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The Liquid Border:
Subjectivity at the Limits of the Nation-State in Southeast Europe

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
2004
ABSTRACT

The Liquid Border: Subjectivity at the Limits of the Nation-State in Southeast Europe

Eleni Myrivili

This is a study of power at the limits of the nation-state: an examination of the institution of the national border that focuses on the practices of the border people, from the perspective of cultural and performance theory. The site of this study is the trilateral border region of Prespa, where Albania, Greece and Macedonia/FYROM meet over the waters of two lakes. This ethnography offers an analysis of the discursive ways in which the border, a materialization of state power, affects the lives of the people who live around it, forming among them particular subjectivities. These border subjects are both formations of the territorial nation-state power, and sites of its articulation. With their negotiations and representations of identity, their haunting by past violence, their excesses and their secrecy, they carve out the border as a material sphere essential to the legitimacy of nation-state authority. The border provides the nation-state with a state of exception. The Prespa borders, as all national borders, are subtended by violence that is instrumental to the institution of the nation-state and the legitimation of its power.

The border is theorized in this study as the space of distance between the Nation and the Subject, the no-man’s land where both the nation and its subject, stripped bare, institute and reiterate each other anew, locked in confrontation: the border is primarily a space of
threat. My investigations used participant-observation and oral history techniques to
document a broad range of practices of daily life in Prespa. I accommodate modes of
representation such as storytelling, historical narrative, and theoretical analysis to take up
challenges that the category of “performance” poses upon writing.
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Acknowledgments

This work was inspired by the people of Prespa, who inhabit its every page. Acknowledging them, expressing my loyalty and gratitude, is the least of what I owe them. Their lives and words have profoundly affected my understanding of the world, of history and power, and of my own aspirations and limitations. They must remain nameless here (as in the text) in defense of their privacy. I sincerely thank them for their many lessons.

I want to acknowledge the unique importance that my teachers have had in my life; their efforts not only mark this text, but enrich all my experience and thinking. Ioanna Spiliotopoulou and Aloe Sideri had a contagious love for the written text; their playfulness and imagination brightened the dull and sterile system of high-school education. From my undergraduate years I am grateful to Alexander Dupuy for his lucid and inspiring Marxism; to Khachig Tololyan for an agonizing and exciting introduction to the works of Michel Foucault; and to Judy Butler for a fascinating first contact with the philosophical ramifications of desire. I am very thankful to Richard Schechner for conjuring up the Performance Studies Department at New York University and to Peggy Phelan for her intimate brilliance and her teachings on presence and post-structuralism. In loving memory of Begonia Aretxaga I acknowledge her support and encouragement in Boston and her inspiring “political imaginaries.”

Two of my teachers deserve special placement in this genealogy and my deepest gratitude. Roz Morris has been, above and beyond all expectation, an inspiring
teacher and dedicated friend. I benefited enormously from her challenging intellect, her extraordinary gift with language, the breadth of her knowledge, her integrity of character, and the generosity of her friendship. I thank her for her insistence on subtlety in thought, in language and in action, especially the lightness with which she offered critical assistance in Spring 1999. My greatest intellectual debt lies with my academic advisor Michael Taussig. Taussig has the gift of turning the world of knowledge into a world of inspiration and enchantment; meeting him in 1991 at Performance Studies was transformative. I learned to enjoy writing as well as teaching, to be inspired and confused, to discover meaning and pleasure in the mundane and the uncanny. It was his insight, attention, and thoughtful, abundant support that saw me through the long years of research and writing of this study. His friendship has been invaluable to me, especially during the first year I spent in Boston. He will always have my unending admiration and gratitude.

My friends and colleagues have both implicitly and explicitly made this work possible through their practical help, support and inspiration. To Mary Leontsini I am grateful for the economy and insight of her commentary, for her enduring emergency assistance, and for the July celebration. Along with Antigoni Liberaki, she made returning to Greece much more appealing. I thank Robin Goodman for her provocative thinking, her support and endless editorial assistance. My friend Kleo Xyros contributed several hours of copyediting for which I am very thankful. To Julie Werntz I am greatly indebted for her meticulous copyediting and for making leaving Boston behind very hard.
I am very grateful to my defense committee: Tom Lutz, Allen Feldman and Neni Panourgia along with Mick Taussig and Roz Morris have generously criticized, advised and supported this work. I feel very fortunate to have a committee of such high caliber scholars. Joyce Monges provided a great support system during my graduate studies at Columbia University; she has been very generous with her time, attention and friendship all these years. I want to also thank Georgia Siampalioti and Gerasimos Antzoulatos for all the extra work they had to do because of me, as well as, my students Iro Stratigaki and Kostas Kripidiris for their valuable assistance with the bibliographical references.

Special mention should go to Litsa Tatoglou Verlet for the many years of selfless support and especially for the childcare at critical times. I am grateful to Tassoula Karakasidou, Maria Giannisopoulou, Russell King and Alexander Kitroeff for generously sharing their work and insights; they offered priceless guidance and support through the years. I am very thankful to Neni Panourgia and Athena Athanasiou for their astute comments. I also should thank Kostas Gounis as well as Craig and Alice Hoffheimer for their hospitality whenever I found myself in need in New York City. Finally, I thank Mark Sussman for his friendship and for taking the time to describe to me over a long distance phone-call what Performance Studies was all about. He insisted that it was the right department for me, and he was right. Kate Ramsey gave me support throughout our many years of studying together. I thank Radz Subramaniam for the cat, the protest and the feast, and for her integrity and wisdom.
I am greatly indebted to my parents who have provided support during the many years of my studies with great constancy. Without my (late) father's unconditional respect and faith in my abilities and my mother's contagious excitement about the world and respect for intellectual creativity none of this would have been possible. I hope that this work honors them.

Two people's support has been uniquely significant for the completion of this work as well as all other endeavors I have launched over the last decade. Daniela Peluso, with her extraordinary lack of pettiness, her insight, and joy, has stood by my side whenever I needed her. I am particularly grateful for her overnight editing on Wall Street, her patience in Boston, for talking me into studying anthropology at Columbia University, for Kalymnos and for Dimitri. Finally, this work would not have been possible without the emotional, practical and intellectual support of John Higgins. He has challenged me to think harder and to write with more clarity as he patiently read, edited and reread the many versions of this work, maintaining his faith and interest even when mine wavered. I will never be able to thank him enough, as my debt and gratitude are beyond any possible mention. I hope that this work will always be a reminder to him of my loyalty and admiration.

My godmother, Professor Christina Zioudrou, I thank for her thoughtfulness and unlimited practical and emotional support. The majority of this dissertation was written on her computer, inherited after her death. She is greatly missed.

None of this work would ever have been possible without the generous support offered by the Social Science Research Council and the Institute for the Study of
World Politics. These two grants allowed me to conduct more than two years of the fieldwork research of this dissertation. I feel greatly indebted also to the Department of Cultural Technology and Communications at the University of the Aegean that provided valuable space and time for me to finish writing this dissertation during the spring semester of 2003.

Finally, I would like to thank my daughter Ariadne for unknowingly indicating the battles worth fighting.
To Katie Myrivili
The Prespa Borders
Introduction

There is a deeply mysterious side to the intense relationships we develop with the spaces we live in—our “homes” (house, neighborhood, city, valley, mountain-range, coastline, lake or sea)—where *memoire involontaire* is hiding in a particular smell, in the dirt, in a body of water, or around a street corner. Even more mysterious is our ability to expand that relationship over lands that we’ve never seen, to translate that relationship with the land into a relationship with the millions of people that live there, and from them to the socio-political institutions that “represent us all.” Increasingly since the 18th century, the relationship that links the people to the land is filtered through, manipulated and monopolized by the Nation-State. Nowadays, it is difficult to separate “the land” from “the nation.” From an early age, ritualized, performative practices of our everyday lives amalgamate the two and infuse us with the mixture.

In Greek, the special relationship of belonging that links someone to “the land” is usually described with the words *dopyos* (ντόπιος) or *endopyos* (εντόπιος), etymologically from *en* meaning *in* and *topos* meaning *place*. These words are used to refer to someone who is “in place,” a local. In English, the word *dopyos* might be translated as *indigenous* or *native*, explicitly bringing the dimension of “birth” into the relationship of “self” and “land.” A community of people who refer to themselves—and are referred to by others—as *dopyi*, occupies a central position in this study. This is a community that uses the term Dopyi as a name rather than an adjective, in other words, as an appellation that distinguishes its members from the other people that live in the region. My
understanding of what constitutes the Dopyi as a distinct community of the Prespa border region is not so much their "ethnic" or "cultural" difference, as these terms are traditionally understood, but rather their particular relationship to the land that surrounds them and to the power of the Greek nation-state. This is a "community in place," defined primarily by their relationship to the Liquid National Borders of the South Balkans, and by their experience of the particular national border of Prespa. Among these people a particular subjectivity has been formed through their relations to "the land" and to "power." This work examines how the Greek territorial border, an institution of state power, has been shaping border subjects in the Prespa region, where Albania, Greece and Macedonia (FYROM) meet and divide over the waters of the two Prespa Lakes.

The border is a material manifestation of the Nation-State’s power. Whether physically present or absent, the border is an institution which articulates on a large scale who is to be considered a "local" and who isn’t, as well as when and where. It is ultimately the national borders that dictate and organize our relationship to the land, and the larger sense of space that we inhabit. This work was motivated by my wish to understand and describe these strange presences, the national borders, through the practices of the people who live around them. The first part, "Border," employs a phenomenological approach to the border, presenting how the border people construct and understand the border as a lived space. This phenomenology of the border is used here as an introduction, and an entryway to the rest of the inquiry about the national border. The ways in which the border people relate to the presence of the border generate a series of questions about the
nation-state and about subject formations around its limits. The rest of the dissertation addresses these questions.

The events and stories I present took place between 1992 and 2001. They occurred in the villages, on the slopes and valleys, and on the waters themselves, of the large Lake Prespa, on the Greek side of this trilateral border region. The border subjects of Prespa, the cast of characters herein, both local and nomad, includes: the Dopyi; the Greek police and military who arrived here with the establishment of the Greek nation-state in these lands which were under the Ottoman Empire until 1913; the Refugees, who came and settled the area after the Exchange of Populations between Greece and Turkey in 1922-23; the Vlachs, the great nomads of the Balkans over previous centuries, who came from the south of Greece and settled in the area in 1950s after the Civil War; and the Albanian immigrants who are mostly transient people living in Prespa for short periods of time as wage laborers. All these people are border subjects as they have formed and occupy specific discursive positions in relation to the Greek nation-state’s limits, both material and rhetorical.

The second part of this study, titled “Subject,” addresses the process of subjectivation. It discusses particular types of assujetissment (the coming into being of the subject of power), in terms of the process that brings about the subjects of the border. The double movement of subject formation (subjugation at the moment of assuming political agency) within the sovereign nation-state is always a partially failed process at the border. Playing a crucial role here is the unresolved gesture of naming some of the subjects in the region,
and this is largely because Prespa constitutes the limits of "Macedonia," whose cultural, political and ethnic boundaries are continually contested.

This is a study of power from the perspective of a border region where the borders are liquid. It is a study of state power at its limits: an examination of the institution of the national border and its function within the modern nation-state. The border as state institution organizes bodies of people around itself in particular ways. The stories about the people of Prespa, particularly those in the third part of this work, titled "Displacements," present the national border as something that becomes embodied by and yet displaces the border people. The stories of the local and the nomad people of Prespa exhibit a profound sense of displacement; an endless return of the past haunts these lives, rendering them "out of place." In some crucial way, the people of Prespa are attached to some other distant or unavailable home. Within this context the term dopios acquires a much more poignant meaning.

These displaced subjectivities are a result of the nation-state's dependence on the rhetoric of security/insecurity. Part four, "Threat," examines how this rhetoric sustains the presence of violence at the border, what Benjamin calls lawmaking violence (Benjamin 1986), making the borders into perpetual "states of emergency." The border is the embodiment of various threats (proximity to a de facto dangerous outside, illegal immigrants, ethnic minorities, etc.), continually providing a "discourse of danger" (which is an inalienable part of the nation-state), allowing for the exercise of repressive force (the same type of violence used for the nation-state inception), which ultimately
maintains the Order of the nation-state, by underlying all law-maintaining disciplinary practices. Within this schema, the border, the limit of the nation-state, seems to assume its fullest being in the acts of its transgression. Forming an essential spatiality of the nation-state, the border in a perpetual "state of emergency" (Benjamin 1969) reveals the national order as the geopolitical locus and the institution of "terror as usual" (Taussig 1992).

This, however, is not the perspective of the political scientist, nor that of the historian of the Balkans (even though both those perspectives have necessarily been used here to elucidate specific aspects of the inquiry). This ethnography employs a cultural studies approach to a south Balkan border region, its power institutions and its social subjects, categories that have been almost exclusively, up to now, read through political theory and ethno-history. Such readings have traditionally assumed analytical perspectives and paradigmatic categories defined vis-à-vis the nation-state and the discourse of nationalism. Limited to the reification of the "ethnic group" and caught up within the binary opposition of the nationalistic / anti-nationalistic discourse, the political science and ethno-historical approaches often overlook the ways through which such categories assume their meaning and power. I depart significantly from such perspectives by rejecting the assumption that the "ethnic group," however it might be defined, is the logical or "natural" unit of inquiry, and by shifting the focus towards the multiple and specific articulations of power that shape the region. Finally, this work aims at a performative—rather than a descriptive or analytical—text characterized by a dynamic tension, the unresolved relationship between its theoretical parts and its storytelling.
The Content and the Form

Here the border is understood to be a performance of nation-state power both through its more spectacular manifestations (police and military presence, checkpoint controls, security discourse, monuments, national discourse, flags, etc.), as well as through the more mundane everyday life practices of the people directly affected by its presence. The border is also seen as a ghost, an absent presence that haunts in many ways the bodies that live around it. Ultimately the border is theorized here as precisely that space of difference, the distance between the Nation and its subject, a no man’s land where both nation and subject, stripped bare, institute and reiterate each other anew, locked in confrontation: the border is primarily a space of threat. Discussing the national border in these ways endlessly dramatizes the chasm between the abstract power of the Nation-State and the embodied realities of the individual subjects, that is, between the general rule and the particular instance.

This inquiry into the border uses a range of different modes of representation: historical narratives, theoretical discourse, relatively unedited stories of border people, text analysis and interpretation, as well as personal impressions and experiences from my fieldwork in the border area of Prespa. A theoretical as well as an aesthetic choice, the form of this ethnography, which preserves the distance between different ways of producing meaning—particularly between storytelling and its analysis—intends to depict the chasm that concerns its content. This form of representation is employed so that it will not just describe, but to some extent actualize or embody this distance that the content discusses: the distance between the institution (nation) and the individual (subject), and between the
power of abstraction and the instances of its embodied application. The representation of
this distance of difference is precisely what characterizes the discipline of anthropology,
and what gives ethnography its reason for being. As for performance, its "challenge to
writing," says Peggy Phelan, is "to discover a way for repeated words to become
performative ... rather than, ... constative utterances" (Phelan 1993: 149). 8

Why reproduce the content in the form; that is, why use a performative approach to the
writing of this thesis? This ethnography tries to illuminate the multi-layered nature of
discourse and, as Hayden White puts it, "its consequent capacity to bear a wide variety of
interpretations of its meaning" (White 1987: 42). Discussing the content of the form of
narrative in contemporary historical theory, in The Content of the Form: Narrative
Discourse and Historical Representation, White briefly explores the performance model
of discourse. He says that this model regards discourse "as an apparatus for the
production of meaning rather than as only a vehicle for the transmission of information
about an extrinsic referent" (42). This statement belongs to what is called the cultural
turn of the human and social sciences, which challenges the view that material or natural
things and events possess meaning outside of their representation. Representation is what
produces meaning(ful worlds), whatever the form that representation might take. It is thus
seen as participating in the construction of "things," rather than acting as a mirror or
vehicle, extrinsic to independent referents. This is the basic premise of the constructionist
theory of representation, which includes the performative element. The notion of the
"performative" becomes all the more pertinent when the emphasis is distinctly on the
creative, the productive side of representation, on what a particular form of representation does, enacts, or creates within a very specific context.

White is talking specifically about a performative model of discourse: it is the notion of discourse that orients the cultural turn towards power, further implicating the performative. The discursive approach to the production of meaning calls into question both the poetics and the politics of representation. It asks what kind of exchanges, effects and consequences are produced (politics) by the specific ways in which something is represented (poetics). What kind of knowledge derives from a particular discursive (language and practice) formation, and how does it relate to power? In other words, how does this knowledge regulate practices, dictate theappropriateness of conduct and utterances, construct identities and subjectivities, and define the ways in which we understand the world. Thus, the notion of discourse further implicates the relation between form and content by making practice part of the production of meaning, and by making power integral to knowledge (Foucault 1980, 1972, 1979).

Returning to White’s argument about the performative model which views discourse as an apparatus for producing meaning, rather than as a vehicle for transmitting information, he continues, “Thus envisaged, the content of the discourse consists as much of its form as it does of whatever information might be extracted from a reading of it” (White 1987: 42). So, he concludes, in this model “it follows that to change the form of the discourse might not be to change the information about its explicit referent, but it would certainly change the meaning produced by it” (ibid.). This statement raises some questions. I think
the performance model of discourse takes the *cultural turn* to a far more radical conclusion than this one. Here, in White’s statement, the referent seems to assume some kind of independence from the meaning that it produces; to some extent in this statement, information seems able to exist outside its particular representations.

Performance, referring ultimately to the presence of the living body, occurs over a time that can never be repeated. If it is repeated, performed again, the performance will be necessarily different. In that sense, existing by definition outside an “economy of reproduction” (Phelan 1993), performance questions whether the form and the content can ever be separated: in the “living present,” content can assume only that particular form, and form that content. But also precisely because performance cannot be repeated—every repetition is always different—no relationship between form and content can be secured. The notion of performance is thus endlessly implicating form and content, questioning the limits of both, and any stability in their relationship (Phelan 1993 and 1997; Phelan and Lane 1998; Parker and Sedgwick 1995; Taussig 1987, 1992 and 1993; Schechner 2002).

So, if by “form” one understands each instantiation or each reading of a discourse, then “every identity or discursive object is constituted in the context of an action” (Laclau and Mouffe 1990: 102), and performance is what constitutes what Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe call the “radical historicity” of discourse. In effect, by laying a claim to performance and the challenges that this category presents to representation and to meaning, a “text” is also laying claim to the “radical historicity” of its identity and of the
identity formations it represents (of all discursive objectivity). This argument informs the content and the form of this particular thesis, which redirects the study of the border away from viewing it simply as an objective category of the territorial nation-state, towards examining the border through the different formations of subjectivity that it engenders, as distinct reiterations and various articulations of state power. Further, these subjectivities are not necessarily attached to the specific border location (immigration, forced relocation, etc.) defying thus an approach that would reify the space of the border, nor are these subjectivities attached securely to the “border bodies.” Some of these border people seem to be spectacularly challenging and destabilizing the identity between body and subjectivity in the modalities of their self-presentation. This is again an issue that the category of performance brings to a fore, as the presence of the performer always seems to question any presumed stability between body and subjectivity (Phelan 1993 and 1997; Butler 1990, 1993 and 1997; Piper 1996; Schneider 1997; Jones 1998; Panourgia 1995; Parker and Sedgwick 1995; Sedgwick 1992). The modalities and multi-layered nature of practice and experience, of the performances of self in everyday life, are best preserved within the context of storytelling.

"The production of meaning" juxtaposed by White with "the transmission of information about an extrinsic referent" brings Walter Benjamin's storyteller to mind (Benjamin 1969). Benjamin writes that information, with its value of "prompt verifiability," and which tries to convey exactly what happened, isolates what happens in the world around us from the realm of our experience (Benjamin 1969: 158). "Where there is experience, in the strict sense of the word, certain contents of the individual past combine with the
material of the collective past” (159). But the aim of information, such as journalistic information with its brevity, comprehensibility and the lack of connection between the individual news items, is not to be assimilated by the reader as part of his/her experience (ibid.). “No event any longer comes to us without already being shot through with explanation” (89). In contrast, “It is half of the art of storytelling to keep a story free from explanation as one reproduces it; It is left to the [reader] to interpret things the way he understands them, and thus the narrative achieves an amplitude that information lacks” (89).

“Storytelling … does not aim to convey the pure essence of the thing, … It sinks the thing into the life of the storyteller, in order to bring it out of him again. Thus traces of the storyteller cling to the story the way the handprints of the potter cling to the clay vessel” (Benjamin 1969: 91-91). “The storyteller takes what he tells from experience—his own or that reported by others. And he in turn makes it the experience of those who are listening to his tale” (87). Why is ethnography content with converting storytellers into “informants?” What kind of political economy of culture is reproduced by the discipline of anthropology when the stories of others transformed into bits and pieces can be used and reproduced as property exchanged for (theoretical) value?

One of the greatest storytellers of our times, John Berger, writes: 9

“Writing becomes, as soon as I begin, a struggle to give meaning to experience. . . . The act of writing is nothing except the act of approaching the experience written about; just as, hopefully, the act of reading the written text is a comparable act of approach. To approach experience, however, is not like approaching a house. . . . Experience is indivisible and continuous, at least within a single lifetime and perhaps over many lifetimes. . . . Experience folds upon itself, refers backwards and forwards to itself through the referents of hope and fear . . . And so the act of approaching a
given moment of experience involves both scrutiny (closeness) and the capacity to connect (distance). . . . As the movement of writing repeats itself, its intimacy with the experience increases. Finally, if one is fortunate meaning is the fruit of this intimacy” (Berger 1979: 6).

The form of this dissertation is used to preserve to some extent the play of power and the tension of difference which characterize the border by keeping the form of storytelling (both the border people’s and mine) to some extent intact. This allows the storytelling to breath a little on its own before it is summarily put into work for the analytics of theoretical interpretation. The border, like Berger’s description of experience, is not a like a house: it is both present and absent, both very real and very abstract, both the order and the undermining of this order, folding upon itself, referring backwards and forwards in time. How does one talk about “the border”? Writing an academic work one necessarily assimilates, moves everything within a frame of interpretation, smoothes over the gaps of difference through metaphors and causalities, transforms performance into disciplinary discourse, the multi-layered expansive experience of the present body into the necessary compression of a concise, knowable, reproducible, reproduction of something past. In contrast, their storytelling—the oral stories of the border subjects of Prespa—produces a perpetual living portrait, which as the only representation of their existence maintains the life of their communities (Berger 1979). These same stories used here are “marked,” as Phelan says, as part of the specific economy of academic discourse, and the power/knowledge produced through it (Phelan 1993). However, when the question arises of the content of the form, the realm of the poetics and politics of representation is broached, and the function of this type of representation is to some extent demystified.
The stories used herein—different stories and tones for the different events, places and people—are representations that stand in for the absent presence of the border in Prespa. Through them I try to represent these ghostly territorial inscriptions of power and their haunting of the region, the concrete ways in which they affect and shape people’s lives. The multiplicity of these presentations tells the story of the border as a (violent) performance—as an interactive exchange between power and its subjects—rather than as a finished external entity. They describe the unresolved agitation that the border bodies must process, a haunting with which the nation-state encumbers the people that live by its limits. This is a study of the subjects of the border, both as effects of its power and as sites of its articulation. With their everyday practices (representations of identity, negotiations with authority, movement through space, social stigmatization, etc.) they carve out the border as a “material sphere,” as Allen Feldman would call it, which “at the edge of social order,” eventuates and engenders constantly anew “an edifice of centralized and authorized domination” (Feldman 1991:2). The border seen as the performances of border subjects is a deterritorialized border, a border unmoored, denaturalized and radically historicized. The border seen as a performance of state power denaturalizes this very power as well, in order to form a challenge to its economy of the reproduction of violence.
Part I. Border
Chapter 1

Prespa Border Views

Summer 1996

Michalis\textsuperscript{10}

One late summer morning, Michalis took me out onto the lake in his tar-covered fishing boat. He was going to check his fishnets. The nets were fine. Then we checked his friends’ nets. He could recognize them from the different buoys floating on the water’s surface. I always loved going out on the lake, but most of all I liked going to see the border.

Big Lake Prespa is endlessly enchanting, with sparkling waters mysteriously receding every now and again, dark depths where the fish gather in the icy winters, and sudden fogs which are maddening to the fishermen caught up in them. The lake reigns dramatic, immense and mysterious, over a remote region in the south Balkans. Large white pelicans lethargically detach themselves from the waters, opening their wings, flapping them as slowly as possible as we approach. Floating on the waters of Prespa alongside the pelicans are a few big white buoys. There once were more buoys floating on these waters, but most of them are now lost: beaten by the winds and waves, they became unhinged and washed up on one of the lake’s shores. These buoys, one every 500 meters, designate three imaginary lines, and these imaginary lines indicate the borders of three different
countries that meet and divide in the blue waters: Albania, Greece and Macedonia (FYROM).\textsuperscript{11}

“Michali,” I screamed over the noise of the engine, “let’s go to the border.” He signaled “yes” with his head and turned the boat towards the center of the lake. After a few minutes of racing through the still waters he stopped and turned the engine off.

“What?” I asked.

“Here it is! The Border!” he said, with a little smile.

“Where?”

“We’re right on it,” he said impishly.

“How can you tell?”

“How can I tell! This lake is my back yard.\textsuperscript{12} I know every inch. I grew up in it.”

“Yes, but what are the signs?”

He first raised his eyes, squinting, trying to see something far away on one of the slopes of the mountains, on what I knew to be the Macedonian (FYROM) side of the lake. Then he slowly raised one arm, extending it along with his gaze towards the mountain with all his fingers stretched out. “Do you see that crevice on the mountain slope where there is a thin shade running down the mountain to the right of that peak? That’s where Albania ends and Former Yugoslavia (Πρώην Γιουγκοσλαβία) begins.”\textsuperscript{13} Then he straightened his upper body and, keeping his raised arm aiming toward the mountain slope, he turned his head the other way and extended his other arm towards a beach that was behind us. He was now sitting upright with both arms stretched out, his body perpendicular, cutting his
boat in two. “See at the end of that beach, the gray rocks? If you carefully raise your eyes up towards the trees you might be able to see a white spot. That is the pyramid indicating the Albanian-Greek border on the land. If you draw an imaginary straight line connecting the two points over the water with your mind’s eye, you’ll see the border.”

Michalis stood there, all stretched out as if hanging from a tight rope that passed through him. He stood there, embodying the nation-state and its limits, translating with his body the “invisible line” of the Greek-Albanian legal border, for me to see. 14

“During the WWII occupation, 15 there were no borders around here, we could go everywhere. I was not born yet,” he said, bringing his arms down. “In my mind’s eye it is still mine, the whole thing, without borders. 16 Imagine what would have happened if they had drawn the border there at Roti (a rocky cliff and the waters surrounding it not far from the village of Psarades). Every morning when you woke up, it would be like opening the door to go outside and banging your head on a thick wall.”

“And what if we crossed over the border now, into Albanian waters? What would happen?” I asked.

“We would soon be spotted by the Albanian border patrol guards, who would shoot once up in the air.”

“And what if you turned around quickly and went back into Greek waters?”

“Then they would shoot at us aiming to kill. The shot in the air is a signal that you have crossed illegally and that you have to stop whatever you are doing and surrender yourself to the guards. What follows is your arrest and an escorted drive, away from Prespa, to the
nearest Albanian city’s police station, which is in Corce. There you usually have to stay until the Greek authorities locate you, verify your ID and arrange for your return. Then you are taken to the nearest Greek-Albanian checkpoint, in Kristalopigi, where you are collected by your country’s authorities and returned home to Prespa. But things change a lot around here. Up until the late 80s, throughout the Hoxha regime, the Albanian land borders around here had electricity running through barbed wires and armed guards every few hundred meters.”

“And what about the other side, the Former Yugoslavian Macedonian side?”

“There too, if you don’t stop, they will shoot to kill. Only the Greek policemen are afraid to shoot on trespassers because of the EU. They are wary of international incidents. So they shoot in the air, and then if they catch someone they beat him up, black and blue.”

He smiled, shook his head, and turned the engine on. He then turned the boat around and headed back toward the village. We reached the makeshift wooden dock, tied the boat, and decided to go to a taverna to have some “tsipouro,” a strong, grappa-like brandy distilled locally out of grapes and vines. On the taverna’s terrace, we sat looking at the lake as the sun was setting. Michalis and the taverna owner started teasing each other about the “imaginary line that forms the border” on the tsipouro glasses, dictating how much tsipouro was an adequate shot. We sat watching the horizon as the night fell.

Sometimes during the late summer evenings, as the night approaches, the waters of the lake, and along with them the whole of Prespa—mountains, fields, roads and all—are colored deep red. Every time Prespa turns red I think of the stories I’ve been told about
the days when the waters of the lake, near the shores, filled with severed limbs and dead bodies, were red from their blood.

Dimitris and Eva
Later that night, driving a pick-up-truck, Dimitris was running into the night along one of the long straight roads that stretches along the edges of the lake. Eva and I were sitting next to him. In the darkness, land could not be distinguished from water, and the only things visible were clusters of lights, like handfuls of jewelry thrown around the Prespa mountain slopes, surrounding the lake. Both Dimitris and Eva are in their late twenties. Dimitris is a farmer who lives in the village of Aghios Germanos with his family. Eva was visiting Prespa for the summer and staying with her family in the village of Kalithea were she was brought up. She is a highschool teacher. We were all heading to the village of Laimos for a drink at the local bar.

“Look! Isn’t it maddening? Doesn’t it drive you crazy looking across the water to the other side? Especially in the night, it is like looking into a large mirror that reflects this side, over and over again,” said Dimitris, looking across the lake towards the Macedonian (FYROM) side.

“No,” said Eva, “for me the border is more like a thick glass wall: we can look but we cannot go through. I think the mysterious and fascinating thing about the border is that you have this expectation that when you cross it, you will enter something unknown, something totally different, that you will experience something unexpected, almost that
you yourself will change. And then when you walk through, the further you go the more it seems the same.”

“When I was serving in the military in Cyprus,” Dimitris said, “I crossed over by mistake into Turkish land, just two or three meters. At first it all seemed the same. But later I realized that I was on foreign land, I changed, I tensed up, I grew cold. I was on enemy territory.”

“And here, Dimitri, how would you feel if you crossed the border here?” I asked.

“We did cross the border once with Phillipos, in his boat. We went toward the island of Saint Peter, you know, and I just felt really satisfied for having crossed the damn thing. And then Fillipos asked me if I wanted to go any further, and I said no, this is enough. I didn’t want to go anywhere from there.”

“And what about you, Eva?” I asked.

“I don’t know. I just thought that all those years the borders with Albania were more like a void. We didn’t know anything about the people there, nothing about that other country. It was like Albania was not really there, that there was nothing there, a hole. So behind the border there was a void. Now things have changed.”

Phillipos

I had seen Phillipos in Psarades that morning. He was very upset. During the last two years, he claimed, some Albanians had stolen three million drachmas (about $10,000.00) worth of fishing nets from him. Allegedly, during the night two weeks before, some Albanians sneaked across the borders, came into the village, and stole three engines off of
three of the boats at the docks. The docks are right in front of the village: all the houses of Psarades face the water and right there in front of the village are the docks. One of the three engines was that of Phillipos. He told me that he had just got a tip from an Albanian,²¹ a farmhand who was staying in his barn, that his engine had been spotted somewhere in Tirana. He was trying to get more information about the engines before going into Albania to see if he could get it back.

Phillipos said, “all our fat cops²² are good for around here is eating and drinking all day, and whenever they get an itch they arrest a couple of decent Albanians, who come here and bust their backs working to feed their families. Supposedly they are patrolling all night, every night, not only up in the mountains but in our villages, as well. Even here in Psarades, which is more remote than other villages and right next to the border, they do nothing at all! They just sit around all day, they stroll around, eat and drink and flirt with our women. They are right here all the time. I’m tired of them. Have you seen any of them do anything useful all these years that you’ve been coming here? No wonder the Albanians stole three boat engines from under their fat noses!” He shook his head from side to side.

The saga of the stolen engines finished a few days later on April 29th 1996. On that day, Phillipos was notified by the Albanian authorities that his engine was in Corce and he should go collect it. A lot of paperwork had to be filed and so Phillipos took with him his friend Petros, who can speak Albanian, to help. Phillipos and Petros were accompanied by a Greek policeman all the way to the border checkpoint in Christalopigi, where he
waited for them for almost the whole day. The two men from Christalopigi took a taxi to Corce and there they prepared and filed a lot of documents, and waited around for many hours, and paid a little something to everyone—whether they were involved or not—in order to get things done. Then triumphantly they re-entered Greece and returned directly to Psarades. Each one of these engines costs around 900,000 drachmas ($3,000.00); the cost of the recovery of the engines (payments and tips to Albanians, travel expenses, etc.) was about 300,000 drachmas ($1,000.00).

Phillipos had paid one of the Albanians who worked for him during the summer months to inquire in Albania about the three stolen engines. The Albanian found out that the engines had been hidden under a bush right there in Psarades, very close to the water, were they stayed for several days after the theft, because the three thieves couldn’t drag them up the mountain on their backs. “So the engines were right under our noses all this time,” Phillipos said. But by the time the Albanian had tipped-off the Greeks, the engines had been taken away from the bushes. That very night the thieves came back and picked up the engines with the help of a horse! A few weeks later the engines were spotted in Tirana.

About a year ago in the summer of 1995, two Albanians had stolen Alekos’s engine along with his boat. Petros and Alexandra were coming back from picking up their nets, around six in the morning, when they saw Alekos and his family on the docks but his boat was gone. Petros said, “but your boat was here when we left the village, not more than an hour ago,” and he jumped out of his boat and gave it to Alekos to go after the thieves. It
so happened that the thieves had also broken into the house of the Canadian (a Psarades
man who lives in Canada during the winter), one of the last houses of Psarades. They
took the TV, rugs, vacuum cleaner—everything—and piled it all up into Alekos’s boat
and off they went. Alekos and his father-in-law, with Petros’s boat, caught up with the
thieves in the first Albanian village, Pustec. They caught them with Alekos’s boat and
Alekos’s father in law started beating up one of the Albanians because he wouldn’t say
what they had done with the engine that had disappeared. Eventually they found the
engine. It had been sold right there on the spot, as Alekos was approaching the village on
the boat, to a man who was loading it on his pick-up truck to take it to Corce. Alekos
didn’t say a word. He just went over the to the pick-up truck, grabbed the engine, put it
on his back and off he went. Coming back to Psarades, they brought back with them
some of the household goods that were stolen, including a vacuum cleaner that they
figured belonged to the Canadian whose house was broken into. So they all went over to
the house, and sure enough, the front door was smashed.

In December 1996 the Psarades police, in their new police-boat, caught two Albanians
stealing nets. They brought them to the village. The whole village was down by the lake
waiting for the police boat to arrive. As soon as the boat docked the people of Psarades
started hitting the Albanians viciously. The Albanians where falling in the water, trying
to avoid the blows, but in vain. The younger men of Psarades were the most violent. The
attack went on for a while: the policemen couldn’t protect the two Albanians, who were
taken to the hospital nearly unconscious. My friend Irini who was there at the scene, the
mother of one of the young men hitting the Albanians, told me later that she was horrified
by the scene. One million five hundred drachmas ($5,000.00) worth of nets had been stolen from her family.

Aris

Aris is in his early thirties. He is half Vlach, half Dopyos. He lives in the village of Aghios Germanos. Sometimes he sleeps at his family home,23 and sometimes in a wreck of a house that he bought and which he is trying to fix up with EU funding.24 He is planning to make it into a small hotel one day. It was late morning now, the morning after a night at the bar in Laimos spent drinking, dancing and singing with Dimitris and Eva until the early morning hours. Sitting near the dock by the lake, I saw Aris driving his banged-up VW into Psarades, steering with one hand while the other, which was hanging out of the window, was holding a plastic cup of “frappe” (whipped cold instant coffee) and a cigarette. I met him at the parking area. He was trying to wake up; he wanted to go get another cup of coffee at a local tavern-cafè. His mother had been pestering him all morning. She always pestered him about being in his thirties and not being married yet. We sat at a table and ordered the coffees.

“And then they tell you, you should do this or that in your life. How can I? How can I, when all day, every day, I see something that I’m not permitted to reach. They should put a black curtain up, so at least I can’t see the other side. TV shows, documentaries, news—learning about the world. How can I take them seriously? Knowledge, what can you do with it? Where can I find the curiosity, the interest, the energy needed to live, if I cannot even go across this lake?”25
He paused. We were silent for a while looking at the water. “Could you believe that guy last night?” he said suddenly. “What a jerk! I saw him this morning with his cop friends sitting outside the police station in Aghios (Germanos). He pretended not to see me.” The night before at the bar, Aris had asked the bar owner to play some Bregovic songs. He was dancing and singing along when a policeman who was there drinking with friends demanded that they stop playing that “Slavic music.” The songs were indeed composed by a Slav composer but the particular recording featured a renowned Greek singer singing them in Greek. “We’re in Greece God-damn-it,” the policeman shouted. “You’re in deep trouble both of you,” he shouted to Aris and to the bar-owner, from the end of the bar. He said he was going to close down the bar for the noise and report the two men (Aris and the bar owner) as autonomists, as enemies of the nation. “I have a lot of complaints piling up against you,” the cop shouted. “You can kiss my ass,” Aris said. Dimitris and Eva told him to shut up and pulled him out of the bar. After a while we all left and drove to our respective villages. It was 3:00 am.

“An ‘autonomist,’” Aris laughed across the table from me. “Right! One should just keep one’s mouth shut around here. Don’t talk to people; let them talk to you. Everyone around here stabs you in the back, as soon as you turn around. No one is straight around here. No one trusts anybody. My father was in Poland for years and years. He came back in the 60s, but still today, every day all he wants to talk about is wonderful Poland. He avoids all other discussion. His mother, a Dopya, lived in Prespa all her life and still today she cannot speak a word of Greek. My other grandmother the Vlach didn’t speak any Greek either. There has never been any communication around here anyway.”
He finished his coffee. He was cooling down. “Look over there,” he said, pointing towards Macedonia (FYROM). “Have you ever been there? They say those villages are very beautiful, that the houses there are villas! I don’t believe them. You know I sometimes take my uncle’s boat and I go to the border, and I sit there right next to it or just slightly crossing it and I think to myself: if I scream, will they hear me, who will hear me? And my heart beats wild. You understand don’t you? I am this border, in between, I can be heard by both, I belong to both and to no one.”

Secrecy: Borders Like Ghosts

Apart from some floating buoys on the waters and a few cement pyramids (land demarcations) scattered among rocks and trees on mountain slopes surrounding Lake Prespa, the other material evidence of the borders in Prespa is the pervasive but elusive presence of police and army forces. There are no checkpoints in the Prespa region, no large edifices of surveillance announcing the limits of the nation-state. The borders here in Prespa are like ghosts.

The policing of the three boundaries seems to be done mostly in secret. Only if you cross the boundary, the policing of the border is revealed: the border becomes apparent through the repercussions of your act of transgression. It is the transgressing the border that reveals this otherwise invisible boundary, as a clear manifestation of state power, as the otherwise invisible but ubiquitous police use of force. Criticizing the mixture of legislative and executive power of the police institution in democracies, Benjamin says,
“its power is formless, like its nowhere tangible, all pervasive, ghostly presence in the life of civilized states” (Benjamin 1968: 287).

There is one outpost per border, a small guard-post camouflaged in some way. Usually, there is a guard in it, who is hidden, waiting for something to happen in his vicinity, in order to mobilize the border “policing machine.” Then, indeed, out of nowhere, they appear, with their cars, jeeps or boats, with great efficiency, immediately on the scene, in full view, in full regalia, and with all their performative authority fully activated. The scene decisively brings to mind Michael Taussig’s fascination with Elias Canetti’s statement “Secrecy lies at the very core of power,” and the latter’s subsequent, in Taussig’s words “zoomorphic fantasy of hunter and prey, where infinite patience and camouflage is abruptly transposed into speed of attack, the flash of exposure . . . followed by the slow and deliberate absorption of the Other” (Taussig 1999: 57, Canetti 1984: 290-296). Through Taussig’s book, Defacement, one can start to grasp the mechanisms and subtensions that link the border with the secret, both substantiated by their lapses and their transgressions.

Consider that, apart from the usual police, there are far more ghostly presences lurking around these borders, forces that are more secret than the already secretive police institution. Prespa is filled with all sorts of ghosts that haunt it, one of which is the secret police. I do not know the extent of the power of the secret police, or how much of a state-within-the-state is established in the region. I did have several unpleasant encounters with some of these people: visits at my house late at night by men dressed in casual clothing
full of questions about why I was there and what my work was all about, or full car and bodily searches from what seemed to be under-cover policemen, who stopped me on the road without any explanations. They were carrying guns and did not need to provide any reasons or use any pretence for searching me. We were at the borders—anything goes; it was all a matter of national security. The Prespa region, despite its beauty and apparent calmness, is a high “security” zone. The notion of “security” always has the power to conjure up ghosts and threats. As exceptional spaces of national insecurity, discontinuities of the national territory, highly militarized zones, national borders have a particular relationship to violence.

**Borders and Subjects**

Apart from the buoys and the pyramids, the borders here “materialize” through an expectation and a threat, the expectation of violence that lurks in the region. The people in Prespa are disciplined by those invisible presences in their daily movements around the lake. They have to organize their movements and their sense of space through the principle of the nation-state’s territoriality. In such a tri-national setting, the people have to orient themselves, to keep checking the signs, in their everyday movements. Fishing in the lake, hunting or shepherding on the mountains, they have to know literally where they stand vis-à-vis the nation-state. Through this territorial type of knowledge and practice, a different sense of the limits of the nation occurs and different types of subject positions develop.
What does it mean to internalize the border—as we see in the Michalis, Dimitris and Eva stories—as an invisible wall? Is this actually a disciplinary relationship? Do the borders function as transparent edifices, powerful architectural mechanisms distributing bodies, invisible political institutions organizing disciplinary gazes and proliferating, amplifying power relations? Are the borders like “the tall outline of a central tower” of Bentham’s prison schema, an empty tower which through its presence ensures the fictitious relations out of which subjection is mechanically born? (Foucault 1979: 201-2) What kind of power relations and what kind of subjection and subjectivities are born through the individual’s interactions with those national boundaries? How are the power relations produced and played out at border sites different than those of the urban centers organized around the usual disciplinary institutions?

Here, Michalis’ internalization of the national boundary as a limit, which hides a concrete violent threat, seems to suggest a different analytic lens: disciplinarity does not form the organizing principle of psychic structuration. As Allen Feldman points out in the case of Northern Ireland, here in Prespa, there is little historical evidence for Foucault’s sanitized application of the ocular aggression of disciplinary institutions (Feldman 1997: 29-30). According to Foucault’s evolutionary trajectory, punition is progressively distanced from the visible practice of physical violence. Discipline takes the place of violence. As a result, the exteriority of power that is pressed onto the subject passes over to the other side, to “its surface of application” (Foucault 1979: 202). Thus power is internalized as the subject comes into being by assuming “the responsibility of the constraints of power” (202). This is the famous double twist of assujetissement: the becoming of the subject
(agency) through the process of subjection (subordination to power) (Foucault 1997; Althusser 2001). The subject is brought about by inscribing in him/herself "the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection" (203). And it is through the discursive matrices of disciplinary institutions that the social subjects are formed, exactly through the process of their subjection, the regulation and management of their bodies.

However, the creation of subjectivity around these borders seems to be a little less discursively bound, less related to disciplinary practices, since the bodies orient themselves in space in relation to a power that exposes itself concretely as physical violence. Exactly due to the presence of that absurd edifice, to the strange quality of the nation-state's limit, at the same time territorial and absent, both policed and transgressed, both violent and dull, the scopic regime of Prespa is a little different. There are elements in the story of Michalis' embodiment of the Greek-Albanian border that bring to mind the kind of zoomorphic subjectivity that Henri Lefebvre talks about in The Production of Space (Lefebvre 1991). The inaugural act of the subject of Lefebvre is not the sign (the reproduction of semiotic/symbolic structures), but the body's spatial practice, presemiotic, precultural, almost prehuman. For Lefebvre bodies orient in space like spiders that produce space, that "secrete" space, as they appropriate it. Somewhere between the theoretical paradigms of Foucault and Lefebvre, border subjectivities seem to come into being within a space which emanates the nation-state territorial principle, through the reiteration and maintenance of state power as physical violence.
What follows is a Batailian reading of the Foucault/Lefevre subject formation, where a practiced space produces and is produced by actions that belong to a very particular kind of economy. Subject formation here takes place to a large extent through repetitive, discursive (linguistic and extralinguistic), violent, territorially specific acts of orientation of self in relation to the nation and its symbolic register. Whether through Michalis’ body stretching out into the border, or through the repression, secrecy and endless violent reconfigurations of peoples lives due to the border, or through the displacements, marginality and stigmatization which characterize all these lives, these are the practices that make up and maintain the national border. These border practices are to a large extent acts of expenditure: the creation of subjects that spend themselves for the borders.

This is not exactly a celebratory description of emancipatory marginalities and of radically open spaces founding transcultural subjectivities, as the ones offered by contemporary “third space” or “border” studies. Rather than going back to originary narratives or reflexive dialectics, my purpose is, instead, to create a very grounded dialectic, a base materialism which necessarily violates any self-enclosed identity or objectivity, a good old Ideologiekritik with a twist and a particular stress on the “habitus,” not Pierre Bourdieu’s kind but rather Lefevre’s. As I mentioned before, this is a discussion of a zoomorphic type of subjectivity, between Foucault and Lefevre, mediated and expressed through a Bataillian economy, that does not focus on the reproduction of symbolic or other structures, but instead on violating them by its baseness. These I understand as the trajectories that shape the formation of subjectivities in the Prespa region, an elaboration of which will follow.
November 1996

Elena

Elena is in her late 30s. She is a “Pontic” (Πόντια), which is another appellation for the community otherwise known as the Refugees (Πρόσφυγες) in Prespa. The two names are used interchangeably as most of the people who came and settled Prespa in the 1920s were refugees from the Pontos region of the Black Sea (fewer people came from the Smyrna area or Ismir, by the Turkish coast of Asia Minor). Elena’s family was one of those families that settled Prespa in 1923 after being violently uprooted from the Pontos region. This was a very significant moment in Modern Greek history; it is still called the “Catastrophe of 1922.” It refers to the forced population exchanges agreed upon between Greece and Turkey, after an unsuccessful military expedition of the Greek Army to “redeem” the Asia Minor territories. But mostly it refers to the violent expulsion of 1.3 million people that had been living in Turkey for many centuries, half of whom settled in Greek Macedonia. (See footnote No. 19 about the Refugees and bibliography.)

