the space of the other. Thus it must play on and with a terrain imposed on it and organized by the law of a foreign power. […] In short, a tactic is an art of the weak. (de Certeau 1984:36-37)

Kritikaros argues in favor of the tactics of everyday life. For example, his mandinadhes teach Cretans to “rebel” against the rigid constraints imposed by the mind through society and its institutions—both national and regional—by following the dance of the heart. The gatherings he hosts persuade Cretans who are currently unable—for financial reasons, say—to change their agriculture into a sustainable practice should, nevertheless, raise whatever organic food they can afford to for their family and friends. Moreover, Kritikaros’s performance of mandinadhes is of itself a tactical practice. Rather than try to publish his mandinadhes, for example, he “seizes opportunities” (de Certeau 1984:xix) to improvise and sing them, constantly “responding” to and re-interpreting the discursive strategies of Greek modernizers and Cretan regionalists. His mandinadhes have no first or last page. They dot the trajectory, “a temporal movement through
space,” of his everyday life (de Certeau 1984:35). Kritikaros promotes both “an esthetics of ‘tricks’ (artists’ operations) and an ethics of tenacity (countless ways of refusing to accord the established order the status of a law, a meaning, or a fatality)” (de Certeau 1984:26). He takes a tactical approach to “ecologizing” the interpretive skills of his fellow Cretans. Like Gary Snyder, he promotes wilderness as “a place where the wild potential is fully expressed, a diversity of living and nonliving beings flourishing according to their own sorts of order” (1990:12). He teaches Snyder’s “positive” definitions of “wild”:

Of individuals: following local custom, style, and etiquette without concern for the standards of the metropolis or nearest trading post. Unintimidated, self-reliant, independent. “Proud and free.”
Of behavior: artless, free, spontaneous, unconditioned. (Snyder 1990:10)

The major apparent difference between Kritikaros and Snyder is that Kritikaros’s tactical sensibilities recognize that the strategic promotion of wilderness is not a viable project for many individuals whose political and economic agency, let alone access to major publishers, is largely restricted. They acknowledge the limitations of strategic approaches to ethics:

Our ethical feeling cannot be grasped by or formulated within abstract moral theory though it can, often to its detriment, be in-formed (i.e. affected) by it. What is more, if ethics is indeed a lived relation, then it can not be strictly an academic pursuit, undertaken in ivory towers. (Smith 2001:216)

Simply put, Kritikaros promotes Snyder’s “practice of the wild” as a “practice of everyday life” a-la-de Certeau.\footnote{I should mention that Kritikaros (the person) did not take an entirely tactical approach to promoting his beliefs. He promoted them strategically as a public school teacher, for instance, and through active participation in political elections. Perhaps Kritikaros was promoting the importance of combining strategies (wherever they can be implemented) with tactics (whenever opportunities can be seized).}

The idea of select individuals preserving a particular “traditional” ethic to keep it alive for the benefit of the world circulates among Cretans regularly. It comes into play, for example, in
Karatzis’s mandinadha that I referred to in Chapter 1 about guarding the virtue Greeks call “humanity”:

Στο μετερίζη τσ’ αθρωπιάς, και στη τιμή το χρέος, εκείω θα στέκω να παντώ, κιας είμαι ο τελευταίος.

On the ramparts of humanity and on the duty of honor
I will stand guard, even if I am the only one left. (Skoulas 1988; cf. Karatzis 2000:88)

Prevelakis’s Yiorgakis describes his Aunt Rousaki as the preserver of Christian kindness and goodheartedness:

Κάποιου-κάπου, μέσα στους τυραννισμένους, βρίσκεται καμιά θειά Ρουσάκη. Γεννιέται με την έγνωσι τους μέσα στην ψυχή της. […] Η Εκκλησία δεν τη θέλει, εξόν αν είναι κάποιοι ταπενοι παπάδες, αλλαφροστόχεωτοι καθώς αυτή. Η Εξουσία την πολεμά. Η κοινωνία δεν την ξέρει. Όμως εκείνη είναι το αλάτι που δεν αφήνει την πλάση να σαπίσει.

Every now and then, among the oppressed, an Aunt Rousaki comes along. She is born with their concerns in her soul. […] The Church doesn’t want her, except for some humble priests who, like her, can see spirits. Those with Authority fight her. Society doesn’t know her. And yet she is the salt that preserves the creation, keeping it from spoiling. (Prevelakis 1968:114)

Kazantzakis suggests that those individuals who manage to avoid the tyranny of rationality guard the possibility of wisdom:

Μέσα στο αφράτο παιδικό μωιλό μου μεταπλάθουν τα μαγικά τα κάθε πράγμα, πέρα από το λογικό, πολύ κοντά στην παραφροσύνη, μα η παραφροσύνη αυτή είναι το σπυρί το αλάτι που δεν αφήνει τη φρονιμόδα να σαπίσει […]

Every single thing was magically transformed in my impressionable childish mind, beyond the rational, very near madness. But such madness is the grain of salt that keeps wisdom from spoiling. (Kazantzakis 1982:49)

Karatzis’s Cretan placed poetry celebrates Crete’s historical rebels as the guardians of freedom:

Βιγλάτορες της Λευτερίας ασημαρματωμένοι
σε μια κορυφή απροσκυνητή, σ’ ένα δεντρό πο κάτω
κάθονται, και τα πέλαγα και τσ’ ουρανούς φρουκούνται
και λυχταρόν κελαρικατσίδιο ν’ ακούσουν των αρμάτω,
να κατεβούν στα κρύα, και με φωθιά και βόλι
τσ’ οριοπλουμής της Λευτερίας το κάστρο να βλεπίσουν…

244
Guardians of Freedom armed with silver weapons
on a proud [unsubdued] mountain top, underneath a tree
are sitting, straining their ears to hear the seas and skies,
yearning to hear the sweet sound of arms,
so they might come down to the foot of the mountain with fire and bullets
to guard the castle of most beautiful Freedom. (Skoulas [n.d.]; Karatzis 2000:102)

No doubt, the representation of Cretan folk as the preservers or guardians of particular virtues
comes close to reproducing the idea that in the folk survive the virtues of antiquity. Yet, reading
“tradition” as Kritikaros does, as an ongoing reinterpretation of past virtues in light of modern
concerns, the notion that the folk guard such virtues transforms them from passive, virtue-bearing
entities into agents of the present. It constructs them as having a particular responsibility to live up
to and as the potential initiators of progressive change. In this view, Kritikaros teaches his
cohabitants to find tactics in their own everyday lives for keeping wild(er)ness alive for future
generations. He teaches them to guard the wild.
CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION: THE RELEVANCE OF PLACED CRITICISM TO THE FUTURE OF THE HUMANITIES

The enthusiasm with which literary scholars in the United States and around the world are joining the ranks of ecocriticism offers encouraging evidence that the environment and place rank high among the concerns of more than a few critics and educators. Yet, parallel to the world’s ongoing environmental crises, the so-called crisis in the humanities leaves the study of literature and environment in a precarious position. It has become commonplace among the practitioners and enemies of academic literary studies to contemplate, debate, and question the value of the literary critical enterprise in general. Scrambling to highlight the relevance of literature and literacy to skeptical administrators, ostensibly apathetic students, and those who consider themselves preoccupied only with the so-called “real world,” reactionary literary scholars argue that literature should be restored to its properly prestigious place in the academic scheme of things. Other, more visionary academics, are convinced that the emergence of a new world order, whatever this might be—the information age, post-industrial capitalism, the Empire of the United States, postmodernity, the postnational-postnatural global village—demands a significant reconfiguration of literary/cultural critical practices and pedagogy in order to keep them relevant and effective. In view of the latter perspective, perhaps the most significant question facing green literary critics about their profession is not quite how the study of literature can foster social and ecological sustainability. Rather, scholars and administrators need to ask: How can a radical retooling of literary studies facilitate socio-ecological sustainability and simultaneously offer better guarantees that the academic study of literature is relevant to society?
The Relevance of Place to an Emerging World Order