Elena says that the first time she became conscious of her Macedonian identity,29 as a particular regional Greek identity, was in 1991-1992 when the Macedonian Issue reopened, with Skopia [Macedonia (FYROM)] claiming nation-statehood. She felt personally implicated; she felt that her own home, her childhood, the land that she’s connected to, were threatened. “Maybe we felt more threatened because we are refugees. We already lost our homes once,” said Elena.
“My grandparents left everything behind; their homes and their land, everything was lost overnight. If they had stayed they would have been slaughtered like pigs. They managed to get themselves to Constantinople, where they were put in a boat which stayed in the port for forty days. They were all packed in that boat, several thousand people from sixteen different Pontos villages, without food and very little water, and only after several weeks they managed to break the quarantine and bring some water and food to the people. Many got very ill and many died in that boat. My grandfather had three daughters with him, all of whom died and he had to throw them overboard. Eventually the ship sailed to Greece, to Thessaloniki. Then they were given land in remote mountainous areas, which was difficult to till and near swamps filled with malaria. They moved here and there trying to find a place to call their home. My grandfather died a year later in a hospital in Thessaloniki from cholera, probably from the foul water that he had to drink on the boat and from his sadness at the loss of his daughters.

“When they came to Prespa they saw the fields and the lake and the empty houses left behind by the Turks and they decided to stay. People were dying a lot back then, from the cold, from malaria and from the hardships. My grandmother buried three husbands and she has told me that she once buried a husband on the evening of the same day she had also buried one of her kids. The last of her three husbands was a Dopyos. That was the very first wedding that took place between us, the Refugees, and the Dopyi. It was in 1953. There used to be a great distance between us and the Dopyi in the beginning. This particular Dopyos had come back from behind the Iron Curtain, having fled with the Communists at the end of the Greek Civil War in 1949. He and his family were looking
for a wife for him. My grandmother decided to marry him because she had a lot of daughters to marry off, and this man had land that she could use for their dowries.

"Among the Pontic households the women have always been in charge. But they had smaller households, not like the Dopyi who lived thirty to forty people under one roof. Anyway, my people knew nothing about borders; they came from the depths of Asia. They just stopped here because the borders stopped them, otherwise they would have kept going. Nothing else was stopping them. Prespa was not a very wise choice after all: the land is good but it's dangerous. We are too remote, if something happens then there is nowhere to go to save yourself and help from outside takes time to reach us. It is not a safe place. During the Greek Civil War, as we were supporting the political Right, my family was uprooted again and taken to Florina for safety from the Communist guerillas. Three days it took them with the horses and the carts to take their things and children to Florina, and in Vigla they were attacked by guerillas who shot at them with machineguns. Two people were killed there—an old man and a small child. You know, it was like we now watch people leaving from Uganda, only there was no TV at the time.

"They stayed in Florina in one room in the house of a Vlach family, along with three other families, for three whole years—1947-1949. You know, it was military law then and everyone had to do whatever they were told. The sister and brothers of my father, who were younger, were taken by Queen Frederika from Florina and put into institutions in Thessaloniki to save them from the hands of the guerillas who were stealing children and sending them off behind the Iron Curtain. They say they had a great time in those
institutions—lots of food, new clothes, just like going to summer camp. They stayed there for two years. Then my family left and went to Canada because the whole area was devastated by the wars and the Civil War in particular. My father says that he remembers when the Italians were bombarding Prespa during WWII. The bombs, he says, were falling in the water, which was rising high—‘plaf’ and ‘plaf.’ Then there was an airplane battle in 1942 and three English airplanes, one after the other, fell into the lake.

“When I was growing up,” continued Elena, “I lived with my grandmother, who spoke only Turkish, and she taught me some too. During all those years that she lived in Greece, here in Prespa, up until the day she died, she kept telling me that she wanted to go back to her home in Turkey. For all these years she had the key to that house hanging on a chain around her neck. She wanted to be buried with it.”

After Hours at the Taverna in Psarades

An American friend was visiting and we were having dinner at one of the tavernas at Psarades. Inside was a group of eight to ten men sitting along the walls eating and drinking, with little speaking, as a homely wood stove blazed in the center of the room. We ordered tsipouro and meze (Greek “tapas” that accompany drinking) and a conversation ensued.

The man nearest us, Yiorgos, was a soulful man with dark, watery, pleading eyes, long hair and a weathered, pretty face. He inquired about the American, but immediately launched into a poetic reverie about Prespa. “This place is like no other. The stones, the
trees, the waters, the people are special. We all go back a long way. We are Prespa. Look at these stones,” he said, and he touched with his hand the stone wall next to him. “We are these stones, we carry the history of Prespa on us scattered around the lake. We know the stones that make up this place like we know ourselves. They tell our stories in whispers. We have always been here, always. We are not Greek, Macedonian, Albanian…we are Prespa. You must understand that this is “somewhere” on its own, and that we are the people of this place—a history, a substance…not a nationality. The Albanians here are the same as us, they are not foreigners. But now not only are they foreigners but they must hide, they must run away, they are not allowed to be here.” He indicated the two men sitting quietly in a corner.

His was at the time making repairs on one of the Byzantine monk cells and its little churches, which were built within the rocks formations around the waters of the lake. The two Albanian brothers, sitting at the table next to him in the corner, were his workers. In the course of the project, traces of an older Byzantine church were unearthed beneath the present structure. The project thus evolved into historical preservation, receiving funding from the government. The Albanians ate in silence and nodded shyly when he introduced them. They seemed vulnerable. They were illegal workers who were sending the money back across the border to support their families. This fact was known to all in the room. Yiorgos occasionally sent them another drink which they drank slowly. He took care of them. He explained that he liked the Albanians not because they were cheap labor, but because he hated the laws that made them into outlaws. He cared about them because
they cared about what they were doing, about Prespa, and they were reverent. They offered their prayers at the church/construction site.

A few tables over from the Albanians sat the younger brother of the contractor. He worked for the national police, and was happy to have been assigned the border regions, not too far from his home in Florina. He wore a camouflage uniform and his pale face turned increasingly pink with the drinking. With him was a wisecracking policeman in plainclothes, who wore a revolver conspicuously on his belt. The question of the Albanians came up and he said if he saw them tomorrow he would arrest them and send them back to Albania. “What can I do? If I don’t arrest them I’ll lose my job. Then I’ll have to sneak into Albania to work!” Both policemen laughed.

Two men entered to no greetings, took a table and set to drinking and eating. They were locally well-known “undercover” agents. They kept their hats on. They looked furtive and sinister like clichéd, B-movie villains.

The politics of the USA came up and the American became apologetic and critical about his country. A couple of fishermen, sitting in another table, said that there was much more to US politics and that he was selling it short. They brought up the history of the American Communist Party, the labor movement, and Hemmingway’s participation in fighting fascism in Spain. They were trying to assure the American that there were indeed proud moments in American political history. My friend noted that these fishermen/peasants living at this remote border region knew far more of American history
than did most Americans. They talked of the rise and fall of McCarthyism, Hollywood, and the blacklisting, of the Balkan people’s role in the Spanish civil war, and of Stalin’s atrocities, China, etc. Everyone but the secret police and the Albanians joined in. All of them were communists. Some, to my knowledge, had spent their childhoods and received their education in neighboring communist countries, as part of the relocation of children that took place during the civil war. (See “The Stories of Sotiris and Maria” in Part 3, “Displacements.”)

Yiorgos, now quite drunk, proclaimed suddenly that he had “walked in Lenin’s footsteps in Finland.” Then he came back to the features of Prespa, the stones, trees and fish. He brought out a bag and poured its contents on the table. It contained small, ornamental fragments from the Byzantine ruin he was working on. One, the prized object, had the figure of a snake carved on the white stone. It must have been several centuries old. He was quite a mix of passions and religiosity: the church, the brotherhood of the people of Prespa, animism, communism.... His eyes watered and his hand went to his heart.

The roles played around the border shifted once the sun had set. Under the cover of darkness the characters - an employer harboring illegal workers, the Albanian border violators, the police, the fishermen who either know everything or nothing, as the situation required—became, as the poet/contractor said, “just Prespa.” Tomorrow, in the light of day, the Albanians would hide, the police would guard and the fishermen would go about their business.
Meanwhile, the secret police take it all in, making “concrete” the threat that the State constitutes in Prespa. At the moment the national policies pertaining to this border seem to be relatively relaxed. Still, the presence of the “secret” police that persists even in this open atmosphere, makes clear that surveillance has not diminished, and that at any time a policy change could mean a return to repression and retribution.

Months later I found out that the poet/contractor, after piously repairing the church and its history, nobly supporting the Albanians, and collecting the payments for the project from the Greek government, suddenly disappeared. He ran out on all his local debts to suppliers, stores, and the Albanian workers. No one saw him ever again. According to the Albanians, it is not safe for him to return to Prespa.

**Arbitrariness of Power**

Border policing was conducted through what appeared as an uneven and erratic patrolling of the lake and mountain border passages of Prespa. In the 1990’s, mimicking the practices of their prey (the Albanians who “sneak” into the country), police and army patrols took place mostly in the night and mostly out of sight on the high mountain paths of the Prespa slopes. Sometimes an unexpected police patrol would take place in broad daylight in the bean fields where the Albanians were working. In such cases, out of nowhere, a police patrol car would arrive on a dirt road at the edge of a field and the policemen would proceed to handcuff the Albanian farmhands and take them away. The Albanians would disappear into the bowels of the police wagons, all of them squeezed in—“now you see them, now you don’t”—through the windows of the wagon as you
drive by on the curvy roads towards the checkpoints, away from Prespa, their faces pressed against shoulders, against thighs and shoes pressed on the glass car windows. The policemen were rushing the illegal aliens to the legal border checkpoints miles away to the South, out of the country, out of its territory. Just one minute before they disappear into the “darkness” and “lawlessness” of Albania, a group picture for the record. Hundreds of thousands of faces are kept on record on these colorful polaroid snap-shots.

The character and frequency of these patrols depends to a large extent on ephemeral decrees issued by police administration and/or political bureaucrats at urban centers surrounding the area. All these decisions and policies are sanctioned, however, by the legal framework of the Greek Law for Aliens (L. 1975/1991), which was a response to the increasing migration pressures that Greece faced starting in the 1980s. In the 1980s and early 1990s Greece’s transformation from an emigration to an immigration-dominated country was consolidated. Trying to address the new social, economic and political reality of immigration, in an effort to align the country with the logic of the “fortress Europe” of the Schengen Agreement, the first piece of legislation in Greece concerning immigration was issued in 1991, under the title: “Entry-exit, Sojourn, Employment, Deportation of Aliens, Recognition of Procedure of Foreign Refugees and Other Provisions” (Veikou and Triandafyllidou 2002; Mitsilengas 1999; Karydis 1998). As Veikou and Triandafyllidou state “[the] law concentrated on the development of stricter police controls throughout the country, and the border regions in particular” (Veikou and Triandafyllidou 2002: 191). The main focus of the legislation was the definition of “illegal entry” and its deterrence. The general gist was the stigmatization and exclusion of
immigrants from Greek society and territory, through the penal repression and
criminalisation of all the immigration-related actions and persons. This was done by a set
of provisions threatening penalties for both illegal entry and exit, including fines and
prison sentences for anyone who assisted such actions and for those who hired these

It is worth noting here is that Article 27 not only defines as a criminal action the entrance
and presence of any alien without appropriate documentation, but by criminalizing these
activities it legalizes deportations and expulsions (Veikou and Triandafyllidou 2002:
196). Article 4 of the same law explicitly allows for the immediate administrative
repatriation of irregular aliens with no judicial remedy, and for a degree of discretion to
administrative authorities in the enforcement of its provisions. As Karydis claims, "the
particular article has been employed by law enforcement agencies in hundreds of
thousands of cases in recent years" (Karydis 1998: 351).

With Article 5, of the same law (L.1975/1991), a special police force was established to
maintain border control and regulate deportations, while with article 4:2,7 the power to
decide ad hoc who will and who will not get permission for entry was granted to the
specific police units set up to patrol the borders. The Greek State thus created a legal
framework that produces and sanctions the arbitrary and erratic use of force. Benjamin
talks about this unnatural, as he calls it, combination of the two forms of violence—law-
founding violence and law-maintaining violence—which, "in a kind of spectral mixture,"
are present in the institution of the police as well as capital punishment (1968: 286). The
police, argues Benjamin, often assumes the power to decree as well as to execute laws; that is, it has the authority to use both law-preserving and lawmaking violence over the subjects of the nation-state. As such this state institution is emancipated from any critique of its use of violence. Benjamin further argues that the ends of police violence are not at all the same or closely connected to those of general law, as it is usually assumed, but rather that “the ‘law’ of the police really marks the point at which the state . . . can no longer guarantee through the legal system the empirical ends that it desires at any price to attain. Therefore the police intervene ‘for security reasons’ in countless cases where no clear legal situation exists” (287).

However, it would be wrong to assume that the border regions create a reified spatiality, detached from the nation-state, that sanctions arbitrary uses of force and the erratic exercise of authority. Such practices penetrate deep into the center of law and order of the Modern Nation-State. Taussig calls it the “Nervous System,” where the arbitrariness of power swiftly changes places with the legitimacy of authority, where reason and violence keep dancing around, and so do the exception and the rule. The modern nation-state can easily switch between ordered system and unstable agent of terror, as many examples of warfare or “terrorist activities” around the world today can attest.

“The border” is indeed the fetishized space par excellence which stands in for all those other remote worlds of violence: the far away countries, the far away wars, those dark, borderless, dangerous Other Places where violence lurks, having somehow escaped the peace and security of the order of the nation-state. “The border” brings all these worlds
home. “The border” is Benjamin’s and Taussig’s perpetual “state of emergency” as it keeps asserting itself as an exception. “The border” is the state institution that keeps reminding us that, the State is a very insecure nervous system and that its power always has a violent side.

October 1996

Antonia
In October, the long and labor-intensive bean cultivation—which dictates the sense of time, the seasons, and the life cycles of Prespa—is at its last phase, the picking and cleaning of the beans. After that, the beans leave Prespa, they are sold to merchants and the slow and languid months of winter come, when nothing really happens. Antonia is a Dopya. She came to pick me up from my house in Psarades to take me to Aghios Germanos so we could both help some friends of hers who were “cleaning the beans.” In the car we were talking about her choice to come back to Prespa after living in Athens for several years. She had studied accounting for a while, then worked in a bank for a few years and then she got fed up with life in Athens and decided to come back to live in Prespa. For the time being she’s making a living as a farmer. She works in her parents’ fields, collecting some money and trying to put together some kind of enterprise related to Prespa’s eco-tourism. She talked about why it feels like home here in Prespa, and about her identity.

“When I was a child, at Greek school and all,” she said, “I never ever questioned my Greekness. It was a given, an absolute. I never thought twice about my identity, or the
history we were being taught of Greece’s glorious past and Alexander the Great, who was a Greek Macedonian just like us, and who was born in this area and lived not too far away from here. The fact that we spoke a different language at home or among friends during our games didn’t mean a single thing. In my house we never talked about such things. My parents were scared, they still are. They never talk about anything, they’ve stayed silent. They say only the absolute necessities. But I remember very well a story that I heard as a child and which is still stuck in my mind about an Indian king who had all the riches in the world and one day he had a daughter. So he took her and put her in a beautiful garden with tall walls all around, and every day he brought for her all that she might possibly desire or need. That way nothing bad could happen to her. After a while the daughter started wasting away and she died because she couldn’t go out beyond the wall. After coming back from Athens, now I realize that for all my life, that was how I felt: I’ve been growing up next to a wall, a wall I could never understand or digest. All those years I’ve been living three hundred meters away from something which was not like the mountains that separate us from Florina, but an absurd thing: I could see through it but I couldn’t go through. What kind of absurd thing makes you look through it, every day, at something, that is out of your reach, prohibited? How are the people on the other side? How similar are they to me? I remember my grandfather used to tell me that up until 1914 he would go to Aghios Germanos and to Dupeni (the first village after the border into Macedonia (FYROM) to check out the girls. Those were the two places that were closest to Laimos, our village. The next Greek village of Prespa, Platy, is much further. I have cousins on that side that I’ve never met. And I know that all of us Dopyi, we are the same people, all around Prespa. On the other hand how similar am I to an
Albanian from Prespa? The education, the politics, the economy, the ways that the others around the lake have been brought up, is very different. My cousins that are 'inside,' are of a different nation."

She paused. "Remember in math, when we were at school, we were taught about "sets?" That is how we are here in Prespa," she said, as she made two small circles with her thumbs and her indexes, one little circle in each hand. Then she placed one circle inside the other like two rings in a chain. "We don't belong to either one of the two sets. We are there stuck in the middle in their intersection," she said showing me the little rhomboid shape that was formed between the tips of her thumbs and index fingers.

Takis and Dorothy and their father Yiannis

Takis, the son of Yiannis Adamopoulos, is 25 years old. He and his younger sister Dorothy, who is about 21, took me to the Kalé hill one day, on the side overlooking the lake, to watch the sunset over the waters of Prespa. "Here is where the young couples of Prespa come for their first secret kiss," she said and smiled. Then looking across the water towards Albania, Takis started talking about his father, who spent seven years of his life in Albanian forced-labor camps. "How could they do that to my father," Takis said. "He still wakes up screaming from dreams of being tortured back in Albania, all over again. He still cannot go near the Albanian border. Once, travelling with one of his friends on the mountains of Grammos (a Northern Greek mountain range) they got lost on some dirt road. He panicked, terrified that they might have crossed the border by
mistake into Albania. He thought he would be captured all over again. He only came out of his panic attack and calmed down when they managed to find a Greek town nearby.”

I knew their father. I had been interviewing him for several days before this outing with his kids. He had an exceptional memory for detail, and clarity of judgment like few men that I have ever met in Prespa. He had told me the story of his captivity, among many other stories, in a very even-keeled manner, highlighting the absurdity of the situation and laughing to himself every now and then, in such a way that marked his strength and his determination to live. He was a prisoner of the communists during the Greek Civil War (1946-1949), captured in the spring of 1948 for espionage against the Democratic Army, the communist military organization. He was then sent to military camps in Albania for several years and was not able to return back home until 1954. (For more details see “The Story of Yiannis” in Part 3, “Displacements”).

Takis told me that one of the most important moments he ever had with his father was the day he took him up into the mountains, to the place where he lost his little sister by a WWII misfired airplane bomb. His father was then eighteen years old. His father had brought wine and after they sat down on the ground he poured himself a drink and offered Takis one too. Then he poured some on the ground for his sister to join them. After a while his father started to cry. Takis turned to me, suddenly and said, “You know, I really hate the communists for what they did to him.”
Takis's father during an interview a couple of days ago had said, "I hate the communists for what I had to suffer, but you know, they were illiterate men with a stupid dream. What kind of excuses does the state have—all these educated and experienced people for their atrocities? None. For example, when I was growing up, before WWII, during the Metaxas dictatorship, the Prefect of Florina (the prefecture that includes Prespa) was Ioannis Tsaktsiras (1936-1940). This man was totally inappropriate for the position. He was crazy, and along with several other vicious police lieutenants they terrorized the region. A lot of the Dopyi from Prespa suffered greatly being stigmatized as 'enemies of the nation,' 'anti-Greek' or 'Communists.' Many were sent away to places of exile. The people with power in their hands are always dangerous people: what they do rarely depends on their ideology. It always depends on the person and the circumstances. There was a chief of police here in Prespa, during the same dictatorship of Metaxas, but he was a good man and he treated the Dopyi with fairness and good will. Unfortunately, that lasted for only a year and a half. After him, especially after the occupation, the Prespa chiefs of police, in order to cover their own complicity with the occupying forces, the Bulgarians and the Germans, took horrific measures against the Dopyi, blacklisting them, sending them in exile, and terrorizing them.

"Once a journalist came to Prespa and we started talking," continued Yiannis. "He said to me, 'Is that village over there a Skopian (FYROM) village?' 'Yes,' I answered. 'Aren't you afraid of them?' the journalist asked. 'No,' I answered, 'we aren't afraid of them, they are just a handful of people. We were never afraid of them.' (See Part 4, "Threat") Whom we are scared of is Athens and the Athenians. The journalist was taken aback, he
didn’t like that at all. ‘Let me explain,’ I said. ‘Even during the time of Alexander the Great, Diogenis in his urn was calling us “barbarians.”’ When our soccer-ball teams come down to Athens to play your teams, you call them “Bulgarians.”’ I even told him that during the Civil War the state had blacklisted all the Prespa Dopyi, so they were not drafted into the Greek army. When the Communist guerillas came to Prespa, in the village of Aghios Germanos alone they found around three hundred battle-worthy young men. There must have been over a thousand young men in the rest of Prespa. The first day just a handful of people showed up voluntarily to join the guerillas. The second day, the rest of the men were conscripted by force into the guerilla ranks.30 One out of three were killed fighting for the communists. It is the State of Athens that has made the greatest historical blunders.

“I feel imprisoned here in Prespa,” said Takis, looking over the waters of Prespa. “It’s one thing to be in Athens and to be able to leave in all directions, and a whole other thing to be here and to be able to go only south. We’re in the middle of the Balkans and then again we’re at the end, at the very edge of the world. Don’t get me wrong—I feel really proud when I hear people talk about ‘the people of the borders, the brave guards of the nation,’ as I realize that it is us they’re talking about. I was ready to take up arms during the problems with Skopia (FYROM) in 1992, and more recently with the incident of Imea, I was ready to go fight against Turkey if we went to war. I couldn’t believe all my friends being so cool and collected about it. I was ready to fight for my country.”
He continued, laughing about how he carried in his mind, for quite a while, a whole series of mental images: handsome, heroic images of himself as a guerilla man holding a machinegun. He laughed again and said that he probably had all the wrong images about the war.

"Yes, you do," said his sister Dorothy who had been silent all this time. "You are clueless." But Takis, ignoring her, went on. "We have lived through different experiences up here, very different from those of the people who live in Athens or Thessaloniki. I mean, for people of the cities the Skopian [Macedonian (FYROM)] people are an abstraction, a concept. For me these people are right here, in my face. If, for example, someone in Prespa is an "autonomist," I can deal with him directly, I can get all riled up real fast, and put him in his place. For me that is a much easier feat than it would be for someone who lives in Athens and sees the whole issue "theoretically." I can get right in his face and start a fight with him because I know the danger; for me the danger is an immediate thing." He paused. And then Dorothy continued as if continuing his thought: "But it is not just the danger. We know many more things in detail by living here. We are more open here. We know how to dance different styles of dancing; we marry with people with other traditions, other languages, like our mother and father, a "Dopyos" who married a "Vlach" woman (see footnote No.8). We understand things, complex situations, much better around here. We think more about people, histories, explanations, about who are the Skopians, who was Alexander the Great, who are the Albanians what they went through, who are the Vlachs, etc. We know many more things than the people of the South, who only know what they've read in books. We think more about such
things. Those other villages are right here across the water, familiar. We know them. We
can understand other people's positions better because we have been exposed to them.
We understand the nuances between one attitude and another, one position and another.”
“Yeah, right, my sister understands everyone,” said Takis, and we got into the car to
leave since the sun was down and it was getting chilly.

Past Violence

The borders are like traces, strange inscriptions, elusive marks on the territory and on the
consciousness of the local people who “see” them from afar everyday. The borders haunt
the present of the Prespa people as invisible reminders, indices of virtually perpetual
violence, both past and present. Charles Sanders Pierce defines the indexical sign as a
“real thing or fact which is a sign of its object by virtue of being connected with it as a
matter of fact and by also forcibly intruding upon the mind, quite regardless of its being
interpreted as a sign” (1931, vol. IV: 359). And it is in a similar “matter of fact” and
“forcibly intrusive” way that narratives of detailed acts of violence circulate around the
borders, betraying unsanctioned uses of force, laboriously disavowed through the
nationally constructed history of forgetting. These obsessive repetitive descriptions of
acts of violence persist at the border, because there the violence of state formation is
always active. The violence that I’m talking about, the unsanctioned use of violence
subtending the border, is what Benjamin calls the “lawmaking violence.” (See discussion
of Benjamin’s theses on violence in Part 4: Threats)
For the Dopyi, the Vlachs, the Policemen, the Pontics, the Army, the southern Greeks, the Albanian immigrants—for all those that inhabit and constitute the Greek Prespa borderlands—the “border” is a space formed by and invested with the presence of occasional eruptions of violence. Today such eruptions are mostly related to “illegal” border crossings and the culture that goes with it. The “border” as a discursive construct, however, is mostly formed, invested and reinvested, and maintained by stories of the past, a past seen as an endless series of “lawmaking” and “law-preserving” violence. Such stories are the stories of the violence of the Greek civil war (1945-1949), accompanied by the displacement of people and hundreds of children, all of whom were dispersed throughout the Eastern Block. (See “The Stories of Lefteris, Sotiria, Yiannis, and Maria” in Part 3, “Displacements.”) There are also the stories about the political repression that followed the Civil War, as well as the stories that go back to the “Exchanges of Populations” in the 1920s, or even to the unrelenting violence of the end of the 19th century, the warfare related to the Balkan Nation-State formation in the Macedonia territories. (See Part 2, “Subject.”) All these stories become the background of, and offer explanations for, present family feuds over land rights, ethnic differences and personal vendettas.

All these are narratives of the past violence that persistently frame the present of the people in Prespa. The presence of the police, the army, and the transient illegal immigrants, lends for further proliferation of violent narratives in the region. It is precisely these narratives of past and present violence, the stories of the people, that allow everyone to define him or herself, and that form “the border” as a discursive field.
The function of these stories, both in this particular text and in the daily lives of these people that tell and retell the stories, is to define everyone in relation to the national border and ultimately to the Greek nation. As Berger says about the stories that circulate in rural communities, they form a “living portrait” where “everybody is portrayed and everybody portrays” (Berger 1979: 9). “This is a continuous portrait; work on it never stops” (ibid.). This perpetual work of storytelling is the making of the border in Prespa.

What are these narratives of Prespa like? They are performative repetitive articulations and disarticulations (rumors, secrets, dissimulations) of the past as violence. They are performances of identity, constructed by narratives of memory that tell of war, hunger, violent displacements, killings and loss of loved ones, repression, fear. The older people tell stories of events from the turn of the century of the constitutive violence of the nation-state border formation. Some of them remember and tell stories of how the borders were charted and moved around. Almost everyone tells about how different policies concerning the borders affected their mobility, their practiced space, their relations to relatives, their politics of identity. The stories go backwards and forwards, folding upon themselves. They are about dictatorships, civil wars, world wars, occupations, military law, refugees, relatives becoming enemies and enemies becoming friends and relatives and then deadly enemies again. Endless were the violent events that marked the lives of the Prespa people, and they want to talk about it.

The border people talk a lot about history, about the past, about violence, about origins and homes. But these origin narratives are different from the nationalist narratives where
the origin guarantees "the recursive character of history through spatial metaphor" (Feldman 1991:18). They are different because the origins of the people in Prespa are not territorially stable; they are "elsewhere," far away, or near by, but never there, in place in Prespa. The Prespa border subjects are displaced, dispersed, and often mobile. These are borders that, along with the border people, do not stay still; they are highly historicized borders and the people that live around them keep bringing the past into the present in a perpetual retelling of the story of the border which haunts them.

The historicized border—one that is known to move, to be established by people and violence, delineated on the ground by committees, then annulled and reestablished after more violence—is a national border that is not naturalized, a border that keeps revealing itself as radically contingent. In their repetitive acknowledgements of the border's failure to become naturalized, the people of Prespa are discursively reconfirming and maintaining the otherwise invisible borderline, while simultaneously undermining its legitimacy, and by extension the legitimacy of the nation-state, by reiterating the contingency of its limit/origin.

This process is very similar to what Ernesto Laclau calls "constitutive negativity," a force that blocks the full constitution of positive identity (objectivity) by radically contextualizing it. This means that the outcome is not predetermined in any way: there is no deeper rationality through which the positive and the negative are realized, there are no necessary conditions of existence at work, and the essence of any identity is nothing outside its accidents. At the same time this "constitutive negativity" affirms the
objectivity to which it is opposed, by being part of the necessary conditions of its existence (which are also contingent) (Laclau 1990: 15-23).

I suggest that for the people of Prespa, the border cannot be an object that establishes relations of exteriority with its specific conditions of existence. Instead, the "essential identity" (the essential characteristics found behind historical specificity) of "the border," and of all these other objectivities that are established around it, is understood by these people as affirmed, transformed, and redefined in each of its contingent contexts, in each one of its articulations. And more specifically the border is in the acts of its transgression. Hence the border reveals structural objectivity as constituted by accidental conditions. These conditions are determined by historical social actors, and are thus perceived as transient, threatened and contingent (ibid.).

And while this contingency and the ensuing lack of legitimacy create an open field of political contestations, an "antagonistic" field, as Laclau calls it, it also creates a specific "psychic life," as Judith Butler would call it, among the people - the subjects of the Prespa - that have intimate knowledge of this type of contingency: "guilt" for the instability that they somehow represent in a world that denies this essential contingency, and "fear" of being its next victims. As they say, "It's a big risk to invest in a border region".
December 1996

The Architect

In December 1996, an architect from Laimos now living in southern Greece was visiting Prespa with his wife, staying with his parents at one of the ethnically mixed villages of Prespa. We were eating together along with Aris who is Dopyos/Vlach and Elena who is Pontic Greek. We talked about our disciplines, anthropology and architecture, and what they had in common, about ethics, politics, ecology—everything. It was a few days before the elections of September 22, 1996. Suddenly he said, “Look around you, all these people talking and talking. There is no way really that a Dopyos and a Vlach or a Pontic can communicate, they cannot understand each other. Through history a great, insurmountable gap has opened between the people of Prespa.” Aris laughed, greatly amused.

Eva was clearly uncomfortable. “There is nothing special about this place. It is similar to all other places in which local people from different cultures peacefully coexist.”

“No,” the architect said emphatically, “reality is still today much more complex and hidden in Prespa, and it is much more difficult to deal with for the people who live here. A Dopyos will still speak a different language when he is among others and a different one among his own people. If the language is different, imagine how different the content would be. What you have here that is different from the rest of the world is an all-pervasive, a priori fear and lack of trust. That is what defines us here in Prespa!”
Eva was getting more and more upset by the discussion until she started shouting at him that he was wrong, absolutely wrong. "People here in Prespa trust each other," she argued. "They live together as one body. You shouldn't be saying such things. Why are you spreading such lies? My experience is very different. You should go to other places, like the villages north of Florina. The people there don't even know how to dance each other's dances. My God, it would be horrible if my Dopyi friends were not trusting and were not truthful! Such lies..."

Kostas

Kostas is a Dopyos from Psarades. He is in his late 30s.

"So, what kind of conclusions have you drawn? What is the difference between us, the border people, and those in the center of the country? I'll tell you what it is. We don't need anything around here. We don't lack anything, because we are nowhere. We are in between. We are the ones who have real democracy."

"We do what we want because we are neither here nor there, but independent, on our own. No one controls us. It's always so. The borders are always anarchic and violent and there is always more oppression at the borders, more laws. They come with their laws and orders from this country and with equal amounts from the other side, and we take what we want from each and create our own reality, however we want it. You might think there is more oppression here, but we've got weapons against it; nothing can touch us. We are small and full of potential, only to get bigger. They are big and can only shrink."
The same happened in Thrace. The Greek state kept saying, ‘Those people are Muslims. They are not Greek, they are Muslims.’ So the Turks said, ‘OK, then they are our people.’ And now they, the Pomaks, are playing the one state against the other.”

“The Vlachs and Pontics have no clue. They are not border people; they’ve just been here for a few years. They don’t understand. They don’t know where they are yet.”
Part II. Subject
Chapter 2

Prespa Becomes Part of the Nation: Discourse and “Social Engineering” in the South Balkans

It’s better to go by a Turkish bullet than by the pen of a Greek.

(Κάλιο από Τούρκου βόλτα, παρά σέννα Ρομιού.)

A popular saying that has survived in Prespa since the early 20th century.

Introduction

Antigone a bank teller from Prespa, who lives and works in the nearby town of Florina, said soon after she met me: “Why did you come here? A variety of people from the south keep appearing in this area prying and spying around. It used to be policemen, civil servants, or teachers, and priests; these last years, they are social scientists, full of questions. The problem is that information can be used in very different ways and for very different purposes. One’s motives do not count, not even what one writes or how one writes it. What is important is how it will be used and by whom” (Fieldnotes, August 1992).

Why do people from the south keep prying and spying around? Why had it been policemen, teachers, priest and civil servants? What is she referring to? Nation-state formation in the south Balkans involved the installation of a whole new regulatory apparatus in the former Macedonian territories of the Ottoman Empire. It required a
disciplining, monitoring and intimidating bureaucratic system, several institutions backed by police and military power, as well as heavy nationalist rhetoric. In the early 20th century, such Greek state institutions came to these so-called “New Lands” of Macedonia from outside, from the south, in an influx of government agents, bureaucrats and ideologues. The whole project aimed at the suppression of difference and the formation a national cultural and political tradition. What was taking place was the inscription of the nation on the bodies of the people, a fundamentally violent endeavor. It was achieved through centralized national education, suppression of difference, repression of language, and political and social marginalization or forced relocation (Hirschon 1998; Karakasidou 1997; Blinkhorn and Veremis 1990). Ever since, the presence of “outside experts,” however hostile or well intentioned, has always aroused discomfort in the residents of Prespa.

The second part of Antigone’s words, a rather popular attitude among the people of Prespa, betrays a very Foucauldian perspective: the understanding of “truth” as a “regime” (Foucault 1980). The value of information, she claims, exists in its discursive use, which has direct political power. This is the performative power of discourse: it can do things with words (Austin 1975). Antigone claims that what is important about “information” is not whether it is “good” or “bad,” “true” or “false.” “Information” is not an independent extrinsic referent, which can be “discovered” and “restored” or “redeemed.” Rather, a more precise interpretation of her words seems to be that even if there were such things as independent, extrinsic referents to the stories of Prespa (the “real truths” about Prespa), they are irrelevant because their meaning and value are
created anew in their use. This is a performative model of discourse: any set of “real events” can be represented in a number of different ways, with very different “effects” every time. The implications for such an approach on all representations of Prespa, including this present one, are significant.

What follows is a genealogy of discursive “events” that represent the struggles of the Greek nation to establish hegemony in the “New Lands” of Macedonia and particularly in the border region of Prespa. These are the struggles which forged such attitudes towards the “power of discourse” and the specific “climate” of suspicion and mistrust among the people of Prespa. What will be elucidated is process of formation of a nationalist discursive backdrop that still exists in the Prespa region, and which insists on evaluating and thus controlling every utterance, and the extent to which it constitutes a representation of difference within the nationalist canon. The focal point will be the community of Dopyi who are the token of difference in the area.

**Young Balkan Nation-State Expansionism over the Macedonian Territories: Originary Violence**

By the end of the 19th century, Macedonia, a province of the Ottoman Empire, was the last space in Europe where different and overlapping ethnic, religious and linguistic worlds coexisted under the ecumenical auspices of a deteriorating Empire. By the end of the 19th century, the people, ideas, affiliations, commodities and land of this region were torn apart and appropriated by six different nation-states (Bulgaria, Greece, Serbia, Romania, Turkey and Albania). Early formations of these nation-states first appeared in
the Balkans with the Age of National Awakening (end of the 18\textsuperscript{th} and beginning of the 19\textsuperscript{th} centuries).\textsuperscript{32}

Within the social setting of the Ottoman Empire, up to the end of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, religion, ethnic backgrounds and language constituted the basic ingredients of hybrid and multifaceted self-identification of the people that inhabited Macedonia. When national ideologies converged, claiming the Macedonian lands and their people—an area of extreme ethnological complexity—they fuelled intense ideological and armed struggles.

During the second half of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, both Greece and Bulgaria had been propagandizing their respective national rhetorics among the different communities that made up people of Macedonia, through religion and education.\textsuperscript{33} The two nationalist agendas collided over the Slavic-speaking Christian Orthodox populations of Macedonia, which were extensive. Serbia nationalists soon followed suit.\textsuperscript{34} To a lesser extent Romania and Albania were laying similar claims to these lands by trying to influence the loyalties, the “identity” of the people. What started as ideological warfare over the language and faith of the people of Macedonia gradually evolved into a guerilla war under Ottoman Rule. Turkey was ostensibly in control, but Greek, Bulgarian or Serbian guerillas instigated a chaotic series of uprisings, sabotage, and reprisals among the local communities. Between 1903 and 1907, guerilla warfare had spread throughout the whole region.\textsuperscript{35}
“Macedonia” was being claimed and reclaimed as land, history, and people, as cradle of at least three civilizations, and as part of the newly formed nation-states surrounding it. During this initial violent phase of national formation the people of Macedonia, including the people living in the Prespa region, were living under intense propaganda, violence and fear. They had to declare their allegiances—that is, their national identity—which was often bought off or terrorized into them by the guerrilla troops. Whole villages were thus known to change their "identity" overnight. It was not unusual for members of the same family to have different national identities, or for the same person to go through different phases of religious and national orientation. Violence was raging and food was scarce mainly due to the special “donations” required by the guerillas and the destructive retaliations by the Turkish authorities.

Edith Durham’s *The Burden of the Balkans* (1905) is a travelogue with a strong anti-Bulgarian and pro-Albanian outlook. Traveling in the region of Prespa in the aftermath of a local uprising, Durham made these observations:

> I heard the same tale day after day—a hideous, squalid tale of wrong. Each village had been visited by secret agents and the people lured by promises or forced by threats to join the movement. Each family had to pay heavy toll in kind. The rising took place, futile, disastrous, foredoomed to failure. They burned a Moslem house of two, [then] allowed themselves to be trapped... the survivors fled, the [Turkish] troops fell on the village ...some were killed, others suffered outrages at the hands of the enraged soldiery (Durham 1905: 113).

> [At] Nivitza [Psarades], a wretched little fishing village...the people had fled to the island of Grad during the insurrection, so had escaped; but the village had been robbed, their fishing tackle destroyed, and they had an outbreak of smallpox, and were in great distress. It was a miserable hole of a place... (126).
They [a band of insurgents] are not fighting Turks, but Greeks. They go armed to a village and offer the people a petition to sign. It is to ask for a Bulgar priest, and to say they are Bulgars. They do not wish to change their priest, but if they do not sign they will be shot (168).

This situation would be farcical were it not so bloody. I vow the place is dizzy with propaganda (173).

The official date for the beginning of the so-called "Macedonian Struggle" and its atrocities is in 1904. In 1908 it stopped with the Young Turk revolution and the democratic reforms of the new Turkish government in Macedonia. In 1912-1913, during the First Balkan War, Bulgaria, Greece and Serbia united against Turkey and "Macedonia" was "liberated." However, war restarted almost immediately in 1913 with the Second Balkan War, in which Greece allied with Serbia against Bulgaria over the Macedonian spoils. In 1913, at the treaty of Bucharest after the victory of the Allied Forces in WWI, "Macedonia" was finally partitioned: 50 percent went to Greece, 40 percent to Serbia and 10 percent to Bulgaria. On the local level however, in 1914 the Carnegie Commission reported extraordinary violence still taking place in Macedonia. The Turks were trying to save themselves from the Christians, the Bulgarians were being pursued by the Greeks and the Turks, the Greeks and the Turks by the Bulgarians, and the Albanians by the Serbs (Mazower 2003: 202). Armed struggle in Macedonia did not cease until the end of WWI.

**South Balkan Representations: The Example of Maps**

All this "bad blood" rendered impossible any consensus over ethno-historical representations of the area, not to mention the demarcation of national borders in the
South Balkans: “ethnological composition, [is] diverse and ambiguous and its historical legacies open to controversial and conflicting interpretations” (Kofos 1991: 4). Many different accounts of the ethnic constitution of the population of the Macedonian lands were produced around the turn of the 20th century. These ethnographic accounts are notorious for their biased natures. Almost all of the ethnographers of the time both Balkan and European through maps and statistics, were trying to validate political exigencies of personal or national nature (Wilkinson 1951). The consequences however of such endeavors were very significant. The results of the statistical and ethnographic maps were presented as the “scientific data” supporting this or that interest in International conferences, treaties and summits where the future of the Balkans was drawn and redrawn by the European leaders. Here is a brief account on the role played by three ethnographic maps.

In an attempt to resolve the problems raised by the Balkan uprisings, an international conference was held in Constantinople, by the Great Powers, between December 1876 and January 1877. Diplomatic history has not dwelt at any great length on the Constantinople conference, mainly because the Ottomans simply ignored it, yet it was important because there, for the first time, formal deliberations took place with the purpose of delineating internal Balkan boundaries. The discussion revolved around one of the first ethnographic maps of the Balkan territories by German Henrik Kieppert. Kieppert’s cartography had a similar effect as Fallmerayer’s history on Greek national discourse (see following section). His map was distinctly favorable towards the Slav ethnic groups in the peninsula and of course in Macedonia.
In the following years, Macedonia was being defined as an area almost exclusively inhabited by Bulgarians, through the three most important maps designed before 1878 (A. Boue:1847, B. Lejeau:1861, and, most important the Henri Kieppert map in 1876). Based on those maps, the treaty of San Stefano in 1878 dictated the borders of Great Bulgaria, which included all of Macedonia and most of the Balkans. These three maps considered language the basic criterion for the existence of a national identity. At the turn of the century the accumulation of statistical data about the Macedonian ethnic composition became much more rigorous, but they were still based on the criterion of language. Reshuffled, these data were often used to highlight religious and/or other criteria. However, they still reflected a distorted image of the conditions prevailing at the time. The elements of language, religion and ethnicity, or "national" consciousness—even the combination of the three—would not give a realistic image of "the identity" of the Macedonian populations.

The Greek State Apparatus Goes to the New Lands

The settling of new national boundaries began to take shape through the Balkan Wars. Territorial Macedonia was finally apportioned to Serbia, Greece, and Bulgaria during the Treaty of Bucharest of 1913. All three used their bureaucratic apparatuses and their nationalist rhetoric to expand and consolidate their power in their new holdings. Mazower likens this expansion into the Macedonian territories by Balkan nations to colonialist powers installing the necessary apparatuses of control and indoctrination. All three nation-states systematically imposed oppressive policies on the culturally heterogeneous populations, such as clothing codes, language prohibitions, religious
practice constraints, etc., (Hart 1999; Divani 1995; Mazower 2002; Poulton 1993) using “imported” policemen, teachers, and tax collectors whom they had moved to the new Macedonian lands from the national centers (Mazower 2002: 206).

When Greece incorporated the Macedonian territories in 1913, it suddenly had to contend with an enormous administrative task. “When Raktivan, the first official Greek administrator, arrived in Thessaloniki by steamship at the end of October 1912, he brought with him ten consulate clerks, two judges, five customs officers, a contingent of journalists, and 168 gendarmes from Crete under the leadership of a military officer” (Karakashidou 1997, 162).36 Greece had been engaged for decades in promulgating its national rhetoric and religion in Macedonia, and now it took to governing it.

Unfortunately, the administrative posts opening in the New Lands with ethnically mixed populations were, more often than not, considered undesirable placements, or used as punitive demotions. Meanwhile, international treaties kept changing the borders, and voluntary and involuntary population exchanges successively altered the composition of the population in Greek Macedonia. The initiatives of the Greek Government just after 1923 included the decentralization of government, special incentives for functionaries moving to the New Lands, sensitivity in the treatment of cultures other than Greek, and positive incentives for building new affective attachment to the new nation, such as organized free preschools and milk distribution for the children (Divani1995: 72-81). Unfortunately xenophobia and petty politics soon tilted the scales towards more
oppressive policies for national assimilation. Soon after came the Metaxas dictatorship (1936-1940) with its ideals of national purity.

**Myths of Collective Origins and the Clearing of Names**

One of the most significant figures in the formation and consolidation of the Greek national identity and historical continuity was Jacob Philip Fallmerayer (1790-1861). He was a German historian who in the 1820s published the *Geschichte der Halbinsel Morea Während des Mittelalters*. The central idea of this work was the total and rudimentary annihilation of the ancient Greeks during the Middle Ages when other ethnic groups invaded and colonized what used to be Ancient Greece. The first volume of this work argued that not even one drop of pure ancient Greek blood flowed in the so-called modern Greeks. The people who called themselves Greek today, Fallmerayer claimed, were Skythian Slavs, Illyrian Arnaouts, and descendents of northern races, that is, ethnically similar to the Serbs, Bulgarians, Dalmatians and Moscovites. It is not difficult to imagine the impact of his writings on the newly formed Modern Greek State. Suffice to say that all the new sciences of the new country (history, linguistics, ethnography, etc.) were busy for decades amassing proof that would conclusively refute the accusation that the predecessors of the Greeks were Slavs instead of Ancient Greeks.

In 1843 Konstantinos Paparigopoulos published a treatise that refutes Fallmerayer by arguing the peaceful assimilation of the Slavic peoples by the already established Greeks. Paparigopoulos wrote his critique of Fallmerayer’s thesis in his twenties. It was the first work of a writer who was to become the “national historian” of Greece, the man who
wrote the canon of Greek historiography. All discourse concerning the ethnic origins and composition of the Greek population produced by the historians, ethnographers and linguists of the young Greek nation-state was directly related to the latter’s political aspirations concerning the Macedonian territories (19th century) and its “insecurities” regarding the newly acquired lands of Macedonia (early 20th century). The Slavic presence within Greek Macedonia as well as to its north (Serbia and Bulgaria) embodied these fears.

As early as 1909, members of the Greek intelligentsia initiated a campaign, and a special committee was constituted for the “Changing of Names.” The aim of the committee was to change all non-Greek names that “contaminated” the map of Greece and which provided grounds for anti-Hellenic propaganda of Greece’s enemies. They were to conduct a “discharge of all the names of settlements and communities which pollute and mar the image of our beautiful homeland, and which, at the same time, provide cause for negative conclusions about the ethnological composition of the Greek nation which our enemies are using against us.” (Lithoxoou 1992, 62)

The dominant reference here is the threat posed by the Fallmerayer thesis and the Pandora’s box that it brought with it. Modern Greek historiography had to affirm the Greek Nation’s historical continuity from Ancient Greece, through the Macedonia of Alexander the Great, Byzantium, and after a short dark period under Ottoman Rule, on to the Modern Greek Nation-State. The unquestionable “Greekness” of Macedonia was the sine-qua-non of the Greek Nation.37
"'Macedonia' is a conveniently elastic term," says Durham, "which is made to include all the territory anyone wishes to annex" (1905: 93). Such elasticity in the nation-state framework creates politics of paranoia. All Balkan histories at the time were forging mutually exclusive, chauvinistic and expansionistic definitions of their respective nations. Macedonia was central to all. To Bulgaria, Macedonia was Bulgarian; to Greece it was Greek; and so on. Each historiography, with the assistance of ethnography, linguistics, etc., had conclusive evidence to support its claim.