The placed approach to literature I have taken in this dissertation suggests one particular route for reconfiguring at least a portion of literary studies. Recognizing that a place-based proposal of any sort will seem to some scholars provincial or quaint at best, another nail in the discipline’s coffin at worst, I submit that placed criticism offers a methodological perspective for improving the chances of literary and cultural studies becoming a timely, relevant advocate of socio-ecological sustainability. As I have tried to demonstrate in this dissertation, placed criticism espouses sustainability not only by seeking to promote place cohabitation in the abstract, but also through direct participation in the process of place cohabitation in particular places. In addition, as I will now discuss, place cohabitation provides a viable perspective for dealing with literature in today’s emerging social, political, and economic environment, and also has the potential to maintain its relevance in—and even to facilitate the development of—more sustainable socio-ecological formations in the future. In other words, place cohabitation is a workable ideal within the current system, and it is adaptable to a variety of imaginable future alternatives as well. As a corollary, placed criticism—which aims to promote place cohabitation—is in an excellent position to affirm the relevance of literary and cultural studies (and pedagogy) to an emerging socio-ecological order.

Many have argued that a radically alternative socio-ecological order is possible and desirable in the future—e.g., bioregionalism (McGinnis 1999), Murray Bookchin’s social ecology (Luke 1997:177-194), David Harvey’s urban anti-capitalism (1996)—in which places will be fundamentally important. In the meantime, and perhaps of more immediate urgency, many individuals—including economists and other social scientists—are gradually beginning to realize that even a thriving corporate-capitalist economy depends in important ways on the well-being of particular places, just as the well-being of particular places depends on thriving local economies. Michael H. Shuman’s Going Local: Creating Self-Reliant Communities in a Global Age (1998), for example, notes that:
A small but growing number of dissidents throughout the world (mostly activists but also academics, philosophers, businesspeople, politicians, and even a few heretical economists) [...] are reinventing the field [of economics] so that the well-being of workers, ecosystems, and communities is the central objective, rather than an afterthought. (Shuman 1998:20)

Shuman assesses the prevailing belief that places thrive by trying “to attract multinational, export-oriented firms” and claims that sometimes even those communities that succeed in doing so end up regretting it (1). Recognizing fundamental disadvantages to the exclusively global view, he investigates a wide variety of examples wherein innovative economic institutions, processes, and functions have been organized around the well-being of community, finding that “communities can reinvigorate their economies by ‘going local.’” (6). This is not to say that they drop out of a global economy. Rather, “[i]t means nurturing locally owned businesses which use local resources sustainably, employ local workers at decent wages, and serve primarily local consumers. It means becoming more self-sufficient, and less dependent on imports. Control moves from the boardrooms of distant corporations and back to the community, where it belongs” (6) Such a place-based approach to economics has the potential, moreover, to overcome the stalemate between Left and Right that stands in the way of socio-ecological sustainability:

Communities have many more choices for securing prosperity than ideologues on either the right or the left would have them believe. Conservatives insist that communities align themselves with privately owned corporations, despite overwhelming evidence that fixation on just the bottom line bodes ill for workers, families, ecosystems, and communities. Progressives remain romantic about state-controlled business, despite overwhelming evidence that such modes of organization lead to bureaucracy, inefficiency, and corruption. Community corporations hold out the possibility that the benefits of each sphere—the efficiency of the market and the social-mindedness of the public sector—can be realized without the liabilities of either. (Shuman 1998:27)

Furthermore, since it is based on community corporations (“any business anchored to the community through ownership” (6)), the local approach is workable within corporate capitalism. Shuman claims that although “[n]onprofits, cooperatives, and public enterprises are inherently more loyal to their home base, [...] the best alternative [corporate structure] may be a for-profit whose shareholders are exclusively residents” (28).
Some studies of current socio-economic trends suggest that, even in the absence of self-conscious attempts to “go local,” mainstream corporate capitalism is making place more important than ever. Richard Florida’s The Rise of the Creative Class: And How It’s Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life (2002) is a case in point. In this provocative study, Florida observes that place is becoming increasingly important in the emerging economic order dominated by a so-called “creative class”:

[Place solves a basic puzzle of our economic order: It facilitates the matching of creative people to economic opportunities. Place thus provides a labor pool for companies who need people and a thick labor market for people who need jobs. The gathering of people, companies and resources into particular places with particular specialties and capabilities generates efficiencies that power economic growth. It is for this reason that I say place is becoming the central organizing unit of our economy and society, taking on a role that used to be played by the large corporation. (Florida 2002:224)

Yet, while today’s creative people choose where to settle down and pursue a career based on the “quality of place,” they do so in a way that hardly indicates social and ecological awareness. They “do not desire the strong ties and long-term commitments associated with traditional social capital. Rather they prefer a more flexible, quasi-autonomous community—where they can quickly plug in, pursue opportunities and build a wide range of relationships” (220). Moreover, they are largely apathetic to politics and civic engagement, and “naively assume that if they take care of their own business, the rest of the world will take care of itself and continue to provide the environment they need to prosper” (316). Such attitudes are by no means suited to fostering social and ecological sustainability and, as Florida recognizes, they are also detrimental to the long-term success of the economy as well. He asserts, therefore, that “[u]nless we design new forms of civic involvement appropriate to our times, we will be left with a substantial void in our society and politics that will ultimately limit our ability to achieve the economic growth and rising living standards we desire” (316). He also observes that “states and regions across the country continue to pour countless billions into sports stadiums, convention centers, tourism-and-entertainment centers and other projects of dubious economic value,” and insists instead that they invest in creative capital, including “the arts and cultural creativity broadly” (320). In short, not only is place crucial to the
organization of the emerging economy, but there is also a recognizable economic need for developing “strong communities” committed to civic involvement and for cultivating literary, artistic, and other cultural resources (324). Academic and other educational institutions have the potential—indeed, the responsibility—to respond to this need, and an important way they can do so is by advancing placed approaches to literary and cultural studies alongside (though, at least for the time being, not necessarily in place of) their (trans)nation-centered mainstays.

Fostering Place Cohabitation in the Humanities with Placed Criticism

In order for the humanities to contribute to the emergence of the kind of strong communities characterized by civic involvement that Florida calls for, important changes in humanities’ disciplinary assumptions, boundaries, research practices, and pedagogy are called for. As William Paulson argues in Literary Culture in a World Transformed: A Future for the Humanities (2001), proposals to re-conceptualize the humanities will manage to be effective only insofar as “they are accompanied by changes in the internal practices, legitimation strategies, and institutional situation of the literary disciplines” (149). He rightly asserts that:

Scholars and teachers need to bring forth practices and institutions that will help make literary culture pertinent to articulating experience, knowledge, and desire in the world as it is today, not as it was in the nineteenth century when the contours of literary culture were becoming familiar, or in the late 1960s when literary education received the impetus for its last major reconfiguration [cultural studies]. (Paulson 2001: 149)

While I certainly agree with Paulson’s general position, I also think he moves too quickly to rethinking literary studies solely in terms of “a largely electronic and audiovisual mediasphere” (150). He merely seeks to revise the conventional, (trans)national category of “literature” by adding to it (trans)national technologically-mediated concerns. Recognition of a new media environment should no doubt comprise an important component of what literary studies needs to accomplish. However, as I have argued in this dissertation, so is the recognition of such “old” local literary forms as the mandinadha that continue to exist alongside—and even circulate within—emerging technological media. Making literary culture pertinent to the world today also requires that the
humanities put more emphasis on place: More “placed literatures” need to be legitimized as literature and more “placed criticism” needs to be written addressing local socio-ecological issues.

Indeed, my attempt to explore, formulate, and begin putting into practice the notion of placed criticism in this dissertation suggests that such changes in the humanities are crucial for the development of a literary and cultural studies radically attuned to the need for place cohabitation. The conventional nation-centered category of literature must be explicitly identified as such: What is now conventionally called (modern) literature must systematically be labeled “national literature.” The unmarked category “literature” must be made more inclusive, signifying placed literatures as well as national literatures (and perhaps other literatures as well). The literature of place cohabitation should include much more than the novels, poetry, and drama of conventional English and Comparative Literature departments. It should also refer to the songs people sing at local coffee shops, the stories and poems that circulate in regionally-published books, the public performances of local church groups and other community organizations, and the endless variety of local everyday life practices that are typically taken seriously only by folklorists and ethnographers.