By decree the Greek government in the 1920s ordered that all Slavic names of towns, villages, rivers and mountains were to be replaced by Greek names. The names of towns and villages in Prespa were changed mainly during the Pangalos dictatorship of 1925-26, following the administrative organization of the communities into the new order of the Greek State. Unfortunately, throughout my fieldwork research in Prespa and particularly in Psarades, I was always denied access to all statistical or any type of formal documents at the village and prefecture levels of government. It was explained that what I sought was "top secret" information due to the sensitivity of the area: we were by the borders. I would need special permissions from the municipality and from the ministry of Internal Affairs to gain access. My efforts at gaining this authorization repeatedly hit a wall.

Later, at the National Statistical Services in Athens, great amounts of information about the Florina region and Prespa were readily available to me with no questions asked. Why would the same information be "open" in Athens and "top secret" at the border regions? What kind of "enemy" would go to the local office of the Florina City Hall in order to get
valuable statistical information, especially when it is all neatly catalogued and organized in the center of Athens?

The National Statistical Services are a massive government effort to catalogue detailed information about its subjects and its territories. As I went through the volumes of censuses from different decades, at the National Statistical Services archives, I was impressed by the increasingly detailed amounts of information collected by the authorities as the years went by. What in the first few decades were data focusing on products, volume and prices, changed in the 1920s to ethnic characteristics and then after the war in an extraordinary proliferation of personal data about each and every person, household, and community which by the 1990s had tripled and quadrupled in quantity. Each decade the details were increasingly minute: what jobs, what ages, what genders, how many rooms per house, how many bathrooms, etc., in an endless proliferation of the sites of knowledge and control of the body politic.

In these archives I found a booklet entitled “Elements of Formation and Development of the Municipalities and Communities,” published in 1961 by the Central Association of the Municipalities and Communities of Greece. It is a catalogue of the Greek Municipalities and of the Communities that constitute them, their populations and their historical appellations.

According to the booklet’s introduction (pages 3-4), the “foreign appellations” of villages were included in this book for history’s sake. It is explained that foreign names had
replaced the previous Greek names during the years of our country’s subjugation to foreign rule (the word used is “enslavement”). It states that the Greek names of cities and villages were “restored” after the independence of the Nation.

About Prespa, I found the following information on village name changes:

“German” was renamed “Aghios Germanos” in 1926.
“Achil” was renamed “Aghios Achilios” in 1926.
“Vivani” or “Vinani” was renamed “Pyli” in 1926.
“Grasdeni” was renamed “Vrondero” in 1926. “
“Rudari” was renamed “Kalithea” in 1928.
“Orovnic” was renamed “Karai” in 1920.
“Bukovo” or “Bukovic” was renamed “Oxia” in 1926.
“Rabi” was renamed “Laimos” in 1926.
“Medovo” was renamed “Milionas” in 1926.
“Popli” was renamed “Lefkonas” in 1926.
“Sterkovo” was renamed “Plati” in 1927.
“Langa” was renamed “Mikrolimni” in 1928.
“Drenovo” was renamed “Kraniai” in 1926.
“Nivitsa” or “Nivista” was renamed “Psarades” in 1927.

“Social Engineering”

In November 1919 (after the conclusion of WWI and the defeat of Bulgaria, which had sided with Germany), the Treaty of Neuilly was signed, and a voluntary exchange of populations was agreed between Bulgaria and Greece. In July 1923 with the Treaty of Lausanne a mandatory exchange of population took place between Greece and Turkey following the Greek army’s defeat in Asia Minor. It set a precedent for all “exchanges of
populations” to come. All together, around 1.5 million people arrived in Greece from Turkey and Bulgaria while 607,000 people left Greece (Hobsbawm 1990: 133; Karakasidou 1997: 145; Yiannisopoulou 1998: 392). Half of the incoming refugees settled in Greek Macedonia. It was at that same time that the Refugees of Prespa, came from Pontos (Pontics) and from Asia Minor to settle in the region. These were massive displacements leaving several generations of people marked by pain and loss. Forced deportation and relocations ended in thousands of families suddenly being without homes, uprooted, moved around and replanted in foreign environments. Nation-state borders were redrawn yet again, and notions of identity and sentiments of commonality and difference were created anew. More state institutions, both old and new, were called to shape the new affective attachments of the populations of the New Lands. The following sections give some examples of how education, language control, church, literature, and the legal system in Greece, and particularly in Greek Macedonia and Prespa, stepped up to the task of assimilating the Slavic speakers into the new nation.

Schooling
On her way to Prespa in the early 1900’s, Edith Durham stopped in “Monastir, called “Bitola” in Slavic, and observed the situation regarding the schools there.

“Greek, Bulgar, Serb and Vlah, build schools that are surprisingly fine and large, and the place reeks with propaganda. For in a school in Turkish territory you do not merely learn the usual subjects: you are taught to which nationality you really belong, and each school is indeed a factory of ‘kanonen futter,’ which may some day enable the government which supports it to obtain territory. That which is able to invest most money in the business [of schooling] will, in all probability, come out as winner in the end” (Durham 1905: 91-92).
From the Greek kingdom in the south, as part of the educational propaganda, schools had been established all over Macedonia (still under Ottoman Rule) as early as 1871 (Belia 1987:27). Bulgarians were allowed to establish Bulgarian speaking churches and schools in Macedonian communities after the Bulgarian Exarchate was granted autonomy from the Patriarchate of Constantinople in the late 1870’s. Other national churches and schools started appearing in the region soon after that. As long as they were all squabbling among themselves over teachers and priests, they were less of a threat to the Ottoman Empire. This period of “ideological” national antagonisms over the Macedonian peoples and territories lasted for a very short while. Soon, national guerilla forces augmented the ideological antagonisms. Nationalism formed the normative discourse for the legitimization of such institutions that spread the language and the nation to the most remote parts of the territories of Macedonia (Kitromilides 1990:38).

According to Vouri, in the 1880’s, in the area that includes Ohrid and Prespa, Greek schools and Bulgarian schools were comparable in numbers. However, by 1897 the Bulgarian schools took the upper hand, and in the meantime Serbian and Romanian schools (targeting the Vlachs) appeared in the vicinity (Vouri 1992: 27-37). It is not altogether clear what kind of schools, and in what numbers, had been established in the Prespa villages. It is one of the subjects that people avoid discussing, as it would undermine the “natural” effect of the Greek nation’s presence in the area. I did have access however to a few oral and written testimonies relating to the subject. I was given, for example, several handwritten documents, which include receipts for food products and land leasing agreements written in Greek in the 1870s and 1880s, signed at the town
of ‘German,’ (later called Aghios Germanos) and authorized by Turkish stamps. This suggests the early use of Greek, though perhaps only in an official capacity.

A local handwritten autobiography asserts that in 1897, the first Bulgarian school was established in Aghios Germanos. The account describes great tension and conflicts, underscored by spying, mistrust, betrayals, and acts of personal vengeance, which took place between the pro-Greek faction and the pro-Bulgarian one, dividing the village through the end of the 19th century. It was in 1900 that the first armed Bulgarian guerrilla forces arrived in Aghios Germanos. Leading figures in the village who were of Greek persuasion informed the Turkish authorities, and the Bulgarian guerrillas, as well as the people that supported them in the village, were arrested. The Bulgarian speaking school was then closed and the teacher was sent away.

The Greek guerrillas also made their appearance in Aghios Germanos around the same time. What followed was war in the region, which continued, almost uninterrupted, for several decades.

In Aghios Germanos, according to several oral testimonies, there was a Greek school already in place as far back as the 1890s. Two different life stories that I have gathered from Aghios Germanos indicate that the subjects’ parents or grandparents were able to speak Slav, Turkish and Greek, and some of them Albanian as well, and that they had actually attended Greek elementary school as far back as the 1870s. However it is not
clear where exactly this school was located. It could have been in Aghios Germanos, or "German," or they might have traveled elsewhere to attend school.

Schools have probably been the most important institution for consolidating the idea of the Greek nation as well as producing a linguistically homogeneous state (Kitromilides 1990). Until the Balkan wars, there were about 400 schools that taught in Slavic (Bulgarian, Serbian and local Macedonian language) throughout the territories that eventually formed Greek Macedonia (Poulton 1993: 176). After the Balkan Wars, 50% of all the Macedonian territories became part of the Greek nation-state: all institutions including schools became exclusively Greek. Night schools were also established for the adult Slavic speakers. But education alone could not sufficiently prevent the use of other languages in the region.

Policing of Language

The popular language of Prespa was not Greek, when it became part of the Greek nation-state. Durham observed that "the bulk of these peasants speak a Slav dialect...not Serbian...nor Bulgarian. It contains, as is natural, a large number of Turkish, Greek and Albanian words, and has some grammatical peculiarities" (Durham 1905: 90).

The Greek language became mandatory and Greek schools were established, attended however, almost exclusively by male children. As a result, for the decades that followed the language of the women in Prespa continued to be Slav-Macedonian, which became increasingly an intimate, indoor language, defining Prespa's private sphere, while
generally repressed in public. It was only in the 1930’s when education became
mandatory, that a few girls in Prespa start attending school. “My cousin Sophia who was
born in 1914 spoke perfectly beautiful Greek... I wonder why?” says Vangelis from
Aghios Germanos. “Maybe it was because her father was a priest and that is how she
learned” (Fieldnotes, May 1996).

The Metaxas dictatorship of 1936-40 referred to itself as “the Third Hellenic
Civilization” (Γ’ Ελληνικός Πολιτισμός), thus claiming continuity with the grandeur of
ancient Greece. The “purifying” name-changing efforts and the language repression
intensified and expanded during this period. Speaking Slavic was prohibited and changes
were now enforced on personal and family Slavic names. The Slav-speaking people of
Greek Macedonia were again the primary target, not only as linguistically heterogeneous
elements polluting the nation’s purity, but also due to their identification in the eyes of
the state with the increasing dangers lurking on the other side of the border: Slavism and
Communism. It was at that time that the northern border areas of Greece were organized
These became, in effect, territories under military law. Residents of Prespa as well as
outside visitors had to carry special identification cards for their movement in and out of
the area. Special permits were issued that allowed only 24-hour leaves from each one of
the three zones that constituted Prespa, and checkpoints controlled the permits at each
one. Passage from Psarades to Florina (approximately 50km), the regional center of
commerce, culture and bureaucracy, required for the people of Psarades the passing of
three checkpoints. This condition persisted until the mid-1970s.
The language purification project, which had always been aligned to a defensive posture in relation to perceived territorial claims and potential military threats, now became the dictatorship’s obsession. Within this context, the Slavic language was strictly prohibited and special armed civilian forces roamed the Prespa villages, eavesdropping into the houses to see who was speaking Slavic and who was not. Those caught were punished and exiled.

[We] listened to the [township’s] president articulate to the council that in accordance with the decision [#122770] of Mr. Minister, General Governor of Macedonia, all municipal and township councils would forbid, through [administrative] decision, the speaking of other idioms of obsolete languages within the area of their jurisdiction for the reconstitution of a universal language in our national glory. [The president] suggested that [the] speaking of different idioms, foreign [languages] and our language in an impure and obsolete manner in the area of the township of Assiros would be forbidden (Assiros Township Decision No. 134, 13 December 1936, as quoted in Karakasidou 1997: 162).⁴⁰

The colonial resonance is obvious, as is the moralizing tone. One wonders whether this was presented with zeal or out of nervous obedience by the functionaries involved. Or were the president, the recorder of the proceedings and the General Governor all outsiders, part of the apparatus and this quote is actually the voice of the people speaking from the position of fear?

During the Metaxas dictatorship a state of terror reigned among the border populations. People were spied on when they were in public, while policemen as well as civil forces organized in special brigades monitored the households. As a result, people had two names and two languages: one that was spoken indoors, in the kitchen rather than the
living room, and another that was used in public (Yiannissopoulou 1998: 402-404). The presence of the Nation had infiltrated and articulated the very rooms of the house.

Naming the People: Church and State

"'Krste Petrov' used to be my name a long time ago," said Christos Petropoulos who is in his late 70s, and lives in the village of Psarades. "Oh yes, I remember well: the borders with Albania closed in 1918 and then opened open up again and finally closed in December of 1944. We all used to go to Corce to sell our fish and to shop. For all kinds of needs we went there. Corce was the center for all of these villages. We were all one people: they [the Albanians] were Greek as well, before the borders closed. Now, wait...what were they? Were they Greek or were they Macedonian (Μακεδόνες), I’m not sure...My grandmother in 1902 didn’t know any Greek. Nobody around here spoke any Greek. It is only after 1914 when they start sending schools and teachers here that we started learning Greek" (Fieldnotes, April 1996).

During the Metaxa’s dictatorship in the 1930’s, Krste Petrov became Christos Petropolous. Ten years later at the end of the Greek Civil War, Queen Frederika ordered the Greek Army to assemble what children were left in the Prespa region. Most children of Prespa had been taken away by the communists during the warfare and relocated in Socialist countries of Eastern Europe⁴¹. The Queen of Greece assembled all of the children that were still on Greek soil and in an effort to "exorcise" any remaining Communism/Slavism from their bodies, she baptized them, one child after the other, with the names of Queens and Kings. Prespa today is full of Friderikis, Konstantinos, Sofias,
and Phillipos as a result. Today the tendency is towards Hellenization of names. This takes place often among the Albanians, who might try to pass as Greek, since Greek lineage facilitates to some extent the immigration procedures, and might alleviate the stigmatization of the immigrant living and working in Greece. Some Albanians accept Greek Orthodox baptism as part of the naming. In so doing they may claim, however accurately, to have been part of the Greek ethnic minority of Albania (King, Iosifides, Myrivili 1998).

In the Florina and Prespa regions there are many examples of the name-changing policies being implemented. At first they were justified as part of the “nationalization” of people in the newly acquired territories after the Balkan War of 1913, and later, in the 1920s and 1930s they were seen precisely as the Hellenization of Slavic “elements.” While some people’s Slavic names were translated into Greek, others received altogether new names (Danforth 1995: 160). After the Greek Civil War of 1945-1949 many of Dopyi from Prespa and Florina were forced to flee to Eastern European counties. Some ended up in Australia, Canada and the US due to either political or economic pressures. In many cases, the names of these people were changed again in their new countries of residence, mostly voluntarily. As Danforth points out, however, all these name changes have resulted often in messy lineages, where various members of the same family subjected to these procedures have ended up with completely different names. Even today in Greece, Slavic family names may not be passed to children. Priests will not allow Slavic names to be given to children. Even gravestones cannot show a person’s original name if it was Slavic (Danforth 1995).
The Greek Orthodox Church is a key agent in this effort, being the institution, along with the State, that can bestow names upon people, at baptisms. As a result, some people have an "official" Greek name on documents, identity cards and such, while they use their Slavic (or Albanian) name in their personal lives. Several of the people I met around the Florina and Prespa region had to contend with difficulties resulting from name changes when dealing with the bureaucracy of the Greek state, which sometimes had different entries as their appellations.

In *The Macedonian Conflict*, Danforth describes the following incident that took place in Florina. It shows the complicity between the Church and the State and the intrusion of the Orthodox Church into the names and lives of the Dopyi:

A grandmother had given the village priest a list of her dead relatives to be blessed at a memorial service. When the priest saw the list of Slavic names he said, 'What kind of names are these? These are not names. Cross them out.' It was only after the names were translated into Greek that the priest would read them. So Zlata became Hrisoula, Slava became Doxa, and Krste became Stavros. 'Poor old Zlata, she won't know she's being remembered. How will she know the Greeks came and gave her a new name? She won't even know her name is Hrisoula. She'll think we've forgotten her' (Danforth 1995: 121).

The accentuation of discontinuity between public and private life that has resulted from this naming "game" enhances the discursive gestures of secrecy among the Dopyi by proliferating its sites and extending its domain. With people in Prespa who use two names (private and public), those people who may refer to them with the private name would also be the people who know "how," "when," and "where" it is appropriate to use it. A whole political "landscape" of relations of intimacy and distance is thus formed. The people who use the private name have access to many more pieces of intimate knowledge.
about the person; they share other common secrets and they form a special community with the person who has the two names. In contrast, he people who are allowed to “know” only the public name of the person, are kept out of this community and its secrets. Even if they do find out the private name, which is never an absolute secret, its use remains “prohibited.” In order for an outsider to be allowed to use one’s “private” name, he or she has to go through a series of “initiations” before they can learn the political “landscape” of appropriate iterations of the name. That would amount to being accepted by the community as an insider, to some extent.

National Discourse

Stratis Myrivilis

A prominent figure in Modern Greek literature, Stratis Myrivilis, as a young intellectual, in a spirit of nationalism and revolutionary idealism, volunteered to serve on the side of the Allies in the First World War. His first novel, “Life in the Tomb,” which came out of this war, is a harrowing account of trench warfare on the Macedonian front in 1917-1918. His division participated in a series of offensives, which eventually culminated in one of the most important victories of the Entente forces against the Central Powers in 1918. This novel, a profoundly anti-militaristic and humanistic work of international acclaim (it has been translated into many languages), is studied by schoolchildren all over Greece at several levels of their education. One of the core texts of Greek National literature, it offers a complex account of Nationalism.
“Life in the Tomb” confronts the big questions of the time: what is it to be Greek; what is the Nation; does not humanism demand the transcendence of such labels; and, what is war? Subtending the narrative of the novel is the narrator/protagonist’s ambivalence about Greek nationalism, his struggle with the notion of nationalism as an unqualified virtue. Initially, the narrator is swept up by nationalist and democratic fervor:

Down with the king! We want war! . . . After we shouted it in this way for the first time, fists clenched at our thighs, teeth locked over each syllable as though biting each in turn, we all stood still for a moment. . . . Something was disintegrating; something had vanished in our hearts, leaving a sudden and disagreeable vacuum. . . . I would hazard that a long line of venerable fathers...had come to a momentary halt. . . . These ancestors...had been living in our blood for centuries; they were our Byzantine heritage... . Amazed, they banged their crutches down, and shouted...But we—intoxicated by our own unbounded audacity . . . —we shouted again, and then again, repeatedly, with obstinate, rabid fury: Down! No more kings! Away with the whole filthy lot of them! (Myrivilis 1977: 79)

But once exposed to the reality of warfare, he loses his faith in the colors he serves:

I engaged in insurrection against lawful government in order to honor the Greek promise to stand by the Serbs as allies. Now I am helping the Serbs to enslave the Greeks in Monastiri. I came here in order to stand side by side with the French and to be killed with them for the sake of democratic ideals. When I arrived I found them thrashing their black troops and heard them greet us in the trenches with the cry ‘chien Grecs’. . . . The truly horrible thing is to wage war without believing in it, and in addition to lack an ‘unbelief’ sufficiently strong to push you to the other extreme of denying war completely, come what may. (138)

Myrivilis describes his stay with a family that cared for him as a wounded soldier, in a Macedonian village, Velousina, not far from Prespa, now in Macedonia (FYROM). The description of this village, the people, their lives, values and conduct, is idyllic; life among these people is the only bright part of the whole novel.
The people over here speak a language which is understood by both the Bulgarians and the Serbs. They hate the Serbs, who treat them like Bulgarians, tyrannizing over them. They hate the Bulgarians because they have conscripted their children into the army. As for us the Greeks, they accept us with a certain sympathetic curiosity on account of only one, fact: our status as genuine spiritual vassals of ‘Patrik’—that is, the Ecumenical Patriarch. The idea of the Patriarchate still hovers over these Christian people. It is an idea encased in an extremely peculiar mysticism . . . despite everything, the fascination of Greek Byzantium endures. In addition they have the tombstones of their notables and priests, carved as they are with those mysterious and sacrosanct Greek letters. . . . All this makes us privileged in their sight. However, they want to be neither ‘Bulgar’ (Bulgarians), ‘Srp’ (Serbians), nor ‘Grts’ (Greek). Just ‘Makedon Ortoodox.’ (Myrivilis 182)

“Just Orthodox Macedonians.” The novel was first published in 1932. In all of the editions published since 1944, this last phrase was removed by the author. It is clear that at some point in his life, Myrivilis chose to obscure the possibility of the existence of a distinct Macedonian identity, as he was persuaded that it was threatening to the Greek Nation-State. By the 1940s, WWII, the Cold War and the Greek Civil War had all brought the “Macedonian Issue” to the fore, and once again it was highly contested by the politics and nations in Europe.

Yiorgos Katsadorakis

In 1996, a beautiful book came out about Prespa, under the name Prespa: a Story about Nature and about People, published by the Society for the Protection of Prespa. The book was written by Yiorgos Katsadorakis, an environmentalist who moved to the Prespa region in the early 1980s. Katsadorakis is an internationally acclaimed biologist/environmentalist. His environmental preservation work in Prespa has brought him and fellow environmentalist Myrsini Malakou, the Goldman Environmental Prize. Along with Malakou, Katsadorakis founded a new institution in Prespa, the Society for
the Protection of Prespa. The Society for the Protection of Prespa has taken under its auspices a large array of activities for the protection and management of the Prespa wetlands, its flora and fauna. It has produced the first scientific discourse coming out of Prespa.

The book was much awaited as no general book had been published about Prespa in Greece for several decades. *Prespa: a Story about Nature and about People* was a stunning hardcover book with a large and beautiful picture on its cover of a fisherman lighting a cigarette inside his boat. Two hundred pages of text and photographs, written in a lyrical tone, if somewhat didactic and authoritative, provide a mosaic of personal memories of the author, other people’s testimonies, historical accounts and popularized scientific information about the nature of Prespa.

The reactions of the people of Prespa to the book were mixed. Some were full of admiration for the book and others were infuriated by it. The basic problem with it was its selective forgetting in its presentation of the particular history of Prespa, that is, the erasure of the important role played by the presence of a Slavic culture in Prespa. The most obvious issue was the author’s presentation of the names of places and communities in the locality. Katsadorakis includes the older names, but goes to great lengths to obscure any etymological and linguistic relations to the Slavic language. Criticisms of the book traveled through Prespa like lightning. Some of the Dopyi, especially the younger ones, were infuriated. Most of the older Dopyi were unfazed; they didn’t expect anything
different. Others were happy with the book but were suspicious of the growing power of the Society and the environmentalists.

During a discussion about the book in Psarades, some of the Dopyi said that they had always considered the author a staunch nationalist, but that they didn’t expect an erasure of their culture of the extent committed in this book. Especially, they claimed, given the liberal political atmosphere of Greece in 1996. They all felt that in the prior two years the repression that had haunted Prespa for many decades had diminished. People were more comfortable speaking “Dopya-Macedonian” (Ντόπια Μακεδόνικα) in public, and they did not feel that they had to discuss their history secretly in anymore. In their place, the Albanian immigrants became “the new scapegoat.” But Katsadorakis was once again placing them in the shadows of history and of the current discourse.

For example, when Katsadorakis discusses the name “Prespa” he says: “An old man from Mikrolimni once told me that the word is Slavic and that it means a pile of snow, an avalanche or a surface covered with snow” (Katsadorakis 1996: 23). Then, Katsadorakis goes on to tell the tale of a man who came to Prespa from far away, and the lake was iced and covered with snow and he was horrified with the site and the poverty of the people and called the area “Prespa.” “But these are rumors and legends (θρόλοι)” (23), he allows, and he hastens to provide the more correct etymology of the word, which he offers as pre-Slavic, from proto-Greek and Latin roots. The Psarades people would laugh and say “all these years that Katsadorakis has been living among us he has never heard that ‘prespar’ in our language means to sleep lightly, to nap!” His etymology may be
defensible, but that does not excuse such an omission or the degrading statement “an old man from Mikrolimni once told me that the word was Slavic.” It speaks poorly of his relations with the Dopyi in Prespa and his acceptance or awareness of their language.

To make matters worse, his inquiry into the old village names of Prespa recognizes only one old Slavic name among the eighteen. He allows that the old name of the exclusively Vlach village of Vrondero, (formerly) Grazdeno, “might come from the Slavic word Grasd” (47). For the others, Sterkovo, Roudari, Medouva, Vinendi, Popli, etc., he finds Vlach, Latin or Celtic roots. Katsadorakis gave Nivitsa no etymological explanation. It has meaning and history, however, for the Slavic-speaking people of Prespa: “a place without fields.” As all the village names do, as Slavic was the dominant language here until the 1930s when it became prohibited, and when the names were changed by the state to sound less Slavic. An unbiased etymology would need to recognize the pervasive existence of this language here. Even the state recognized it, albeit as a threat.

“You know, I’m not a linguistic specialist,” said Aris, as the discussion was continuing around the table of the taverna in Psarades, “but this is our lake, this is our land, and our language is spoken all around it, be it Albania, Greece or Macedonia. We’ve been here speaking this language for many centuries. It cannot all be Greek, Celtic, Latin and Vlach. He has gathered all of his information exclusively from his Vlach friends.”
Petros laughed and said “No matter what you or anyone writes about Prespa, no one is ever going to be happy with it. Everything is so contested around here that it is almost impossible to pin anything down.”

Language and Security 1998: A Court Case in Thessaloniki

An extraordinary court case took place in Thessaloniki, the capital city of Greek Macedonia in 1998. A Dictionary of Modern Greek edited by a linguistics professor named Babiniotis prompted a lawsuit on the grounds that it both injured the plaintiff and threatened national security. The passage at issue was:

“‘Bulgarian’: 1. born in Bulgaria or originating from there,
   2. (negatively) the fan or player of a Thessaloniki team
      (mainly P.A.O.K.)

The colloquial use of “Bulgarian” was the perceived offense. Soccer fans from the south of Greece use the term “Bulgarian” to taunt the team of Thessaloniki, playing with fire in suggesting that those from Thessaloniki are not as “Greek” as others in Greece. However offensive the use of “Bulgarian” in this way might be to some people, the status it gained as a legal issue is stunning. It goes far beyond questions of offensive speech to concerns about the very security of the Nation.

The plaintiff argued not only that he was “greatly hurt and insulted” by this dictionary, as a Thessalonikan and a sport fan, but moreover that it “injures the national feeling [ ] and the historical continuity of Hellenism,” that it “legitimizes . . . anti-Hellenistic propaganda at the expense of Macedonia and Macedonians,” that it “accepts a derogatory
phrase for a big part of the undivided Greek people” and that it “poisons on a daily basis the conscience of our young students” (Mitsilegas 1999: 13). The attorney for the plaintiff went on to claim that “the territorial integrity and the development of national and religious conscience is jeopardized” by the dictionary (Mitsilegas 1999: 14).

The plaintiff sought, due to the “clear and present danger to our national interests,” not to pursue this through normal legal channels but through special procedures designed to address matters of emergency. Thus, as notes Valsamis Mitsilegas in a 1999 article on this case, the “securitization of the issue . . . started” from the outset (13).

The defense argued that the complaint ran afoul of several legal principals: the dictionary was protected under the Greek constitution both as freedom of the press and under the freedom guaranteed to science; a person may not make claims purporting to represent “the people of Greece;” and there is no legal connection between the person and any national security matters. Nevertheless, the court not only accepted the urgent national security basis for the case, but ruled in favor of the plaintiff.

The court’s decision validated both the claim of personal injury and the threat to national security. The judgment also stated that the dictionary had failed in its “mission to educate” as it describes language usage (Mitsilengas 1999: 15). The Court further judged that the dictionary “creates confusion regarding the ethnic origin of the players and fans of P.A.O.K. and Macedonians in general” (ibid). All the copies in circulation or in stocks were ordered modified to remove the offending reference.
The Greek Supreme Court overruled the Thessaloniki court, citing the unconstitutionality of their judgment. Still, the "mission to educate," as it were, was achieved. The newer edition of the Babiniotis dictionary omitted the controversial "Bulgarian" definition and made several other "nationally correct" modifications as well.

Afterword

The violent struggles that marked the formation of the nation-state, the inaugural violence that establishes nation-states and in this case the Greek Nation state in the south Balkans, eventually gave way to the legitimate violence of forced assimilation achieved by the concerted efforts of a series of national institutions. However, the institutional labors aiming at the absorption—basically the "digestion" and the erasure of the "Slavic elements" within the Greek Nation—seem to have to a large extent failed. The "Slav" has still an ambiguous presence in Greek national imagination. He or she still constitutes a threat. What kind of subjectivity could the Dopyi form? They seem to be expected to fill both positions: of invisibility (as successfully absorbed by the Greek nation) and of the national threat (as always retaining some core of difference). There seems to be a specific plot that is being acted out here in the story of national assimilation and the formation of the subject of the Dopyi—the story of a premeditated "indigestion." In the following chapter I will discuss the process of subjectivization in relation with the Dopyi: the formation of the subject of power in Prespa.

In this chapter I have traced events that have rendered the understanding of power in Prespa, to a large extent, discursive. As a result, the people of Prespa seem to have a
Foucauldian understanding of "truth" and its relation to power: all political and social forms of thought are inevitably caught up in discursive struggles over hegemony. The emphasis here (both in Prespa as well as in this work) is on knowledge as power, rather than the existence and discovery of a hidden truth, hiding behind an ideological construction, waiting for a "science" that can discover and emancipate it from every system of power. Foucault defines "truth" as a *regime*, the "ensemble of rules according to which the true and the false are separated and specific effects of power attached to the true," and states that the battle for truth is not a battle "on behalf of truth, but . . . a battle about the status of truth and the economic and political role it plays." (Foucault 1980: 132)

Revisiting what Antigone said when she first met me: "The problem is that information can be used in very different ways and for very different purposes. One's motives do not count, not even what one writes or how one writes it. What is important is how it will be used and by whom." This is how power/knowledge is understood in Prespa. There is an almost visceral understanding in Prespa that truth is not outside power. The people there are very familiar with the power of discourse to produce that which it names (the domain of the performative), and that one has to be quick on one's feet to cope with such power. As a result suspicion and dissimulation prevail at the borders on all sides.

A Vlach man kept asking, "What is she doing here writing about us? Where is she from? Is she American? Is she an agent then from Macedonia (FYROM)? Who has sent her? Whom is she working for?" My friend Kostas was defending me. "Don't worry" Kostas
would answer, “I know her, she’s all right, I know her…” And the other man answered,
“You don’t know anything Kostas, you don’t live here. We who live here will have to
endure the results of her ‘observations.’”
Chapter 3

The Formation of the Subject: Interpellation and the Performative Power of Naming

Introduction: Subjectivization and Performance Theory

In this chapter I will talk about “subject” formation and “identification” in relation to the Prespa border region. The notion of “subject” as it will be used here includes the notion of “identification.” Identification is part of the ambivalence, the double meaning, in both Foucault’s and Althusser’s notions of “subjectivization” (assujetissement), which describes the moment of the simultaneous subordination and formation of the subject. During the process of “subjectivization” power is exerted, pressed on the subject, that is, the subject comes to being as a subordination to power, and power is also assumed by the subject in the same process, as the subject comes into being, that is, becoming “invested” with agency. “This ambivalence” which is at the very center of the notion of the subject, “forms the bind of agency,” says Butler. (Butler 1997: 12) “Where conditions of subordination make possible the assumption of power, the power assumed remains tied to those conditions, but in an ambivalent way; in fact, the power assumed may at once retain and resist that subordination” (13). She quickly qualifies this statement by saying agency is not a recuperation of power, nor is the power assumed really a resistance. The ambivalent relation of the subject of/to power constrains the agency of the subject, to the point that many see the Foulcauldian and the Althusserian subjects as having no agency.
at all. It is imperative to think of agency as "bound" agency when we speak of the subjects at the borders of the nation-state in Prespa, and to try to be very careful with how we conceptualize resistance in this setting. The notion of subject is useful here because it also "binds" our understanding of identities in Prespa as positions that emerge from specific discourses—and within the context of specific discursive apparatuses—as relations of power and knowledge.

"Identification," says Diana Fuss, is "the physical mechanism that produces self-recognition." (Fuss 1995: 2) For Fuss there is an equivalence between identification and subjectivity: the formation of the subject, "I." Bringing into this picture the notion of identification introduces a psychoanalytic dimension into the formation of the subject. It introduces "desire" into the picture of subject formation, or what Judy Butler calls "the psychic life of power." (Butler 1997) Butler "excavates" this "psychic life" from Althusser's essay *Ideological Apparatuses*. For Butler it underlies his notion of "conscience," which is part and parcel of ideology since it assures the reproduction of "good" subjects, that is, subjects who acquire skills and the mastery of social rituals, which they unfailingly reproduce. "The reproduction of social relations, the reproduction of skills, is the reproduction of subjection," she says. "But the reproduction of labor is not central here—the central reproduction is proper to the subject and takes place in relation to language and to the formation of conscience" (Butler 1997: 118). This "conscientious . . . consciousness" which in Althusser makes the subjects "work all by themselves"—that is, internalize and reproduce sets of rules as embodied rituals of action—is based, according to Butler, on a presumed "guilt." This inferred "guilt" seems to be present and
to underscore the interpellation of the subject into being, as “the turning around towards the Law” initiated by the hailing of an individual by a policeman, in the famous Althusserian scene.

It is important to focus on the role played by “naming” and “guilt” in the Prespa region, in order to understand what kinds of subjects emerge in Prespa and how the border, as an inalienable part of the nation-state both materially and conceptually, influences the formation of those subjects and their identifications. I thus approach these questions initially through the notion of the subject in Althusser’s essay *Ideological State Apparatuses*. One of the most vexing—and for that matter telling—problems that emerges when one is talking about the people of Prespa, is the issue of how to refer to them, to name them. Who refers to whom as what, and why, becomes so convoluted that writing about these borders and about the people of the border without addressing the “naming issue” is almost impossible. So, I discuss how ideology interpellates individuals as subjects, as the point of departure for a further exploration of subjectivity and identification in Prespa which will be continued in the next chapter.

The discussion of Althusser’s essay, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses,” serves as a “plotting device”: through its presentation and discussion specific themes relating to subject formation in Prespa are “woven” in. First, in the section “Prespa People and Their Relations of Production,” I present the relations of production in Prespa—land ownership. The land distribution in Prespa represents and re-enforces a particular type of ethno-social stratification organized along the lines of national loyalty,
exposing once again the Greek national insecurities regarding its borders. In the next section, “Althusser’s Notion of Ideology and the Subjects of Power,” I discuss what kind of ideological framework might be producing such state policies, followed by an exposition and discussion of Althusser’s notion of Ideolgy as the concrete materiality of performed practices. Althusser’s “rituals of recognition,” in the scenes where power “interpellates” the subjects, bring about the notions of “naming” and “guilt,” which are further discussed through an example, the story of Valia, a young Prespa woman. Finally, I conclude this chapter by placing interpellation in a more general framework of the cultural theory of naming. This leads into the next chapter, which focuses on the names “Macedonia” and “Dopyi”—in the south Balkan context as well as in Prespa.

**Prespa People and their Relations of Production**

In the beginning of his famous essay “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses,” Louis Althusser briefly outlines the essentials of a Marxist theory of the State by first asserting that the State in Marxist tradition is explicitly conceived as a repressive apparatus (Althusser 2001:92). The State, he claims, is a “machine” of repression which enables the ruling classes to ensure their domination over the working class and to subject the later to a process of surplus-value extortion (ibid.). This is the deterministic Marxist model where the economic base “in the last instance” determines the politico-legal and the ideological superstructures. He likens this structure, this spatial metaphor, to an edifice, a two-floor building dependent on its foundation (90). In this essay Althusser insists on this “last instance,” determinant role of the base in this spatial metaphor of the edifice, not in order to describe a reductionistic, mechanical relation between base and
superstructure. Instead, he sees this originary directional relation as setting out an
obligation to deal with “the theoretical problem of the types of ‘derivatory’ effectivity
peculiar to the superstructure, that is, the relative autonomy of the superstructure and the
reciprocal action of the superstructure on the base” (91). This is what he calls
“descriptive”: “the first phase of every theory,” a “transitional” phase, where the
juxtaposition of terms renders necessary the development of the theory. Indeed, when he
later formulates his theory of ideology as an immutable part of our being in the world in
each and every socio-historical formation (“ideology has no history”), and also asserts the
productive power of the “ideological state apparatuses” to constitute social subjects, the
whole edifice seems to be unmoored, spinning a multi-level relational model of social
reproduction.

Any similarly complex relational model between “base” and “superstructure,” such as the
dialectical one used here by Althusser, would be valuable here as a theoretical framework
to a presentation of the “material realities” of Prespa. By highlighting the complexities of
Althusserian determinism, and placing this model as an introduction to the “relations of
production” in Prespa, I intend to caution against reading the following section as
“information.” My aim is to problematize the facile relationship that usually develops
with this type of information and the ensuing inadvertent assumptions: their direct
relation to an external—to the discourse—“reality,” “higher truth value,” “deterministic
power for other phenomena.”44
Prespa is an agricultural economy. Most people today own their own land and cultivate beans (and sell them as dried beans), which is very labor intensive, requires highly irrigated soil, and overall yields good prices in the market. Only the people of Psarades live off of fishing and tourism, while the latter provides some additional income to a few families from Aghios Germanos as well. The bean in Prespa was established as a monoculture about fifteen years ago. As a result, life in the last fifteen years in Prespa has not been as hard as it used to be (and the soil of Prespa, as well as its wildlife, is not as rich as it used to be). Before the bean, Prespa was characterized by a subsistence economy up until the 1960s when systematic irrigation was introduced. That is when the whole region gradually started moving into an agricultural market oriented economy.

Before the 1960s there were no roads in Prespa. There was one dirt road that went up to the villages of Aghios Germanos and Koula, and in the 1950s there was a bus from Florina that went down that road several times a week. Only mountain paths led in and out of Psarades or Vrondero. People moved in and out of the region (if, for example, they had to go sell their fish at the nearby towns), as well as around the different villages of Prespa, by horse, mule or donkey, or on foot. Greek politicians and administrators, when faced with the locals’ claims for roads, would answer that the General Army Staff could not give permission for road construction in Prespa as that would “facilitate the advances of the invading enemies.” It is, ironically, during the Papadopoulos military junta that in two years time (1967-1968) asphalt roads were cut and paved in Prespa, along with a complete network of dirt roads for moving agricultural machinery.
Not surprisingly, before the 1960s, families and extended households cultivated and produced most of what they needed for themselves and for their animals. They also fished a little, had some cows and a few horses or mules, maybe a pig. They bartered a little and sold a couple of things in the market every now and then for cash. People say life was very hard back then. A lot of people left Prespa in the 60s, 70s and 80s due to the region’s plummeting economy. The endless wars, followed by periods of political repression that ravaged the area from the beginning of the century until 1974, had taken a great toll on the economy of Prespa. The wars meant the constant pillaging of the products of the people’s labors by different armies and guerilla troops, and it also meant the ruin of material infrastructure: fields, houses, mills, etc. Finally, the wars took away a significant part of the labor force of Prespa: a lot of young men (and women during in the Civil War) joined or were forcibly conscripted by the armies, leaving fewer hands for cultivating the land. Of course, many of them died. Finally, the political repression and fears of retaliations provided motives for further depopulation of the area. Large numbers of emigrants left Prespa in the beginning of the century, and after the wars.

In the early 20th century the population of Prespa was over 10,000 people, who lived in eighteen communities. In the 1940s census the numbers dropped to approximately 7,000. The exchanges of populations between Greece and Turkey that took place between 1919 and 1924 dramatically changed the composition of the population in the area and render the above statistical figures discontinuous. Only a part of the 7,000 people who lived in Prespa in 1940 had been inhabitants of Prespa in the 1910s. Prespa was settled in 1922 and 1923 with people from Asia Minor (Ismir mostly) and from the Pontos regions of the
Black Sea (see endnote No. 8 in Part 1. Border). Eighty families from Ismir came and settled in the houses abandoned by the Turkish and Albanian Muslim populations who had once lived there, in the village of Lefkona. The same happened with people, mostly from Pontos, in the villages of Pyli, Laimos, Aghios Germanos, and others. The relations between these repatriated, Greek, Refugee settlers and the Slav-speaking, indigenous Dopyi were relations between two disenfranchised groups. The Dopyi called the Refugees “Turks” and the Refugees called the Dopyi “Bulgarians.” From the start this relation was shaped around the land redistribution issue: the redistribution of the estates that had belonged to the Ottomans.

“Locals” and “Nomads”: Land Distribution and “Social Engineering”

Before the arrival of the Refugees in the region, the Slav-speaking populations either were land-less workers in the Ottoman estates, or owned small pieces of land in the mountainous remote regions. Since the end of the nineteenth century, the Slav-speakers had been able to buy some of the land they were working on from the Turks, with informal deeds and contracts, using lawful and, especially during the last years of the Ottoman Empire, sometimes unlawful means. Whether landless serfs or small landholders, the Slav-speakers of Macedonia had high expectations of the land redistribution programs. However, after the arrival of the refugees, the Greek State was not willing to ratify the informal claims of the Dopyi to the land. Instead, the land was confiscated, divided up into smaller fields, and redistributed, often in terms unfavorable to the Dopyi. The Dopyi felt entitled to land they now saw being appropriated by the
Refugees. The Refugees had left behind lands and homes, and, according to the Treaty of Lausanne, they were entitled to land of the same quality and worth. They felt cheated by the modest pieces of land given to them by the Greek State. Neither group thinks that the Land Redistribution Program (which in Prespa was designed and implemented sometime in 1933) distributed the land fairly.

In Aghios Germanos all of the Dopyi lost their land. According to local testimonies that I gathered, the Greek State confiscated it and then gave it to the Refugees. New land was given to the Aghios Germanos Dopyi much later, in the early 1960s, with the second land distribution, after the irrigation program was implemented. The land of Aghios Germanos was "exchangeable land"—a category of lands that came under Greek ownership with special provisions attached. The matter of who could claim ownership of the land of Aghios Germanos was finally settled in court, which granted the land to the Greek State. The people of Aghios Germanos were given the opportunity to buy their houses and lands from the State, first in 1958, then in 1959 and all the way up to the 1970s. Today many people still have no titles to their houses. In all the other villages, except Psarades, the land was confiscated and redistributed between the Dopyi and the Refugees. Initially, small lots perpendicular to the lake were given to the people, as well as some land near the villages for gardening. In Psarades nothing happened. No one had any titles for their homes and some still today do not own the houses and land: they are "squatting." The irrigation works started in Prespa between 1957 and 1958, and they ended around the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s. The whole image of the Prespa changed: a
lot of trees were cut, land was leveled, the lots were drawn parallel to the lake, and the
land was redistributed.

But land ownership would become re-articulated and politicized in ethnic terms once
again before the irrigation works began reshaping Prespa. After the Civil War, and the
defeat of the communists, the people who had fled with the communist guerrillas to
Eastern Europe were labeled “national traitors,” and their land was confiscated by the
Greek State. It was during that time that the terms “Dopyos” and “Communist” became
conflated in the eyes of the Greek State and its right-wing citizens. During the 1920s the
Dopyi were mainly Royalists, while the Refugees were predominately Liberal (see
Mavrogordatos 1983; Michailides 1997). In the 1940s, the Dopyi sided with the
Communists and the guerillas of the Democratic Army in their vast majority, while the
Refugees sided predominately with the Greek State. So, as Riki Van Boeschoten
succinctly states, “After the defeat in 1949, political stigma was thus added to the ethnic
stigma” (Van Boeschoten 2000: 37).

Five out of the eighteen villages of Prespa that formed a stronghold of the Communist
leadership, the rearguard were bombed during the civil war by the National Army
airplanes, devastated by the war, and deserted by the people, and they were never
populated again. After the Civil War, new settlers were moved to Prespa—part of yet
another Government resettlement program—and they were offered the land and houses of
the political refugees (Communists/Dopyi) who had fled from Prespa. This new group of
settlers started arriving in Prespa in 1952 (1952-56). They were Vlachs, predominantly
from Epirus, nomadic pastoralists now becoming small landowners (see endnote # 18). They brought livestock to Prespa, especially sheep, goats, and some horses, and they were predominately right-wing conservatives. Once again, the confiscation of land and the resettling of the border areas by people who were more “Greek” were implemented, considered necessary both for demographic and national security reasons. These processes created large rifts in the society of Prespa and fostered a social hierarchy based on national loyalty that is in turn based on ethnic criteria. The initial antagonism and stratification involved only the Dopyi, the Refugees and the “palaioelladites,” members of the Greek State institutions who had moved to the region from the south. The introduction of the Vlachs complicated the picture further, elaborating and refining the actions and practices of the people, who were all vying for recognition as the group more nationalistic than the others. That, of course, produced a wide array of performances of national identity in the region, among the most tragic of which are those of some of the Dopyi who identify fervently with the Greek cause but are nevertheless perceived as national traitors or threats.

Van Boeschoten argues in her 2000 essay, “When Difference Matters: Sociopolitical Dimensions of Ethnicity in the District of Florina,” that society in the Florina district (which includes Prespa) remains highly stratified along ethnic lines. In this essay she paraphrases Stuart Hall’s dictum about race, and asks if ethnicity becomes “the modality through which class is lived” (Hall 394) in Florina. Some of the remarkable data that she has assembled from the region assert what seems to be an obvious point to the persistent
observer of the region: there is an important correlation between social and ethnic
cleavages. Consider this:

The average land tenure in the homogeneous refugee villages included in the survey
what amounted to 49 stremmas, as against 32 for the homogeneous Slav-speaking
villages. In mixed villages, the average was 40 stremmas. Our survey also showed
1555 unemployed and 1121 landless, of whom 90 per cent and 88 per cent
respectively lived in Slav-speaking villages or mixed villages with a Slav-speaking
majority. The number of (mainly unskilled) workers in homogeneous Slav-speaking
villages was 666 as against only nine in homogeneous refugee villages... (Van
Boeschoten 44, ftm.6).

The region’s stratification, she claims, is directly related to unequal access among the
different ethnic groups to land, education, employment, and civil service jobs, the last
being very important to upward social mobility in Greece. According to her findings the
Gypsies49 and the Slav-speakers (as she refers to the Dopyi) are at the bottom of the
ladder, the Vlachs somewhere in the middle, and the Refugees clearly on top. The
Refugees are clearly better off than the other groups: they are better educated and more
urbanized, have low emigration rates and high state employment, practice liberal
professions, and are successful in commerce. Most of the industries of the Florina district
belong to them. The majority of Vlachs (who strongly identify with Greek nationalism),
do not have a very high educational level, and do not own much land, even though they
are predominately farmers. Still, their average income has been well above that of the
Slav-speaking village populations mostly due to supplementary jobs the Vlachs hold
outside of Prespa: commerce, tourism, and the fur trade of Kasteria. The bone of
contention however, which according to Boeshoten underscores ethnic difference in the
region, is not access to land property, but access to state employment. The Refugees are
the most favored group, and the Vlachs are more favored then the Slav-speakers who gained access to state employment only in the 1980s.