In legitimating such local practices as “literary” or “artistic,” as I have aspired to do with the mandinadha in this dissertation, the humanities will already be making an important contribution to the well-being of local communities. After all, a healthy community requires a variety of cultural activities, practices, and sites—including those that are perceived as “aesthetic,” “expressive,” or “artistic” in some way—through which cohabitants can participate in local life. Such practices can add to the intensity of local “gatherings,” stimulate discussions about locally relevant issues, or even just encourage locals to gather together in the first place. They can give creative individuals an alternative forum—apart from the national scene where recognition is almost impossible, and the Internet where it is difficult for an audience to “find” them in the first

---

182Placed criticism can certainly be extended beyond the textual to include other aesthetic practices like music and art/visual culture as well. See Lai and Ball (2002) for a placed critical analysis of yard art in upstate New York. Here, we investigate the socio-ecological issue of recycling and consumerism by analyzing the artistic articulation of class differences within place and of place identities in terms of spatial and class distinctions among places. See also the dissertation by Krug (1993) that examines non-academically art educated “makers of art” in Wisconsin.
place—where they can “succeed” as authors or artists by reaching and engaging an audience. In doing so, local aesthetic practices play a significant role in cultivating or reinforcing cohabitants’ sense of place and feelings of belonging to the local community. They build “social capital” and “social infrastructure,” something that is just as important for newcomers as it is for old-timers (Flora and Flora 1996:220). As the case of Kritikaros’s mandinadhes illustrates, placed literatures can even become a site for locals to promote self-consciously and in a local idiom a sense of place and to encourage cohabitants to become responsible local citizens. The legitimation of placed literatures will facilitate their practice by making them more visible. Perhaps more importantly, though, it will counter the negative stigma currently attached to art and literature that is recognized “only” locally, and will begin demolishing derogatory stereotypes of literary and artistic practices that are currently considered “mere” folklore or “craft.”

Serious consideration of local creative practices—old and new—will also go a long way to make literature appear to students more “attractive and engaging vis-a-vis other cultural forms and practices” (Paulson 2001:159). Students have excellent access not only to the “globe” through the Internet, but also to their local community because of its geographical proximity. Some students dismiss the study of literature not because it is out of step with a media-saturated world, but because it imposes a nation-centered notion of what counts as literature that leaves out the kind of local texts they are familiar with or find more interesting. If, as Paulson claims, “[l]iterary culture should contribute to the educational task of enabling people to link their experience of their own small-scale interactions to their knowledge of the larger world in which they live,” then a more serious engagement with local small-scale interactions is crucial (172). This is not to say that they should stop learning what is new and unfamiliar, but that this needs to be more effectively integrated with the study of what is local. Students still need to learn, so to speak, that no matter how much time they spend on the Internet, their garbage still ends up in the local ecosystem.

In addition to legitimating locally placed texts, a placed critical approach to literature can further the cause of strong, socially and ecologically sustainable local communities by conceiving of its own task as locally relevant—as an integral part of the process of place cohabitation. Placed
criticism is not a nostalgic celebration of local literatures. It analyzes and critiques all kinds of literary texts in terms of socio-ecological issues that are important to, and/or that affect, a particular place. Indeed, it seeks to find ways to negotiate with the cohabitants of a particular place about those issues. Thus, in this dissertation, I have striven not only to conform to the expectations of conventional academic writing, but also to reach more than just “a captive academic audience” (Paulson 2001:24). Through a treatment of Greek national literature, Cretan placed literature, as well as cookbooks and other materials, one of my main endeavors has been to engage with Crete's inhabitants, in particular with its intelligentsia, and anyone else concerned with the island’s well-being. For example, I have tried to point out some of the negative or derogatory consequences of modernizers’ portrayals of the Cretan folk as “close to nature” and “wild.” I have analyzed and criticized the folkist assumptions that inform regionalist Cretan cookbooks and many literary publications of mandinadhes. I have questioned the place identity politics of Cretan cookbook authors and of literary critics whose works analyze nationally canonized authors in terms of a stereotypical “authentic” Crete. I have tried to bring attention to the attempts of a mandinadh composer to teach the importance of striving for sustainable agriculture and for preserving wild(er)ness. One might even say that I have contributed to the construction of a place-based literary canon, although I have tried to do so reflexively, in order to avoid asserting that the texts I consider are “representative” of the island. In short, my readings of literature in this dissertation, apart from offering concrete evidence and examples that I could use to make an argument for placed criticism and its principles, also comprise an attempt to negotiate with Cretans about their own readings and methods of interpretation, as well as their future writings and compositions. Moreover, I have made this attempt in terms of social and ecological issues that are crucial to the island’s well-being. In this way, at the very least, I hope that my work will promote further active and critical engagement with local culture by even more of the island’s inhabitants.