Prespa Today: A Brief Portrait
Today in the inhabited Prespa villages there live about 1,200 people. Since the irrigation system was established the majority of the people of Prespa have lived off of the cultivation of bean plants and the selling of beans: navy beans and “giant” beans. In the village of Vrondero, which is inhabited exclusively by Vlachs, people are stockbreeders (sheep and goats), and to a lesser extent so are the Vlachs of Pyli, Kallithea and Aghios Germanos. Psarades, an exclusively Dopyo village, is sustained by fishing and tourism which has been increasing steadily during the past fifteen years, thus supplementing the people’s income. The people of Prespa have small gardens, which provide each family’s vegetables. In the past the Dopyi would have a pig or two, which they would slaughter and freeze for the winter months, but this rarely happens nowadays. Still, the Psarades people are state-subsidized for owning a special, small breed of cow—one or two per family for the milk and the meat.

Two small industries that opened in Prespa in the 1960s and 1970s—one for processing lumber and another for canning fish and vegetables—closed soon after. Prespa has a county court, functioning periodically in Aghios Germanos, along with a couple of elementary schools and a junior high-school, two Preschools. There is one police station in Aghios Germanos with a couple of annexes in Psarades and Vrondero. Aghios Germanos has the post office and there is an army station in Koula. Prespa is supposed to
have a doctor, but as the post is very remote it's often hard to find someone to take the position, so there are periods without a doctor in Prespa. The same is true for the positions of the veterinarian and the agricultural scientists that the government established for the region (Katsadorakis 1995: 57-59).50

After the devastation of the Civil War in the area, another population drop came in the 1960s, when large numbers of people emigrated out of the Florina region, almost exclusively for economic reasons.51 The Prespa population began stabilizing to the levels we find today in the 1980s. The Diaspora population from Prespa, is not only large in numbers, but it also spans several continents, with people predominately in Eastern and Western Europe, Canada, USA, and Australia. Many people of the Prespa Diaspora converge back in Prespa during the summer, up to tripling its population, thereby contributing more to the cultural than to the economic life of Prespa. It is important to note that the economy of Prespa has benefited from agricultural and other subsidies through EU programs, and especially by the three Regional Development European Union Funds that have served Greece during the past fifteen years. These funds have subsidized several initiatives in Prespa during the 1990s, through Governmental Programs for Underdeveloped and Border Regions of Greece. Most impressive are the women's hotel cooperatives, that have been open in Aghios Germanos and Psarades for over a decade, and the more recent women's cooperative which produces and sells local products from Vrondero.
Finally, there is the work that the resident environmentalists have done in the area, conducting research to find ways to protect the flora, fauna and to some extent human life in Prespa, and to preserve the richness of these wetlands. Myrsini Malakou and Yiorgos Katsadorakis came from the south and settled in Prespa about twenty years ago in the village of Aghios Germanos, founded the Society for the Protection of Prespa and introduced a new scientific regime, environmentalism, into the region. The relations between the environmentalists and the local people of Prespa went through great turbulence in the early years of the creation of the Society for the Protection of Prespa; their interactions were antagonistic and underscored by suspicion. The people who first collaborated with and supported the projects of the Society were members of the Vlach population, and since the mid 1990s, the Society for the Protection of Prespa has become an integral part of Prespa life, providing jobs and visions to a group of local young people and thus keeping some of them in Prespa. For their environmental work they received one of the most prestigious international awards. In 2002, through an initiative of the Society for the Protection of Prespa, the Prespa Transfrontier Park was created. On February 2, 2000, the Prime Ministers of Albania, Greece, and Macedonia (FYROM) signed an agreement that, within the context of wetland conservation, establishes the first transboundary protected area in the Balkans. Apart from their extraordinary work on environmental conservation, the Society for the Protection of Prespa has created a new kind of platform that could potentially reach beyond national interests and beyond the particular historical, ethnic and economic attachments to a new cooperation across the borders.
State Ideology: Behind the State Policies, the Ethno-Social Stratification Produced/Reiterated

The relations of production in Prespa are articulated through, and in effect are constantly reiterating, a series of violations that the Greek State and its apparatuses inflicted on the Prespa people. The displacement and loss that all of these people have had to suffer—being uprooted, relocated, dispossessed, and forced to live away from “home”—are perpetually represented and repeated in the current lives of the different people of Prespa, through the performances of proximity or distance to the Greek nation-state. There is a proliferation of sites in which this process takes place, as it finds expression at the very core of their relation to society; that is, the regulation of access to economic, political and social resources. Who has access to what in Prespa keeps retelling the story of social/ethnic stigmatization. The argument that is starting to take form here and will be further elaborated, is that on the Greek side of Prespa, material relations and bodies are perpetually regulated and constrained by the nationalist discourse and its ideal subject positions. The results of this process seem to be the propagation of fragmentation, the continual implementation of new sets of boundaries and of antagonistic relations among the population, all shaped around the dominant discursive gesture of national identification.

If the nationalist ideology and the State institutions’ roles are predicated on creating the purity of an ethnically homogeneous society made up of disciplined subjects that have internalized and naturalized the Nation and its obviousness, then they have failed, despite their scrupulous attempts for over a century. It is a failure, that is, unless the
consolidation of the national imperative is predicated on *purity no less than on contamination*. The State creates the disavowed, abject subjects that haunt its own domain. The relation the people of Prespa have to the Greek nation-state brings to mind that of alien immigrant groups who have more recently settled in Greece: that is, as “pollution” inside the main body of the nation. And those different polluting agents are all vying for better placement for proximity to the national imperative: Greek identity.

Why is it, asks Foucault in the *History of Sexuality I*, that the repression of sexuality has simultaneously produced all this discourse about it? Through a critique of Freud’s “repression hypothesis,” Foucault proposes that the prohibition on sexuality, the repressive regime that surrounds sexuality, not only reproduces what it tries to prohibit and suppress, but in the process it also expands its domain. It does this by proliferating the sites of control, discipline and suppression (Foucault 1980). The hypothesis leading this discussion of the border and its subjects is that, the national discourse that creates the subject-position “of the border” and “as the border” functions in a similar way. That means that the discourse that engenders the “border subjects” incites its own transgression, proliferates the sites of “the border,” thus augmenting its regulatory domain. Let’s return to Althusser and his discussion of ideology in order to try to elucidate the production of such subjects.

**Althusser’s Notion of Ideology and the Subjects of Power**

Althusser distinguishes between two aspects of the State: State Power (the possession of which is the objective of all political class struggle) and the (repressive) State Apparatus
(including police, courts, prisons, army, and above all, the governmental administration) which is the function of State Power (Althusser 2001: 94). Acknowledging Gramsci’s contribution in drawing important initial links between the State as repressive apparatus, ideology and civil society, he formulates his theory of “ideological state apparatuses” (ISA): the non-repressive side of the State Apparatus. As ISA’s he lists religious, educational, family, legal, political, trade union, communications, and cultural institutions (96)—the most important of which in bourgeois capitalism is the educational ISA. “The Repressive State Apparatus functions ‘by violence,’ whereas the Ideological State Apparatuses function ‘by ideology.’” (97) However, “There is no such thing as a purely repressive apparatus” nor a purely ideological one. (97) The repressive apparatuses also function by ideology in order “to ensure their cohesion and reproduction” internally, and “in the ‘values’ they propound externally”(98). As for the ideological ones, like “Schools or Churches,” they use “methods of punishment, expulsion, selection, etc., to ‘discipline’ not only their shepherds, but also their flocks” (98).

What seems most important in Althusser’s notion of ideology is precisely, first, that he links the existence of ideology with State Apparatuses, and, second, that his critique of ideology is a wider critique of the symbolic order. Ideology in classic Marxist thought refers to all representations that obscure and obfuscate the real relations among people and with the world around them. Marxism is thus primarily an Ideologiekritik, unmasking the real conditions of existence, that is, the relations of production. Linking ideology to State Apparatuses, Althusser insists that it is in the concrete materiality of performed
practices that ideology exists, engendering subjects exactly through their repetitive submission to the rules of, and their mastery of the skills of, specific apparatuses. ‘Ideas’ and ‘representations’ thus disappear “to the precise extent that . . . their existence is inscribed in the actions of practices” (Althusser 2001: 115).

The “ideas” of a human subject exist in his actions, or ought to exist in his actions, and if that is not the case, [ideology] lends him other ideas corresponding to the actions (however perverse) that he does perform. This ideology talks of actions: I shall talk of actions inserted into practices. And I shall point out that these practices are governed by the rituals in which these practices are inscribed, within the material existence of an ideological apparatus, be it only a small part of that apparatus: a small mass in a small church, a funeral, a minor match at a sports’ club, a school day, a political party meeting, etc. (Althusser 2001: 114).

It is the performances of rituals (with all their modalities), which materialize ideology—through the specific practices of the State Apparatuses—to such an extent that it becomes like a “material force,” capable of producing social subjects. Here Althusser eliminates the ontological difference between base and superstructure, while at the same time persistently grounding his dialectics in the notion of materiality, a performative materiality.

Althusser’s materiality in this essay doesn’t reinstate the category of the “real.” His subject is thus different from modernism’s alienated subject as there seems to be nothing outside the “Symbolic,” nothing untouched by ideology. But is there no “remainder” in this paradigm? Is there such a thing as a constitutive “lack” that forms the primary kernel of the Lacanian subject? Is there some fundamental “fold,” the primordial condition of possibility between presence and absence as in the Derridian paradigm, what he calls
“difference,” “irresolvable tension,” “gap,” “aporia,” (deconstruction being another type of critique always already within the symbolic)? Is there some moment or space that the subject can occupy that does not necessarily stand in a relation of exteriority to the discursive system, but which might operate in a relation of contingency and reversal to the power that makes it possible, to which it nevertheless belongs?

In Althusser’s discussion of how the subject comes into being, there is no moment and no space outside ideology, the subject is always already within the symbolic order. That is a crucial point in our understanding of subjectivity and the extent of its agency, that is, the extent to which the subjects of a specific hegemonic order can resist or subvert its premises. This is a particularly important question in the case of border subject positions exactly because one could argue that due to their “objective positioning” vis-à-vis the nation-state, their coming into being at the limits of it might open up (or close) different possibilities of subjectivity and identity formations.

The context within which the Althusserian subject is interpellated, determined by two theses: “there is no practice except by and in ideology; there is no ideology except by the subject and for the subject” (Althusser 2001: 115). The first thesis becomes clear when Althusser describes the process of subject formation as that which he calls the “constant practice of ideological recognition.” This recognition takes place in all the practical rituals, all those behaviors which seem absolutely obvious, “including those that make a word ‘name’ a thing,” the most elementary ones of everyday life. It is precisely these rituals of recognition and the obviousness of their character that guarantee that we are
“concrete, individual, distinguishable, and (naturally) irreplaceable subjects” (117). “The
hand-shake, the fact of calling you by your name, even if I do not know what it is, that
you ‘have’ a name of your own, [meaning] that you are recognized as a unique subject,
[and it is] this recognition [that] gives us the ‘consciousness’ of our incessant (eternal)
practice of ideological recognition” (ibid.). This consciousness is precisely the
recognition of our subjectivity, i.e. the double recognition of our subject positioning: our
“free” agency as individual subjects, always already curtailed by the limits of our
subjection to the State and its apparatuses. Such consciousness which escapes the
“obviousness,” the “natural” quality, the “covering up,” and “obscuring” of its own
mechanisms performed by ideology, can be achieved, but it doesn’t amount to much,
Althusser claims.

Based on these eternal rituals of recognition Althusser asserts that the category of the
“subject” is constitutive of all ideology, insofar as ideology has as its function (which
defines it) the constituting of concrete subjects as subjects (Althusser 2001: 117). It is a
double instance where both subjectivity and ideology come into being. These subjects are
“‘concrete’ enough to be recognized, but abstract enough to be thinkable and thought,
giving rise to a knowledge” (ibid.). What he is describing here is the process of naming
something, of creating an objectivity, which renders something concrete and
distinguishable from others, while creating the category through which that thing can be
thought of, “known.” What knowledge is he talking about? It must be both the knowledge
of the subject by the State and the knowledge by the subjects of the Law of its
domination of them. The Althusser quote above is very reminiscent of Foucault. It
suggests the subjection to a discursive regime, necessarily mediated through, and applied onto the body, through the practices of specific institutions that create the power/knowledge matrix: relations of power rather than meaning. 53

What is of particular interest here is that Althusser describes this recognition of, and subjection to, authority as it occurs specifically through naming, calling or interpelling. It is primarily through a linguistic/sound utterance that the presence of that authority is established as the origin of the subject, and reaffirmed in each and every reiteration of the subject’s “name.” I will elaborate further on how this process of naming takes place in Althusser’s interpellation.

The obviousness of recognition is the same as the obviousness of a name: subjects come into being by recognizing themselves in a name, which is unique, concrete and also abstract. When Althusser describes interpellation as a hailing that results in the turning towards the Law and into the subject, he means precisely the State’s ability to invade the interiority of the subject, that is, to dissolve at any moment the constructed image of the subject’s independence and sovereignty, by the presumed knowledge (by both the subject and the State) that the State has of the subject. In his famous example of interpellation, Althusser has a policeman hail an individual by saying “Hey, you there!” and the individual turns around, and by this “one-hundred-and-eighty-degree physical conversion, he becomes a subject” (Althusser 2001: 118). The abstract pronoun “you” stands in for all names and categorical apppellations that could constitute the identity of a subject, and indicates the internalization of the subject position. The example thus
functions like little symbolic theater of how the subject is named through power and thus recognizes himself as a subject.

The Category of Guilt: Valia’s Story

During the summer of 1997, I was invited to stay with Valia and Petros, in their new home in one of the Prespa villages. Valia is about 24 years old. Both of her parents are from Prespa and she has lived here all her life. Her mother identifies herself as a Vlach and her father as a Dopyos. One morning as I lay in bed reading she was preparing to vacuum the blue wall-to-wall carpet of the living room. While assembling the vacuum cleaner, she put some effort into reading the title of the book I was holding, which was far way from her. She muttered aloud the title of the book, “The Plundering of Convictions” (Ασηλασία Φρονημάτων). I smiled and continued reading. She said “Ah, vre Lenio” shaking her head, and then as she was moving into the living room and turning the vacuum cleaner on, I heard her say “it wasn’t, however, our fault…” (Δεν φταίγαμε πάντως εμείς).

I was stunned. “The Plundering of Convictions”—what did it mean to her? Had she read the subtitle “the Macedonian Issue during the Occupation in Western Macedonia 1941-1944” as well? Had she heard about this book through the media? She wouldn’t have read it. I had never seen her read anything, as I haven’t seen any other young person in Prespa reading, ever. Was her reaction based on her understanding of my fieldwork? I was not certain what that understanding was; even I didn’t have a clear idea at the time. After my initial shock, I asked her loudly “what do you mean?” She didn’t answer. It
could have been the loud buzz of the vacuum cleaner that made me inaudible, or it could have been her choice not to hear me; maybe she didn’t want to talk. She changed the subject, I didn’t insist. I didn’t insist in case her silence was indeed intentional and my further asking would insult her.

“It wasn’t our fault.” she had said. What could have made a twenty-four-year-old woman assume the weight of that ambiguous “it” she uttered? “It”—what was that? The whole history of Greek nation-building? The German/Bulgarian occupation of Prespa during WWII and the complex politics of resistance and ethnic identity that took place at the time? The Greek civil war? the politics of the communist party and their role in the Macedonian issue and the identities of the region? If she had read the subtitle then she must have been referring to the local people’s compliance and/or resistance to the occupation and to communism. And what of this “however” which comes to underline the guilt as if to brush the whole issue off. What wasn’t her fault, the “Plundering” or the “Convictions”? And who had plundered those convictions?

John Koliopoulos, in the Plundering of Convictions (1995), talks about the ethno-national identity of the “Slavomacedonians of ‘Greece’” (as he calls the people referred to here as Dopyi) during the German Occupation (1941-1944). He argues effectively, presenting an impressive array of bibliographical and original archival material and testimonials from a very clear national perspective. His main argument is that among the Slav-speakers of Greek Macedonia there is a subgroup with malleable identities that never really “congealed” enough to develop into a single separate identity, different from the Greek or
Bulgarian identities. It is his view that during the periods in which the strong nationalist hold that the Greek State had achieved over these people weakened, the ideological convictions of their own leaders were so unstable and ambivalent that they rendered this leadership totally incapable of guiding these people towards a specific national orientation. He claims that the Slavomacedonians of Greece, who at some point identified with Bulgaria and thus aligned themselves with Italy and Germany during the war, would have quietly assimilated into the Greek nation after the defeat of fascism, were it not for the Yugoslav partisan propaganda and the lenient position on the “Macedonian issue” held by the Greek Communist party. These people, he argues, due to their malleability and lack of clear identity positions, have been easy prey for different political and ideological agents, battling over the people and the territories of the region. As such, he concludes, the separate, distinct national identity that emerged in the 1940s among some of the Slavomacedonians of Greece—that is, among those people who embraced an autonomist Macedonian vision—was an identity imported to Greece, originating in political campaigns of the Soviet Union and the Communist International during the Greek Civil War.

Koliopoulos’s stance is one of the most common Greek nationalist perspectives towards the Dopyi. It belongs to the tradition of historiography that delegitimizes any other than the a priori, existing, national subject position, though portraying such identifications as politically motivated, ideological, and recently constructed categories. What is surprising is the extent to which a young person of the 1990s has internalized the
dialectical “other” to this nationalist position, which is evident in the generalized guilt of Valia’s response.

It is daunting to me to try to fathom the extent of this guilt. Who was the agent in her mind of the plundering of "their" convictions? It could be historical actors and forces, or specific people in the region. They could be people that were still plundering her convictions or characters in stories that she’s heard from family members and other people. What convictions was she referring to? She could be referring to very specific political, ethical, ethnic or national convictions of the local Slav-Macedonians. Or she could be talking about the people of Prespa, about the trials and tribulations of the region in general, which would depoliticize to some extent her position. Up to that day, all these years that I had known her she had never expressed any political position, nothing concerning identity, history or memory. Now it was revealed that to some extent what she identified with was something marred, destroyed by the political necessities and the violent conditions that prevailed in the area.

Finally, who was the subject of her utterance, what was the identity that she was revealing? Who were the people behind the “our” of “our fault”? The obvious reference here is the Dopyi, the “Slavomacedonians,” her father’s people. But did she identify with them entirely? She could be referring to the Vlachs as well, her mother’s people, or she might have been speaking as an inhabitant of Prespa. What kind of identity was so large that it could assume all this guilt? Why was her identity a guilty one? Why did she assume any responsibility at all? Why did she take the burden of such an articulation
upon herself? Was she identifying with the object of the plundering (as I have been assuming all along) or was she identifying herself with the agency of the act? Was she referring to herself as a “plunderer” who shouldn’t be blamed?

This is an instance of interpellation, of recognition by Valia of her subject position through a discursive power gesture. I think that this particular subject position and the silence that accompanied it, is “normative” for the Prespa Dopyi. It is an assumption of the “otherness” projected onto these people by the national discourse, an “otherness” which at the same time asserts as it negates their particular subject position. This is a complex type of interpellation, which constitutes very difficult subject positions. Butler emphasizes the fact that in Althusser’s interpellation there is always the possibility of misrecognition. The dynamic between interpellation and misrecognition, she argues, can be seen in the fact that the interpellation of names, proper names—and even more so when interpellation takes place through the naming of a social category—may be interpreted in a variety of divergent or conflictual ways (Butler 1997: 96). “Black,” “Jew,” “Woman,” or “Queer,” depending on the context, may or may not be perceived as an insult (ibid.).

If that name is called, there is more often than not some hesitation about whether or how to respond, for what is at stake is whether the temporary totalization performed by the name is politically enabling or paralyzing, whether the foreclosure, indeed the violence, of the totalizing reduction of identity performed by that particular hailing is politically strategic or regressive or, if paralyzing and regressive, also enabling in some way. (ibid.)

This hesitation is very obvious in identity politics in Prespa; it produces a lot of ambivalence. It takes place in the most mundane presentations of self in everyday life
(performances of identity), and in all the different assumptions of subject positions (the recognition of identity in others' ethno-national ascriptions)—that is, in all interactions. The Dopyi at times can exhibit an extraordinary variation in identifications, depending on the spatio-temporal context, and the individual's perception of the specific power dynamics present within each exchange. This variation intensifies the others' perception of the theatricality of the "identity" of the Dopyi, which is as a result seen by its "audiences" as "superficial" and "untrue," hiding its real "core." This is a whole system of interpellation based on the mechanics of secrecy, in particular, what Taussig calls "the public secret" (Taussig 1999). The workings of secrecy in this particular subject's interpellation are displayed in identifications revolving around the assumption and/or disavowal of "guilt" and "threat" as the two basic formations of the psychic life of power in Prespa. The assumption of subject positions in Prespa has very high stakes because, depending on the subject position of their interlocutors, the Dopyi may be interpreted as being national traitors or national heroes, agents of foreign states and their interests or human rights activists, communist revolutionaries or threats to the sovereignty of the nation-stat—and, on a more personal level, "assassins of my relatives" or "defenders of my freedom." The subjectivation and identity in Prespa is further elaborated in the following chapter.

**Interpellation and the Cultural Theory of Names and Naming**

In the Althusserian notion of interpellation there are no individuals walking in the street hailed into subjects: they are all always already subjects within ideology, practicing endless rituals of recognition. So if there are no individuals, when is it that we first
become subjects? When do we enter into subjection? Althusser seems to insist on the power of naming. Even before a child is born, he says, it is always already a subject as “it is certain in advance that it will bear its Father’s Name, and will therefore have an identity and be irreplaceable . . . appointed as a subject in and by the specific familial ideological configuration…” (Althusser 2001: 119)

Whether through the voice of the State, the policeman, the voice of the father, or as we shall see the voice of God, the subject comes into being through the performative power of words. But it is not Austin, but rather Lacan who seems to be the direct reference for Althusser here, as it is to the “Name-of-the-Father,” the paternal signifier, that Lacan gives primacy as the structuring agent of both the subject and the organization of the larger symbolic system. It is through the co-operation of the family and language, which converge in constituting the subject of the “Order of Law.” In his essay “Freud and Lacan,” Althusser’s writes “the crucial point that Lacan has illuminated is this: these two moments [the imaginary and the symbolic] are dominated, governed and marked by a single Law, the Law of the Symbolic . . . hence as the first moment in which the child lives its immediate intercourse with a human being . . . without . . . realizing it as a symbolic intercourse, it is” (Althusser 2001:143). And further, “Lacan demonstrates the effectiveness of the Order, the Law that has been laying in wait for each infant to be born since before his birth, and seizes him before his first cry, assigning to him his place and role, and hence his fixed destination” (144).
Though the Althusserian subject is discursively (through language and practice) produced and maintained, it is specifically through “voice”—sound, spoken utterances—that the inaugural moment takes place. Mikhail Bakhtin (1981, 1986) says that “voices,” “utterances” always exist within a web of dialogic relations. For Bakhtin the social processes within which meaning is produced are much less rigid and much less unilateral than they are for Althusser. Bakhtin’s “voices” are not always already the voices of ideological authority, however they are always “half someone else’s,” in the sense of always anticipating response, always participating in endless interactive efforts to produce meaning. It is within a dynamic context of interaction, where different sets of forces (which he calls the forces of “heteroglossia”) come to play, that meaning is produced. Two groups of such forces are distinguished: the centripetal ones, which are normative and homogenizing, and the centrifugal ones, which are disruptive and dispersing. Compared to the Althusserian, Bakhtin’s is a model that allows for much more agency on behalf of the subjects. Bourdieu curtails this agency in his discussion of “voices” by emphasizing the power structures embedded in all language use. In the struggles for meaning, Bourdieu’s social hierarchies produce lived norms, which regulate and constrain what can be said, as well as by whom and in what context. Some people are able to produce utterances that are more “likely to be listened to, [more] likely to be recognized as acceptable.” (Bourdieu 1991: 55)

The question raised here is: why are some statements recognized as acceptable and intelligible while others are not? Much of Foucault’s and Butler’s work deals with how the intelligibility of normative discourses is maintained and regulated. Butler answers:
“constant reiteration.” The same idea is elaborated in Althusser's “Ideological State Apparatuses” essay. Every time the norm is cited, Butler says, it is reproduced and its regulatory power is reinforced. These practices of citation are not a “set of actions performed in compliance with the law; on the contrary, they will be a set of actions mobilized by the law, the citational accumulation and dissimulation of the law that produces material effects, the lived necessity of those effects as well as the lived contestation of that necessity (Butler 1993: 12).

In opposition to Bourdieu's paradigm, where between the power of social institutions and the *habitus* (the implicit assumption of their authority in our everyday practices), ‘social reality,’ however constructed, is a very rigid structure which leaves very little space (if any at all) for the subject to chose or change positions, Butler formulates a more dynamic and creative space for the subject to move in. Butler’s citational practices, while mobilized by the normative, allow for the possibility of a *dissimulation* of the norm, as well as the contestations of its material effects. She calls this reiteration of the norm “performativity,” and she warns against an understanding of the notion as a voluntary, singular act. However, she adds, “to the extent that it acquires an act-like status in the present it conceals or dissimulates the conventions of which it is a repetition” (Butler 1993: 12). This brings us back to Althusser and his reiterative practices of recognition in interpellation, which, as ideology, doubly disguise the fact that they are reproducing exploiting relations of domination55 (the conventions of which they are a repetition), while also allowing for what he calls “misrecognition – méconnaissance” (Althusser 2001:116). This possibility is almost a necessary provision of Butler’s category of the
performative, which is implicit in the Althusserian paradigm, "performative" being the discursive practices, within speech act theory, that produce or enact that which they name (Austin 1975; Butler 1993).

But is that really possible in Althusser's paradigm? His discursive practices of recognition are modeled, after all, on the "divine performative," as Butler points out in her reading of Althusser's ISA essay in "The Psychic Life of Power." The authority of the 'voice' of ideology, the 'voice' of interpellation," is figured on the religious metaphor, as the voice of God in the "divine power of naming," and thus it must be almost impossible to resist (Butler 1997: 110). The main example used by Althusser to elaborate on interpellation is of God addressing himself to Moses, calling him by his Name (capitalized in the original) (Althusser 2001: 122). Moses, by recognizing that it is he who was called by God, recognizes himself as a subject, as subject through God, as a reflection of Gods image, but also as subjected to God, as a subject of the Absolute Subject (ibid.). Moses and the infinity of individuals are interpellated as subjects through a mirror-structure, which duplicates the image of an Absolute Subject that occupies the unique place of the Center. "Baptism," Butler explains, "exemplifies [in Althusser] the linguistic means by which the subject is compelled into social being: God names 'Peter' and this address establishes God as the origin of Peter; the name remains attached to Peter permanently by virtue of the implied and continuous presence in the name of the one who names him" (Butler 1997: 111). Indeed, the centrality of position that Althusser gives to State ideology, through the model of God, grants it formidable regulatory efficacy in mimetically reproducing and regulating lesser images of itself, through what
seem to be immutable rituals of the recognition of this relationship. How can misrecognition escape such a “divine” imperative?

What is the “divine power of naming”? It is power to actually create, to bring to being, that which you name. Walter Benjamin says that in Genesis, in the “Let there be” and in the words “He named,” which are found respectively at the beginning and the end of every act of creation, “the deep and clear relation of the creative act to language appears each time” (Benjamin 1986: 323). “With the creative omnipotence of language it begins, and at the end language as it were assimilates the created, names it. Language is therefore both creative and finished creation, it is word and name” (ibid.). It is only in God that the creative power in naming—what Benjamin calls “word”—coincides with the thing-in-itself and the knowledge of it, that is, “name.” In God’s “word,” language is absolute knowledge; it is totally transparent. This gives it creative force, in the beginning, and at the end the “name” is what allows for the absolute knowledge and the transparency to that which is created. But it is only in God, says Benjamin, that this absolute relation of name to knowledge exists. In human language there is an “alienation,” as it were, between the creative and the knowable. Human language is a kind of translation, a transformation that converts the silence of things, “the communicative muteness of things,” by name, into sound (326). The language of man, says Benjamin, is a language of knowledge. This language is able to create the knowledge of things by naming them; it is a minor creative act, transforming the nameless into named.
For Benjamin, no full cognition is possible through this language of man; it remains always “limited and analytical in nature in comparison to the absolutely unlimited and the creative infinity of the divine word” (Benjamin 1986: 323). The human name is the point where “human language participates most intimately in the divine infinity of the pure word” (324). It is the point at which it cannot become finite word and knowledge. That is because names do not correspond to any knowledge. He states that “the theory of proper names is the theory of the frontier between finite and infinite language” (324). In proper names the language of man reaches its highest creative capacity exactly because these names do not “correspond to any knowledge,” that is, they have no referent meaning, they do not describe something else; they are in a sense pure signifiers, signifiers without the signifieds.

The Power of the Performative

Slavoj Zizek uses this notion of pure signifier in his book *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, to say that such a signifier that has no reference is “purely performative” in nature: “its signification coincides with its own act of enunciation; in short, it is a ‘signifier without the signified’” (Zizek 1989: 99). Zizek makes the point that in order for language to work as a signifying system, the signifiers have to promise a referent, which they can never really recover. In order to achieve symbolization, the signifiers operate by constantly displacing the referent, producing what Zizek calls the “metonymic sliding of the signified,” a multiplication of signifiers which take the place of the lost referent (ibid.). However, in the case of political signifiers, Zizek argues, terms are used to institute and maintain the social phenomena they refer to, rather than to describe some
referent content or political reality already in existence. Seen from a different perspective, 
(possibly influenced by the Althusserian model of the subject’s *assujettissement*), 
Bourdieu makes a similar argument when he states that the power to name is one of the 
originary forms of political power, which he calls the “magical power of naming” 
(Bourdieu 1991:236).

However, it is neither Bourdieu nor Zizek, finally, who provides a convincing paradigm 
for the power of naming and the political struggles for claiming the discursive field, the 
struggles over hegemony. Both ultimately create an underlying structure, one which 
egates the possibility of radical contingency as a political and social force. Zizek, for 
example, says that for a democratic struggle for hegemony to take place, a type of 
“terrain must constitute itself by means of a more fundamental exclusion (‘primordial 
repression’) that is not simply historical–contingent, a stake in the present constellation of 
the hegemonic struggle . . .” (Zizek 1989: 110). Rather, it is Butler’s and Laclau’s 
arguments that I wish to conclude with. Laclau’s paradigm provides for the possibility of 
ew and contingent identity-formations within an expanding democratic field, subjects 
who can make their claims against other formations in the antagonistic struggle over 
political hegemony (Laclau 1990). Similarly, Butler’s appeal is her commitment to a 
hegemonic transformation of the “horizon” constituted by foreclosures and social 
prohibitions, a horizon that she regards as “a historically variable schema or episteme, 
that is transformed by the emergence of the non representable within its terms, one that is 
compelled to reorientate itself by virtue of the radical challenges to its transcendentality.
presented by ‘impossible’ figures at the borders and fissures of its surface” (Butler 2000: 149).

In his introduction to the *Sublime Object of Ideology*, Laclau, asserts that Zizek’s performative theory of names and his notion of performativity are crucial for a radical democratic politics. If indeed names as political signifiers are performative in the sense that they retroactively constitute that which they appear to refer to, that is if they do not refer to a preexisting social reality or an already constituted identity, but rather they call, as it were, and organize, under the unity of a name, different free-floating elements, meanings, thus instituting the social objectivity that they name, the consequences for a theory of hegemony and politics are critical. Such a theory of naming, by negating the stability of the referent, radically reverses the essentialist view that sees identities and constituencies as preexisting entities with characteristic features described by the signifier that names them. That creates the possibility of discursive hegemonic variation, opening the field for different constructions of social identities. “If the process of naming of [social] objects amounts to the very act of their constitution, then their descriptive features will be fundamentally unstable and open to all kinds of hegemonic articulations” (Laclau “Preface,” in Zizek 1989).
Chapter 4

Macedonia and Prespa: On Names, Secrecy and the Performances of Identity

Introduction

In this chapter I will examine the political and performative issues surrounding particular names and the process of naming in the context of the south Balkans. I will focus, in the first section, on the signifier “Macedonia” and its sliding referents. In the second section I will address naming—the assignment and the assumption of names—as it relates to subject formations and identification in Prespa. Finally, in the third section I will focus on naming and the performances of identity in Psarades.

One of the first problems one is faced with while attempting to represent the Prespa borders and people concerns the intricacies of naming: understanding the socio-political meaning of different political signifiers, figuring out the connotations and nuances of their usage, knowing what to call whom, and how each appellation is appropriate to a certain context. That is because Prespa constitutes a border area of “Macedonia,” and Macedonia’s political, ethnic and cultural boundaries in relation to its neighbors are still under contention, as the term has been used to summon oppositional and mutually exclusive referents. Despite the declaration of independence of the Republic of Macedonia (September 1991) and its acceptance by the United Nations under the name “Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia” as an independent and sovereign nation-
state with clearly defined territorial boundaries (June 1993), very different perceptions of
“Macedonia” can be identified even today, on the level of national discourse, within the
Bulgarian, Greek, FYROM and Serbian national rhetorics.

“Macedonia”

It is only recently that the struggles over the definition and limits of “Macedonia” have
been limited to four nation-states. For several centuries the Ottoman Empire was forming
the hegemonic discourse that defined the name “Macedonia” territorially as one of its
administrative provinces, but from the 19th century onward all the newly formed Balkan
nation-states, as well as different western European interests in the area, began to
interfere, adding ethno-historical meanings to the name. Later, during the 20th century,
while national interests over the region and its definitions continued their separate
trajectories, the communist parties of Eastern Europe entered the discursive platform,
sometimes expressing independent visions for “Macedonia.”

For over a century now, all these perspectives and interests have promoted conflicting
and overlapping identity politics in the region. The different discourses that have
dominated the field, and are shaping contemporary politics in the area, conceptualize
“Macedonia” and “Macedonian” identity through the perspective of national sovereignty.
This means that all of the prevailing positions tend to mirror the nation-state logic, which
depends on a clear definition of external borders enclosing a coherent, communal identity
inside.
For Greece, the name “Macedonia” can refer to its own northern region exclusively, as it is a name integral to Greek national identity. In official Greek discourse, the existence of the Modern Greek Nation-State and its identity and the existence of a Macedonian nation-state and its identity are mutually exclusive propositions. As a result, the Greek nation-state currently accepts the existence of a separate nation-state and people to the north of its borders, but it cannot accept the name “Macedonia” for either the country or its people. From the perspective of the Greek nation-state, the existence of another nation-state using the name “Macedonia” engenders a future potential threat—namely, claims to the northern regions of Greece, Greek Macedonia. Such claims would rest on the implicit/explicit argument that a large part of its population was not and presently is not Greek, but is, in fact, Slavic. This is the ghost of irredentism that lurks in the Balkans: the concepts of the “nation-state” and “national sovereignty” presume that the nation-state will be completed by the incorporation of all of the “nation” and the “national territories” that might happen to be outside its current borders.  

Greece thus still claims exclusive use of the name “Macedonia” and all products of the name (Macedonian, New-Macedonia, etc.), which as a result is straining the bilateral relations between Greece and Macedonia (FYROM).  

Bulgaria, on the other hand, based on a similar understanding of the nation-state and the identity of its territorially enclosed community, does not accept the identity of the “Macedonians” as different from that of the Bulgarian people. It has thus recognized the new nation-state under the name “Macedonia” but it does not accept as legitimate the use of the name “Macedonian” for or by the people inhabiting Macedonia (FYROM).
Bulgarian national identity is tightly linked to the “Macedonian territories,” their culture and history. Consequently, Bulgaria seems to consider as “Bulgarian” the people that populate today’s Macedonia (FYROM), at least the Slavic populations who constitute the majority. The Bulgarian nation-state, thus, does not mind a state called “Macedonia” inhabited by dormant/potential/old “Bulgarians,” as it allows them to retain the historical claims that support their own construction of national identity. It also allows, for, again for the irredentist views integral to the nation-state and the notion of national sovereignty—the possibility of someday annexing these territories (Danforth 1995; Kaplan 1991).

Serbia, on the contrary, officially recognizes the population of Macedonia (FYROM) as “Macedonian” people, but it undermines the legitimacy of the new nation-state: Serbia has refused to recognize “Macedonia” as an independent nation-state. In unofficial Serbian discourse “Macedonia,” which became one of the federal democracies of Yugoslavia under Tito, and the “Macedonian” people, are still considered to a large extent to be south Serbia, and the “Macedonian” language is considered Old Serbian or a Serbian dialect (Danforth 1995; Perry 1992: 43).

As for the nation-state of Macedonia, the Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), it is rather aggravated with the acronym form of its name, and particularly the terms “former” and “Yugoslavian” which initiate it. Within the current field of pressures forming its external boundaries, “affirmation” and “recognition” have become the two words that dominate Macedonian nationalist ideology, argues Danforth: to affirm their
existence through difference from their neighbors and to gain recognition by international organizations (Danforth 1995: 43). He quotes from a pamphlet that was circulated by the Australian Macedonians in Victoria: “The Macedonians are an ethno-specific group with their own national individuality distinct from their neighbors the Serbians, Bulgarians, Greeks and Albanians. They have lived within a naturally defined territory on the Balkan Peninsula for over 4,000 years and are the descendants of the Ancient Macedonians and Alexander the Great” (ibid.). Such a statement implies that they potentially have irredentist “claims” to the part of Bulgaria called “Pirin Macedonia,” and Greece’s so-called “Aegean Macedonia.” Irredentism appears routinely as part and parcel of national ideology and sovereignty, identity and territory. The Macedonian national community is considered incomplete if it does not include all of its people and its territories in its boundaries. Finally, in order to claim legitimacy and a sovereign identity, Macedonia (FYROM) has no alternative but to stress its difference on the basis of a pure, distinct “Macedonian” identity and language. Otherwise it is threatened externally by its bordering states, or internally by implosion caused by its Albanian populations, who would surely reject any definition of “Macedonia” which implies a conflation between it and the Slavs.

All these national perspectives of the name “Macedonia” and its referents are mutually exclusive. This makes the naming “game” very difficult because it incites a political paranoia, since every move is perceived as threatening. Members of the respective ethnic groups that belong to the different nation-states are thus perceived as traitors, potential spies, or agents of agitation and propaganda of the enemy within national territories. As a
result, throughout the 20th century all of the above mentioned Balkan states have imposed extreme policies of repression on language and other signs of cultural difference, and have conducted “population exchanges” that have uprooted and displaced thousands of people. What constitutes the referent to the names “Macedonia” and “Macedonian” remains to a large extent an aporia, linked to the internal paradox that governs the notion of the modern sovereign nation-state.

Naming the Macedonian

The book *Macedonia: the Politics of Identity and Difference* (2000) edited by Jane Cowan, has a long section entitled “Note on Names and Terms” which precedes the introduction, and which, like a preemptive strike, seems to try to anticipate reactions to the names and terms used in the texts to come. Danforth’s *The Macedonian Conflict: Ethnic Nationalism in a Transnational World* (1995), to cite another example, includes an extensive discussion of the Macedonian naming problem. The book, he says, is about the conflicting claims to Macedonian Identity asserted by both Greeks and Macedonians. “[Who has] the right to identify as Macedonian is a dispute over names, flags, history and territory,” he writes (Danforth 1995: 6). And he continues, “Ultimately however, it is a dispute over meaning. Who will control the meaning of the word ‘Macedonian’? Who will define it? Who will determine which of its many contradictory and mutually exclusive definitions will prevail in diplomatic circles, at scholarly conferences, and in public opinion around the world?” (ibid.)
In Prespa, too, the problem of naming is constructed around the name “Macedonia.” Wherever this term is called in to name any entity, from the international to the most minute local and interpersonal level, it is called in precisely because it has had a very shifty and slippery referent. I believe that the rearticulations—the reiterations of the name “Macedonia” and its subject positions, the “Macedonians”—were not merely unable to produce self-same replicas,⁵⁹ but that they were in fact unable to adequately repeat and recognize the discursive power gesture and its symbolic authority, because of the recurrent shifting. There were overlapping and antagonistic interpellations of subjects—different national and political discursive powers⁶⁰ using the same (or very similar) signifiers to name different referents, different subject positions, or identifications, in “Macedonia.” As a result both the symbolic demand (the naming, or the ethno-national ascription) and its subjective assumption (accepting the name, the recognition, or self-definition) have unstable referents. In Prespa, various practices through which identity is performed accumulate authoritative force through their constant reiteration. These reiterations cite prior only partially authoritative sets of practices, however, without any single one acquiring hegemonic status for any sustained period of time.

This is where the notion of the “metonymic sliding of ‘signifieds’” becomes relevant (Zizek 1989:99). For a protracted period of time, the name(s) for subject positions in the Macedonian area did not manage to conjure up a social formation that could assume the status of an already constituted, preexisting identity, and an objectivity of set characteristics or facts. As a result, there exists a plethora of names, reiterations of the discursive gesture “Macedonia,” that are antagonistic, some overlapping. Some are
mutually exclusive, trying discursively to construct a seemingly fixed and readily available referent, which, however, is not available because all of its formations are always contested. This indeed is not unique to this name and the parade of other names that frame it. However, this name and the instability and unpredictability of its appropriation by the constituency that it is trying to summon, exposes in stunning ways what Laclau calls the “essentially performative character of naming, [a] precondition for all hegemony and politics” (ibid. xii-xiv). What is being described here is the antagonistic discursive struggles underlying all social formations, the attempt to establish normative, hegemonic rearticulations, and to simultaneously obscure their constituting conventions. In this case, however, at the borders of Prespa, the field remains spectacularly open with plenty of partial “failures” of the reiterative gestures of power, plenty of “misrecognitions,” plenty of “excess,” and nothing is obliterated as everything is still being constituted.

Macedonians (Μακεδόνες), Slav-Macedonians (Σλαβομακεδόνες), Slavic Speakers (Σλαβόφωνοι), Bilinguals (Διγλώσσοι), Slavs (Σλάβοι), Macedono-Bulgarians (Μακεδονοβουλγαροί), Bulgarians (Βουλγαροί), Communist-Bulgarians (Εαμπυλγαροί), Iron Curtain (Παραπέταιμα), Dopyi (Ντόπιοι), Aegean Macedonians, Pseudo-Macedonians (Ψευδομακεδόνες), Bilingual Ghosts (Διγλώσσα Φαντάσματα), Skopians (Σκοπιανοί), Former Yugoslavs (Πρώην Γιουγκοσλάβοι): these are some terms that have been used in Greece for subject positions related to “Macedonia.” These names, and the practices that take place around them, are closely linked with accusation of falseness, excuses and explanations, historical justifications, secrecy and partial
revelations, and excessive presentations of self. There is a lot at stake here politically, with a high toll on the psychic lives of the border subjects.

Naming the “Macedonian” exposes context and agency: who is called what and by whom, when and why. All these terms are politically transparent, overdetermined, betraying specific political agendas and dragging along their respective linguistic, historical, ethnic and national connotations. Ultimately what is reiterated is the “hundred faces” of the “Macedonian Issue”: a bloody past, many different national and other political powers claiming the same people as their subjects and radically different memories, interpretations, reiterations of the same “events” by different (national) discourses. What persist are liquid borders and sliding referents: identities conflated with nations conflated with territories, all expressive of state sovereignty. Still, what is most significant are the ways in which the individuals, the subjects of the border, embody these issues. These articulations create a field of forces within which the individuals are caught up in a type of spider web in which are more entangled with every move they make.

**Naming in Prespa**

**Greek Nationalism and My First Contact with Prespa: The Public Secret**

I would like to go back to how I was introduced to the issue of naming when I first went to the Prespa borders to research my master’s thesis, *On Bilingual Ghosts and Nations: a Study on the Performances of Nationalism* (NYU, April 1993). My “first contact” was during the summer of 1992. That year many people of my country had been
demonstrating in the streets of Athens and Thessaloniki, reacting to the name of a new nation-state being established at the northern border: “Macedonia.” I lived in New York at the time. I was following the debate through articles in the New York Times. The articles were trying to grapple with why the use of the name Macedonia (and other national symbols appearing on the new nation’s flag, currency, etc.) was so vexing to my country’s people. 61 I was also getting letters and phone-calls from friends clearly upset with the turn of events. What was intriguing to me was the intensity of emotions surrounding the issue, including my own. It was a bit strange. Among my family and friends, “nationalism,” in the form of so-called patriotic rhetoric, its symbols and paraphernalia, had long carried the stench of the military dictatorship that plagued Greece from 1967 to 1973. Intrigued by my own nationalist reactions, as a student of Performance Studies at New York University at the time, I set off to research and critically approach Greek Nationalism from the anti-essentialist and anti-essentializing perspective of “performance.”

The discourse around the “Macedonian dispute” in Greece was explosive and ubiquitous. Endless debates and articles were circulating about the illegitimate use of symbols and names, the illegitimacy of the new nation and its false claims to history and archaeology. Even the brown paper bags used for fruits and vegetables became surfaces where grocers could assert their sentiments and Greek propaganda could reclaim its symbols and history. Many such bags bore slogans announcing that “Macedonia is Greek.” On a very profound level, the sense of security and wholeness of the Greek nation and of Greek identity was being threatened. The specter of the Macedonian Question had reemerged.
At the time I had very little knowledge about the whole history of the Macedonian issue and I had just started reading about it back in New York. When I got to Greece, overcoming my general confusion as to where to go and how to limit the focus of my fieldwork, I finally decided to go to the border between Greece and Macedonia (FYROM). My assumption was that at the border with "Skopia," which is the name the Greeks use for Macedonia (FYROM), the Greek national fervor would be even more pronounced than it was in the country's centers. Also, "the borders" had a strange mysterious appeal to me. I was going to study the everyday performances of nationalism in a small border community at the Greek-Macedonian (FYROM) border. I chose as my destination a little village on the map called Ethniko (Εθνικό), because its name meant "National." Before leaving I met with several people I knew in Athens, academics mostly, with questions about what to do and how to go about my two month stay in Ethniko. I quote here, from my master's thesis, the section called Rumors in the City.

The reactions of people in Athens (and in Thessaloniki) about my going to a village near the borders to talk about Nationalism, were mostly negative and filled with worry. Many people tried to discourage me from the whole project, especially the 'experts': the anthropologists, historians, or sociologists I counseled with.

It was dangerous, they said, to go up there alone, especially if I was going to wander around talking to people about their National consciousness, especially in times as these, when National issues are explosive. I was advised to ask for protection by the army stationed around there, to ask for an army jeep for my comings and goings. I should notify the local political authorities explaining my purposes and asking them to keep an eye on me. Or I should go to the Ministry of Internal Affairs in Athens and, explaining my plans, ask them to contact the local authorities before leaving.