Fostering the development of new modes of civic participation through the humanities entails a “new kind of cultural politics—and a new kind of political culture” that foregrounds “the ways in which power is deployed, experienced, and made productive within and across multiple
spheres of daily life” (Giroux 2000:7). Place cohabitation is not only about the cultivation of a sense of place, but also critical understanding of—as well as participation in—various discourses and institutions. Placed criticism recognizes this. As I have demonstrated throughout this dissertation, placed critics must never stop at considering how a text represents place. They must go beyond asking how a text promotes an ecologically-minded awareness and sense of place in the minds and hearts of readers—how it tickles their own “environmental imagination” (Buell 1995), as it were. As Pandelis Prevelakis’s depiction of the literary creative process illustrates (Chapter 5), and the relational dialectical theory of place confirms (Chapter 2), place, personal values, individual environmental perceptions, discursive power and institutional authority are interrelated. Therefore, placed criticism also considers the discursive, institutional, and ideological relationship of place and literature. It refuses to become provincial by rejecting rigid, non-processual definitions of place and by avoiding nostalgia for “authentic” places. It always considers the local and the larger-than-local as mutually constitutive processes. In this dissertation, for example, I examined modern Greek national culture’s construction of Crete as an ambivalent wild(er)ness, at once an “authentic” local bastion of perennial Greek values and a place and people in need of acculturation. I also analyzed how certain Cretan cookbook authors and traditionalist mandinadha composers have subsequently adopted the folkism and aesthetic ideology of modernizing discourse in order to resist certain aspects of modernization. Discussions of Cretan foodways entailed coming to terms with not only the discourse of national identity, but also the transnational discourses of medical science and environmentalism. Legitimation of the mandinadha as placed literature required analyzing its relation to the national institutions of literature and folklore. My analysis of Kritikaros’s mandinadhes depended on understanding not merely the physical context of their performance but also their allusions to Greek national literature, as well as their re-interpretation of the larger-than-local stereotype of the “wild” Cretan rebel.

Placed criticism also foregrounds the operation of power and ideology by critiquing the categories of “nature” and “culture.” It enables consideration of literature and criticism’s role in enabling particular human-nature relationships through particular discursive constructions of
nature and culture themselves. Thus, in this dissertation, I examined Greek national literary
culture’s construction of nature as a national location and a force connecting the regional lands and
folk in an organic unity that could justify and facilitate the processes of modernization and
nationalization. I analyzed Cretan culture’s adoption and transformation of such a construction of
nature as an attempt to vie for more regional control over agricultural and other food practices. By
examining the role of discourses like medical science, agriculture, environment, and economy, I
likewise considered how nature is constitutive of culture. I discussed how Cretan culture not only
constructs nature as a regional space and a legitimizing force, but also as environment: Cookbook
authors and mandinadha composer Kritikaros foregrounded the relationship of food to agriculture;
cultural identities and ecological place awareness intermingled, and hence I examined Prevelakis’s
construction of nature as both the source of cultural identities and the inspiration for ethical
literary place cohabitation; Kritikaros constructed Cretan wilderness as a matter of ecological
responsibility for its inhabitants. In other words, I considered interrelated discursive constructions
of nature that participate in modernization, place identity politics, and the facilitation of organic
agriculture, wilderness preservation, and other forms of environmental activism. I also considered
as a placed critic my own constructions of nature and culture. In using such terms, I emphasized
their constitution by socio-ecological processes, and avoided appealing to a transcendent nature to
explain culture or to an all-powerful culture to explain nature. In short, I focused on how a variety
of cultural texts constitute and are constituted by nature, considering how they “work within the
material and institutional contexts that structure everyday life” (Giroux 2000:135).