They warned me that I would only get the official story. The people up there had been hassled enough already to know exactly what they 'should' say. For over a century, there had been too much indoctrination and propaganda (no one mentioned violence or repression and their generative power pertinent to such nebulous subjectivities), in regard to those peoples' National identity. Their 'real' feelings were set too deep inside of them. Their 'true' allegiances would never be exposed or allowed to be traced by me. The only access I could have would be to a very thick cover, obscure and
impenetrable, which has been slowly, but steadily constructed by: a. the National doctrine of the State through army, teachers and priests, b. political and economic interests, c. fear.

I did not have the tools, they insisted, to process the complex information I was going to get. I would interpret things wrongly; I did not know history well enough. I did not know what to do and what not to do among these people: how to dress, what to address. I would not be able to recognize the different ethnic groups. I would just be given the wrong impressions and information. It was hopeless. I had to change my persona, not to appear as the learned authority, the educated one, the one who came to inquire. I should go under cover: as a student of architecture taking pictures of the buildings. No, even better, as the girlfriend of one of the soldiers doing his military service by the borders. I should get a room in one of those villages and pretend that I was there to see my fiancé, the soldier. Once a week, on his fictional day off, I would disappear from the village, supposedly to be with him, and then I would return the next day, re-immersing myself into my romantic solitude.

The Athenians warned me that the people up there, in those parts of Greece, in Macedonia, the northern mountainous people, the rough, difficult ones, were lacking in delicacy and refinement; they were violently disturbed as if by storms. They were hostile, secretive, inhospitable, obscure, hiding in themselves and their houses (which were going to remain closed to me). They were suspicious, unfriendly, and no one was going to talk to me, anyway. I was told that they were hard and monolithic, closing up inside of them a formidable strength. The kind of strength which cannot be molded, that cannot be given a desirable shape, like a rock: their speech and their movement were like the throwing of stones, they said.

Many of the people I encountered in Athens and in Thessaloniki talked and talked and filled my mind with doubt and fear. Why? The "Macedonia" I was going to look into was an impenetrable, dangerous, a forbidden place. No one even wanted to go near it. No one seemed to want to be informed about what was going on among these people. The opinion was set, no matter how unclear and shady, it remained set. There was no need for any discoveries of any kind. This is often how power works: through rigid appearances, misunderstandings, complications, and murk. Fear reigns on all sides and ignorance can be as potent as knowledge” (11-14).

This is a construction of internal “otherness” by which the border areas constitute identity as difference for the Greek nation. It allows the latter to define themselves as a coherent community, rational and civilized, compared to the barbarous, dark and secretive people of the borders. They occupy, for Greece, the same position of the internal “other” that the
Balkans offer to Europe: “geographically inextricable from Europe, yet culturally constructed as other” (Todorova 1994: 455). What is particularly telling in this description is the large role that secrecy plays in the construction of “otherness” (Taussig 1993, 1999). It is not so much their “real” feelings, their “true” allegiances that constitute their alterity, but rather their secrecy itself. It is their secrecy, described with such dramatic flair, that is the object of fascination here. Otherwise why was I to dissimulate? Why was I to undergo all these transformations: the girlfriend of the soldier, the student of the architecture, etc.? It was not in order to get to their “true core.” That was deemed beyond the pale from the outset. It was too deep, covered under the “thick, obscure, impenetrable” layers of their secret, sanctioned and double-locked by the Greek State apparatuses and fear. Or was it beyond the pale? What kind of secret is this, which so clearly defines its “secretness?” When everyone knows why and how the secret core of the border identities is hidden, when most of the secret is so well spelled out, what is so secret about it? It clearly is not the “core” because under such conditions it wouldn’t be very hard to discover it.

The secret has always to be partially exposed in order to be a secret. According to Taussig, secrecy is the workings, the “drama,” of revelation. “To put it bluntly there is no such thing as the secret. It is an invention that comes out of the public secret, a limit-case, a supposition, a great ‘as if,’ without which the public secret would evaporate” (Taussig 1999: 7). And what is the “public secret”? That which lies at the very core of power, says Taussig, paraphrasing Canetti. Taussig defines the “public secret” as “that which is generally known but cannot be articulated,” that is, “knowing what not to know” (5-6).
And it is indeed a very public secret, the charade played around the existence of the "bilingual ghosts" (yet another appellation of the Dopyi), their fetish presence at the borders of the Greek nation-state, which recognizes their charged absence while denying them at the same time (Freud, "Fetishism," discussed in Taussig 1997: 68).

But why the mimetics of dissimulation? Why then should I go "under cover" to meet the secret borders of the nation? Because through my own dissimulation I would be implicated in the system of secrecy, the public secret of the existence of violence, fear and the hidden identities of the people at the borders. By hiding who I was and why I was there, I would be part of the suspicion and spying cycle that constitutes the discursive relation between the nation and the border subjects. I would be participating, reproducing it, and thus compromising myself by directly positioning myself within the workings of the secret, binding myself to it. Because "in acting as a purveyor of public secrecy . . . a person is compromised in a complicated emotional and epistemological manner into the system" (Taussig 1999: 71). What system? The nation-state regime that sets up the prohibition of a subject formation different from the national norm, which, as a result, incites and proliferates what it tries to suppress, through endless misarticulations, excessive representations and dissimulations of the discursive norm which interpellates these subjects.

The practices of secrecy and dissimulation are precisely what are instigating the formation of all these different names and subject positions, the diversity of which—and the complexity and difficulty of their assumption and usage—expose a dynamic,
formative field of power relations, within which social identities or subject positions are open to all kinds of antagonistic rearticulations. This is where Foucault and Laclau come together.

Foucault writes that “At the very heart of the power relationship, and constantly provoking it, are the recalcitrance of the will and the intransigence of freedom. Rather than speaking of an essential freedom, it would be better to speak of an ‘agonism’—of a relationship which is at the same time reciprocal incitation and struggle; less to a face-to-face confrontation which paralyzes both sides than a permanent provocation” (Foucault 1982: 221-222).

Despite the efforts of the state to present the discursive field as fixed and normative, it effectively creates struggle and a multiplicity of reiterations of the normative which might indeed exceed its original purposes. In this sense the power itself, the power of the nation state discourse, formulates resistances to its own hegemony as a side effect of its subjectivization, resistances which might possibly redirect the norm through contingent and unpredictable formulations of subjectivity. In some ways the state power is a power that turns against itself.

What is important to note, however, is that this performative ability of the name to reiterate subject positions that exceed the normative interpellation is, as Butler argues, a historicizing of power: performativity exposes the contingency, as well as the constitutive history, of the discursive gestures of interpellation. So at the same time that those names
might in some ways exceed or subvert the gestures of power that interpellate them, each one of those names exposes its own history of assujetism, its own constitutive conventions, thus binding the agency of the subjects (Butler 1993). Claiming an open antagonistic field where the political possibilities are endless, does not mean that the subject becomes a free volitional agent picking and choosing whether he or she wants to be a Slav-Macedonian today and a Communist/Bulgarian tomorrow. The different names and their referents can be renegotiated in each and every citation of those subject positions, as they are not yet absolutely fixed. However, they always reiterate specific power relations, which bind the practices and articulations, and the forms that those can take. The border subjects cannot step outside the Nation-State, even though they can certainly challenge it. The Nation-State is present in all their articulations, in all of the performances of their everyday life. This holds true particularly in Prespa, where the state sits like a monkey on the back of the border subjects, questioning them. This is because the border is where the nation-state’s power is created and where it assumes its fullest density.

Identity and Secrecy

When I finally got to Florina and headed north towards the village of Ethniko (National), my original destination, I found desolate, abandoned villages with ruined houses and a few old people here and there standing or crossing a square pulling a cow behind them. No cafes, no stores, empty squares with dusty national monuments engraved with names of heroes, victims of wars, in their centers. That was what Ethniko was like: there was no place to stay, and I thought it funny that the village called “National” was practically
empty of people and even the houses were in ruin, but the dusty monument was
prominently standing in the middle of nothing. In Florina, people spoke to me about the
cultural heterogeneity of the area, about the past, about the civil war, and about the
Dopyi—the ones who had suffered the most. I was excited about this discovery, about
this “difference” that I was discovering within my own country. A couple of days later I
decided to stay in the Prespa Lake area, and I easily found a room to rent in one of the
villages. I stayed in the village of Psarades near the waters of the lake for a month and a
half. Soon I realized that the people of Psarades spoke a different language among
themselves which they did not want to acknowledge or disclose when I inquired about it.
Before long I went back to Florina, and from there to Meliti, a larger village north of
Florina which had a fiesta that day. I quote again from my thesis:

July 20th: The Fiesta at Meliti

On our way to the fiesta, we picked up three young Greek soldiers who told us that
this village was the only one in the whole province “openly expressing its pro-
Yugoslavian sentiments.” It was a village of "Dopyi," around seven hundred families,
three thousand people altogether, only one tenth of whom were pro-Greek. The
soldiers were excited and laughing, and they told me: "stick around and you'll see
what we mean." And I did. There were two fiestas taking place in the village. A small
one on the village square (in Greek, more formal, more "bourgeois") and a large one
in a field in front of a school (badly lit, with thousands of people dancing in
centripetal circles, fists raised above their heads screaming the words of the songs in
Slavomacedonian). The only words I could recognize were "Makedonje" and
"Makedonski." The music of the songs was familiar, but these versions lasted for
almost half an hour each, with more and more verses being added. The
Slavomacedonian version of "Glorious Macedonia, land of Alexander" was repeated
at least four times during the two hours I was there. I was mesmerized: my blood was
beating loud in my veins from the rush that I was feeling. I couldn't believe it. I was
holding my tape-recorder, taping the songs and impassioned voices of the people, half
hidden in the sleeve of my coat and I was scared someone would ask me something in
Slavomacedonian and that I would be suddenly exposed.

I couldn't believe it. In Greece, these people were revolting against Greece. Excited, I
sat and stared until it was all over. I did not know how I felt about it, I was shocked
(35-36).
That was my first encounter with the existence of Dopyi with an exclusively Macedonian identity. I thought that I had discovered something very important that had been carefully held as a secret of the Greek nation-state. Who were those people? There is of course a variety of subject positions and identifications among the people dancing in Meliti. For example, some of them had a Macedonian ethnic identity, clearly articulated, and distinct from the dominant Greek national identity. These people want to keep the differentiating characteristics of this identity, but within the context of the Greek nation-state. Some of them are human rights activists seeking recognition as an ethnic minority within Greece: the right to use Macedonian names, to preserve and develop their language and cultural traits, and to be free to enter and exit Greece whatever their national beliefs and loyalties, free of repression and discrimination. The Macedonian activist movement, under the name Macedonian Movement for Balkan Prosperity, was founded in 1991 and its constituency was formed by a part of the Dopyi of the Florina and Pella prefectures.

Maria Yiannisopoulou claims that the MMBP, as a political force representing the Dopyi population—and by articulating different claims in the name of the group—was the first to constitute the group’s identity (Yiannisopoulou 1998: 375).66

Some of the people dancing in Meliti had a nationalistic Macedonian identity. Some must have been extreme irredentist nationalists—“autonomists” as they are called in Greece. These are people who believe that what they call “Aegean Macedonia” is part of an organic whole, the Macedonian nation, which is “occupied” by the oppressive Greek nation-state, and that one day this part of the Macedonian Nation will be free to join the rest of the Macedonian nation-state.67 Not all were of that nationalist brand. Other people
in Meliti wanted to express their resentment toward the Greek State—towards the “State of Athens”\textsuperscript{68} as they called it, for its past oppressive policies that afflicted them or their families, without necessarily seeking a change of borders. All the nuances of identifications of the people dancing at Meliti were lost on the rest of the Greeks in the area, including many of the Dopyi who have formulated a Greek national identity. “These people” are “Communist-Bulgarians” (Εαμποβνύλγαροι) . . . “agents of foreign powers in our country” . . . “Skopians” (Σκόπιανοί), “Makedonski” (αυτοί είναι Μακεντόνοι).” All those appellations are fine gradations of the same thing, something that amounts to a national threat.

**Psarades: the Modalities in the Performances of Subjectivity**
Back in Psarades, the performances of identity had more nuances and variations. The charged script of their relationship to the Greek State and the Nation was constantly being performed, from various subject positions. It never was as concrete as the presentation of identity that I witnessed in Meliti. Here in Psarades people’s identities were shifting, on liquid grounds. I witnessed more and more this elusive behavior among the villagers. Their performances of identity were either excessively nationalistic or they seemed to be hiding something under a thin disguise. It was like their identity was a loud mask hiding a secret which I was inadvertently allowed to partially access. I was being told something through the cracks: sudden stops in their speech, the persistent changing of specific subjects, out-of-the-blue statements of admiration towards the Macedonian villages on the other side (which they called “Yugoslavian”), anger toward the State, immediately followed by declarations of loyalty to the Nation, mixed-up statements about their
language which was alternatively Greek ("what other language are you talking about, we only speak Greek here"), Serbian, Bulgarian and sometimes Slav-Macedonian or Dopya. What I was being told, however, in all of its modalities and permutations, was not that they were hiding the "real" "Macedonian" identity under the mask of the "fake Greek." (That might have been so in some cases and less so in many others) What I was being shown, ultimately, was a "negative nationalism." It was "negative," not as an opposition to Greek nationalism, or any other nationalism, but rather in the sense of an imploded nationalism, which shows its guts, the practices of subjectivization, the making of State power, their constitutive negation. And I saw the pervasive mistrust and insecurity that these presentations of identity brought about in the people of Prespa.

A fight once took place in Psarades, though not in my presence. One of the Psarades men started fighting with another who had said that Macedonia could not form a nation-state under that name because it is a mixture of different ethnic groups and religions: of Albanians, Bulgarians, Serbians, Gypsies and Muslims. The fight became violent and they started hitting each other. For days after, different women of the village were telling me about it, trying to "explain" to me what had really happened. The explanations were highly contradictory and inconsistent, but clearly geared to blur my impressions of the perpetrator's identity.

During a fiesta which took place in one of the Prespa villages, while I was doing my Ph.D. research, a man whom I did not know came and sat next to me. He was introduced to me, by my friend Kostas, as Yiannis, a Vlach from the village of Pyli. Yiannis "knew
about me.” He said he “had heard all about me.” Then he paused and looked at me. He started questioning me about why I was in Prespa, what I was writing about, exactly, where I had come from, which organization I was representing, who I was working for, whose interests I was promoting, whether I knew about the Slav-Macedonian activist, why I had chosen to live in Psarades, whose side I was on anyway. Because, this man argued, if I wrote the story of Prespa according to the Dopyi it was going to be just a pack of lies. My friend Kostas, also a Vlach from the same village who knew Yiannis well, kept trying to defend me by telling him that he knew me and that I was trustworthy. Yiannis kept telling Kostas to shut up, turning the questions that he was posing to me towards him. “Kosta,” he said finally, “you don’t live here. In a few weeks you’ll go back to Germany to work and live through the winter with your family. But we, we are the ones who have to live with this situation. We have to endure these people and their duplicity, as well as the repercussions of her ‘observations’.”

Then there was Yiorgos who was from Psarades but now lived in Laimos. "Do you see those trees?" he said. "I do." "Well," he continued, “they’re called ‘pixaria’. Have you noticed where they sprout? These trees feed on blood. They sprout only where blood has been spilled. You can look for them all over Greece; where more blood has been spilled you’ll find more trees. That is the Nation, this is what being a Greek means to me: my grandfathers have been sacrificed for these borders here. And I will be the first to die, in order to defend the rest of Greece. Why do you think we people live here? Nothing has ever been made easy for us. Why do you think Panagiotis is spending a bundle of money
to keep this old house here in Psarades, while he lives for years now in a far away city?

What do you think is keeping us here on this land?"

He paused. I thought that it was a rhetorical question, so I didn’t answer. As he talked, there was great intensity in his face and voice, and he kept hitting his hand on the table to emphasize the trees, the nation and the blood. Then came a very long exposition of all his brave deeds during his service in the Greek army, and then came statistics, lists of numbers about the Prespa: the people that immigrated, the people that stayed, the dates, new immigration waves, this many in Australia, so many in Canada, etc. He was showing off. "I am telling you all this orally and unofficially. You are not supposed to have access to such information, it is controlled by the National Statistic Service and it is officially sanctioned and secret. No one is supposed to know how many people are living around here, it is a national security issue. Here, we are at the borders. You have to go to Florina and get an officially stamped permission if you want access to all this information, but I doubt they’d give you such a thing."

Another time I was sitting with Petros, a fisherman in his early fifties. An old man came by with a walking stick and started talking to us. He was from the south and he claimed that he was traveling through Macedonia (Greek Macedonia) in order to see, with his own eyes, why the people of this land were so easily swayed by words and propaganda, always making trouble for this country. He had come to see the provocateurs of the nation that kept creating constant disturbances. Petros was silent. I started teasing the man by saying that I was a Macedonian and I did not understand what he was referring
to. As the conversation continued I started getting upset by his chauvinism and told him off. Petros was silent throughout. As the old man growled and began to leave us, I realized that he had a walking stick because he was missing a leg. "Oh, no," I said to Petros, "he has lost his leg." "He must have lost it somewhere around here, fighting for the Nation. Forget it. We get a lot of those nationalists preaching at us around here," said Petros and changed the subject.

An old man was sitting with me and his grandson telling stories about his life, different events that had happened in the past in Prespa. "Papouleas Mafiosos" (Grandpappy Mafioso) was the nickname that his grandson was using for him. Every now and then the grandson would interrupt the stories and question his grandfather: "Did you see it?" he would ask. "Me? No. I just heard about it," the grandfather would answer, and then turn and smile at his grandson. The boy would then burst with laughter. This was repeated many times in this same way during the course of a few hours, like an internal joke, but also a practice, a lesson in dissimulation.

The little girls of the village came and sat by me once when I was eating at one of the Psarades tavernas. They were telling me endless stories from school. A few people walked by the table speaking another language. I asked the little girls if the language was Macedonian. "No," said Anna, who was the oldest one, and she lowered her eyes. Alexia jumped from her seat and said, "Maybe it was Bulgarian?" Quickly Anna snapped at her, "What are you talking about you little fool, Macedonian IS Bulgarian." "I thought Macedonian was closest to Serbian?" I said. "Yes," Anna answered quickly and
categorically, in order to get rid of me. She immediately changed the subject while all of the little girls seemed perplexed and embarrassed. Anna knew that these are not subjects to be discussed with outsiders.

For several months in the winter of 1995 I had been interviewing a Dopyos called Sotiris, who had also given me a small hand-written autobiography.\textsuperscript{69} Some Dopyi who knew Sotiris seemed to like him and considered him a righteous, fair man, a democrat. However, throughout the period of interviewing him, other people of Prespa went out of their way to try and de-legitimize all that Sotiris had said. Those people claimed, for example, that he had a good memory for names and events, because he used to be an informant against the communists of Prespa, and that he had ruined many peoples lives, being a snitch, a collaborator. I was told that I wasn’t being careful enough. These were very complex socio-historical situations that I was being faced with, and I was too naïve to be able to “cut it” around here. “One just ends up with the wrong, one-sided information, not the truth, fiction, and not even the whole story. Around these places one could easily be swayed by the wrong informants.” When I mentioned this discussion to a man from the near by town of Florina, he said that snitches do not write memoirs. If he was a snitch, Sotiris would have been scared to do so, scared for his children’s sake. Collaborators don’t want to have records of what happened; they want to forget. Their characteristic is not to remember but rather to forget dates and names, to meticulously and actively forget. He then asked me if Sotiris had a big fortune. Snitches were “paid off” with land usually, he said, that is how you can tell. As for the whole story, he said there was no “whole story”. And as for “fiction,” what the people in Prespa say is already
fiction, I just had to write it down. The people who were accusing Sotiris of being a spy were just trying to control my information sources.

One summer day I was visiting the house of a woman from Athens who, after marrying a Vlach, had moved to Prespa six years ago. She started telling me about the repression that the Dopyi had endured. She believed, from what she had heard around Prespa, that the Dopyi had suffered much through the years and that they were all still frightened. She said that up until the 1970s special civilian squads, constituted mostly by Vlachs, equipped with guns, were terrorizing the Dopyi by painting red crosses on the doors of the houses where Macedonian was spoken. She said that anybody who had any personal misgivings with any one of the Dopyi here in Prespa would accuse them of being “autonomists,” “national traitors” and “communists.” During the years after the Civil War many were incriminated on such allegations and ended up in exile or without jobs. The Dopyi had gone through a lot, she said, and as a result all of them—especially the people of Psarades, who constitute an exclusively Dopyi community—now have clandestine aspirations for self-determination and autonomy from the Greek nation-state. I told her about the fiesta in Meliti and she said: “You’ll be writing your theses, while I’ll be slaughtered like an animal by these people.” She said this very seriously.

In the spring of 1996 I went to an outdoor river concert not far from Prespa with two young Vlachs. One morning, while sitting by the river, they started telling me about the Dopyi. The two young Vlachs said that they didn’t trust any of them. They both claimed to have initially approached the Dopyi with the best of intentions, but now it was clear to
them that not one was to be trusted and there was nothing to be done about it. The Dopyi were all “autonomists” at heart, even the ones proclaiming their Greek identity and boasting about their nationalism, even the ones that were right wing or fascists. They acted as nationalists because they had to, out of need, and they would at any given moment betray this country and go with Skopia [Macedonia (FYROM)]. One and all, if they could, they would switch to being “Makedonski” If Greece and Skopia were equally rich and powerful, continued the two young men, the Dopyi would definitely chose the second—for sure. Their feelings, their sense of belonging to this country, were not real, not true. Even the old president of X village,70 who was right wing and kept proclaiming his Greekness, even he was Greek only out of self-interest. They all light up when Macedonian music is playing.71 Each and every one of them, no matter what they professed, had the desire to overturn the state of things. They never have one position vis-à-vis the subject of their identity. Depending what is going on they turn and say different things.

One of the two men complained, “Our friend Haris, who we all love a lot, has several times turned around, out of the blue and said ‘I am Macedonian.’ How are we to take this declaration? Was he only trying to be provocative or was he trying to tell us something? Lenio, things are getting worse: the Dopyi are getting increasingly provocative, openly professing their hatred for this country and their ethnic difference. What are we supposed to do when we hear such things? You say it’s all fine, normal, a reaction to all the oppression etc., but I ask you, how are we to react to all these provocations? How are we to react when Eleni Siakou says ‘I am not Greek’? And then in front of so and so all of
them act like they are more Greek than any of us, and then again, just a little later, they
turn around once more and act as if Greece was nothing to them.”

The Festival

The panigyri\textsuperscript{72} of Psarades is the largest event in Prespa. It takes place on August 15th, the day of the Virgin Mary. That is when visitors and relatives fill up every available room and mattress in the area. All are waiting for the night of the 14\textsuperscript{th} and 15\textsuperscript{th} for the fiesta of Psarades. That year, in 1997, towards the end of the night, after every one had danced the Dopya songs, and the Vlach and Pontic\textsuperscript{73} songs, and after everyone was quite drunk, Aris and a couple of others started asking the band to play “Macedonian songs.” It must have been after midnight. Aris and his friend Spyros would lean over and translate in my ears the words of the songs and would get all teary eyed. Those Macedonian songs made some of the people who were there cringe and some others sigh, and as the others would get up to dance I felt that the songs inspired them in a special way, gave them a sense of unrest, some kind of effervescence, an ecstatic quality. I had seen this among the people of Prespa and it was one of the things that I love about Prespa. I had seen it with Aris who would throw his head back and let out a deep sigh listening to an Albanian clarinetist play soulfully a specific solo from an Albanian song. I had seen it in the local bar when in the after-hours the people of Prespa would play jazz and local folk gypsy music and dance around the room like it was the last night of their lives. This ecstatic quality was related to the Macedonian songs, music, and dances, but was shared by the other people of Prespa. But it took its fullest form among the Dopyi. That night at the fiesta of Psarades, Aris called for a couple of Macedonian songs and paid the band to
play them. He took his friend Spyros and me and lead the line as we started dancing around in a circle, just the three of us at first. Someone from the crowd that surrounded the circle shouted, “Ari be careful cause you’ll lose your job.” And Aris would laugh and say he didn’t give a shit and Spyros would start laughing to and we would continue dancing. A few more people, about ten of them, mostly from Psarades, joined in hesitantly after a while. It was a statement. And the dancing became stronger and stronger with more people joining in the circular line which Aris and Spyros alternatively led while singing loudly, in Slav-Macedonian, the words of the songs as they had done before quietly, earlier in the night, when we were sitting at the table. It went on and on, and when the dancing and the song had reached its peak, suddenly Aris turned the line around, and one by one the people of the line started snaking outwards, with their backs facing each other, so that they would all eventually pass in front of the musicians facing them. When Aris, who was leading the dancing line, reached the musicians, he threw some money towards them and asked for “Rambo,” a Vlach song. The change of rhythm was quite abrupt but everyone immediately changed their dancing following Aris and Spyros, accepting the change as if nothing had happened. With renewed effervescence Aris guided the dance, jumping his steps, sometimes turning and dancing with Spyros in front of the line and sometimes “pulling” the line and dancing in front all by himself. It was a great relief to me that we were now dancing a Vlach song because I felt a little uncomfortable dancing the Macedonian songs while all the Vlachs that I knew were glaring from the periphery. Then Aris grabbed Aliki, who was a Vlach friend of his, and took her to the front of the line, giving her the lead. He then called her husband to join and gave him the second position next to the lead, placing himself third. Aliki and her
husband led the Vlach song with much ornamentation, and as it was finishing Aliki asked
the band for an Albanian song, which Aris and her husband paid for, and the musicians,
not losing a beat, immediately started playing. Aliki led the dance with her girlfriend
Soula second and me third. After that song was done, Soula asked for a Greek song from
the south of Greece, an island song, but then she didn’t really know how to dance it, so
her daughter, a teenager who was further back in the line called to her, screaming to
dance it as a “Tik” which is the name of a Pontic dance. Seeing her mother still lost with
the footsteps, the teenager ran to the front and led her mother through the song. Danae,
Aliki’s daughter, went to dance next to her and we all danced a Pontic song, quick and
rhythmical. It was now around 4 a.m. and people had started leaving. The older ladies of
Psarades, before they left, came over to me and complimented me on my dancing of the
Macedonian songs. Eventually we all had a last beer and I went home.

Many were getting in their cars and driving back to Aghios Germanos and Pyli, while
Aris, who was from Aghios Germanos, was going to sleep in Psarades on the roof of the
“House of the Child,” a government building housing part of the Society for the
Protection of Prespa. “You know he does this every year just for the two days of the
fiesta in Psarades. The house used to be his grandfather’s. He donated it to the Greek
state.” That is what some Psarades people told me as we were walking home. I wondered
whether the house was donated or confiscated. Who knows? The men of Psarades were
telling the story in a compassionate tone, but also they seemed to be filled with pride
about Aris, who had “every right to that house.” He chose to exercise this right by
sleeping on its roof for a couple of days every year, the house he was probably cheated
out of by the complex politics of Prespa. I went to sleep thinking of Aris claiming his family's rights back from the roof of that large house that stood there facing the lake.
Part III. Displacements
Chapter 5

Stories of the People of Prespa

Sotiria
A Dopya woman from Kallithea, she married a man from Psarades, trained as a nurse, and went to the mountains with the guerillas. Her family was scattered by the Civil War.

Yiannis
A prisoner of war held by the guerillas, he survived an Albanian prison camp and returned to Greece.

The House
Yiorgos, a Vlach man from Aghios Germanos went to Bitola in Macedonia (FYROM) to find Siolkas, the 80-year-old Dopyi former-owner of his house. The old man had lost the house when he fled Greece during the Civil War.

Lefteris and the Paidomazoma
Lefteris left with the “paidomazoma” or “children’s displacement” during the Civil War and led a fragmented life while waiting to return to Greece. The background and legacy of the “Paidomazoma” is explored here.

Maria
She was taken in the “paidomazoma,” while her sister and mother were with the guerillas in the mountains. She returned from a “European” life in Czechoslovakia to live in Prespa.

Dafni
She was born in Czechoslovakia to a Greek father, who had lost his citizenship in Greece due to his role in the Civil War. She tried to fulfill his failed dream by going back to Greece to secure her own citizenship after his death.

Aliki
A Vlach living in Germany due to the economic hardship in Prespa, she returns “home” annually.

The Albanian
The illegal Albanian immigrants in Prespa are alternately hunted as criminals and treated as workers, family or friends. These notes explore their predicament in 1996 and the crisis at the border during the collapse of Albania’s economy in 1997.
Sotiria

Fieldwork notes from December 1995

Everything was frozen. Snow was covering every corner of Prespa and the small lake was solid ice. In a large house at the village of Kallithea, we sat in the living room with the large wood stove. I was sitting on one of the sofas and in front of me there was a low wooden table with a hand-embroidered runner covering its top. Over the embroidered cloth were several bowls of cookies and candies, offerings for my visit, along with the coffee. In a shiny tray surrounded by little glasses stood a bottle of Sotiria’s delicious berry liquor. We ate and talked and I wrote as fast as I could in my notebook. Around the room sat Sotiria on another sofa to my left, her husband Nikos, next to her on the other side of the sofa, and Spyros, one of their sons, to my right in an armchair. A couple of grandchildren ran in and out, grabbing a cookie or settling for a few minutes on someone’s lap. Though Nikos was one of the people I liked and respected most in Prespa, it was always hard work for me to understand him when he talked: he would speak fast and mumble his words. I was relieved when Sotiria started talking, telling me her story “from the beginning.” The first half of her story is about her mother and father and her marriage to Nikos, while the second half is about her brothers and the Greek Civil War. Here is what she said—with little editing.
This is the voice of Sotiria, unless otherwise indicated:

"The first time I ever went to Psarades was in 1950, following Nikos back to his village after he had ‘stolen’ me from my house in Kallithea. One needed special permits then to get to Psarades. Every time, in order to enter and exit Psarades, we had to go through the wooden bridge and by the army outpost, in Koula. The bridge was French, made of wooden planks with iron at the edges. The Greek Army blew it into pieces in 1941, when they retreated, so the Italians wouldn’t take the bridge. I was sixteen years old when they blew it up. They fixed it again after the civil war when the army came back. We used to cross over the river back then, on the donkeys, but the donkeys would get scared by the water and would stop. Once I was with one of my children, still a baby in my arms, and Pavlos, who was then a toddler, along with my mother. As we tried to cross the river the soldiers were sitting there looking at the donkey, with me pulling and screaming at it to move, and they were laughing their heads off. ‘What are you laughing about?’ I said to them. ‘You better come and help me.’ So they picked up the donkey and raised him up in the air and that’s how we crossed the river.

"In 1950, when I was ‘stolen,’ I had no permit to go through Koula to Psarades, Nikos’ village. So they kept me there at the outpost for hours. As Nikos was from Psarades, the soldiers knew him and had the necessary permits issued by the police. But they didn’t know me and I had no permit. So they called the police station in Lefkona and the police there all started making fun of me and laughing about the whole affair, how I’d been ‘stolen’ and everything, but I couldn’t go through. Eventually I got special
permission over the phone, and they let me go through. In the meantime, my cousin was running after me, sent by my mother to bring me back home. He never caught up with us. He didn’t try too hard either; he was just scared of his aunt.

“Nikos had pawned his watch, even though he knew that my mother didn’t want him as a son-in-law. The reason she didn’t want him is that all the rest of her children had been killed and she wanted to keep me with her. But this is how it all unfolded. Nikos was coming to my house holding a golden lira to offer to my mom and ask for my hand, but she locked the house up pretending no one was there. So, next time Nikos came and ‘stole’ me away, with the help of five men from Psarades who were hiding in the woods. Nikos and I, we were under a willow tree when we decided to elope. But a cousin of mine went running home and told my mother what was going on, so we had to hurry. Only to end up sitting at the army outpost in Koula!

“A month later there was a meeting arranged at the village of Laimos [half way between Psarades and Kallithea], between Nikos and my sister-in-law. After the two of them met and talked I went to my mother’s home to ask for her apology. A week later we went to Florina and did all the necessary shopping for the wedding. The wedding took place in Psarades and we used the crowns that belonged to the Church of the Virgin Mary, there at Psarades. These crowns are made of metal—aluminum, but kind of yellow, like real crowns. After the wedding at the house in Psarades there was a gramophone, so we all danced.
“In 1947 the guerrillas took my brothers with them up into the mountains. One of my brothers was second lieutenant. He had studied to be an agronomist in the city of Ptolemaida after he got out of the orphanage. He was at the orphanage because our father, who had gone to Canada to work in the cotton industry and send money home to us, had died. That was four years after he left Prespa. I was four years old when he left. My youngest brother [the one now living in Skopje] was still in the cradle, the oldest one was thirteen, the others were five and three. That is how we were when our father left us behind, with our mother and our grandfather, my father’s father, who had only one hand and one eye. Later on, she sent him pictures of all the children and there, in Canada, they put them all together and made a ‘synthesis.’ He was struck by tuberculosis and fifteen days later he died. It was there at the ‘cottons’ that he got ‘blocked’; the heat in there, it got him right in the lungs and—‘poof’—he was gone.

“I went to Canada in 1973 when my son Pavlos got married, and I asked around about my father’s grave. I found the people that had buried him. They bury them like this in Canada: they put them in the ground with a large stone on top with their name carved on it. But on his grave they had put no stone, nothing. So I didn’t find him. There were two graves there and I didn’t know which was which. I never knew him, my father.

“My grandfather back here was plowing and sowing the fields with one hand, and that is how we survived. My oldest brother, Yiorgos, got frostbite and died in Albania during the civil war, in 1948. But he had first gotten the frostbite during WWII, the war with the Italians, when he was fighting on the front lines. You know Konstandinos Benopoulos
Papadopoulos, who has the taverna in Psarades? Well, this brother of mine buried his father. He died there during the war. I was told that he died from eating too many dried figs all the time, because they were all so hungry and had no other food. He died, and he's gone and my brother buried him... The Italians then took my brother Yiorgos hostage. Ten people, all together, they took them to Rome. Later on the Red Cross found them, and in 1941 they returned through Bulgaria, to Bitola, then all the way to Prespa on foot.

"My brother Andreas, who had become an agronomist, was a platoon captain with the guerillas. He was killed fighting up in the mountains in 1948.

"Then the guerillas took me to a nursing school that was only for the guerillas. I graduated with 19 and a half out of 20. Three doctors were asking the questions, and because I was shy, I didn't tell them all the answers and that is why they cut half a grade. The nursing school was at the village Prasino, across from Pervali, next to Trigono. The school took place in the village houses, and from there they took us up in the mountain of Sfika. We were moving all the time. We had nothing, just a few little chairs and sometimes a desk. For practical training they took us to the hospitals and showed us the mutilated people, the wounded ones. At the mountain of Sfika the hospital was in a cave. There were great doctors working there, like Maganis, Sakelariou, and Sokratis Kokkalis [the father of a prominent businessman]. Kokkalis was one of the best doctors of his time. After my exams were finished, there on the mountain of Sfika, they all wanted me to go to another nursing school to learn more. But I wasn't one of the
guerillas; I was just a villager, and I stayed back with my mother. I didn’t go to another school nor did I ever work in the guerilla hospitals.

"On December 15, 1948 they let me go home. Until then I worked for the guerillas as a stretch-bearer, carrying the wounded to the hospitals. But because three other children from my family were fighting with the guerillas, I was entitled to go home. When I returned to Kallithea, everybody was nagging that all the village girls were up in the mountains with the guerillas, and there was no one left behind to help wounded and sick village people. So on January 6th, 1949, I went to nursing school again and I came out of it on the 6th of March. I came back to the village and started working, but by August it was all destroyed—the [national] Army came in and everything was finished.

"You see, the ones who were too old to carry guns were used up for a hundred other things, but I was twenty-five years old then, a monster. Someone tried to take my weapon from me, once while I was on sentry-go. ‘Tak,’ I twisted it around and said, ‘Let me go or I’ll shoot you!’ No one dared to fool around with me.

"This is what happened. When the time came after WWII for the Greek Army to leave Prespa, the army notified some Prespiots who then followed them to Florina. Those notified were the most nationalistic, the most chauvinistic people of Prespa. Guerillas were already up in the mountains fighting during the occupation. When the army left, Prespa was left in the hands of the guerillas. Not all of the Prespa people who ended up in the mountains went voluntarily to fight with the guerillas. Most were forced by the
circumstances. Others joined them enthusiastically, like one of my brothers. That’s how the situation was here in Prespa when the civil war started.

“After the Civil War—it was August 1949 when the guerillas left—in September, one of the policemen called me to the headquarters in Lefkona. Someone from my village had been accusing me, and the policeman called me in and asked, ‘How many brothers do you have?’ ‘Four,’ I said. ‘Guerillas?’ he asked. ‘Yes,’ I said. ‘And what about your sister-in-law?’ ‘Yes,’ I said, ‘she too was a guerilla.’ Her children had been taken away by the guerillas during the ‘children’s exodus’ so that she could become a guerilla fighter. ‘And you were a nurse?’ he said. ‘Yes,’ I said, ‘and I was a nurse. What did you expect?’ I asked him. ‘Were we not supposed to help people when they got wounded? Since you guys up and left us, we were all working with the guerillas. Sometimes they’d threaten us with their weapons if we didn’t want to cooperate. What do you think?’ I asked him. ‘Could I have refused to come to see you now that you called for me? Were you or were you not going to arrest me if I didn’t come to the police station?’ That’s what I told him, and then he said, ‘I can’t deal with you,’ and they let me go. But that is how things were then in Kallithea. There was a lot of discord and dissention, everyone was trying to incriminate everyone else, with both true and false accusations. That is how I got snitched.

“My sister-in-law [Yiorgos’s wife] joined the guerillas as a fighter. After the Civil War they took her with them over the borders and she ended up in Russia where she was eventually reunited with her children—two daughters and a son—in Tashkent. The
children had left Prespa during the ‘children’s exodus,’ and they were first taken to a refugee camp in Bella Crkva.\textsuperscript{79} After the war we filed all the necessary papers, petitions and certificates from Prespa, asking for the repatriation of children and their return to us here in Kallithea, but we didn’t get them back. Their mother got them with petition papers that she filed in Taskend, in Uzbekistan. The children stayed in Yugoslavia for about a year. Their mother got them back in 1950, and by 1951 they were all together in Taskend, where they all stayed. The names of all the children who left the country during the ‘children’s exodus’ were crossed off the national registers with red ink. They were considered fugitives, along with the guerillas. Then the state confiscated all their properties. I got only one fifth of my father’s land. That was why Nikos came to live with us here in Kallithea. We wouldn’t have been able to hold onto anything without any males in the house. So instead of me going to Psarades to live with Nikos’s family as I should have,\textsuperscript{80} we thought about it and Nikos said we should live in Kallithea in order to save the property from being confiscated.

“Andreas was killed in Malimadi. A lot of guerilla fighters left their bones there. Big battles took place there, near Vatohori, on the highest mountain, above where the old Krystalopigi used to be. His wife stayed behind with her mother-in-law, my mother, and with her baby who was nursing (otherwise they would have taken that kid too). The boy is now living in Germany. Andreas’s wife remarried and had another two children—a girl and a boy. Her new husband was also married before, and his first wife had gone behind the iron curtain with guerillas who ended up in Poland. He [Andreas’ wife’s second husband] had a daughter from this first marriage. The baby went with her mother when
she fled. She held the baby in her arms, still nursing. The mother managed to take her with her to Poland.

Fanis, the youngest brother, was twenty years old when he got killed. They took him to Elbasan in Albania, after he was badly wounded on the head. He died there in the hospital.

Dimitris, the one who is now in Skopia, also was wounded twice, once on the arm and once on the hand. The first time he got hurt he recovered, turned around and back he went to the mountains. He was the most fanatical of all the kids.”

“And he still is,” said Spyros, turning to me and interrupting his mother. “He still is harping on the same old communist arguments!”

“He must have been the idealist of the family,” I said hesitantly, not knowing what else to say after this dark narrative—the killings of the brothers of Sotiria and the deportation of everyone else. Sotiria continued.

“Well, what can you expect? Since these where the kind of friends he always had, these are the kind of things he learned in his life. In Taskend, where he ended up after the Civil War after fleeing through Albania, he married a guerilla, a phone operator from Kastoria. She was a very active woman. She had two children. One of them was born in Taskend. In 1956 they came here [Skopia] where their second child was born. He, Dimitris, has
come to Greece twice, changing his passport in Belgrade. Who knows how; just like that, he sneaked through. Then he died, but this is another tragedy; they never stop. But let's leave that one out, so that we won't end up on the worst note."
Yiannis in the Albanian labor camp

Yiannis, a Dopyos, was a hostage of the communists during the Greek Civil War having been captured on March 4th of 1948 for espionage against the Democratic Army, the communist military organization. After twenty days of detention and questioning came several months of marching (along with about twenty other hostages), all over the Northern Greek mountain ranges. They walked during the night and early morning hours, hiding during the days in order to avoid the National Army’s aerial bombings. On the night of August 21st they crossed the Albanian border and daybreak found them on Albanian soil. Then army trucks took them to Moschopolis.

“Moschopolis used to be one of the big, important Vlach towns in the Balkans,” he explained to me. “When we arrived it was all bombed out; only a church was still standing.” On the 6th of September they were handed over to the Albanian authorities. The Albanians marched them without stopping for food or water for several days to Koritsa [Corce] where they were incarcerated in the local prison. On September 17th they were packed in trucks again and taken to a plain near Tirana where they were put in a labor camp that had been an Italian military compound with two large woodsheds. One of them was used for the men and one for the women coming from Prespa, Kastoria and Epiros [northwestern Greek territories]. Twelve people were there from the Prespa villages. The last one they brought to the camp about a year later was from the village of Psarades. “He was a Communist guerilla himself at first, but then he must have deserted for some reason. He never told us what had happened,” said Yiannis. All day long they dug drainage canals and then they were taken back to the camp for the night. Tea in the
morning with a piece of bread and five to six beans in some broth for lunch—that was all
the food they got. Sometimes it was not even that, but only a quarter of a cabbage each.
But Yiannis said they managed to supplement it with greens they picked while digging
the canals, or turtles, porcupines and frogs that they grilled in the fire at night. “I have to
admit,” he told me laughing, “that no matter how hungry I was I could never eat those
frogs! It was mostly the bread that held us through the day. They had more bread there in
Albania than we had in Greece during the warfare.

“One day in 1949, the Albanians picked up a mother and her daughter, a lieutenant,
myself and a few more political prisoners, and they took us all to the Security Police
headquarters in Koritsa. Only the lieutenant was questioned. We never found out why
they took us there and why they held us for twenty days. Then they sent us back. I asked
the lieutenant about it, but he hadn’t understood what had happened either. He said all the
questions were general and abstract and they made no sense whatsoever. When we
returned to the camp, everyone was shocked to see us back alive. They thought we were
all surely dead. The camp guards terrorized us daily in the camp with taunts that they
would kill us all. We couldn’t understand anything.”

In 1951, two and a half years later, Yiannis and the other political prisoners were taken to
Souk-Souziak near Dirachio (the Greek name for Durres, the central Albanian port),
where they dug the earth once again, this time unearthing oak trees and planting fruit
trees. “You cannot imagine the hunger and the cold. We were mostly naked and full of
lice, and we were tormented daily, hit and cursed all the time. That is when several of us
died and a few committed suicide. There was a man called Evangelos Athenaios who was a hostage of the Germans during WWII. He had made it through Dachau. Here he couldn’t take the suffering any more, and he took a nail and pounded it right into his chest. There was another young man called Babis who was our cook. At the end he gave up too and killed himself. Three out of the initial eleven men and women from Prespa died.” Yiannis recited their names and villages without missing a beat, as if it had all happened yesterday.

“On February 2nd of 1952 they again loaded us up on military trucks, 107 people out of the 650 that where in the camp. I was twenty-eight years old then. They took us to Dirachio where a Russian cargo boat came during the night and took us away. After ten days at sea, after sailing up through the Aegean, they took us to Konstanza [Constanta, a central Romanian port]. From there by train they took us to a Romanian town called Florika where they kept us for two to three months in wood shacks surrounded by barbed wire. There they deloused us, clothed us, and gave us food which was a vast improvement from the food in Albania, as was our treatment by the Romanian people. I stayed in Florika where I worked as a cobbler until the 26th of October, 1954. On that day, the International Red Cross handed us over to the Greek Red Cross at the port of Konstanza. There was a beautiful, super-luxurious boat that the Greeks had bought from the British, called “Semiramis,” waiting for us. When we got into the boat we thought that we would burst from all the food they had out for us to eat: grilled ducks, and geese cooked with oranges, things beyond the imagination, grapes, fruit... When we arrived in Thessaloniki they had a special reception for us, and a parcel containing dried foods,
three blankets, our tickets back to Prespa and 150 drachmas, for each one of us. On the third of November, 1954, I arrived home. Here!”

The House

When I arrived at the house of Kostas and Ioanna, where I was supposed to clean beans, we entered a big empty room with a large makeshift table in the middle. On one side of the room was a wood stove, and several sacks of beans were laid against the walls. The rest of the room was empty. Over the table a naked lamp hung low over the heads of the people sitting around the table and the shadows it cast were long and sharp. Everyone sitting around the table was sunk in beans up to their thighs. White and slick, the fat beans formed large heaps under the table and chairs and around the legs of the people. Most of them were Vlachs living in Aghios Germanos. The discussion was frivolous and aimless for quite a while until the brother of Ioanna, Yiorgos, started claiming that his was the only house in Aghios Germanos that was truly owned by its inhabitant. “I have the approval of the owner, and I paid for the lot it stands on when we were given the chance to buy the land of Aghios Germanos. I have the titles to this land. Every one else here in Aghios is squatting.” he said, and they all laughed.

“One day,” he continued, “we decided to go and meet the old owner, Siolkas, because he kept sending us things all the time, presents from Monastiri [FYROM], sweets and stuff, inquiring about us and our well-being, since we were the people now living in his house. Finally we went to Monastiri to look for him and his wife.”
“You just went, like that, just to meet those people?” asked his nephew incredulously.

“To tell you the truth,” Yiorgos said “there was also this story about the golden pounds. There were all these relatives of theirs coming to the house all the way from Psarades, looking for the gold that they believed Siolkas had buried somewhere in the house. Eh! So we thought we’d go and ask them about the gold as well. We crossed the borders north of Florina, and went ‘inside’ [Macedonia FYROM] about six or seven years ago. When was it, Viki?”

“Around 1980 or 1981,” his wife answered.

“OK, yes, it was fifteen or sixteen years ago... wow... eh, so we went there, and we looked and looked for him, but he was scared and he wasn’t showing up anywhere. We went to a Greek neighborhood there in Monastiri.”

“At the Vlachika?” asked his nephew.

“No, not the Vlachika, a Greek neighborhood, a different one, and there they told us that ‘this man over there’—they showed us someone—‘is the only one in touch with Siolkas,’ the man we were looking for. The guy left with his car to go find Siolkas and tell him what it was all about. If Siolkas wanted, he would come back and take us to him. We didn’t wait for long. Siolkas came and took us to his house, which was a tiny apartment, all he needed at his age. But what a man! He was eighty years old, but a “palikari,”
(πολικήρη, a young and brave man)—all the way up to the ceiling. He looked younger than sixty years old. He walked up and down, with such poise, a straight body—what agitation! You cannot imagine... Blond with blue eyes, and his wife was also blond and tall. We had arrived on the memorial day of the death of his son who had died during the Civil War. He was very emotional. He told us lots and lots of stories about the Civil War—how he wasn’t a communist but rather a royalist, but somehow the guerillas took him along.”

“Eh... come now... He was really something, that guy Siolkas!” interrupted the old lady, the neighbor Vassiliki.

“What do you mean?” I asked.

“SioIkas was considered one of the wildest guerilla fighters, a leader,” explained Yiorgos. “But he might have been taken by force at first, and then fanaticized by the others. What they say now about him is that he was a real savage! Who knows?”

Yiorgos continued, “So over the mantelpiece, in his apartment, I see a large photograph of our house. A recent photo, I could tell because our rugs were hanging out to dry. How could that be, since they weren’t able to cross into Greece all those years? Later we found out that his daughter had come to the village and had taken pictures of their home to take back to her parents in Monastiri.”
“We shouldn’t say ‘Monastiri’ anymore,” I said suddenly. “We should call it ‘Bitola.’”

Ioanna smiled at me with satisfaction. Yiorgos, incredulous, asked, “And why should we do that?”

“Well then they should also have the right to call Florina ‘Lerin,’ and Thessaloniki, ‘Solun.’”

“Ah, Lenio I do not like what I’m hearing. You mean we should learn to call Constantinople ‘Istanbul’? That is too just much.”

Everyone agreed with Yiorgos and continued throwing heaps of beans from the table down to the floor.
Lefteris and the Paidomazoma

The Paidomazoma, the “Macedonian Question” and the Border
The so-called “Macedonian Question” ferments under, and to a large extent still shapes, politics that persist in Greece, particularly in the border regions, in the aftermath of the Greek Civil War. A relocation of a great number of children into the communist countries adjoining Greece to the north took place during this war. Known as the “paidomazoma,” the odyssey of these children played a crucial part in the socio-political developments of the region, and it continues to animate the conflicting stories, identities and allegiances of the borderlands. This section will explore the formative historical and political dimensions of this phenomenon and its legacy for Greece—and Prespa in particular—and will conclude with the story of Lefteris who left with the paidomazoma and finally lives again in Prespa.

The “Macedonian Issue” and the Greek Communist Party
An intertwining of “Macedonia” with the ambitions of the Greek Communist Party (KKE) began at the Third International in May of 1924. The KKE, as part of the Balkan Communist Federation, put forth a resolution recognizing the independent and equal status of Macedonian national identity in the Balkans, which was later ratified by the Fifth World Congress of the Third International, (Katardziev 1981:398, in Karakasidou 1993: 459; Kofos 1964). Adherence to the Comintern line has haunted the Greek Communist Party and the Slav-speaking population of Greece ever since. As Karakasidou writes, while the KKE might have “signed this resolution under duress, fearing accusations that it sought to destroy the international communist movement, over the next
few years it repeatedly promised the Slav-Macedonians a united and independent state of their own” and its support in their revolutionary efforts towards their own liberation (Karakasidou 1993: 459-460). This policy collided with Greek national interests, stigmatized the Communist Party with “national treachery,” and created deep schisms within the KKE itself (ibid). While the question of the necessity of an historical phase of nationalism thus vexed Marxist revolutionaries, Greeks discovered that the territories of Greek Macedonia could be severed from the Greek nation-state not only through war with another country and the signing of international treaties, but also through a social revolution fostered by an international political movement.

The KKE changed its “ autonomist” position towards Macedonia in 1935 with a resolution supporting complete equality for national minorities within the nation of Greece. This continued until the end of the Civil War in 1949. Nevertheless, the stigma of “national traitor” that arose from the earlier autonomist position continued to haunt the Greek Left, and it persists today, despite the official efforts to affect a so-called “National Reconciliation” that accompanied the collapse of the Eastern Bloc in 1989. This persistence is also vividly seen in the lives of the border residents in whose villages the civil war was fought. Families were irrevocably divided over civil war political positions and further fractured by histories of local violence. They have had “foreign” identities imposed on them due to their Slavic language or Slav-Macedonian backgrounds, which associated them with the communist neighbors who abetted the guerrillas. Many were and remain communists with a particularly difficult identification with Greece. Many
lost their children during the civil war in the Paidomazoma. Still others who left as children have, in middle age, found their way back to Prespa.

The Paidomazoma

The paidomazoma was a program in northern Greece that was conducted by communist guerrillas and involved the communist neighboring countries, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, and Albania, as well as Hungary, Rumania, Poland and Russia. Children between the ages of two and a half and fifteen were taken by the communist guerillas away from their homes and parents and “shipped” to different Socialist Republics of East-Central Europe. The initial premise was that these countries would host the children until the war was over.

The agreement reached between the leadership of the Greek Communist Party and the countries of the Eastern Block willing to accept the children as victims of the Civil War, was announced by the guerilla radio on the 3rd of March, 1948. A few days later, on the 7th of March, the newspaper of the communist Democratic Army, “Exormisi” (Charge), claimed that the (communist guerilla) Provisional Democratic Government “has decided to honor the appeals made by grass root organizations as well as parents and has consented to the transport and the stay of the children [abroad] until the conditions in our country allow for their return” (Baerentzen 1992: 141).82 One of the mothers or a teacher would go along, accompanying the children of her village. The children of a given village would travel together and would not be separated in the host country. There they would get food and shelter, and education in their own language, as well as in the language of the host country. This was how the Communist party presented the children’s evacuation to the local populations at the time. As a result, thousands of children left Greece during
the years 1948 and 1949 to go to Eastern Europe with unknown destinations. The total
number, while very much in dispute, appears to be between 10,000 and 30,000 children.

The Greek government reacted immediately to the “paidomazoma,” characterizing it as
“genocide” and as “janissarism.” The latter refers to the Turkish Janisary Corps which
are, throughout the Balkans, a legendary atrocity of the Ottoman Empire. Male children
were appropriate as a kind of tax by the Ottoman government and inducted for life (with
no further contact with their families) into an organization that trained them (and
religiously indoctrinated them) to become elite and highly valued soldiers and
administrators. Known for their loyalty and fierceness, the Jannisaries were feared and
loathed by the occupied populations of the empire. The very term “Paidomazoma”
invokes this “official” Greek history: “paidomazoma” translates as the “gathering of the
children” (from paidi: child + mazoma: gathering). The Turkish term “devshirme,” for
the male child tax, also translates as “gathering.” However, the phrase “gathering of the
children” with its apparent neutrality conveys none of the grave connotations of the word
“paidomazoma,” a strong term with loss, death and mourning in it. It suggests, in effect,
the “harvesting” of children by an oppressor, as though they were a crop in the fields.

The Greek press reported the Paidomazoma as a program of violent child abductions in
the northern parts of Greece that constituted a direct threat to the Greek nation. In these
accounts, the possibility of the parents’ consent was seen as unthinkable. (“Kathimerini,”
“Eleftheria,” “Ellinikon Aima” February to March 1948, in Lagani 1996: 31) As for the
fate of the children, they were expected to be brainwashed into ardent communists, stripped of religion, and to return as enemies fighting against Greece.

The Paidomazoma inspired international outrage as well. The “kidnapping of the Greek children” was seen as a vengeful communist response to the Truman Doctrine and the ensuing Marshall Plan of aid for the recovery of Greece and the rest of Western Europe. U.S. Senator Pepper, in a letter to President Truman, refers to the issue as “the children who have been kidnapped and carried off into Communist servitude by guerillas,” and he continues that he knows “how deeply you have been personally moved by this shocking outrage to humanity” (ibid: 167).

On March 12, 1947, President Harry S. Truman addressed the Joint Session of the Congress and presented the so-called Truman Doctrine with its cold war overtones:

The very existence of the Greek state is today threatened by the terrorist activities of several thousand armed men, led by Communists, who defy the government’s authority at a number of points, particularly along the northern boundaries. A Commission appointed by the United Nations Security Council is at present investigating disturbed conditions in northern Greece and alleged border violations along the frontier between Greece on the one hand and Albania, Bulgaria, and Yugoslavia on the other. Meanwhile, the Greek Government is unable to cope with the situation . . . Greece must have assistance if it is to become a self-supporting and self-respecting democracy. The United States must supply that assistance . . . If Greece should fall under the control of an armed minority, the effect upon its neighbor, Turkey, would be immediate and serious. Confusion and disorder might well spread throughout the entire Middle East. Moreover, the disappearance of Greece as an independent state would have a profound effect upon those countries in Europe whose peoples are struggling against great difficulties to maintain their freedoms and their independence while they repair the damages of war. 83
In archival documents from the British House of Commons, pertaining to discussions entitled “Greece: the Abducted Children,” the issue is characterized as “perhaps one of the worst crimes of this century” and the removed children are referred to as “prisoners.” When the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs used the term “refuge” or “shelter” for the countries hosting the children in Eastern Europe, he was strongly criticized by several British Members of Parliament who insisted on the exclusive use of the term “abduction” in reference to the whole affair (Foreign Office 371/78362 178062, 1 June 1949, in Lagani 1996: 27).

In most of Yugoslavian and Macedonian (FYROM) historiography the “paidomazoma” is referred to as “the Children’s Exodus.” The heroic connotation of salvation immediately announces a very different position. Yugoslavia was not only the country where the children were initially gathered in camps for a few months before they were sent to their destinations, but it was also the country that hosted by far the largest number of children. In a pamphlet distributed in 1951 by the Yugoslavian Red Cross under the title “You are asking: What about the Greek children? Here are the facts,” the events are described in the following way (my translation):

While the civil war was raging in Greece thousands of children without their parents, crossing mountains never treaded before, were saved from certain death. The children started arriving in Yugoslavia on the 30th of March 1948 and continued arriving until the 22nd of April 1949. Their crossing into Yugoslavia was not organized. They left their homes unaccompanied, but they were, most of
the time, under the supervision of women from the area that took them along with their own children creating thus small groups. The children saw these women as their mothers. On the way the groups kept getting bigger and bigger (Lagani 1996: 51).

The Yugoslavian press on the 23rd of April 1948, describing the arrival of 153 “terrified… hungry…dirty…half-naked…shoeless” children to Yugoslavia, wrote: “The children after having wandered for two weeks without food or clothes around the mountains of Aegean Macedonia, finally escaped the monarcho-fascist [Greek] terrorism by taking refuge in Yugoslavia” (ibid: 51-52).

In former Yugoslavia, but even more so within Macedonia (FYROM), these children have been known as “Detsa Begaltsi” or “Desata Begaltsi,” meaning the “refugee children” (Radin 1989). They are considered not Greek but ethnic Macedonian children who escaped the Greek Government’s oppression towards this ethnic minority.84 Consider the following piece (quoted in whole) from the website of the Macedonian Information Liaison Service of January 9, 1995, and its terminology. Here the “children’s exodus” saved them from the Greek “ethnic cleansing.”

Children refugees meet in Perth.

In Perth, Western Australia, last Saturday, the children refugees from Aegean Macedonia held their Second Meeting. The Macedonian Radio informs the meeting included a photo - exhibition showing the horrors of the exodus of 28 000 Macedonian children, scattered throughout Europe and the world, as a result of the ethnic cleansing in Greece during the Civil War in 1946 - 1949.

They sent a declaration to the Australian govt., European Union country members and the US demanding the following: urgent withdrawal of the Australian govt.
decision to rename Macedonians in Australia into Slav-Macedonians, use their influence to force Greece to allow free registering of Macedonian culture centers and cease of the Greek discrimination of Macedonians living in Greece, particularly concerning their freedom of movement. The meeting also condemned the Greek embargo against Macedonia.

Meantime, the govt. in Greece and the Greek community in Australia described the meeting as an anti Greek provocation, dictated by Skopje.

In Prespa, the mothers I talked to that had anything to do with the “paidomazoma” (as they called it) were Slav-speakers, Dopyi, both left and right wing in their politics. Most of them, as well as most of the children who remember their mothers going through the ordeal of handing them over to the guerillas, said that they did it voluntarily. They all said that they willingly gave their children away in order to save them from the famine and the constant bombings ravaging the area. Many of the parents were themselves guerillas fighting in the mountains while the children lived with grandparents or other relatives who could not feed even their own children. There was no food anywhere. People survived on boiled weeds for weeks, or ground corncobs to make a kind of flour to bake with. They said that they remember the paralyzing fear they felt when the bombs were falling. Others remember children in groups running around trying to find a place to hide in a ravine or somewhere while their villages where being leveled. When playing around their villages, children would find severed parts of bodies everywhere: a finger next to the wall of the church, a leg by the gardens or a hand in the square.

I asked again and again whether the children were taken by force or not, as it seemed strange that the parents would let the children go to an unknown place, among strangers, not knowing if or when they’d see them again. Almost everyone said that they
felt grateful for the guerillas’ initiative. A few mentioned that it was reassuring that in
each village one of the mothers was taken along to accompany each children’s group, and
that they were all certain that it was temporary. Only one woman told a story of her
mother having hidden her children, bravely refusing to tell the guerillas where they were.
Her mother had screamed and fought until the guerillas finally left without the children.

Most of the people I talked to who were relocated as children through this ordeal have
only positive things to say about the ways they were treated growing up in these countries
far away from their parents.

The Controversy
This issue is represented always in polarized terms. Did the Greek Communist Party and
the “host” Socialist Republics remove the children from Greece for humanitarian reasons,
that is, to save them from the brutalities of war and from the retaliations and oppression
of the “monarchic-fascist” Greek Government and National Army? Or was it a sinister
political project aimed at depleting the Greek countryside, proselytizing fanatic
communists and influencing the future of the nation by ideologically alienating its youth
and eventually turning them against it?

The sensitive character of this issue of profound human suffering—manipulated and
distorted by cold war ideology and strategy—has created a pitched, antagonistic
divergence of points of view, and much secrecy. The Greek government has had good
reasons to keep the “paidomazoma” out of Greek historiography. First, the issue is
impossible to detach from the "Macedonian question" of who is Macedonian and how is Macedonia defined. Second, the positions of Greece in relation to the displaced children have been inconsistent and transparently opportunistic within the pressures of the cold war and the Macedonian issues.

As part of the official outrage against the paidomazoma, Queen Frederika of Greece quickly established "children's towns" (paidoupoleis). In trying thus to save the Greek youth from the communist abductions and propaganda, they too removed over 12,500 children (that was the number by the end of 1948) from their homes in northern Greece and brought them south.

Initially the right wing Greek government kept a high tone of sanctimonious outrage in its demand that Yugoslavia and the other "host" countries of Eastern Europe immediately repatriate all of the children. The government progressively toned down its rhetoric and eventually (four years later) abandoned the issue, and along with it, the children (Lagani 1996). This abandonment of the children betrays another side of the whole affair. Beyond the cold war manipulations and allegiances (including America's support of Yugoslavia on the repatriation issue because Tito resisted Stalin), the Greek abandonment of the whole issue was expressive of ethnic politics and the "Macedonian Issue"—the children were, in the end, not considered "Greek" enough to warrant pursuing the issue further. This Greek political move is telling about the role of ethnic politics, of "Macedonia" and the "Macedonian," in the unfolding of the period's events and their later repercussions.
This story has thus had three levels of overarching and interrelated politics determining the different positions vis-a-vis the “paidomazoma” issue. On one level is the Cold War politics within Greece (i.e., the communists versus the right wing government). The second level of politics is the Balkan embroilment between Greece and its neighbors which involves Cold War politics and the different interests around the “Macedonian Issue.” The third level is the international Cold War politics (the Yalta Treaty and what followed) and local interests of the Great Powers of the time directly affecting regional developments. As Kofos points out in his 1989 essay “The Impact of the Macedonian Question on the Civil Conflict in Greece (1943-1949),” the period is characterized by fanaticism, a great lack of information and a general distortion of issues found at all the levels of politics. The several points of contention regarding the “facts” about the “dislocations of the Greek children” and their “repatriation” created a tremendous conundrum and impasse involving the local populations, the Greek Governmental, guerilla Communist political and military authorities, and the major players of the Cold War: Stalin and countries in the USSR orbit, the Americans and British, who greatly influenced the developments of the whole affair, and last but not least Tito’s Yugoslavia.

National Silencing

The story of the “children’s displacement” is still today a taboo subject in Greek society and historiography. In my generation, the issue had assumed the qualities of a “myth.” In the south of Greece, by the 1970s, the subject of the “paidomazoma” was rarely broached. If it did get mentioned, particularly among older people, it immediately polarized the discussion, producing heated fanatical responses. Due to the silence as
much as to this volatility, young Athenians/southern Greeks\textsuperscript{89} who became “politically aware” in the 1970s and early 1980s,\textsuperscript{90} would avoid the subject, dismissing it as part of the inflammatory rhetoric of the Right, along with stories of the Communists making soap out of human bodies, and Jews or Gypsies stealing and eating little children. More strident interpretations on either side—that is, that the paidomazoma was a rescue or a kidnapping—suggested that the persons holding such views had “sold their souls” to one political party or the other. In other words, “reasonable” people just avoided this touchy subject, thus strengthening its secrecy.

In the 1980s, amnesty was given to Civil War political refugees by the Socialist government, and people who had been living in the Socialist republics started returning to Greece. In the changed climate, the discourse about the Civil War became legitimate and more inclusive, and information about what had happened circulated around Greece. However, the “paidomazoma,” was still largely untouched with little coverage in articles in the press or in books. It finally appeared in Greek historiography in the late 1990s. There are still many educated and politically active people in Athens who have never heard of the Civil War “paidomazoma.” And still today, the “paidomazoma” has the power to recreate Cold War political tensions within Greek society.

It is to be expected. Civil Wars bring about extraordinary brutalities of a very intimate character, usually performed by all the sides involved. The Greek Civil War still haunts Greek society, though the wounds are healing. Perhaps the forgetfulness of a generation or two aids the healing from a Civil War. Into the void, however, comes misinformation
and biased, one-sided accounts of an issue dragged into the open only for political exigencies, the recycling of existing socio-political tensions and fragmentation, and the fortification of more borders and walls in the name of national security.

**Lefteris**

The following is a life story of one of the paidomazoma children, now a middle-aged man living once again in Prespa. I have translated the whole narrative with minimal editing. It is presented in the voice of Lefteris, unless indicated otherwise.

“In 1948 I was six years old and my sister, Vasiliki, was eight. We were both in Budapest in a school with five or six children in each room and the teachers were teaching us in Hungarian, Russian, Greek and Macedonian. All the children from Psarades went to Budapest, and then they were sent to different villages around the city, so they scattered.”

Petros, a fisherman, and Dimitris, the taverna owner, were sitting with us, and Petros interrupted:

“Two hundred kids left the village of Psarades. They took all the children between the ages of two and a half (so that they wouldn’t be breast-feeding) and fifteen. It was 1948, in the middle of the civil war. Most of them went to Hungary, some went to Romania, and some to Czechoslovakia. The last people that left were the guerillas, and they left for Russia, through Albania.”
Lefteris continued, gesturing towards the other two men sitting at our table:

"Myself, Dimitris and Petros, we all went to Hungary. Dimitris came back to Greece in the 1950s, but soon after he took a boat and fled to Albania. That was because Dimitris's father had married a new woman who was treating Dimitris very badly. As soon as he stepped on Albanian soil they caught him and sent him off to a terrible Albanian forced labor camp where he stayed for years. Petros's sister, who was older and had Hungarian citizenship, filed many petitions from Hungary asking the Albanian authorities to release him and let him return to Hungary. That's where he wanted to go. But it was all in vain.

"You see, a few of us were able to come back in 1957. The revolution took place in Hungary in 1956 and many left the country: some for Austria, others for Australia and still others for America and Canada. My brother Alekos left Hungary and went to Munich, where he is still living. Stavros, my other brother, is still in Bucharest. I was twenty-seven years old when I left Hungary for Berlin. For four years before that I worked as a skilled laborer in a wooden furniture factory in Hungary, after attending a technical school for another four years.

"My childhood years, my childhood friends, were scattered. I wonder where they all went. All these people from the villages around here...whenever I hear a name of a village from the Kastoria area or from Prespa, the faces of childhood friends come to mind. These are faces that have never grown up."
“The guerrillas took the children with boats to Koula and from there on foot to Dupeni. It was in Koula that we first gathered and then we all gathered with the children from the other villages at the borders near Laimos. The crying...”

“Then after Dupeni we were taken by car to Liuboino from there to Bitola. In Bitola we stayed for about a month. Then they took us to a large field and they brought English marmalades and cookies and we waited for the train. That’s where the odyssey begins. In the trains they gave us numbers to wear on our wrists with a little chain and I remember I had number 701. Eventually we reached Budapest. The trip seemed endless to us. I do not remember crossing any borders. In Budapest they put us in army barracks and they shaved our heads and took away our clothes, which were full of lice. They put us in training costumes and one couldn’t recognize the other. We stayed at the camp for a long time. Then we dispersed to different villages. The children from Psarades went to a village called Mozdos, and from there to Tisadob and then Bolaton-Maria and Bolaton-Armadi (‘Bolaton’ means lake). Lastly they took us to Tisourgo. In all these villages we went to school everyday, and with the Hungarians we had very good relations. All the children became very attached to them. The lake reminded us of our village. We went fishing and we made hooks by bending pins. We caught little fish that reminded us of ‘tsironia’ so we dried them just like we do with the ‘tsironia’.

“The Hungarian authorities determined how many people were needed for each trade, so every one of us was taught a skill. When we had learned how to read and write they
distributed paper and envelopes and took photographs of us and they sent them to our parents.

"Because our parents had been guerilla fighters, they left Prespa after the war to go to Serbia. In 1953 one of my uncles—my father's brother—prepared the required legal papers, and our parents were allowed to return to the village. That was the first amnesty given to the communist guerillas in 1953, and so the poor people came back. Terrorism was the state of affairs for the inhabitants around here after the war. Terrorism. The police, the priests, the government officials and everyone in the village were potential informants; they were all a threat to the people who came back.

"Katerina, my sister, became a galvanizator and worked in a factory, and then married a Dopyos from Mavrokambos, a village from the Kastoria area, and they all stayed there in Hungary. They had two daughters. I never got Hungarian citizenship. I wanted to come back to Greece. My father prepared the appropriate papers for me to return to Psarades, but I wanted to finish with my school at the time. When I was ready to come back there was a military junta (1967-1973) in Greece. So I decided to take a little trip, and with two friends of mine snuck out of Hungary and into Yugoslavia and from there to Italy. From Italy we went to Germany and I still don't know why I decided to stay there for two years. We stayed in West Berlin. We were all very excited by the big city and we had read so much about Berlin, the city that had two forces imposed on it—the Socialist and the Capitalist powers. And we wanted to be in-between those two forces, both on this side and that.
“Returning to Hungary after my unauthorized exit I had to report to the special registry for the Greek nationals. The policemen recognized me and asked what I was doing coming back. I told them that I had no problems with their country, a country for which I only felt gratitude. That is why I wanted to come back. I had just wanted to see the world a little, I told them, to go a bit further away. All these things were kind of rough at the time. The police and the authorities were hostile and very intimidating.

“While in Berlin I did a lot of different jobs, no matter what they were. And it was hard because we didn’t speak the language. I did whatever job I found. Slowly I taught myself the language. We weren’t allowed to stay in Germany, so we prepared our papers in order to go live in South Africa. The papers were ready in three months. However, I had permission to stay in Germany for another six months. When the time came for me to go to South Africa I went, for the last time, to the police station to make the final arrangements, papers, etc., and the German cop asked me, ‘Where are you going, you fool?’ And I said my papers have come through for South Africa. The policeman then gave me a stamp that was good for a year’s stay in Germany. With that stamp, in a year’s time I could get another stamp for two years and then after that I could get a permit to stay forever.

“But I wanted, finally, to go to Greece. At the Greek consulate in Germany, they told me to go back to Hungary and that I had no business going back to Greece. More than anything I wanted to see my parents. And I was also getting tired of having no “home”
and traveling here and there all the time. ‘It’s time to go home,’ I said to myself, ‘time to start something there.’

“So I went back to Budapest and got married. However, 24 hours before the wedding, the authorities kicked me out of Hungary because I had been sneaking in and out of the country. That was in 1972. Christmas of 1973, with a transit visa, I re-entered Hungary and married Maria, who was my great love, in a civil ceremony. After the ceremony I went back to Germany, prepared yet a new set of papers for Maria, and we waited for a whole year before we could see each other.

“All this paperwork! In 1967 when I went from Hungary to Yugoslavia, I had to get stamps from the director of the factory I worked in, the secretary of the Communist Party, and finally from the ministry of Internal Affairs. That’s what’s been bugging me all my life: all the paperwork. If I want to leave from somewhere I want to be able to leave. It was always in my blood this coming and going into different countries. It was something I’ve always wanted. I grew up during the occupation when the borders around Prespa were open and people where moving around. For a child, borders do not exist anyway. The first time I felt a border is when I was eighteen years old and I went to visit my uncle in Poland. Borders had seemed very strange to me then. However, among all these countries of the former Eastern Block there were minimal checks and controls at the borders. Only at the Austro-Hungarian borders the controls were a very big deal. Those borders had barbed wire and machineguns all over the place at the watchtowers. I saw all these things when I crossed from Germany to Austria and back to Hungary. Around those
parts of Hungary, close to those borders, even the Hungarians were not allowed. One could visit the villages around the Austro-Hungarian borders only after being issued a special permit. Those borders were terrifying. And it was the same with the borders between East and West Berlin. That border was terrifying too. And whenever I went into East Berlin I had the extra fear that they were going to keep me in there. In the West the borders were never as hard. Still, every time I crossed a border I was scared. I was worried because I had crossed illegally a couple of times, sneaking out or in without permits. But I never had any trouble at all.

“In Berlin we had two daughters. We got remarried in a Greek Church there because Papandreou had given amnesty to all who wanted to return to Greece that year. Only through a church wedding could we be recognized as husband and wife, and only as such were we able to get temporary passports to come into Greece. And so we did. And the whole family came. We left behind our youngest daughter who was then three months old. She stayed behind in Budapest with my in-laws. Our papers had to be issued in Greece. My passport came through immediately without any problems, but Maria’s petition was not approved. She was born in Hungary and her father had a ‘red stamp’ in Athens. Finally she managed to get a passport a year later.

“I came to Greece for the first time in 1977, late at night on the 15th of August, after the panigyri (πανηγύρι). My little girl was now three years old and she was crying and she didn’t want to go up to the mountains. We waited until she fell asleep near Edessa and then we came to Prespa. By mistake I headed towards the village of Aghios Germanos.
Then the road ended and I said to my wife: 'That's it, this is where the world ends.'

'What's wrong?' she asked. 'Can't you remember where your village is?' 'How could I remember?' I said. It was also 4:00 am. There was a light inside a building and I knocked on a door. It was the police station and the policemen told us how to go. We finally arrived at Koula. But there they had border controls before taking the turn to go to the village. The army checked anyone who came to the village of Psarades up to the 1980s. And the people from the village kept asking about it. 'Are we not in Greece here in Psarades? Is that why you put another border in Koula?'

"Eventually I reached my village. Silence. There was only someone passing in a car who knew me from Hungary. 'Where is my father's house?' I asked him. 'Come, I'll take you,' he said. 'Dimitri, come out, I brought you your son. What are you going to treat me with?' he shouted outside our house. Cries, cries, cries. Then I brought my wife in and the girl. The next day I had to go and register with the police. Then I went to the café of Pavlos's cousin, you know. All the old men came and kissed me and welcomed me. Then suddenly the door opens and a policeman comes into the café. All the old men that were sitting got up immediately, they all stopped talking and they made space for the policeman to pass by and to sit down. That made me very angry and through my head went 30 years (1948-77) of oppression that the people here had suffered while I was away."
“Five or six years later the terror seemed to break up. It was then that people started seeing the policeman as functionaries, as employees of the state. That was around the mid-80s. As for the last four years, the people of my village are much, much more open.”
Maria

*The following account, by Maria, is from fieldwork notes from July of 1996.*

"My grandmother, Tzvezda, was married to Grigoris and they had a daughter called Lena—my mother, born here in Psarades. Grigoris was a priest. Psarades back then had two priests. The people of the village kept calling him "the Bulgarian," so he was forced to leave. He moved to the 'inside' Prespa villages where he officiated in eight of them. There, at the age of sixteen, Lena was 'matched' with Ioannis Petropoulos, who was a man from Psarades. At the time, she was living with her family in Podmotsani. Lena and Ioannis met for the first time at the border near Laimos. At the arranged time, she went to the border with her aunt. She saw him, and allegedly she didn’t like him too much. But she took him as her husband nonetheless. She moved into his family house in Psarades and had five children—three daughters and two sons.

During the 1940s Ioannis worked as a shepherd for the animals of the communist guerillas in Vrondero and Pyxos. During the retreat of the guerilla forces, Ioannis followed them into Albania and from there to Poland and Czechoslovakia. In Czechoslovakia he met with three of his children who had been brought there during the ‘paidomazoma.’

"During the ‘paidomazoma’ the children had left the area in ‘dispatches,’ depending on how many children were being admitted at the time by the different countries. Some were sent to Hungary, others to Poland, Romania and so forth. First they took the children to Liubino where they stayed for two weeks. Our parents (Lena and Ioannis) took us across
the lake to Liuboino themselves, in their boats. The children were shipped away two weeks later, by trains and trucks.

"The first ‘paidomazoma’ took place at the end of March in 1948. They took the children between the ages of one and twelve years old. All these children from the first dispatch went to Hungary. They were 350 children. Two weeks later on the 9th of April they took the older children between the ages of thirteen and fifteen. Around thirty-six children left the village then for many different destinations. That is when they took me away. My brother and sister were taken away with the first dispatch to Hungary. You see, we were being heavily bombarded here, so the parents, in order to save their children, sent them away. The children were supposed to return back ‘soon after.’ What a joke. Fifteen years went by before we could come back. As for the children that were older than fifteen years, those were taken by the guerillas. They were conscripted.

I was one of these kids that reconnected with our father in Czechia (Czechoslovakia), and the other two were Kostoula and Christos who now live in Skopia. They have changed their names to Slavic names and they are now suffering the consequences of that choice. All four of us, the three kids and our father, we lived in Czechia, in Vourkralove, from 1948 to 1954. My father was one of the first people who got repatriated through the Red Cross, which in 1954 facilitated the first wave of repatriations. But here in Greece the conditions of living were grave. In Psarades my mother, Lena, had been struggling to survive with her two other children, Andreas and Ioanna. When my father came back to Prespa he found her terribly poor, but also struggling with horrible political conditions.
Every one in the village was accusing everyone else of ‘collaboration’ and ‘treason’ and denunciations were flying right and left. ‘Iron Curtain’ was all they called my family.

"The people in Psarades had no bread to eat back then. My father (and later myself) was returning to an impoverished Greece from Czechia, an industrialized, developed country. We came back with chairs and sofa-beds, with refrigerators and televisions. In 1963 when I came to Greece there was not one television in the whole of Prespa. Everyone was looking at our things and they were saying that not even the Prefect had as much furniture. Soon enough we had to sell it all for money to survive. Look at these chairs—only they remain. They’ve been in this house for over forty years. I came back to Greece in the 1960s with my husband Konstandinos. His father, my-father-in-law, filed the petition for our return and we came back, here, back to our country, nowhere else!"

"Before the war the men from Psarades, the fishermen, went fishing and the women had the home to deal with, the cows, the pigs and so on. They took the calves to graze in the fields. In the old days before the war, when the families were large, everything was planned and organized in rotations. You would be washing clothes for a week, next week you would be collecting firewood, and so on and so forth. Everyone was always doing something. The father and mother in law, the oldest couple in the house, always had the last word. Your mother in law would be deciding about everything in the house. But the house was everything; it included gardens, wood, and animals. We collected and carried home wood, branches and grass for the animals daily. The men were always absent, as they had to go bring flour or fish or something that we needed. In the summer the men
lived in huts by the Little Prespa where they went fishing. In the winter they came back to
the village and went fishing for ‘tsironia’ in the Large Prespa, at Roti, during the night.
That was how life was. We had nothing to do with the market place. Only the men went
to Florina\(^{108}\) or to other villages to sell their fish on their mules, each one his own. Except
for the villagers from Psarades and Microlimni, no other Prespa people ever went fishing
in the lake. Not like nowadays. There was great poverty, and everyone had to make do
with what they had with their gardens, their chickens, and their animals. I’m telling you,
we had to beg our parents to make us ‘tsarouhia’\(^{109}\) and if they went to Florina they
sometimes might buy us a little pair of shoes from the thrift stores for the holidays!

“Back then, however, we all lived harmoniously; we had no expectations, nor even from
our parents. But our parents, even though they often had no bread to eat themselves,
always found food for us kids. The whole village was on good terms, back then. They
didn’t know what the word ‘fighting’ meant, nor was there jealousy within a family or
within the village. And that was when we used to live all together, twenty-five people or
more under one roof. There would be four and five brothers in a house, who would get
married, bring their wives home and have children all under the same roof, and there
were no fights at all, not even the couples between themselves. They used to listen to the
elders, and OK, they might have little fights every now and then but there were no big
disputes, long-lasting issues and no separations of families. Everybody had to share
everything. Let’s say we had seven or eight cows, four vines and a vegetable garden. If
the next-door family didn’t have wine, vines or milk, we took some over to them. He
would also give us whatever he knew we didn’t have. And you will say, ‘It still happens,
Maria. Even today here in the village people give foods to others who don’t have them. So-and-so doesn’t have a cow, let me bring her a little milk. Everyone thinks that way and everybody makes do.’ We still do that here in Psarades. But in other Prespa villages this is not at all the case. Well now there is dissention everywhere, due to politics and with the elections. One has become rich and the other is jealous... Eh! It’s the same thing everywhere. Back then, when I was growing up, everyone was equally poor and there were no disputes.

“And when the wars came, we had no time for disputes either. When the war was taking place in 1940-41 the whole village was uprooted. As the war was raging and we were close to the borders, in order to protect ourselves we abandoned our houses, vines, pigs, cows, everything. We left it all behind and we all went to Agios Germanos—the whole village—and we stayed with friends or relatives. The Italians were everywhere around here: at the borders, in the villages, in the lake, at Koula. When we were still here in Psarades they gave us two Italians who lived with us, in our home, and who were very sick. I have no idea what happened to these people. The Italians were not all bad. There were good people among them. Well, we stayed at the village of Agios Germanos for approximately two months. It was during the night that we left Psarades on mules. My brother was only forty days old, I remember, born in 1940. Today he is fifty-six.

“Before the war the borders with Albania and with Skopia were both open. It was at the last phase of the guerilla warfare that Tito closed the borders, and later Hoxha followed
suit. I remember we used to go shopping with the mules, mostly at the Albanian villages, which were closer to us, much closer than Florina.

"I remember then the Germans came.\textsuperscript{112} My mother had finished kneading bread, and we had prepared all the loaves. They were ready to bake in the wood oven and the oven was blazing. And the Germans said, 'Tell us where the guerillas you're hiding are.' My mom was trembling with fear and the Germans were screaming and threatening her, and they were holding hand-grenades and screaming, 'Are you going to take these breads to the guerillas? I'm going to throw this grenade in the oven and blow everything to smithereens!' And we, we were little kids then, there by the oven, helping our mom with the baking. We kept saying, 'There are no guerillas, I don't know, I have not seen any!' Then they got angry and went stomping into our house and searched every corner: the hay-barns, the basements, the stables. They dug into all the animal food in case there was someone hiding there. In the basement we had a wooden water flask, large and round. 'Tsostra,' we call it. So they said, 'What is this? A bomb?' and they started shooting at it. We were all trembling with fear but we said nothing. We stood mute from the fear. Eh... then they left without neither burning the house down nor blowing us up with their hand-grenades.

"The men were not here. As I told you, they were fishing at Koula, living in huts and fishing, and only once a week they'd come and see us. And the women lived separate from the men; only once a week they saw each other. As for us kids, we would go to work when we were around ten or twelve years old. I went to help my father with the
fishing in 1947, when I was barely twelve. That was because my brother Andreas had joined the navy, my older sister had to help our mother at home, and the other kids where too young. So I had to go. We went to Agios Achileios, at the monastery with the snakes—you know, the ancient place. My, my, my were there snakes!!! I was terrified and I was crying all the time. And my father was all worried about me, and sad that he had dragged me there. We just slept like this, in the open, because it was summer.

“Then my brother was in the army, and my sister Ioanna, who had stayed behind to help our mom, was taken away by the guerillas, to fight with them. They conscripted her and she went up to the mountains. She took arms and fought with them. She was tall and lean, like you—a strong girl. Then the army captured them and held them hostages in 1948-49—I cannot remember exactly when—and they were taken to prison in Kozani. Meanwhile she had hurt herself by falling a couple of times, and she had frostbite from the winters up in the mountains, and then she was beaten up a bit in prison, too. She suffered from pains in her spine for years afterwards.

“Later on, Ioanna had two operations in Kilkis, during which they took out parts of her spine. That is why she got smaller. Our brother Andreas would take her back and forth to the doctors. He’d carry her over his shoulder, as we had no cars at the time, and she was in excruciating pain. Eh, as she was maimed that way, whom would she find to marry? She took a widower for a husband who was no good and she lived with him for ten years until he died, too. Eh, she was an old girl: in 1947 she must have been eighteen years old and she got married when she was around thirty-eight years old. What could she do?
“When our brother Andreas was released from the navy he returned to Prespa. When he got here he saw the entire road between Laimos and Koula covered with corpses. The lake was red, filled with bodies. You see, this is where the guerilla headquarters were—in Laimos, Pyli and Vrondero. The hospitals were here in Psarades, and whoever died here, we buried him up by the church. So Andreas came home and found our house empty. He then found out about his sister being imprisoned in Kozani, so he went there, got her out, and brought her home. But we were all gone! Our mother, too. She was up in the mountains digging trenches for the guerillas at the age of 40-45. We, the three younger children, were gone with the ‘paidomazoma’ and as for our father, he left Greece during the ‘retreat’ and went with the guerillas to Poland and then to Czechoslovakia. They took boats and left from Albania up north.

“I remember before being taken away from Psarades I was with a friend of mine, who is now in Romania, and we had gone up the mountain gathering wood. We loaded all the wood and branches on our backs and were on our way back down to the village when we saw airplanes coming from Florina. Our parents and the guerillas had warned us that if we ever saw any planes in the sky, we had to fall straight down to the ground. So—‘bam!’—as we were loaded we fall face down on the ground with all the wood covering us, so the planes passed us and they came and threw their bombs on the village. They destroyed the house of Chrisa Lagopoulou. We were young, so as soon as we unloaded the wood we were carrying we ran to the village square to play. But there were screams and cries there as news had come of some men that had been killed. So everyone was crying and mourning and we were just sitting there not knowing what to do, when the
guerillas called me over. They saw us sitting there and took pity on us. ‘Come here!’ So I went. ‘What do you want from me?’ The whole village was full of guerillas, the school, everything. (It must have been around the beginning of 1948 right before we left with the ‘paidomazoma.’) And the guerilla then told me, ‘Take this little girl by the hand,’ (I was thirteen and she was nine), ‘and take this note,’ (they hid the note, here, under my armpit), ‘and do not open it nor show it to anyone.’ (The army was still at Koula, so from Koula nothing was coming this way, not even the birds.) ‘You should not pay attention no matter how much they call at you. Just hold the little girl by the hand and walk. You’re not going to stop anywhere, straight you will walk all the way to Pyli.’ What a hike, eh, for two little girls… We walked and walked, we paid attention to nothing on the way, we were going straight to where he had told us, to Pyli. I knocked on the door, out came a guerilla. I took out the note from my armpit, I give it to him and then—‘frrt’—I ran away. The guerillas start calling us, ‘Girls, girls, wait! Come back here!’ We were scared. After a while we went back to them and they gave us bread, a whole loaf, and some canned food and I don’t know what else. And they spoke to us nicely and they bid us farewell, and we took all the stuff and returned to the village. That little girl, Sofia, the daughter of Chrissa, who was sent to Romania, and who came back to Greece years later, ended up in America. When we met I asked her, ‘Remember, Sophia, this and that?’ She didn’t remember a single thing!

“Get it?! The army had figured out that the guerilla headquarters were around here and the hospitals and everything… Someone had ‘leaked’ that this place was crawling with guerillas. The school, the church, the whole village of Psarades, was filled with wounded
people, who the others had carried in stretchers and by boats. As young girls playing around the village and in the dirt, we would find severed fingers and ‘things,’ you know, that the guerillas had thrown to the garbage. They were crying, screaming, sighing, dying, the guerillas. We buried some of them here in the village and all of us kids would gather around as the guerillas would play songs and sing: ‘Our brothers, you fell victims in an unjust battle...’" All the kids, we would stand there around the graves of all these people... My, what times those were.

“But, you know, back then the people were very brave. They did not pay attention to hunger, or cold or anything. But there was also a lot of fear. Many people from our village were killed. Each house had one, or two, or three casualties—young women as beautiful as cool water and young men, too. There was great fear at the time. At Koula there was the Greek army and the mountains were filled with guerillas.

“When we came back to the village in 1963, the village was just as it is today, only it had many more people." But there were no jobs. As Australia, Germany, and Canada opened for immigration, most of the people of Psarades left the village. There was extreme poverty after the war, and no one had any money to buy boats or nets to fish with. So, the people kept leaving, trying to find a better life. Most of the ones that left our village went to Perth, Australia. One would make the start and go there, and then everyone else would join him. Konstandinos, my husband, and I wanted to go to Germany. But we couldn’t get the so-called ‘social convictions certificate’ which was needed in order to emigrate abroad. My husband’s brother and his wife had moved to
Ptolemaida after their repatriation in 1959, four years before us, and they both had steady jobs. We were thinking about going to Ptolemaida, but first we decided to go to Panayotis’s father’s village near the town of Grevena. Oh, I was crying and crying, and asking him, ‘Why did you bring me here to the jungle?’ You see, we had come to Greece like Europeans, with our short-sleeved dresses and everything. ‘Don’t go out with short sleeves,’ my father-in-law would tell me, ‘or we’ll be the laughing stock of the village.’ My husband said, ‘OK, we won’t stay here,’ so we started running around all over the place trying to find jobs.

“The freight car containing all our things from Czechia arrived in Kozani a week later, and we had to go get our things out of customs. We went to Kozani, what could we do? They were asking us for money for the customs, but we didn’t have a cent. We had no money at all; we couldn’t afford a glass of water. And then on top of it all, where would we put all that stuff: chest of drawers, furniture, televisions, armchairs, vacuum cleaners, couches? ‘We’ll take them to the village,’ said my mother-in-law. ‘We’ll store them in the basement.’ Oh, how I was crying... ‘Stop,’ said Konstandinos. ‘Don’t cry!’

Meanwhile in Kozani, at customs, they had checked everything, the vacuum cleaners and all, and they were demanding their money. Not only did we need to pay for customs but also for trucks that had to come and move the stuff to wherever it was going to go. I cried and cried...Only to think about this story makes me sick to my stomach. We were melting from the summer heat of Kozani, we couldn’t afford a drink, and the more the foreign freight car delayed in Greece the more the prices kept going up and up. Then a
nice man from the customs office, who had seen me crying my eyes out, felt sorry for me and said, 'Go to the welfare center at the church.' And so we did, and the priest saw me all puffy and red from crying and he gave us 100 drachmas and that was it. They also provided the trucks for free, and the customs people cut all the prices in half, and we took our household to Ptolemaida where Konstandinos's brother lived. He said, 'You have to come and stay here in Ptolemaida.' And so we rented a little house and we started putting things in. And we kept putting the things in and putting them in, but they wouldn't fit—half was still out in the street, and the place was packed inside. We took everything out again and we went and rented another house. All this was done with me crying my eyes out. I could not stop crying—you cannot imagine how much I cried. Anyway, we found a house that was new and really big. We rented it without any money and we put all the stuff inside. The house was brand new and the owners were in Germany.

"Now we had to get jobs. The brother worked at the electricity factories, or some large industry in Ptolemaida which had a lot of factories. Konstandinos got a job there. My sister-in-law asked at the orphanage where she was working and they took me to work there, too. We cleaned, mopped and cooked for the orphans and for the director. Within a day, Konstandinos and I, we both had jobs! I could take food home from work as well! We liked it there and everything seemed to be fine, until they asked for my "certificate for social convictions" since my job at the orphanage was in the public sector. The policemen were there everyday, checking my every move. So I came back to my parents in Psarades and told them my troubles, and they managed to get the papers I needed from here, from Psarades. They probably went to the police and the police asked the other
villagers, and it was OK. I got the certificate and I left for Ptolemaida. Konstandinos and I were never asked to sign anything, ever. I think that the authorities were always pretending that they wanted the best for us, that they were going to take care of us, do this for us, do that for us. Yeah, right!”
Dafni

The following is based on fieldwork notes from October of 1996.

Dafni is thirty-eight years old. It is 1989. She is in a train crossing southeastern Europe going north. It is the end of the summer and outside her window the fields are light brown, dried up and brittle. She boarded this train several hours ago in Florina, Greece.

Looking through the window at Yugoslavia passing by she repeats, to herself: “Ka stana? Ka stana, stana!” (“What is she doing? Whatever she’s doing it’s her business!”) She’s going back to Czechoslovakia, where she lives, married and with two daughters in the town of Brno. She still hasn’t managed to like Brno. But she’s been away from her family for more than a month now. Too long! It’s chilly in here. She thinks of the month of year, September. She feels a little numb. She should be feeling different, even a little triumphant. After all, she finally was a woman with a nationality!

Two months before, she had left Czechoslovakia with no identification documents other than a letter from the Czech authorities. And what a hassle it has been, all these years, travelling without a passport, living without a nationality, every interaction with the authorities a nightmare. There was of course a very serious reason, but it seems strangely futile now… For six years she’s been leading a dizzying bureaucratic quest for Greek nationality and citizenship. For six years, along with her cousin Martha who lives in Florina, they traveled to Athens and Thessaloniki many times, told the same story over and over to many people, knocked on doors and more doors, visited ministries and
endless lawyers—all to no avail. Eventually they found a little window, some legalistic reasoning they could pursue: the Greek State had revoked her father’s nationality (“ithagenia”) in 1953, but Dafni was born in 1951. This means that she was born to a Greek father. She was born in Czechoslovakia, but to a Greek national. According to Greek law this is the sole requirement for being a Greek.