Implicit to the entire project of placed criticism is the suggestion that humanistic
approaches to literature—now broadly conceptualized—need to be (from a conventional
perspective) interdisciplinary. Indeed, expanding the category of “literature” to include placed
literatures calls into question the institutional boundaries separating literary studies from folklore
and cultural studies. The placed critical inquiry I have undertaken in this dissertation has indeed
been an exercise in interdisciplinarity. In addition to literary studies (especially modern Greek and
ecocriticism), I drew on cultural studies and folklore studies to achieve my goals. I required a
background in ethnography in order to come to terms with the cultural context of the Cretan texts I examined. Even though I legitimated Kritikaros’s mandinadhes as literary texts, I still needed the insights and methodology of performance folklorists in order to interpret them in light of their performative context. I analyzed the relationship of the “folk” and “nature” and considered the stakes of the category of “folk literature” itself by drawing on postmodern folklore studies and anthropology. I conceptualized place as a relational dialectical process, and problematized “nature” and “culture” by learning from the scholarship of ecocriticism, cultural geography, and science studies. In short, the efficacy of placed critical approaches requires that the humanities support interdisciplinary approaches to the study of literary culture.

Gathering Together the Pieces

Throughout this dissertation, I maneuvered back and forth between the general and the particular. Consideration of a part led to the investigation of its whole, which led in turn to the exploration of yet another part. Examination of a novel turned up the quest for modernization; Pursuit of the processes of modernization gave way to newspaper articles, cookbooks, and poems scribbled on napkins. Every time the scope of my inquiry began to expand, it suddenly turned a corner and contracted, before expanding again in a slightly different direction, from a perceptibly different angle. Folk poetry (mandinadhes) pointed to folkloric novels (Kondylakis), folkloric novels to folkloric cookbooks (Psilakis and Psilakis), folkloric cookbooks to novels about place (Prevelakis), and novels of place to placed poetry (mandinadhes again!). Queries about nature implied interrogating culture while analyzing culture demanded asking, “What about nature?” Ecological place awareness became unthinkable apart from cultural identities; cultural identities turned sterile when isolated from place awareness. The context shifted from the local to the national to the transnational, and back to the local again, only to find it transformed.

It only seems fitting, then, that I should conclude my placed critical inquiry into literary culture in modern nations back where it first began: at the gatherings in Crete in which I participated. These gatherings, as I described in the introduction, provided the original motivation
for my undertaking a study of literature and place in the first place, and they set in motion my quest to formulate “placed criticism.” But that is not all. The exploration of literature and place illustrated that it was imperative for placed criticism to examine not only national literature but also “placed literature” in terms of socio-ecological issues of local interest. Thus, the gatherings came into play once again as the primary site in which Manolis Kritikaros’s placed poetry sought to engage a local audience in terms of such issues as Cretan agriculture and wilderness preservation. They provided me, moreover, with evidence that the “folk” poetry that usually flies beneath the radar of ecocriticism can in fact be one of the most important literary sites where the work of local place cohabitation can occur.

It might be worth asking, then, as a kind of closing afterthought, if perhaps the message itself of Kritikaros’s mandinadhes, interpreted allegorically, might have something to teach a wider academic audience. His mandinadhes stand at the intersection of nationalist, modernizing discourse and regionalist, traditionalist discourse, but they refuse to take an either/or position. They seek neither to abandon altogether nor merely to reproduce static conceptions of what it means to be a Cretan. Rather, they assert the importance of reinterpreting, in an ecologically aware manner, conventional notions of Cretan tradition and Cretan identity in the modern world. In many ways, as I mentioned at the outset of this concluding chapter, literary culture in the United States stands at an important crossroads as well. Critics are being asked to consider whether literary studies even has a future in a media-saturated world characterized by emerging digital literacy and visual culture, in a “post-theory” academy where literature’s ontological status is no different from that of any other form of cultural production. Kritikaros reminds us that this need not be an either/or scenario: We need neither to abandon literature altogether (along with our identity as literary critics), nor to scramble to find ways to preserve or recover literature’s former status. Perhaps we simply need to reinterpret, in an ecologically sensitive manner, conventional (i.e. nation-centered) notions of “literature” and “literary criticism” in ways that are appropriate to the particular social and ecological formation in which we operate.
It might not be absurd, then, to suggest that a schoolteacher’s mandinadhies, by ecologizing Cretan literature to promote wild(er)ness preservation and socio-ecological responsibility to place, carry a more general message for scholars in the humanities. Maybe they are meant to set an example for all educators about the importance of localizing and ecologizing their own discursive creations—their articles and books, their presentations, and their courses—in order to teach audiences to be more socially and ecologically responsible to the particular places they cohabit. Maybe a schoolteacher’s performance of the struggle to guard wild(er)ness in the modern world is a call to all educators to recognize that wild(er)ness needs guarding more than ever. One needs to be careful, of course, in making such sweeping generalizations, for as Cosgrove cautions, “The ideology of wilderness is a potent weapon in social discourse. It needs to be treated with great care” (1995:39). Indeed. But then again, so does the wilderness.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Agapios. 1979. Γεωπονικόν Δασύτου Μοναχού του Κρητώς, Αθήνα: Εκδόσεις Κουλτούρα. [Reprint of 1850 edition printed in Venice]