In 1981, when the Socialist party came to power in Greece, her cousin Martha became more hopeful about Dafni’s plight for citizenship. There was great anticipation that this government would compensate for all the wrongs suffered by the Greek communists since the dictatorship of Metaxas in the 1930s. There was clearly a change in the tone of everyday political life. But as the years went by, Martha, like many others, became more and more disillusioned. “They are changing a few things,” she’d tell Dafni, “but they are slow and lumbering.” Indeed, they seemed to continue hitting the same dead ends: mistrust and suspicion about Dafni’s political and national sentiments, bureaucratic murk, and general indifference.

In 1989, the political landscape was once again changing. Using a couple of opportune contacts through the Communist party, they had managed to arrange an appointment with the Minister of Internal Affairs, Nikos Konstandopoulos. Kostandopoulos had become minister in June 1989 as part of an extraordinary, short-term, coalition government supported by the two sworn enemies: the right wing Conservative Party of “New Democracy” (Nea Democratia), and a union of the two Communist parties119 (which, some would argue, was itself even more extraordinary), under the name “Coalition.”
Konstandopoulos, a communist himself, listened to the two women closely and with great interest, Dafni thought. She told him that her father had a limitless adoration for Greece. That he taught Greek to other Greeks in Czechoslovakia, and that when the Czech Communist Party asked him to join, he had answered that he was a life member of the Greek Communist Party and he did not see the reason why he should join anything else. And that even when the Greek State revoked his Greek nationality, he had refused to become a Czech citizen and insisted that he was Greek. Dafni had also refused to get a Czech passport. She too, always thought of herself as a Greek national. All her life, just like her father, she had had to endure the suspicion and animosity of the Czech and other authorities, as a woman without a nation-state. She now wanted to be part of her nation, the Greek nation.

"Like a triangle of unrequited love," she laughed, "this relation between me and the two countries." Konstandopoulos smiled. Her father would have been proud of her. She felt strong, like she could bite the minister's ear off. Konstandopoulos asked a couple of questions. Then he wrote a report and sent it off to a man who had no title attached to his name. She assumed that he must have been a top national security agent or something like that. He was available to see them the next morning. He looked at the report and said he had to check her father's file. They had to wait for a while. "If it only says in his file that he was a 'threat to the nation,' a 'communist traitor,' 'communist guerilla,' and the like, you're in the clear. But if on the file we find the classification 'S.Ph.' (Σ.Φ.) then there is nothing we can do." Dafni immediately knew that "S.Ph." stands for "slavophone" (σλαβόφωνος), or slavic speaker, and her father Demetrios was one of
them. She then remembered that just a week earlier the so-called “political convictions” (politicon fronimaton) files that had plagued a large part of the Greek population - branding them as Communists and thus limiting their life options - had all been burned. All of them. It was a great media event, part of the coalition government’s policy toward “National Reconciliation” (Ethniki Simfiliosi) between the right wing Democrats, the Left and the Communists. It was portrayed as an effort to bridge the chasm and mend the wounds opened up by the Civil War and the dictatorships of the 30s and 60s. Martha had said at the time that all that was really burning was the guilt of the Right. They clearly had not burned all the files, Dafni thought.

Nine years had already passed since her father died. While still alive, he always said that he wanted to be buried in Prespa, in the cemetery of the village where he was born, overlooking the lake, but that was not allowed him. No matter how much he tried during the last few years of his life, and no matter how much he pleaded, he was unable to get a permit for the entry of his dead body into Greece. He was blacklisted. It didn’t matter that all his life in Czechoslovakia he had been teaching Greek history and literature. Nor did it matter that even though the Greek State had taken away his nationality he had maintained his Greek identity, ardently refusing to embrace any other. He had refused to Slavify his name and he had refused to move to the Republic of Macedonia in Yugoslavia, along with other political refugees from Greek Macedonia, where the pressures for embracing a non-Greek identity would be even stronger. He had often told Dafni that he really wanted to take the trip to Yugoslavian Macedonia, just once, all the way to the borders, and sit there on a hillside overlooking Prespa, and while looking at his village to drink some
“retsina.” That was all he wanted, he’d say. After that he could die in peace. He never did take that trip. He never did see his village again before he died.

All that must have seemed irrelevant to the Greek authorities; he was considered a threat to the nation and wasn’t allowed on Greek soil, dead or alive. A few months before he died, he made up his mind. He asked Dafni to burn his body and to throw his ashes into the Vardar River so that it would reach the Aegean Sea near the port of Thessaloniki. “They cannot stop me that easily,” he said and laughed. “I’m going back to Greece whether they like it or not!”

Dafni sat on a metallic folding chair of yet another office of the Greek government waiting for her father’s file. She wondered what had made her father’s communism and his vision of Greekness so clear and so potent. Then she started thinking about that vacation she took with her husband a year ago, in 1988. After so many years of being constantly with the kids, they had gone, just the two of them, to Romania for five days, to Bucharest. She had just stepped out of an old Christian Orthodox church with a thin yellow candle in her hands, ready to light it and place it alongside the other candles standing in a big rectangular hole in the wall, just outside of the church door. All these candles were standing there, in a copper grid, one in each hole. Below the grid was a metal tray, and in it shallow water was covering the bottoms of the lit candles. She stood there unable to move. Over the candles there were two signs: to the left it said “For the dead,” and to the right “For the living.” She couldn’t chose. Her husband bought her another candle so they could move on.
Her husband Laszlo couldn’t really understand why she had gone through all the trouble for her Greek nationality. But he had never met Demetrios. Dafni’s father had resurrected all the characters of Greek mythology, all the tragic heroes, and the Greek philosophers, and had made them part of their household when she was a child. Later on, the Byzantine Emperors and Empresses and the heroic figures of the Greek Revolution of Independence against the Ottomans, as well as the heroes from the Balkan Wars for the annexation of Macedonia, often came to join them at dinner time in the long Czech winter months.

It was soon after her father’s death that she had taken this train ride for the first time, down, down, through the Balkans in that same (or so it now seemed) slow, dark train, with the fake leather burgundy seats all cracked and torn. Down, down through the same dried up and brittle Yugoslavian fields she can now see outside her window. It was then, a little after his death, that she began her quest for the recognition of her Greekness. Unlike her father, she was able to enter the country, and she did cross those borders many times.

This time it is different. She is going home “with a nation.” There was no “S.Ph.” on her father’s file. Or so she was told. It made no sense but things rarely did. The file just said that he was a communist guerilla, a traitor who had fled the country and was denied entry. That is what they told her. She was given the certificates and orders to the respective authorities, who had then issued her an identity card and a passport that said “Ιθαγένεια Ελληνική,” Greek nationality. And now she is finally officially Greek. A couple of hours ago, when the train crossed the Greek-Yugoslavian border, she showed
her new passport to the authorities. Crossing the border was so easy! It felt good. She was a Greek, at last, and she was legitimate. She says it now feels a little empty. She’s on her way to see the girls, though, and she can’t wait. They must be in school now. What a horrible building, that school. She has never managed to like Brno.
Aliki

Based on field-notes from August 1995.

In another train speeding through central Europe another woman, a Vlach from Prespa named Aliki, is traveling back to Germany. Her mind is still filled with images from the wedding. Her cousin was married yesterday to a young man from Lefkona. Aliki has just spent a month in Prespa for summer vacation. She is thirty-two years old. She lives in Hamburg and works at a factory, canning fruit imported from southern Europe. Her husband Achileas is sleeping in the seat across from her. His head leans against the window, and between his head and the glass is his sweater bundled up into a messy pillow, with a sleeve hanging down touching his arm. Her daughter Danae sits beside him reading a book. “She is fourteen already, and so beautiful.” Aliki loves how willful her daughter is: “Quiet and strong, like me.” Achileas is more open, more vulnerable… Aliki’s glance skims over her daughter’s body, from head to foot. She is tall and thin, like herself, with beautiful thick brown hair and green eyes. She wears military boots constantly these days, even in the summer. It was good she had them on these last few days in Prespa. The rain had turned the village streets into rows of red mud puddles. And yesterday, when they danced down the street to get the bride from her house in the village of Vrondero,123 and then danced with her in her courtyard, and then danced again all the way back to the cars, Aliki’s shoes were totally destroyed. Danae dances beautifully even in her stupid boots, Aliki thought. She dances like a young man.
Both Vrondero and her own village, Pyli, become mud pools every spring and fall. They are villages of Vlach herders, and possibly no one thought it necessary to make the roads any different. They all had goats and sheep to take care of, in and out of their fold, up the slopes and down again, everyone covered in dirt or shit most of the time anyway. She never minded it before, all that mud. After all, she was the first generation in her family to be born in a house. They were all nomads just thirty or so years ago, traveling from mountainside to mountainside moving the flocks of sheep and goats to grazing pastures. When she was a child her uncles would take her with them, sometimes for the whole summer, up into the mountains where they slept in tents. She loved it all, especially the horses. She remembers riding the horses with her cousins, up and down the slopes. Now she lives in Hamburg in an apartment on the 4th floor of a very gray building. She feels like she cannot breathe in Hamburg.

The bride was not feeling well. As she danced, she could hardly drag her feet and her face looked like it was made of wax. She was Aliki’s cousin from a part of the family they rarely visited. After a fight, years ago, between some uncles of hers over a piece of land, or some goats, or both, the two families were barely talking to each other. Since she left with Achileas for Germany, all these very important events in the life of her village, Pyli, seemed light and irrelevant.

The bride’s wedding dress had a red ring of mud around the bottom by the time they got in the cars. Asphalt led up to cobble stones in front of the church at the village of Lefkona where the wedding was going to take place. There were three traditions coming together
in this wedding, and the people close to the two families feared trouble: the bride was a Vlach from the village of Vrondero and the groom was half Dopyos and half Pontic from Lefkona. There was a lot of gossip going around before the wedding, but Aliki had closed her ears to it.

On the way to the church, the Dopyi family and friends of the groom were angry because they felt the bride’s people were not respecting their customs. They hadn’t brought enough beer and wine to offer during the dancing that took place between the cars and the church. Also they were not dancing enough, they didn’t look very happy, and they had not asked the musicians with the clarinet and the big drum to play some “dopya” songs. So the groom’s people, quite drunk already, made a big fuss and threw money at the musicians, paying them extra to play the “dopya” songs for them to dance to before anyone could proceed with the wedding. They danced tightly around the musicians blocking the bride’s way to the church. Then a couple of them sat down on the ground right in front of the entrance to the church courtyard. They knelt down and then they sat between their bent legs. Shaking their shoulders to the music, they would bring their torsos all the way to the ground, all the way back and then all the way to the front again, almost touching the earth. Others poured beer in their mouths at every chance. The bride stood for a long time right behind them waiting, with her people standing behind her. Aliki thought there would be a fight but nothing happened. The bride stood there with her lips tightly closed, holding her dress and looking exhausted, impatiently waiting for the ordeal to be over. After fifteen minutes the drunks moved out of the way, and everyone finally squeezed into the church.
A few minutes into the ceremony, the bride fainted and collapsed to the ground. The priest turned his back on the scene, pretending not to see what had happened. The doctor came through and he said, "She needs fresh air," and we all slowly squeezed back out of the church behind the doctor, who was now carrying the bride in his arms. Someone brought a chair. Someone else brought some cologne for her to smell. Eventually she came to, but she couldn’t go back into the church. The priest was furious as he went on with the ceremony at the threshold of the church door. The priest was barely inside the church while, facing him, just outside of the church door, stood the groom, and beside him the bride on a chair. She leaned over periodically and vomited.

Aliki thought that the bride must have had the flu. She had always been this way: unassuming, taking things at face value. She made a poor gossip. All of the presumptions necessarily involved in telling stories about others confused her. All the long tales spinning around Prespa scared her. Like the story about the mother of Maria Voukou from Aghios Germanos, who had killed, they said, one of her newborn children and hung it on a tree in the woods. She then went on pretending for months that she was still pregnant, until a neighbor kicked her in the stomach and the rags fell down to the ground between her legs. Then there were the rumors about the groom’s grandmother being a witch. During the Civil War she had cast a spell by throwing a snake in front of a brave man’s horse thus tying the man’s tongue. The brave man—Fotis Bellos was his name—was on his way to speak in defense of his best friend Tassos Arnavakis, at a makeshift tribunal put together by the communist guerillas. Tassos (whose sisters are still alive in Kallithea) was wrongly accused by some people from his village of being a traitor and a
secret collaborator of the national army. He was responsible, they said, for an ambush
that caused the death of three guerillas and a woman nurse. Tassos was clearly innocent
and the only man who could save him was the brave man, Fotis Bellos. Every time Fotis
tried to speak and defend his friend, the words wouldn’t come out—he just coughed. And
he coughed and coughed, so his best friend was executed in the middle of the village
square.

These were the kind of tales the older women would tell, and Aliki tried to stay away
from them. But the men told stories, too, about the past, about Albanians, about the war,
and young people told stories about each other. Everyone spun stories here. Stories made
the whole of Prespa spin around. It felt, to Asimo, totally out of control! That is what
scared her. When she was younger she would feign interest, but she often couldn’t even
follow the stories told. People thought she was a quiet girl, shy. After she married and
moved to Germany, she felt relieved. She only had to talk to Achileas about day-to-day
concrete things. When she returns to Prespa, she spends most of her time with Achileas’s
sister. They go everywhere and do everything together, keeping themselves at a safe
distance from all this talk. Achileas is more vulnerable. At the panigyri of Psarades he
was drinking and crying about something someone had said about him.

At the wedding reception someone made a joke about the baby bouncing inside the bride
as she danced, and that was when Aliki understood why everyone was so tense during the
wedding. Bits and pieces of gossip she hadn’t managed to avoid flashed back into her
mind. Someone had said the child’s father was one of the Albanians working as a
shepherd for the bride’s father. Other’s said that the bride had a crush on the groom but that he never really wanted her. She had manipulated him into getting her pregnant. The people from Pyli and Vrondero said that the groom’s father didn’t want a Vlach bride and that was the source of all the nasty gossip. Aliki wandered whether the couple was ever in love? Aliki’s mother always said that the reason she had such a great time all these years with Aliki’s father was that hers was an arranged marriage. A lot of people around Prespa still believed in arranged marriages being more successful and “steadfast.” She remembered hearing about a book with photographs of eligible Albanian young women circulating around Prespa this summer. A lot of older men in the region have been marrying young Albanian women. What a shame to be so poor. She had married Achileas for love. She adored him. Was the groom really pressured to marry her cousin? Did she ever love him?

Aliki then thought of the groom’s mother. She hadn’t heard much about the mother; people didn’t seem to know much about her. And during the whole event—wedding and reception—the mother’s side, the Pontics, seemed almost absent. Earlier in the night, before everyone was served the lamb, potatoes and salads, the band had played a couple of “Pontic” songs and the mother’s people had danced with her and the newlyweds, as was expected. The mother danced a few rounds and then sat down. Her son, the groom, got her up again and danced one more dance, the “tic,” with his mother and her people in the circle. Even though it is a “Pontic” dance, the “tic” is one of Aliki’s favorite. It has fast and small steps, the body is straight and the arms, for most of the dance, are kept straight down between the dancers who tightly hold hands and whose bodies form a
circular wall as they stand side by side. Whenever the dancers took a step towards the center of the circle they bent their elbows and raised half their arms and the circle breathed a little. Whenever the leader of the dance felt like it, he raised both hands up in the air with the inward steps, and then everyone followed, raising their held hands and arms straight up into the air and then sharply pulling them down again tightly against their bodies. But as soon as the song was finished the band switched to “Vlach” songs again, the Pontics retreated, and the Vlachs took over.

As the circle was slowly turning around, Aliki saw her daughter Danae dancing with her cousins further down the line. Oh, those black boots! Among all the young men stepping in sync, she looked stunning. She knew and danced all the dances—the Dopya and the Pontic as well as the Vlach. Everyone in Prespa knew how to dance and danced the different styles. The Vlach dances are moody, often slow, danced with big simple steps. Sometimes these steps—the music and the legs—would stay hovering, delaying up in the air a bit before touching the ground again. The Pontic songs have sharper rhythms and the dances are complex, fast and upright. The Dopya songs are also complex both melodically and rhythmically. They are danced with looser movements, they have skips and jumps, false starts and syncopations.

Aliki was surprised when she discovered that in the villages around Kastoria and Florina people did not dance all the different styles. Her friends, the teachers from Kastoria, who were Pontic, did not know how to dance any of the “Vlach” or “Dopya” songs. At the wedding in the village of Drossopigi near Kastoria, a year ago, her Pontic friends
couldn’t dance even the simplest of “Vlach” dances. “Incredible,” she thought. In Prespa the young people these days know all the dances before they even learn how to read and write. We all dance each other’s dances nowadays. Sometimes however, depending on where we are or with whom, we might choose to dance only our own dances, she thought. At the panigyri of Plati, for example, the atmosphere was strange from the very beginning and there was a stand-off throughout the night.

To begin with, something was wrong with the band: the good clarinet player from Kallithea, the one who knows how to keep the precarious balances between the different styles, was not there. Then Vlachs kept ordering more and more of their songs, monopolizing the dance floor for too long. Some Dopyi got annoyed and bored and decide to leave. Others silently protested by staying at the margins and refusing to dance or order any of their songs. Aliki wouldn’t have noticed if Nikos hadn’t passed by their table to tell Achileas that he was leaving with the others from Psarades to go to the bars in Florina. They were all very annoyed, he said. This wasn’t a panigyri he said, it was more like a “Vlachikos gamos,” a Vlach wedding. Then, a few hours later, early in the morning, a few Dopyi from Australia went on the rebound and ordered some inappropriate songs, some of those “autonomist” songs. All the Vlachs and Pontics sat down and soon most of them left to go home. As one grows older, Aliki thought, whom you dance with and what you dance becomes more of a statement, a political statement. You can show that you respect and love someone a lot sometimes, if you dance with him to his people’s music. In Prespa, most of the time, dancers shift through the styles with ease, going in and out of one another’s music, mood and dance steps.
Everyone loves to watch Achileas dance. He dances mainly the “Vlach” songs and even when drunk he dances well. He beams when he dances. He becomes happy and every now and then lets out a scream. When he leads one of the dances that he likes, he brings up the mood of the whole the room, several hundred people, and it feels like he just turned up the volume. She wonders whether if they had stayed in Prespa he’d dance the other dance styles more. Sometimes it seemed like he had to prove himself every time they came to Prespa, his “Vlachness” included. Maybe because he spent too much time in Laimos and Psarades with Andreas and Tassos… Maybe someone said something about him and it reached his ears. He would have told her. Anyway, every time he asked for a song from the band, last night, everyone around our table, friends and family, would rush up to support his dance. That is how it works: the friends and family are the support of the dancer. A dancer shouldn’t be left alone to dance with “strangers.” Aliki didn’t dance much, but when Achileas was leading the rounds she had to stand up and “dance her husband,” she had to support him. She liked this “obligation.” She didn’t like to dance next to him, but after a few people, down the line. Right next to him danced one or two of his best male friends, or occasionally his daughter, Danae. Later that night Achileas requested Aliki’s favorite “Vlach” song, and he waved at her to come and lead the line. Danae mobilized all the young people to come and dance her mother’s song. They were all dancing slowly round and round and she did indeed feel very “supported.” As every year passes, day-by-day, she waits for the summer and their trip to Prespa.

There were so many things wrong with their lives in Hamburg, but they didn’t have enough land or animals to give them a decent living here in Prespa. In Germany Achileas
worked in the automobile industry. Between the two of them they got by. They managed every year to afford train tickets and sometimes plane tickets to come to Greece, to reenter Prespa, and to restore themselves.
The Albanian

Summer 1996

The section that follows addresses “the Albanian” as a figure in the dynamics of the Prespa border region. It is not meant to characterize Albanians per se, nor is it in any way a summary view of Albanian culture or history. The Albanian has a presence, real and mythological, in the border zone, that represents both the daily life and a discursive position of the transnational migrant - a specter of the border’s porosity, a “national impurity,” an a priori suspect in the eyes of the legal system, an unknown, uncontrollable and indigestible presence. This presence is explored herein through my fieldwork.

“The Albanian” is easy to spot as you drive around the mountains and rural areas in the north-west of Greece near the Albanian borders. He often travels in groups of two or three, avoiding the main roads, and cutting across rough mountains trying to avoid being spotted by the increasingly numerous Greek police jeeps. You often see the Albanian as a flash, like a deer suddenly bounding across the road, disappearing just as quickly into the rocks, bushes and trees, never to be seen again.

Some months of the year you see the Albanian working the fields, or building at a construction site. In the Greek rural areas near the Albanian border, these are the two most common jobs for illegal Albanian immigrants. They are also used in goat and sheep herding as well as in all the hard, manual labor jobs such as cutting firewood. This job, because it is one of the hardest, offers what is considered very good wages: it can range from thirty-five to fifty dollars (thirty to forty-five euros). Herding brings the lowest wages: 120 to 180 dollars per month. The majority of the Albanian illegal immigrants work as seasonal agricultural workers and they get from ten to fifteen dollars per day.
They work from sunrise to sunset. The wife of their employer feeds them twice per day. They sleep in barns or in deserted, decrepit old houses at the outskirts of the village.

In the provinces of Florina and Kastoria, in the far northwest of Greece and bordering Albania, the hands working the fields are almost exclusively Albanian. According to local police authorities, in these two prefectures alone more than 20,000 Albanians had been arrested and deported back to Albania during a recent month. The local agricultural work remained stable throughout this massive upheaval. When a worker is arrested in this way, another is immediately on hand to fill the gap. There is a constant flow coming into the area, being chased out, and sneaking back in.

During the months when agricultural activity peaks there are specific meeting points, usually at remote crossroads or villages near the borders, where prospective employers go at around 7:00 in the morning. There they find large groups of men milling around, and from their trucks they arrange the wages and the number of days of work available. Then they load their men into the back of the pick-up truck and take them directly to the fields. All these men have crossed the borders over the mountains during the night. They walk very familiar, narrow mountain paths, forty or more people in a line.

These same mountains are simultaneously roamed by Greek military and local police—patrols who set ambushes for the Albanians. In the small villages near the borders, more and more policemen have been added to the local populations as efforts to tighten the borders have intensified. Special police forces, detached from their regular posts in
nearby towns, are assigned to these regions for three month periods and rewarded with bonus payments for the unpopular work. In the village "Krystalopigi," near one of the two Greek-Albanian check-points, there is now one policeman to every two villagers.

The policemen are expected to keep the Albanians from breaking into houses, looting, and stealing cars, trucks, boat engines and fishing nets from the lakes of the area. Several such instances are reported regularly in the vicinity, though rarely involving physical violence against people. The fear of the inhabitants of remote villages, once intense, is starting to subside as they have become accustomed over time to the new reality, that is, the coming and going of the illegal Albanians. The fear persists however: no one walks beyond the village limits alone after sunset anymore. Repeatedly I had been told not to drive alone after sun-down, and never to stop to pick up anyone. If I should see anyone lying in the middle of the street, I should never stop the car. It was a trick of the Albanians, who will then rob and rape you. Such stories had circulated heatedly. Turn the car around quickly, I was told, or if you have no space to do so, "just step on it."

All along the border line are military posts. Young men from all over Greece are sent here to do part of their military service. Their assignments last for several months and living conditions are trying. They are sent out every night, on foot, to catch the illegal Albanians crossing the borders over rugged mountains. The winter months are severely cold and the terrain is full of snow and ice. In these conditions, they hide in ambush or trudge around looking for the passing Albanians.
Worse than the cold is the absurdity and futility of their task. They go out in groups of five to seven armed men and monitor the well-known passages. If they encounter the Albanians they threaten them with their rifles, and capture some of them. Most of the Albanians are not scared by the rifles. They know full well that the Greeks have no permission to shoot. So, if possible, they run off while the soldiers run after them.

Those that do get caught are sent to the checkpoint at Krystalopigi. In the morning they are lined up and the Greek guards take group snap-shots of them. Then they are sent through the checkpoint back to Albania. Both the Greeks and the Albanians involved in this charade know that during the coming night the very same Albanians will be back in the same mountains where the same ambushes will be set waiting for them. One Albanian who was being sent back for the second day in a row asked the guards if he could have the snapshot they had taken of him the day before.

The soldiers naturally find this extremely aggravating and their frustration leads to rough handling of the Albanians. I asked what keeps them running after the Albanians at 4:00 am in the snow? They answered that they were initially unmotivated and tried to avoid the assignments. But eventually it became personal. It was a humiliation to have the Albanians running away, totally ignoring both the guns and the general authority of the military. As their apathy turned to frustration, they developed a sustained anger focused on the Albanians. Furthermore, the Albanians run faster and have greater stamina. Among these military men, myths run rampant about the Albanians’ toughness, their
speed, and their ability to bear hardship and pain. This, of course, demeans them as it
ennobles them: the Albanian both as superhuman and as primitive or animalistic.

Those Albanians who do not get caught head for the large city centers—Thessaloniki or
Athens—or disperse into the rural areas looking for agricultural work. At the borders near
Prespa the agricultural workers preferred by the Greek land owners are the Albanians
who come from the villages just over the border. Many of them are actually relatives of
the Greek landowners. After World War II, when the borders came up like an
impervious wall surrounding Albania, many families found themselves severed into
pieces, and for those who ended up on the Albanian side, prospects were not so good.

Today, on the Albanian side of the borders, there are nine villages that are almost
exclusively inhabited by Christian Orthodox Albanians who are ethnic Macedonians.
These are called the “Prespa villages,” as they line the shores of the Prespa Lake. Since
1991 when the Albanian borders “opened,”¹²⁴ comparatively, and it became less
treacherous to pass, all of the men of these nine villages, starting in their teens, regularly
entered Greece and Macedonia (FYROM) and worked the fields across the border. As
“ethnic Macedonians,” they felt they were usually less discriminated against in
Macedonia (FYROM) than in Greece, and the wages were comparable.

In the Greek border region in the prefecture of Florina there are eleven villages which are
also called the Prespa villages, as well as several other villages located to the south along
the Albanian borders, called Korestia. Here they grow beans, a highly labor intensive
crop. Before the Albanians, the gypsies were the seasonal workers who would arrive in the area and help work the fields for a month or two in the spring and for the harvest period in the fall. At the prices that Albanians are today offering their labor, the Gypsies are not willing to work, as the cost of living in Greece cannot be compared to living in Albania. An Albanian named Sotiris had been an agricultural scientist employed by the Albanian state at a monthly salary of 20,000 drachmas ($60). He came to Greece to do agricultural labor. In seven days of working in the fields in Greece, Sotiris would surpass his monthly salary in Albania.

Some of the Albanian villages are so close to these Greek fields that the Albanian workers cross over the mountains into Greece in the morning and, after work, cross the borders once again to go home and sleep. For weeks they will do this. They work the fields all day, under the "knowing" noses of the policemen who turn a blind eye most of the time. The needs of the farmers, the personal or familial ties to the Albanians, the sense of the Albanians as "Prespa" people—all these form a disincentive for the police to be vigilant. Still, the police will eventually act. All these workers live with the constant fear that they will be arrested and deported. They say that they don't mind the low wages so much, nor the exploitation and prejudice. What they most desire is to work without the corrosive fear, without constantly looking over their shoulder for Greek policemen. Not only is it a long way from the check-point back home to their villages, but they lose the wages they have earned and their jobs are given to another man by the time they get back.
The Greek police conduct raids on the Albanians sporadically as they work in the fields. The arrest can be brutal. The Albanians have to stop whatever they are doing immediately, they cannot remove their soiled rubber boots, cannot get their shoes or any possessions from their lodging. If they fail to be completely compliant and attentive, the policemen soon resort to violence to coerce them. They get packed tightly into the back of the jeep and sent off. I've seen this picture often while driving behind such jeeps: through the back windows of the jeep the limbs of the people are so tangled up that it looks like some of them are packed in up-side-down.

The men from the nine Albanian Prespa villages are Christian Orthodox Macedonian Albanians. When they cross into Macedonia (FYROM) for seasonal agricultural work—mainly apple picking—these "ethnic Macedonian Albanians" have no problems getting visas for working there. In fact, only in their case does the Macedonian (FYROM) government provide six month visas, which are easily acquired. For all the other Albanians who enter Macedonia (FYROM) as seasonal workers, the visa is only valid for one month and it's difficult to get.

In the Macedonian (FYROM) portion of the Prespa border area there are around forty "Prespa villages" along the lake. When the migrant Albanian agricultural workers of Macedonian ethnicity come here, they enjoy, due to their Christian Orthodox faith, a higher status than the Macedonian (FYROM) citizens of Albanian ethnicity who are predominantly Muslims. In Greece as well, in some cases, the Albanians who are members of the Macedonian ethnic minority are considered less "Albanian" (that is, not
Muslim), and sometimes they may escape, to a degree, the negative stereotypes that most of the Albanians suffer from.

Construction is another line of work where one finds many Albanian immigrants. The Albanian masons get from twenty to twenty-five dollars per day both in Greece and in Macedonia (FYROM), where they were usually paid in German marks before the transition to the euro. The Albanians have a very strong reputation as stone masons, a highly skilled trade which is slowly disappearing among the Greek and Macedonian (FYROM) builders. Most of the houses in the wider area near these borders have been traditionally built with stone, and the use of stone has been mandated by new historical preservation statutes. Any one who wants to renovate or build a house must use stone as the main building material. The Albanian stone masons are thus in great demand.

Another Albanian “product” in demand in the region is Albanian wives, particularly Christian Orthodox. The demand is great in both Greece and Macedonia (FYROM). This is seen not only in the rural border regions, but also in the cities near the borders. Men in these areas are looking for virgins, young women who will make quiet, steady “traditional” wives and mothers. They look for women who were brought up in villages that are remote, who are unspoiled by “progress,” whose conduct is not frivolous or promiscuous. Many young Albanian women are now living in Greece and Macedonia (FYROM), married to older men—often widowers with children.
Many Albanian women also immigrate illegally to work as prostitutes, but the demand for Albanians is not so great in brothels, while the supply seems to be large. More in demand are women from the former USSR. The latter seem to be the clients’ preference. Thus the price for bringing an Albanian woman to work in such a place is around $900, while a woman from the former USSR can be procured for around $1500.

When the illegal immigrant workers in Greece want to return to Albania, they finally stop hiding. They come out and walk along the country roads. In so doing they now hope to be picked up by the Greek police. This way they get safe and free transportation to the border checkpoint. They thus avoid walking into the ambushes set for them by Albanian mafia gangs who aim to steal the earnings of the returning Albanian workers. The Albanian mafia is said to abound in the mountains near the borders, on both the Greek and the Albanian sides, as well as on the outskirts of the Greek urban centers. These same gangs work closely with their Greek counterparts in the smuggling of goods and people.

As the preceding account makes evident, multiple images adhere to the Albanian in Prespa. They might be distant family members or employees. They might be “Dopyi, too, just like us.” They might be skilled craftsmen, brave and tough, or, concerning the women, ideal wives. On the other hand, they might be desperate, primitive, secretive, immoral, thieves and prostitutes, violent and criminal. There is, in Prespa, a particularly conflicted apprehension of “the Albanian” both as a member of the region—a part of its indigenous ethnicity and history—and as a threat, abject and something to be reviled. It is the relations among nation-states, translated through immigration policies, that animate
these hostilities at the border zones, but there also exist different bonds that have survived across the borders for centuries, and these bonds work to defuse and confuse the hostilities.

The treatment of the Albanian in Greece as a whole is less ambiguous. While there is recognition in some quarters that they play an important economic role in the emergence of a middle-class service economy, the Albanian has been held responsible for a wave of petty and serious crime, and for disrupting the long-standing notion of ethnic “sameness” in Greece because of the massive “immigration crisis” of 1991-93 during which 300,000 Albanians (10% of Albania’s population) came into Greece (King, Iosifides, Myrivili 1998). One hears people in Athens speak of how nice the city was “back when we were all Greeks.” In Prespa, where the people have never been “all Greeks,” the Albanian, however displaced, illegal, harassed and used, is not a foreigner.

The border as a political institution has, as one of its main functions, the control of the movement of people. That means that change in immigration policy has a direct effect on the Albanians in the border region. These policies constitute an erratic history, variously addressing EU standards for fair treatment of immigrants, using such policies as bargaining chips with Tirana over the fate of Albanians of Greek ethnicity, retaliating against Greece’s neighbors for their emigration policies and appeasing the anti-immigrant sentiment in Greece. All these reactive uses of immigration policy are enacted while simultaneously they are restrained in order to ensure the presence of essential cheap Albanian laborers. This policy confusion finds its way to the borders and manifests in the
ebb and flow of the police presence, the erratic nature of raids on illegal workers, and in occasional, well-publicized deportations of masses of Albanians.

Summer 1997

*At the border of Chrystalopigi, July 1997*

When the economy collapsed in Albania, during the rampant pyramid scheme scandal of 1997, the chaos that reigned there rapidly crossed over the border into Prespa. The already tenuous living conditions described above became a nightmare for the Albanians and the legal Prespiots alike. The account that follows is drawn from field notes taken at that time.

Yiorgos Kostopoulos, from the village of Psarades, serving his military duty as a lieutenant, was recently stationed at the border with his troops. They are an undercover attack unit, all in camouflage with two tanks, on high alert. A few days before, he was in a different operation in the mountains at the village of Heiropygi, in Kastoria. As he and his men lay in hiding, armed Albanians were passing them in large groups of thirty to forty men. He told his men to stay low and hidden. With their guns and numbers, the Albanians would “finish us all” if they were spotted, he said.

They later arrived in Kristalla, a border checkpoint, and during their first two nights there “the bullets were flying around like flies.” They couldn’t sleep all night because the mafia men were all around the borders shooting at each other. One mafioso, who sat on a
rock under the Greek and Albanian flags at the center of the neutral zone, periodically shot his machine gun into the air.

On Wednesday the Albanian government sent hundreds of police who took everyone away. Now the control at the Albanian checkpoint is ruthless and all is quiet.

Endless trucks are lined up on the Greek side waiting to pass into Albania. Yiorgos said that the truckers are waiting for the government’s control of the checkpoint to collapse again and for the mafia to resume control. With the mafia they paid fixed fees to go through. Now, with the “legitimate” police in charge, they are taxed according to their cargo. For a sixteen ton load of apples authorities demanded 500,000 drachmas ($1500) from one trucker, which he did not have. When his boss arrived the next morning to pay it, the price had escalated to 800,000.

Prespa, in July 1997

The following anecdotes or comments are from my fieldnotes. They came to me over the course of 3 days and they describe different people’s perceptions of the events of the preceding three weeks, their anxieties, stereotypes and ambivalence.

Several rumors concerned the deteriorating situation with the armed Albanians. Reportedly, a few months ago, Dimitris Sotiropoulos was assaulted near Ourrinda (the mountain behind the village of Pyli, where the Greek Albanian border is located). They stole his car and left him, tied up, on the ground. The men from Tserya (an Albanian
village across the border) who know Dimitris, recognized his car as it passed and shot at the tires to stop the thieves. They then brought the car over the border back to Greece and searched for Dimitris. As they expected, they found him injured. He had been called in the morning to pick up his farm workers on the road after Pyli, and that is where he had encountered the thieves. He was hospitalized for days. Later it was rumored that Dimitris had been having an affair with an Albanian woman, and that the attack was orchestrated by her husband.

Other rumors circulated about Albanian gangs that had been stealing herds of goats at Vrondero. The Albanian shepherds who were watching over the animals started shouting and yelling for help. Some of the residents awoke, but the goats were already gone. Some claimed that the Albanians gangs were merely coming to repossess a herd they had sold to someone in Vrondero but had never received payment for. These rumors reiterate the reputation of Vrondero as a place of lawlessness, a stereotype which often characterizes remote “dead end” regions against national borders. The people of Vrondero have allegedly been very active for years in contraband movement across the border. The burgeoning police presence, ostensibly there to ensure their security, is said to be making life increasingly dangerous for those in Vrondero.

In another recurrent story, five tourists recently had an incident with Albanians at Aghios Petros. A popular attraction across the lake it is a ruin of a Byzantine monks’ cell, with icons. The tourists had been taken there by boat by someone hired from Psarades. Allegedly two men with hoods and Kalashnikovs attacked them and robbed the group of
$2100 and their belongings. They disabled the boat engine to prevent them from getting help and reporting the incident. The tourists and the boatman were very shaken. It was later suggested that the tourists might have been buying drugs, hence the large amount of cash stolen.

A pregnant woman was allegedly raped by seven Albanians near Kastoria. She died, they said, a few days later from internal injuries.

A car was reportedly stolen from someone’s yard in Kallithea. They also heard gun shots coming from Karyes or Platy where workers were irrigating the fields at night. (The agriculture work shifts go round the clock). Everyone seemed worried. The man operating the irrigation controls spent a fearful night alone at his work, worrying that his conspicuous truck might attract violent thieves. As for the shooting, it was later rumored that the police were mobilized by a television production group that wanted to film them “setting an ambush” in the fields, and the firing was to “make it more real.” Still, the people of Prespa were terrified. The women of the cooperative operating the hotel at Psarades were also very afraid of working their overnight shifts. They requested frequent patrols from the police all night.

A twenty-seven-year-old Albanian man, who works as a goat herder in Psarades, was said to be shot near Poustets (in Albania). The story in circulation was as follows: He and his friends were stopped in their car by an Albanian mafia gang that was shooting at them. Some said drug trafficking might have been involved. The twenty-seven-year-old
stuck his head out the window and was shot in the neck. When it was discovered that he was Albanian, his attackers jumped in his car and drove him to the Macedonian (FYROM) border, where they believed he would get better medical treatment. The Macedonians (FYROM) initially refused him treatment because he was an Albanian. (After the uprising of ethnic Albanians in Northern Macedonia (FYROM), where in the bloody finale ten were killed and many injured by the police, tensions and resentment remained high.) But when they learned he was a Macedonian Albanian (thus not a Muslim), they found a helicopter and flew him to a hospital in Skopia. He died a day later, leaving a pregnant wife and a child.

Maria Kostoula, at Aghios Germanos, was discussing the relative safety of the roads around Prespa and Kastoria with a friend. She urged her friend, an archaeologist working there, not to bring her child along. She then brought up the Aghios Petros incident, which was only the latest of several such assaults there: “With one more they have occupied it. It’s already Albanian ground. Only they can go there; no one else dares to go there anymore. And who knows for how many years?”

Kostas has stopped sleeping in his home in Pyli. For two weeks the gunfire has kept him awake. In Vrondero the men patrol the village every night in armed groups of three. Today the government sent in commando forces that are roaming the borders, and more army forces arrive daily.
Rumors have circulated about a severed head found in one of the fields. The intrigue was immediately followed by claims that the rumor had been started by certain farmers who wanted to frighten others working in that particular area, in order to keep them from the fields and thus prevent them from watering their crops. In so doing, they could then take more water for their own fields from the irrigation system they share.

The chaos in Albania in 1997 affected all of Greece with a new flood of immigration, but at Prespa it sharpened dramatically what is at stake in this already stricken region. The police and military, once merely chasing border violators, now have serious threats from masses of armed refugees and the mafia, as well as from the wave of crime now flowing over the border. Their increased presence has a range of consequences, disrupting both legal and illegal trade, and creating a war zone atmosphere of tight controls. The desperation that normally brings Albanians across the border seems now to be transformed into a frenzy of anger, despair and violence fuelled by the financial scandals that have destroyed the Albanians’ fledgling economic recovery. An image of “the Albanian” as an uncivilized criminal is now eclipsing the previous more complicated, mixed image of “the Albanian” as both “threat” and “one of us.”

We see that the violence and criminality can evoke territorial or national anxieties. The incidents at Aghios Petros are not construed here as mere robberies; they are seen as territorial expansion by Albanians, a victory over the Greeks. While this at first seems rather exaggerated, it is also, in a surprising way, astute, for how else is territory taken and naturalized but by force and intimidation? This is well known here. In Prespa,
where politics have caused ceaseless upheaval in everyone’s lives, political consequences 
do not go unnoticed.

Finally, the perceived police cooperation with the television crew bears notice. While the 
local people are being terrorized by the gunfire, the police are alleged to be creating the 
television “reality” of border control, which in the face of the Albanian crisis has 
apparently gained some cachet in the minds of the media. No doubt intended for 
consumption in Athens and Thessaloniki, they are reproducing stories of the border 
menace and the vigilance of the State in protecting its people.

A field of rumors accompanying or countering the preceding accounts developed 
immediately. Was Dimitris’s assailant really a jealous husband? Were the goats of the 
Vordonero merely being re-possessed, not stolen? Were the robbed tourists actually drug 
dealers? Many stories here are met by counter-narratives that undermine and dissipulate 
the original meaning of the account. Whom do we believe? Whom do we identify with? 
Who is the real victim? In Prespa you can never take a story at face value.

“It’s war,” said Christina, (the wife of the Secretary of Psarades) “hit and run, 
arbitrary and violent.”
Part IV. Threat
Chapter 6

Borders, Limits and States of Exception: The Border as Space of Lawmaking Violence

Perhaps it is like a flash of lightning in the night which, from the beginning of time, gives a dense and black intensity to the night it denies, which lights up the night from the inside, from top to bottom, and yet owes to the dark the stark clarity of its manifestation, its harrowing and poised singularity; the flash loses itself in this space it marks with its sovereignty and becomes silent now that it has given name to obscurity.

"On Trangression," Foucault 1993:35

Introduction

A decade ago, in "Borders, Boundaries of State and Self at the End of the Empire," Michael Kearney claimed that the Mexican/U.S. border and its ethnography had unleashed a creative ambiguity of identities and that neither of the two nation-states could ban, control or "digest" this proliferation of identities; such traditional modes of dealing with difference were ineffective. In this last chapter I will be arguing that the contemporary national "indigestion" apparent at border zones creates a variety of exceptional spatialities which exist inside/outside the law of the Nation-State. These aspects of the terrain of the nation-state are results of the "lawmaking" (Benjamin 1986) state violence, applied therein through the institutions of police and military, which forms "states of exception" within state rule. Such liminal regions include the national borders
(border zones, border checkpoints and the area that lies between the border checkpoints of adjacent countries, known as the “no man’s land”), the spaces spanned or inhabited by transnational labor immigrants, and the refugee camps and/or detention centers for irregular aliens. These spaces share a common character in that they legitimize the excesses of power and the use of repressive force without recourse to lawyers or legal procedure. In these spaces nation-state’s sovereignty is reiterated and its dependence on violence is exposed. In recent years, these marginal and dispersed spaces are acquiring more legitimacy and colonizing wider territorial zones. The tension found therein, which is created through the juxtaposition of exception and rule, is embodied by the inhabitants of such spatialities, that is, it produces particular subject positions, the “border subjects,” who are threats to the nation and lesser national/social subjects.

State Sovereignty, Security, Violence

Limits shape forms, and forms are everything. That which the adjective “formless” designates, Bataille deftly tells us, “has no rights in any sense and gets itself squashed everywhere, like a spider or an earthworm,” (Bataille 1985: 31). It is abject. The fate of nations without “shapes,” like the Roma, the Kurds or the American Indian nations, confirm this observation. Since the late nineteenth century, power is organized by territorial pieces, blocks. Within a state-centered world, the sovereignty once “vested in the person of the monarch or other leader within the hierarchy of ‘orders’ from the lowest peasant to the warriors, priests and nobles . . . is now vested in territory” (Agnew 1999: 174). Thus, as Foucault would say, the tactics and strategies of power are now deployed through an explicitly spatial organization, through controls and demarcations:
administrative and disciplinary power distribution over domains and territories. The
boundaries of each territorial state “contain” the political life of a society whose security
is the primary goal of that state (Agnew 1999; Cambell 1992; Weaver 1995; Walker
1990; Sahlins 1998).

Consequently, any violation of the state’s territorial boundaries is a criminal act, an act of
aggression against the “life,” the political “body” that it contains. And it is exactly in
such abstract notions as “territorial integrity,” “territorial sovereignty” and the
“inviolability of national boundaries” that one can discern the inalienable combinations
of the metaphorical and the literal, the magical and the rational, the sacred and the
profane integral to the modern nation-state (Taussig 1996). In the nationalist
imagination—where national territory is like a “body” that houses the nation as its
“soul”—borders act as the skin. But it also, like a mirror, sustains and refracts the nation’s
"purity." And this "purity" can only exist in relation to a boundary that is seen as a source
of contamination no less than of containment. That is part of the ontology of the border. It
is through such seemingly paradoxical simultaneity of purity and contamination, of
security and insecurity, of limits and their transgression that the concepts of the territorial
Nation-State and its borders are constructed.

In the territorial state, the notion of “security”—or rather its correlative “insecurity”—
becomes an organizing principle, a dominant discursive gesture. Weaver claims that the
concept of “security” in political theory refers exclusively to the nation-state, as there is
no tradition or philosophy of “security” in non-state terms. He thus defines “security” as
a coherent and recognizable field of practices with which states threaten each other by challenging each other’s sovereignty (Weaver 1995). The rhetoric of security and the set of practices that it sets into motion are not necessarily reactive, as they want to appear, but also proactive. More often than not, the rhetoric of security creates an offensive strategy of action, masquerading as a defensive response to challenges posed by powers outside the nation-state. The political imaginings of a de facto dangerous “outside” is what defines Campbell’s concept of “foreign policy”; a “discourse of danger” is always set in motion in order to forge a common identity without difference internally. This “discourse of danger” is reiterated in order to obliterate all diversity (which threatens the ideal of a sovereign national identity)—that is, in order to promote the “security,” the “safety” of the interior of the state (Campbell 1992). In a similar vein, Walker argues that the “sovereign state,” the concept that today organizes and defines all political possibilities, is constructed around the fundamental territorially based structure of inside (a homogenous community of citizens, peace and justice) and outside (people of different values and interests who cannot be trusted, and potential violence). This fundamental spatial dichotomy reproduces the logic of threat and insecurity in relations between nation-states (and all other international political configurations), which ultimately undermines the possibility of peace (Walker 1990).

Weaver asks, “What makes a security problem”? It is a threat that undercuts political order and must therefore be met with the mobilization of maximum effort. In the final instance, he argues, the power-holders define what constitutes such a threat: by definition, something is a security problem when the State and its elites declare it to be
so. In the case of the South Balkans and particularly in its border regions, "Macedonia," and the "Macedonian people" have been perceived and defined as security issues and manipulated as threats to the sovereignty of the different Balkan nation-states for most of the twentieth century. What is ultimately threatening about "Macedonia" is precisely its ill-defined boundaries. To cite another example, we are currently witnessing the extensive securitization that is taking place in the United States, organized around the vaguely defined notion of "Terrorism," which is legitimizing the wide range of repressive powers assumed by the Justice Department and the recently created Office of Homeland Security.