Alexiou, Maria. 1961. Μαγειρική-Ζαχαροπλαστική, Διατηρητική, Τρόποι Καλής Συμπεριφοράς. Αθήνα.


Decavalles, Antonis 1985. Αντινή Εισαγωγή στο λογοτεχνικό έργο του Παντελή Πρεβελίκη. Αθήνα: Εκδόσεις Κέδρος.


Dermitzakis, Yannis. 1963. Γιάννης Δερμιτζάκης Κρητικές Μαντινάδες. Σητεία: [n.p.].

Dermitzakis, Yannis. 1968. Γιάννης Δερμιτζάκης Κρητικές Μαντινάδες. Σητεία: [n.p.].


Ksilouris. 1990. Νικός Ξυλόφυλλος: Ο αρχαγγέλος της Κρήτης. Αθήνα: Music Box International. [1 compact disc]


Lioudaki, Maria. 1936. [Μαρία Λιούδακη] Δασογραφικά Κρήτης. Τόμος Α’, Μαντινάδες. Αθήνα: Εκδοτικός Οίκος Ελευθερουδάκης.


Mavrakakis, Yannis. 1983. Αυγογραφία Κρήτης. Αθήνα: Ιστορικές Εκδόσεις Στεφ. Βασιλόπουλος.


Menegakis, G.A. 1970. Γ. Α. Μενεγάκης Διαλεγμένες κρητικές μαντινάδες. Αθήνα: [n.p.].


Olsen, Scott W., Ed. 1999. When We Say We’re Home: A Quartet of Place and Memory. Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press.


Potamianos, Themos S. 1943. Η Μαγειρική των Περιστάσεων. Αθήνα: [n.p.]

Potamianos, Themos S. 1965. 33 Ελληνικές Συνταγές. Αθήνα: Δκόση Ταχυδρόμου.

Prevelakis, Pandelis. 1966. Ο Θρησκές των Αγγέλων. Αθήνα: Βιβλιοπολείον της Εστίας.


Psilakis, Nikos and Maria, and Ilias Kastanias. 1999. Το Ελαιόλαδο: Ιστορία, Λαογραφία, Μυθολογία, Υγεία, Διατροφή. Ηράκλειο: Καρμάνωρ.


272


Skoulas. [n.d.]. Βασίλης Σκούλας: Κρητική Ανθολογία/Σκοποί και γοροί της Κρήτης. Ηράκλειο: Αεράκης. [1 compact disc]


Skoulas. 1986. Βασίλης Σκούλας: Χίλιες γρυσές αθιβολές. Αθήνα: EMI. [1 compact disc]


Tsouderos, Yannis Ε. 1989. [Γιάννης Τσουδερός] Φραστικό τρίποι καθητική δομή της κρητικής μαντινάδας απ’ τον “Ερωτόκριτο” ως σήμαρα. Αθήνα: [n.p.].


Yannaris, Antonis. 1876. [Αντώνης Γιάνναρης] Περικλής Χιανόπουλος Η ελληνική γραμμή. Αθήνα: Εκδόσεις Ερμείας.