Weaver further asks, "What then is security?" His answer is: "Security is a speech act" (Weaver 1995: 237). As such it is not a sign that refers to something that exists in advance in the extra-discursive "real world." When there is no security problem, he argues, we do not conceptualize our situation in terms of security at all; the concept never really appears under normal conditions. Accordingly, "security" and "insecurity" are not binary opposites, but rather correlative terms. The utterance "security," is rather a specific political choice, the decision for conceptualization of a problem in a specific way, which then legitimizes the mobilization and use of all necessary means to block the specific challenge. The field of state power is augmented: remarkable political, military and social resources become available to the state, which can now legitimize the use of any means to overcome a threat defined as existential, as a challenge to state sovereignty. The premises of reasoning change and political rationality gives way to the "logic of war"—reciprocal acts of violence leading to extremes, intended to compel a politically
organized collectivity to fulfill the will of another. It is within this kind of violence, "in
this struggle for recognition (Hegel) that states establish their identity as states" (235).

The performative character of the "security" device brings into high relief the
arbitrariness of state power underwriting its legitimation of authority, exposing the State
as a Taussigian Nervous System, nervously switching between exception and rule, order
and its suspension, reason and violence, revealing, as per Benjamin's dictum, that "the
'state of emergency' in which we live is not the exception but the rule," or at least part of
the rule (Taussig 1992:11-35; Benjamin 1969: 257). How is the arbitrariness of power, or
the "state of emergency" implemented by the "security" speech act, underwriting the
State's legitimate authority? Benjamin's Critique of Violence shows that all "historically
acknowledged so-called sanctioned violence"—the law-maintaining violence through
which the state reiterates its order and grounds its legitimacy—depends on an inaugural
prior act, a manifestation of pure, immediate, unsanctioned violence, the kind of violence
which establishes a Law (the State) in the first place (Benjamin1986). This inaugural
violence (wars of independence, military coups, revolts, occupations and annexations,
colonizations, and all nation-state-building policies for the eradication of difference,
genocide, ethnic cleansing, population exchanges, deportations, etc.) is what Benjamin
calls "mythical" or "lawmaking" violence.

For the function of violence in lawmaking is twofold, in the sense that lawmaking
pursues as its end, with violence as the means, what is to be established as law,
but at the moment of lawmaking, it specifically establishes as law not an end
unalloyed by violence, but one necessarily and intimately bound to it, under the
title of power. Lawmaking is power making, and to that extent, an immediate
In this critique Benjamin dissociates "violence" from being conceptualized as either a justifiable means depending on the ends (for example, the use of state violence being the means towards the absolute virtue of social security, "natural law"), or as "guaranteeing" the justness of the ends through the justification of the means ("positive law," for example, the state as product of history being considered as the sole "right" source of the means of violence on which it depends) (Benjamin 1986: 278-279). He dispenses with "natural law" by asserting the crucial (for a critical approach to violence) distinction provided by the positive theory of law: that is, the distinction between the *historically acknowledged* "sanctioned violence" and "unsanctioned violence" (ibid.)—that is, the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate violence, which has nothing to do with just or unjust ends. The State, in accordance with the law-preserving function of violence, persistently delegitimates and violently suppresses all use of force other than its own, revealing that "violence, when not in the hands of the law, threatens it [the state] not by the ends that it may pursue but by its mere existence outside the law" (281). The existence of any violence, other than the State's own sanctioned and law-preserving use of force, actually threatens the state's very legality. What constitutes the threat is not merely the state's possible loss of its monopoly over violence, but a much more essential fear. It is the fundamental function of violence (mythical violence) to found and modify legal order (lawmaking violence). "Non-official" violent or potentially violent acts (from the general strike to a criminal action) which use this same constitutive violence are thus deeply threatening to the state as it recognizes in those acts the potential for a new order. Mythical violence is behind every inaugural act of lawmaking violence, which will be
sanctioned a posteriori through the "entirely necessary" "peace ceremonies" of law preserving, which consist of recognizing the new conditions as a new "law" (283).

Benjamin writes, "the establishment of frontiers . . . is the primal phenomenon of all lawmaking violence" (295).

The 1978 Vienna Convention on State Succession, which decrees that even after a state has collapsed the frontiers still remain in force, exhibits the primordial character of frontiers in public international law. Frontiers seem to be conceived here as a prerequisite of this (re)construction of a state (Anderson 1998: 4). As legal preconditions of the State's mythical lawmaking institutions, the borders become constitutive of all power. "The frontier is the basic political institution: no rule-bound economic, social or political life in advanced societies could be organized without them" (ibid.).

Who has the power over these institutions? Who decides how and where the national frontiers will be established? "[I]t is in principle the sole responsibility of neighboring states to decide on the line between them. Their agreement is deemed valid erga omnes, demanding full respect by all other nations" (Muller-Graff 1998: 13). Borders, then, are the originary contracts that regulate conflicting interests, while at the same time instituting the nation-states through binary agreements of mutual recognition (usually a consequence of violent wars). Frontiers in the Balkans were not really bilateral agreements. Always preceded by armed conflict, they were established by treaties, through multilateral processes during which several other European states with specific
interests participated, negotiated and renegotiated borders. Later these borders were claimed again through new wars that tried to redefine them. This is not an exclusively Balkan process; rather, it describes the general process through which new territorial order was established in Europe in the aftermath of great conflicts. The states participating in the treaties that regulated conflicting territorial interests acted as guarantors of the border lines and made sure that they would be respected (ibid.).

On the international level, borders are legal contracts instituting the nation-states; they are the political institutions that establish mutual recognition of the sovereign power of each state over the delineated territory and its citizens. On a national level, these legal territorial boundaries define the identity of a political community as they demarcate the “inside” of the nation-state and delimit claims to nationality and the exercise of the rights to citizenship (Anderson 1998: 4). Borders define the spatial organization of power and its institutions on a territorial basis. Whether based on Hobbes’ security pact, Locke’s social contract, or Weber’s acceptance of power as state monopoly, there is a legally binding contract between the state and its subjects, which the border represents, one which contains and legitimizes the state’s basic power to control the movement of bodies in, out and within its lines.

Benjamin says that all legal contracts are predicated on violent origins and are sustained by containing a constant threat of violence (Benjamin1986: 287-88). There is no way of regulating conflicting human interests through a non-violent resolution, he claims, because violence is always necessarily implicated in the “problematic nature of law.
itself” (287). First of all, this is because every contract confers to both parties the right to take recourse in some form of violence against the other, should the agreement be broken. Secondly, the origin of every contract points towards violence, exactly because the power that guarantees any contract has a violent origin and violent means. This means that the borders not only are predicated on (lawmaking) violence, which underpins their existence with its immutable presence, but also they contain the threat of violence in the perpetual possibility of their transgression. The border as a legal institution, in order to avoid “decay,” must keep the consciousness of this lurking violence constantly animated. Periodic violent acts at the border sustain and reinvigorate its power. All violence, says Benjamin, is either lawmaking or law preserving; otherwise it forfeits all claims to validity (287).

Benjamin’s reflections reveal that national borders not only expose the state law as intimately and necessarily bound to violence, but also that by establishing and reiterating the law of the state through the immutable presence of violence, they engender that which is outside the law, the “threats” that can challenge its lawmaking monopoly.

**Border Paradox**

Viewing the border, the gaze is forced to split. The nationalist view—that of an authentic, autonomous, internally coherent, and homogenous culture—is both crystallized and blurred. It is at the border, after all, that the nation-state and its sovereignty are continually reiterated and reasserted (through visas, passports, military posts, police, flags, etc.) and constantly challenged (by ethnic minorities, ambiguous identities and
other uncontainable polities, such as illegal immigrants and, the more recent to this specific border scene, traffickers of young women and/or drugs). National boundaries embody both the State’s weakest points and the ultimate expression of its sovereignty. They cannot be crossed unless the individual who desires to exit or enter a country is a legal “subject,” who recognizes and respects the state’s determinate order (by belonging to a nation, possessing the appropriate documentation, having paid taxes, having voted in national elections or served in the military, etc.)—that is, unless the individual is willing, not recognizing the order/law of the State, to transgress the prohibition of the borders. In both cases, whether one obeys or transgresses its boundaries, the nation-state is asserting and reinvigorating its order.

How is it possible that the non-recognition of the border and its order, in other words the transgression of the limit of the nation-state, sustains its power? Foucault, in his essay “On Transgression,” claims that this is the nature of limits; their transgression is ultimately that which engenders and reinforces them (Foucault 1993).

It is the Foucault/Bataillian image—the “lightning flash” that gives “to the night it denies” its “dense and black intensity,” and whose spectacular “singularity of manifestation” (owed to the dark) exists, only to spend itself in the process of giving “a name to obscurity”—that most eloquently describes the nature of the national border (Foucault 1993: 35). This “flash” could be the Albanian “violating” the Greek border, or the Dopyos “challenging” it. It could be the fear induced in the Greek national, the Vlach or the Pontic by the presence of the border, or it could be the shock of the political/ethnic
refugee who is refused entrance. It is precisely these small or large violations that reveal and animate that political institution, the border. These subject positions and their relation to the power of the nation-state constitute the negative subjects of the border, whose legal status, citizenship, humanity or agency are always to some extent expended in order to illuminate and substantiate the border and by extension the nation-state. This expenditure that names and legitimates the border can be seen as a sacrifice, a tribute that "feeds" the border. The price of the border that some of its subjects have to pay is the loss of legitimacy, the stigma of criminality and/or marginality, and the assumption of guilt and fear as subjectivity, as the organizing principles of identity. The sacrifice that the border subjects have to make is to step into the role of the pollutant, or of the abject.

Foucault, elaborating on Bataille's insight on the nature of the "limit" and its "transgression," claims that both of these terms acquire their ultimate "density of being" only in the violence of their intersection, the "act of transgression" (Foucault 1993:34). This is not an oppositional relation that juxtaposes the one term to the other, like black is to white, the prohibited to the lawful, the outside to the inside. It is rather a relationship of ontological interdependence, which, through the mechanics of negation, asserts both of their "beings" which have no life beyond that singular moment of intersection. For Foucault and Bataille, the limit assumes its fullness of being, its "density," its "materiality," only at the moment of its negation: through its transgression. This thesis is illustrated by the case of the nation-state borders in Prespa where there are no checkpoints. Three limits cut and partition the waters of a lake with their formless power, invisible and ghostly, only to become spectacularly tangible in the shooting and the
ensuing arrests that take place in the case of their violation. Furthermore, this moment of intersection, the transgression that causes the limit to arise, which reveals and asserts the Prespa borders or any other boundary, "is a glorification of the nature that [the limit] excludes" (ibid: 34). What is this nature, excluded by the limit that gloriously reveals itself, when the Albanian immigrant illicitly crosses the border? The nature that the limit excludes is the nature of its content, the law and order of the nation-state. At the moment of its transgression, the border spectacularly reveals the nature of the nation-state as "law making" violence, the violence that perniciously subtends the border (as potentiality as well as through the acts of its reiteration), as well as the Law in its entirety.

In the Foucauldian thesis, it is not simply that transgression exists only in relation to a limit, as the act of "breaking" it, but also that the limit cannot exist unless it is exceeded, that is, unless it contains the possibility of its transgression. Indeed, the borders exemplify this paradox of asserting a prohibition in order to regulate its necessary "violation." The limit (border) demands its transgression. The borders of the nation-state must be violated, otherwise their function, which is to circumscribe and thus define a socio-political entity, by literally as well as metaphorically delimiting the inside/outside the nation-state, would atrophy. That is the function of the borders: to sustain and refract the nation's "purity," because they are simultaneously a source of contamination and of containment. After all, as Benjamin reminds us, "when the consciousness of the latent presence of violence in a legal institution disappears, the institution falls into decay" (Benjamin 1986: 288).
There has never been a pure case of a totally un-crossable border. Albania provides one of the most extreme cases of insular political entities. During the Hoxha regime, the Greek-Albanian borders were demarcated by electrified barbed wires, which were further charged by the knowledge that if they were ever crossed, the whole family of the violator would be captured and tortured. The people living near those borders, on the Greek side, said that Albania seemed like a black hole; it was an absence, as if it didn’t really exist. The people who lived on the Albanian side of those borders, however, told stories of extraordinary repression and persecution related to their actual attempts to cross. There were crossings—there always are. Meeting over the Prespa waters, during the Hoxha regime, the Greek and Albanian fishermen exchanged fish for money, gasoline, and other commodities.

This understanding of the border as a limit dependent on the acts of its violation (and acts of expenditure) that generate and sustain the border and the nation, does not describe a dialectical relation. This is not historical materialism (Althusserian or other), as there is no “synthesis.” What Foucault is taking up when he talks about the limit, as the act of transgression is a Bataillian epistemology. This is a different type of materialism, what Bataille calls base materialism. “I mean a materialism not implying an ontology, not implying that matter is the thing-in-itself” (Bataille 1986:50). The border exists in the (violent) acts that constitute it and its subjects.
Borders as Threats

Summarizing the argument up to this point, the Border constitutes an inalienable part of the nation-state, precisely because the latter depends on the “discourse of danger” that sets up the nation-state as a relationship where the State is to protect the security of the Nation from a threatening Other. The legitimacy of State authority, argue Benjamin and Taussig, depends on the use of “unsanctioned” violence, lawmaking violence, which institutes and is intimately bound to the nation-state and its Law and Order. This type of violence, which remains “behind” the Law of the State, can be sanctioned and brought to the surface at any given time by a security breach. “Security,” being a “speech act,” arbitrarily fills in the referent of the “threatening Other,” and thus allows for the mobilization, the “surfacing,” of lawmaking violence. The border, whose nature is to set up a rule that demands its violation, provides the space for the perpetual possibility of a security breach. It thus provides the space where lawmaking violence—that is, the violence that sets up the Rule—is perpetually present. The border thus provides the state with an exceptional space which, defined by lawmaking violence, mirrors the wars of the nation-state’s inception, and continually authorizes and sanctions the State’s legitimate authority, its Law and Order.

How does the border establish a space that provides for the perpetual possibility of a security breach allowing it thus to function as such a “space of exception”? The border contains an immanent threat to national security that then sanctions police and military presence and the use of exceptional violence. What kind of threat to national security does the border contain? The “Border” could be conceptualized as three distinct but
related spatialities, which are inhabited by “border subjects,” that is, by individuals whose subject positions and identities are formed in direct relation to the nation-state’s sense of threat. These are (1) the “border zones,” which are typically inhabited by ethnic minorities; (2) “border dislocations,” constituted by semi-successful transgressions of the border, that is, the border crossings that lead to the illegal alien’s life of ongoing stigmatization. As such the border, in effect dislocated, travels along with the bodies of transnational migrants, into the heart of the nation-state. Finally (3) is the “state of exception,” of which there are various manifestations. One is the “no man’s land.” It is framed by the border checkpoints, the nation-state’s entrances and exits with their spectacularized representations (army and police guards, bureaucratic procedures, flags, monuments, and other national symbols). The “no man’s land” is the profoundly unfamiliar space between two national checkpoints. Similar will here summarily discuss these border threats, these particular spatialities and the subjects that inhabit them. Another “state of exception” is the refugee camp, a particular type of national border malfunction in which people are suspended indefinitely between nations.

Border Zones

The Greek Prespa region is a “border zone,” a national territory that extends for several miles from the national boundary into the nation-state. The inhabitants of border zones—the border people—internalize and embody the border in multiple ways. In the Balkans, where the nation-states have had great trouble dealing with the ethno-religious complexities of their polities, and where nations, conceived reductively as a single ethnic group, always spill over borders into the neighboring nations, border people—just like
the boundary lines themselves—are perceived as the defenders but also as potential threats to the nation. Both projected onto the border people as well as adopted by them, this ambiguity pervades the identities that form around the Prespa border (as well as in many other Balkan border zones): the performances of self vacillate between the “guardian/hero” and the “violator/traitor.”

Such a case is Yiorgos, the Dopyos from Psarades, who with great passion claimed that I couldn’t have seen the type of trees that surround the village of Psarades anywhere else in Greece, as those trees were fed by blood—the blood of his parents and grandparents who gave their lives for the Greek nation. Later in the discussion, the same man was telling me about how brave he and his brother were when in the 1980s they used to sneak into Albanian waters to barter goods with the Albanians. With equal passion, Yiorgos was now claiming that these borders were unnatural and arbitrary. After all, he had relatives living in Albania and the Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia, whom he was unable to see for years.

Similarly, the “hero” and the “traitor” become categories powerfully asserted and contested among the people of Prespa in narratives about the past. Sotiris, another Dopyos from one of the Prespa villages whom I interviewed extensively, had the reputation among some of the Prespa people of being an ethical, righteous social-democrat, a brave and fair man who never harmed anyone and whom people could trust. He was known as a defender of Greece who, by circumstance rather than by ideological conviction, had fought on the side of the national army against the communist guerillas in
the Greek Civil War (1945-49). He had lost most of his siblings (one sister and two brothers) in the same war on the other side: they all were fighting with the communists. Among other Prespa people Sotiris had a different reputation: as a young man during WWII, he was allegedly a collaborator of the Germans, and later on, a local right-wing spy. His “finger-pointing,” it was said, destroyed the lives of many young leftists who ended up stigmatized or sent off to exile. Such contradictions were not unusual among the people of Prespa, and one could argue that they might develop within all sorts of small, politically divided rural communities where narratives of the past are oral and contested.

What is significant here, however, is that both of these men—Yiorgos and Sotiris—are Dopyi (members of a community historically treated with great mistrust by the Greek authorities with regard to its members’ national affiliations), and more precisely, Dopyi who live in a border zone. In the context of this South Balkan border region, discourse accumulates authority by references to death and social violence (forced separation, exile, stigmatization), that is, by references to the constitutive violence of the national community. As a result, all “difference” here is highly politicized and the contradictions surrounding the two men’s stories are weighed down by “dangerous” national and political connotations.

The threat posed by these border people is not their actual affiliations and territorial aspirations based on shared ethnicity with “national enemies” across the border. It is rather the possibility of that being the case. And that possibility is eagerly “detected”
among the border people in such qualities as ambiguity, secrecy and dissimulation, a perceived lack of consistency or “integrity”—in other words, in the general “instability of identity” that they often exhibit. Throughout most of the twentieth century, the Greek nation-state has responded to the threat posed by those uncontrollable polities with conspicuous efforts to suppress all difference, and with “ethnic engineering”: the settlement of other cultural/ethnic groups with “healthy” national sentiments. As discussed in the previous chapters of this work, the culturally oppressive policies and the settlement of different groups in the region created a general state of mistrust and competition among the members of the different communities, who vied for the favoritism of the Greek authorities and the social and economic status that came along. As a result, socio-cultural hierarchies were formed in the region, based to a large extent on performances of nationalism.

Such performances can be organized around two predominant types of self-presentation in the Greek border regions: the nationalist who excessively represents his loyalties to the nation-state and the secretive other whose presentations of self are ambiguous. In many cases those roles are interchangeable in one and the same person. The “border subjects” are caught up in an active process of identification, an ongoing negotiation with the nation-state’s attempts to control, assimilate or obliterate them. Ethnic and national identities here change depending on the context. Vigilant and full of subtleties, these identities keep revealing the “processes of nation building.” I am referring to the violence of state rule in its inscription of the nation on the bodies of the people: their language, their collective memory, their music, their dress, their religion, their lives. The practices
are familiar: centralized national education, suppression of difference, repression of languages, political and social marginalization and/or forced relocation (Hirschon 1998; Karakasidou 1997; Blinkhorn & Veremis 1990). If nationalism is where the nation assumes its fullest objectivity, border identities are a “negative nationalism” as they are the sites that expose the inception and domination of the nation-state revealing its contingent nature (Myrivili 1993). At the borders the anxieties and insecurities of the nation-state are perpetually reenacted in the performances of border identities, as it is always in the acts that constitute it and its subjects that the border can be found.

Border Dislocations

With the body of Albanian labor migrants, who either cross the Albanian-Greek borderline to work in Prespa as seasonal workers or else continue traveling through the Greek territories toward the urban centers, the biopolitics of the border dislocate from their “proper” place. It is the act of crossing the borderline and entering the existing European Union, and specifically the Greek legal and political order, that stigmatizes the bodies and marginalizes the lives of the transnational labor migrants, wherever they may be within the Greek territories. Through the movement of those immigrants the border detaches from its location and disperses, inhabiting many different spaces in the nation’s body. This new broken-up border destabilizes categories of “center” and “periphery” and the traditional relational models associated with these concepts. The “center,” allegedly the source of nationally authorized domination, is no longer safely located away from the “periphery” and the entrenched edges of social order. The border and its threats are no longer remote or locatable; their mobility, proximity and omnipresence feed waves of
national paranoia. Several case studies show how the Greek national imagination in the 1990’s was taken over by images of crime, pillage and rape committed by Albanian immigrants onto the Greek national body (Pavlou 2001; Mitsilengas 1999; King, Iosifides, Myrivili 1998).

Endless media reports fed the growing Greek paranoia, typically implicating Albanian immigrants in crimes and attributing a general, alleged rise in violence and criminality in both the Greek urban centers and the countryside, to Albanian transient immigrants (who at the time numbered several hundred thousand). “Albanian criminals kill, rob and rape… they have transformed neighborhoods of Athens and entire provincial cities into ghettos,” claimed a January 11, 1993 article from the right-wing Greek daily “Eleftheros” (quoted in Triandafillidou & Veikou 2002: 200). In Greece, in the 1970s and early 80s (during my childhood years) only gypsies inhabited that in-between unsafe space now occupied by the “devious” Albanian. Discrimination and ethnic hatred are daily experienced in Athens today by Eastern Europeans, Africans, Philippinos, Middle Eastern people, but predominately by the Albanians who are the most reviled, standing in metonymically for all other immigrant communities. Undesirable, mistrusted and uncontainable, the transnational labor migrants are remote pieces of the border unmoored. The biopolitics of the border keep articulating new subjectivities.

To cross the seas in un-seaworthy boats risking death by drowning, to cross over mountains walking for endless hours through snow and rain, through remote treacherous passages, in order to avoid the police or military, to wait in endless queues at foreign
embassies for a work permit, to stand facing officers who humiliate them at the border checkpoints, to live in shacks or subways, to work for the lowest wages, to have no rights or privileges, to dread the police, to experience an identity constantly challenged by the surroundings, to become a builder, a cleaning lady, a parent, an angry man, sly, despondent, a con-man, a prostitute, a lap-dancer, a criminal, is to live between worlds, stuck on a border for life. These are the performed practices that reiterate and maintain the culture of the border in the everyday life of the transnational laborer. This is how, dislocated within the bodies of legal and illegal immigrants, the border and its threat intrude deep into the nation.

“No Man’s Land” and States of Exception
Several miles south of the Prespa region a very different kind of border spatiality exists: two national border checkpoints—one Greek, one Albanian—with a stretch of land between them, the “no man’s land” (what a name!). Goods and people are checked, controlled and allowed (or not allowed) in and out of Albania and Greece, at the checkpoints between the villages of Bilishti and Kristalopigi respectively. Then they have to drive or walk through the “no man’s land.” This stretch of land that belongs to neither of the two national territories is an exceptional space that spans a few hundred meters. This “no man’s land” is an empty space full of tension. It has an inhuman quality, a harrowing emptiness. I remember walking through this border space par excellence, between Greece and Albania—and also between Macedonia (FYROM) and Greece—at a checkpoint near the village of Niki, as well as between Albania and Macedonia (FYROM) at the village of Cafasan. Each time I passed between these nations, I had a
visceral nervous system reaction, as if I was surrounded by invisible machineguns pointing at me, waiting for me to “step out of line.” Walking down that strange land corridor was like stepping into a space that transformed me into a “guilty” subject, a past, current or potential violator of the order of the nation-state. And indeed it seemed that if I, the “guilty subject,” was shot, it would be somehow warranted.

This is not an additional identification in the inventory of multiple possibilities, but rather a reduction. It is the core of the subject of power, which is unearthed in this passage, at the limit of the law. The kernel of power is imbedded inside the body of the subject during his or her subjectivization, interpellation by the power of the nation-state. This core of the subject is the recognition of the violence that subtends all power, and the recognition that the power of the nation-state has the ability to strip the subject of all that redeems it—achievements, potential, work, ethics, desires, values, rights, personality, memories, family, mercy—and to turn one into “pure life.” It is that same recognition that engenders the surprising fear and guilt that makes you run through your life’s inventory, trying to remember any transgressions you might have committed, even by misunderstanding or omission, when the bureaucrat at the borders’ checkpoints, or the customs officer at the airport, says “excuse me for a moment” and disappears with your documents behind a closed door. At the “no man’s land” the nation-state’s absence is pulsating with the tension of the absolute power of the nation-state.

The “no man’s land” is a distillation, a reduction as well as an abstraction, of the “border,” which is otherwise elaborated in the practices and articulations of the bodies
that constitute it: the “border bodies,” the displaced subjectivities of the border of Prespa, be it the bodies of the Dopyi, the Refugees (the Pontics, or, the Dopyi political/ethnic refugees who cannot return to Greece), the Prespa emigrants, or the Albanian immigrants. The “no man’s land” represents, as a distillation and an abstraction, the “state of emergency” that pervades the nature of the whole border region and disseminates beyond it, constituting other “exceptional social spaces” created in the name of “security and public order,” created by the “discourse of danger” of the nation-state.

Consider, also, that the entire Greek Prespa border region was under a state of emergency for about forty years: from the late 1930s (during the Metaxas dictatorship), with an interruption during WWII and the Civil War, up until the 1970s. Greek citizens needed a reason, a special permission and passport-like documentation issued by the police, to enter Prespa. The interior of Prespa was also separated into two, distinct, securitized zones. All movement of people in, out and between the Prespa zones was controlled by three military checkpoints in “Vigla,” “Pervals,” and “Koula.” When first entering Prespa one was in what was called the “Zone under Surveillance” (Επιτηρούμενη Ζώνη) and most of Prespa was under this status. The western part of Prespa which was closest to the Albanian and Macedonian (FYROM) borders formed a more heightened police state, the “Prohibited Zone” (Απαγορευμένη Ζώνη), which was in effect perpetually under military law, with extraordinary checks and restrictions applied within it.

All movement in and out of these zones was regularly policed and restricted, not only for outsiders, but also for the locals. Prespa villagers were issued special identity cards,
called “white identifications cards” (λευκές ταυτότητες), which they had to produce every time they were asked to do so, when moving between these zones, to go from one village to another. It was mostly the military that checked these identification cards, and the closest scrutiny took place at the “Koula” checkpoint that separated the rest of Prespa from its western villages, those which formed the “Zone of Prohibition.” The village of Psarades (my home during fieldwork) was part of that “prohibited” zone. The Prespa “state of emergency” was abolished along with the Prespa “Zones” in the 1970s, and people were allowed to enter Prespa for the first time without special permission.

However, all visitors still had to follow specific, designated routes when visiting the area, from which they were forbidden to diverge. This new status, “free” of prohibition, was established in Prespa during the Greek military junta (1967-1974), when the “state of exception” stopped being a provisional state with a specific localization and had become the rule of the land.\textsuperscript{126}

**Borders, Spaces of Exception**

The space of the border, whether localized or dislocated, is a space in suspension, resonating with the potential of violence. As Benjamin asserts, borders are “primal phenomena of lawmaking violence”; their existence reiterates and reaffirms the law’s instituting violence (Benjamin 1986: 295). At the borders, the State confronts the violence of its inception, which is otherwise disguised by hegemonic national discourses of selective memories and glorifying narratives. The border exposes the nation-state’s continual reliance on repressive force, the existence of which underlies and is invoked by all law-maintaining disciplinary practices. Embodiments of this lawmaking violence of
the state at the borders are the ever present police and the military. The exercise of repressive force by the police at the border attests for the nervous and sliding interdependence between law maintaining and lawmaking violence, while the military, whose mere presence announces the possibility of a “security breach,” embodies the state’s founding force and its ability through “military law” or war to remove all humanity from its citizens.

The nation-state, and its Rule of Law, disavows its dependence on unsanctioned violence and on creating and maintaining legal inequality between its citizens and between the “citizen” and the “alien” (particularly those who do not merit protection by other national governments, the “irregular aliens”). I am here critiquing this aspect of the modern nation-state, which creates and maintains spaces defined by the absence of administrative and judicial controls, wherein the institutions of state force are allowed to “make the law” to whatever extent, under the excuse of “security.” This is a direct result of the conception of the territorial nation-state, which is unable to institute laws that equally protect the basic rights and freedoms of all people (radical cosmopolitanism). Instead it vacillates between its oppressive dimension and its liberal protectionist aspirations (Dimoulis 1997:152). The incongruity transports the problem into the hands of the police.

Walter Benjamin in the “Critique of Violence” (1986) and, Hannah Arendt in Origins of Totalitarianism (1973) and especially in Chapter Nine “The Decline of the Nation-State and the End of the Rights of Man,” claim in the modern nation-state the institutions of executive power have often assumed powers of decision and decree over people.
Especially those people not protected by rights of national citizenship have traditionally been treated through non-transparent, ad hoc and unaccountable policies and procedures against which there are no lawyers and no appeals. Today in Greece it is often left to the border police members to interpret and decide, whether an “irregular alien” fulfills the criteria of some political status category that is protected by national or international law. This is not an exclusively Greek phenomenon. The European Union today is struggling to address and standardize its treatment of ethnic minorities, immigration and of “irregular aliens,” legislate and implement common policies through common institutions in the different countries with different constitutions. But in the E.U. as well as in the United States the fate of thousands of “aliens” are decided daily by members of institutions charged with protecting the “national security,” from police and immigration officials, to detention center officers and even military tribunals.

As Hannah Arendt, was claiming in The Origins of Totalitarianism, still today international law is limited to agreements among territorially based sovereign states, defeating the power and efficacy of international law.\textsuperscript{128} As long as the nation-states are ultimately the guardians of the people’s rights and freedoms, these will be collapsed with the notion of national security, which will always remain a necessarily arbitrary and malleable notion. “National Security” will be manipulated for the institution and maintenance of nation-state’s Law and Order, sanctioning the exercise of violence towards requisite transgressors.
Giorgio Agamben, in his essay “The Camp as Nomos of the Modern,” describes a social space, a spatiality characterized by a particular juridico-political structure, created by the modern democratic nation-state; he calls this space “the camp” (Agamben 1997). The essence of “the camp” is the materialization of the state of exception, a space where exceptional violence can be legitimized. In this work I have argued that the Prespa borders have constituted and still today constitute states of exception, and that national borders in general are subtended by violence, the lawmaking violence that is instrumental to the institution of the nation-state and the legitimation of its power.

In recent years, the marginal and dispersed liminal spaces that allow such violent practices, within or at the edges of the nation-states, are acquiring more legitimacy and colonizing wider territorial zones. The “War on Terrorism,” increasing economic pressures that force more people into transnational migration, ethnic tensions and warfare world wide, all have “revived” such “exceptional” regions as national borders (controls at airports, immigration related detention centers, etc.), while proliferating the occurrence of such spatialities as the refugee camps (currently housing several million people worldwide). Spaces of exception such as “borders,” “detention centers” or “refugee camps,” offer radical perspectives on the political space of (post)modernity and the transformations of current institutions of power. When power-holders promote “public order and security” by establishing more exceptions as the rule, the result is the legitimizing of power excesses and violence.
Endnotes

1 Much has been written about the formations that bring together and equate “the people” to the “nation” to the “state” and the “territory.” For a concise text on the discourse that developed during the Age of Revolutions in the late 18th century, see Hobsbawm’s first chapter in Nations and Nationalism since 1780 (1990:14-45), as for the formation of Imagined Communities see Benedict Anderson’s classic text (1983).

2 The term “dopios” is commonly used today among the Greeks to distinguish Greeks from foreigners “xenoï” (ξενοί), or the members of a geographically bound community (village, island, region, etc.) the insiders, from all others, in other words the “outsiders.” The adjectival noun “dopios” or “dopya” (which is the female and the plural forms of the term) is commonly used to refer to people as well as products that are “local,” “regional” or even “national,” indicating insider identity while delineating communities. The use of the same term throughout Greek Macedonia, however, has an additional, historically specific reference: it is used to distinguish the people who lived in Greek Macedonia prior to the arrival of over a million Refugees from Turkey in 1922-23 (Karakasidou 1997; Cowan 2000; Danforth 1997; Pelagidis 1994; Koliopoulos 1999; Michailidis 1997). In the Prespa region of Northwestern Greek Macedonia the same term is used as the proper name, the appellation of a particular community of people. Indeed through this name there is a particular claim by the members of this community to origin and identity with the land. As this is the name most commonly used by people of other communities that live around the Dopyi for the Dopyi, this is a recognized claim. However as is the case with most proper names the meaning of the term has to some extent faded away through many years of usage. From this point onwards I will capitalize the term Dopyos when referring to this Prespa community and its members, as the name of one of the distinct communities within the Prespa region. Further discussion of the term and the community it designates in the Prespa border region can be found in footnote # 12 as well as in the rest of this study.

3 A “landscape identity” indicates a place bound community formed within the particularity of a specific geographical space, which becomes a lived place articulated through the social relations of these people that inhabit it, as well as through their cultural values and meanings, the emotional, perceptual and symbolic investments produced therein. For more on “landscape identity” see: Morley & Robins 1995; King 1997; Donald 1998; Lowenthal 1961; Massey 1997 and 1998; Carter, Donald and Squires 1993; Terkenli 1996. Acknowledgement is due here to Theano Terkenli who introduced me to the subject of landscape identity and to Dimitris Papadopoulos, now writing his Ph.D. dissertation on the landscape of Prespa, at the University of the Aegian. It was during a recent discussion with him that the role played by the land as social “glue” for the community of the Dopyi was clarified and articulated.

4 Throughout this work I use both the terms “Macedonia” and “FYROM” (Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia) as the first is self-ascriptive and the later is the United Nations appellation for the country.

5 The Prespa borders, in large part, “cut” the waters of the two lakes of Prespa; they are to a large extent invisible. There are no checkpoints in the Prespa area; a few cement pyramids, land
demarcations, and a few buoys floating on the waters form invisible lines that separate the three nations. Only to the locals and the authorities know their exact location.

6 The word **assujetissement** translated in English both as **subjectivization** and **subjectification** contains several nuanced theoretical approaches to the process of subject formation from Luis Althusser (2001) and Michel Foucault (1979, 1982, 1980) to Judy Bulte (1997) and Bulte, Laclau and Zizek (2000).

7 Other recent works that have problematized the “ethnic group” and the “Balkans” include those of the Belgrade Circle, such as **Balkan as Metaphor**, edited by Obrad Savic and Dusan Bjelic (2002) and including the work of Alexander Kossev, Vesna Kecic, Vesna Goldworthy, Toma Longinovic, Stathis Gourgouris; as well as the work of Andonis Liakos (1993), Miroslav Hroch and Maria Todorova (1996), Sia Anagnostopoulou (1998), Elli Skopetea (1997), to name a few. Others can be found in the bibliography herein.

8 These are categories of speech coined by J. L. Austin who argues that some utterances describe the world (constative) while others do things with words (performatives) they enact what they signify, e.g., “I promise” or “I bet” (Austin 1975; Phelan 1996:149). This is the realm of the performatives, where signifiers and forms have creative rather than just descriptive power. The creative power of performance is not taken up only as a challenge to the writing of this dissertation; it is also discussed extensively as a mode of subjectivization that takes place through “naming.”

9 John Berger, storyteller and cultural theorist, has written seven pages entitled “An Explanation” in his book Pig Earth (1979), that make up to date the best introduction I have ever read to an ethnographic text.

10 “Michalis” and all the other personal names used in this paper are fictitious. As will be demonstrated in this paper, border regions are highly “securitized” zones of national insecurity: a great amount of discretion is demanded.

11 The South Balkans is an area of shifting borders, where the processes of state formation and cultural homogenization that took place during the 19th and the early 20th centuries were long, complex and violent. After centuries of multi-ethnic and multi-religious empires, the nation-states divided and re-divided these territories with wars and treaties, they moved populations around, and more often than not became oppressive towards ethnic minority groups. The First and Second World Wars ravaged the area, followed on the Greek side by a disastrous Civil War, which lasted until 1949. Albania and Yugoslavia after the WWII, as part of the Eastern European block, formed two unique versions of communist rule, organized around the personalities of two “revisionists” Hoxha and Tito, respectively. With the advance of the 20th century, ethnic differences became tangled with the socio-political ones, resulting in highly politicized cultures. Towards the end of the 20th century, war ravaged Yugoslavia followed by the formation of new nation-states (new national borders reshape the Balkans), while Albania witnessed generalized violence and a socio-political and economic collapse. The Prespa border region clearly belongs to the south Balkans, this part of the world which both manifested and borne the most acute ethnic forms of conflict, indeed became symbolic of ethno-nationalism. This work discusses a Balkan microcosm from an anthropological perspective. Among the plethora of publications on the Balkans, three recent works address both their political history and their discursive role. Those are Todorova’s **Imagining the Balkans** (1997), Mazower’s **The Balkans** (2000) and more recently Bjelic and Savic’s edited volume “Balkan as Metaphore” (2002). Todorova’s book, by tracing the
boundary between reality and imagination, takes on the construction of stereotypes concerning
the Balkans and their effects in the region, while offering a discursive alternative to Said’s
Orientalism. Mazower’s book, is a careful and discerning view of Balkan history, that treads
lightly around the region, eluding the categories and causalities within the context of which
Western historiography has been working for more than a century. Written in a very different tone
Balkan as Metaphor, is a collection of essays which brings together a variety of analytical tools
such as deconstruction, psychoanalysis, multiculturalism and other forms of cultural criticism, in
order to discuss how the people of the region challenge and/or uphold the different metaphors of
“Balkan” identities. These essays undertake a critique of the image of a fractious Balkans against
which Europe has been defining itself, as well as a discussion of the critical uneasiness felt
among the people in the Balkans or of the Balkans by the different uses of the various Balkan
metaphors.

12 Michalis belongs to one of the communities that live on the Greek side of these borders called
“Dopyi” or “Slav-Macedonians.” “Dopyos” (singular male), “Dopya” (singular female) or
“Dopyi” (plural), are the terms most frequently used by the members of this community to refer
to themselves, and by others that live in the Prespa area. “Dopyi” literally means the people of the
land, the locals or indigenous people. “Slav-Macedonians” is another term used for the same
group of people, a term that distinguishes them as an ethnically different community that lives
within the Greek nation. As these people do not have an ethnic minority status within the Greek
state, this second appellation is more charged politically. Many more terms have as their referent
this specific group of people, whose political, ethnic and national affiliations are as controversial
as they are varied. Ethnic differences in the region are always collapsed in the national
imagination with political ones; as a result all identifying terms used for the “Dopyi”
inaudiently betray the speaker’s political agenda. If, for example, a member of the “Dopyi” who
lives in Greece today proclaims his or her ethnic difference by using the term “Slav-Macedonian
(Σλαβομακεδόνας) to refer to him/herself, this self-identification, in the company of other Greek
nationals would probably connote anti-Greek sentiments and, in some cases a communist political
orientation. In the case of naming this community the meanings and connotations wildly vary
depending on the context (see Part 2 Subjects for further detailed discussion on naming and the
formations of subjectivity among the Dopyi).

13 The Dopyi that form the community of the Psarades village are the only people of Prespa that
take tourists (mostly Greeks) out into the lake to show them the Byzantine relics and the “tri-
ethness” (τρειδείας), the “three nations” area, i.e. the part of the lake where the three borders
meet. The “tour-guiding” activity and its monetary returns is monopolized by the Psarades men
because their village is the only one of the 11 Greek Prespa villages located directly on the lake.
During the years between 1992 and 1998, when they had to refer to Macedonian (FYROM), its
side of the lake, or its shores, they used the name “Former Yugoslavia” (πρώην Ελλάδα). Probably
because they could thus avoid using the name “Macedonia,” which is a problematic
appellation among Greek nationals, while also avoiding the name “Skopia” which, for the Greeks,
again, has been the preferred way of calling the Republic of Macedonia since its establishment as
a nation-state. Among the “dopyi” of the village of Psarades, I often noted a particular fondness
towards Yugoslavia, and the good old days when it was big and thriving, and particularly Serbia
and Belgrade.

14 Up until 1913 there were no borders around Prespa. The stories of the establishment of the
Balkan borders are long, violent and complex. The following story is a brief history of the Greek
Albanian border. On May 30th of 1913 the London Treaty established the new independent and
sovereign Albanian nation-state, but the new nation-state had no borders. The borders of Albania
remained uncharted up until the 17th of December 1913, when the Protocol of Florence was signed, based on the work of two international committees commissioned with the delimitation and the demarcation of the north and south Albanian borders. However, while most of the Greek-Albanian border was indeed charted by December of 1913, the borders of the Prespa region were left pending, due to the highly contested character of those lands (Kondis 1976; Helmreich 1938). During the decade that followed WWI, several international treaties and intense negotiations over the Balkan lands, kept the borders of Albania unstable and mobile. In 1921 the borders are restored to where they had been established by the 1913 Florence Protocol. In 1922 another committee was instituted consisting of an Italian, a Frenchman and an Englishman, assigned to chart and demarcate the Greek-Albania border on the land. The Prespa border was charted and agreed upon in July 1923 by ambassadorial decree. But in August 1923, the Italian envoy and president of the committee, General Tellini, was assassinated along with his entourage, a few miles south of Prespa. The works continued and the results were included in the new Protocol of Florence signed January 1925, but the final delimitation act took place in Paris in July 1926. (Stickney 1926; Barros 1965). According to article 8 of the Florence protocol of 1925, a bilateral agreement between the two counties would demarcate the boundary with pyramids, maintain of the border and establish ways to prevent and to handle “border incidents.” Due to the post WW2 crises in diplomatic relations between the two countries (based on ethnic minority issues and territorial claims), all efforts for the demarcation and maintenance of the borderline have remained inconclusive. Border incidents have been handled in an ad hoc fashion until the early 1990s (Dimitrakopoulos 1991). The Greek-Macedonian border has an equally complicated history of delimitation and demarcation.

15 During WWII most parts of Greek Macedonia, including Prespa, were under the triple occupation of Germany, Italy and Bulgaria. During that time the border restrictions were lifted and the borders remained completely permeable until 1945, when the nationalists formed a government after taking the power over from the communist guerillas. During WWII the communists had formed a formidable resistance army, a provisional government, and a political network of wide constituency throughout the country. After the war was over, the communist guerilla army continued fighting throughout Greece, this time against the national army. That was the Greek Civil War (1945 to 1949), the effects of which are still felt around the country, and (for reasons that will become obvious further down) especially in northwestern Greek Macedonia and Prespa. Due to its remote location, and its proximity to Tito's Yugoslavia and Hoxha's Albania, Prespa became one of the strongholds of the communists (headquarters, hospitals, etc.). Thus, during the Civil War, the borders had a porous character as the leadership of the communist guerillas could come and go through them freely, many people crossed them to avoid the military draft and thousands of children where shipped through them towards northern Socialist Republics. In 1949, Tito with an unexpected reversal, withdrew support to the Greek communists and summarily closed the Greek Yugoslavian border, which remained closed until the early 1960s when diplomatic relations resumed between the two countries.

16 In Greece (as well as in Albania and Macedonia/FYROM) even this kind of statement, uttered by ethnic minority member is over-determined. Such a statement is immediately loaded with political contents which, in this case, might range from mild disapproval of state policies, to actively pursuing the autonomy of the area and/or its annexation from the neighboring Macedonian (FYROM) state. Even if that is not at all what Michalis had in mind, being a Dopios from Prespa, he would never be so naive as to say such a thing without considering first who he was saying it to, the connotations, and how much he was risking by the utterance. It has been engraved deep in his consciousness that he is “suspect” as a national subject. If we hadn’t known
each other for a while, he might have not said anything. Or if he had said something like that to a total stranger, he would have done so to be cocky and provocative (see Part 2. Subject).

17 Enver Hoxha created a one party State with a hard-line communist regime which ruled Albania from 1944 to 1985. During those years many state tribunals condemned thousands of "enemies of the people" to death or prison, and all industry, transportation, agricultural and other production, forests, pastures, etc were nationalized. Hoxha's was a revisionist communism that soon broke out of the Stalinist line, and then proceeded to break contact with the other revisionists: with Tito's Yugoslavia first and eventually with China as well, totally isolating a country of increasing poverty and desolation. Fifty years of communist rule in Albania ended in 1992, and the period that ensued was a very difficult transition to democracy that culminated in the pyramid investment scheme collapse in 1997: more that 75% of the Albanian people lost their life's savings. The period of rioting, violence, looting of Army armories, burning government buildings and the collapse of all social and political institutions that followed lasted for several weeks. A parliamentary democracy was eventually established with the help of foreign troops and the country seems to be going through a period of increasing stability ever since. For a brief account on Albanian nation building up to WWII see Zavalaní's (1994) "Albanian Nationalism" in Nationalism in Eastern Europe, (eds.) Sugar, P. and Lederer, I. J., Seattle and London: University of Washington Press. For a short but comprehensive history of Albania, and Greek-Albanian relations up to the early 1990s, from the Greek perspective see G. Harvalia's section on Albania, in Balkans. 1994. (ed.) Veremis, Thanos. Athens: Gnosí (in Greek). Miranda Vickers' The Albanians: a Modern History, London: I.B. Tauris, 1995, and, Miranda Vickers' and James Pettifer's, 1997. Albania: From Anarchy to Balkan Identity, (New York University Press), is a recent revisionist history, one of the least burdened with stereotypes Western view of Albania. Women in Modern Albania: First Hand Accounts of Culture and Conditions from over 200 Interviews, by Susan E. Pritchett Post, (McFarland and Company: 1998) is an interesting ethnographic account that tells the history of Albania through many mouths and from the point of view of different generations. Bibliography on Albania is limited and usually written with great ideological fervor. One of the authors who stands out is Antonia Young who has written several articles about Albania and an extraordinary book on the Balkans called Women Who Become Men: Albanian Sworn Virgins. 2000. Oxford and New York: Berg.

18 Dimitris is a Vlach. The Vlachs (also Vlaihs) or Aroumanians of Prespa were from the Pindus mountain range (Greek and Albanian Epirus), predominantly Christian Orthodox nomadic pastoralists. The seasonal dispersion of pastoralists, formed part of a great old tradition in the South Balkans of transhumance and nomadism. Entire populations would move around the Balkan Peninsula, men, women and children, with horses and sheep and other animals, and with blankets, rugs, cushions and kitchen utensils. Dr. Holland in 1812 encountered such a group of nomads and he writes: "The many large flocks of sheep we had met the day before, belonged to these people, and were preceding them to the plains. The cavalcade we now passed through was nearly two miles in length, with few interruptions. The number of horses with the emigrants might exceed a thousand; they were chiefly employed in carrying the moveable habitations, and the various goods of the community, which were packed with remarkable neatness and uniformity. The infants and small children were variously attached to the luggage, while the men, women and elder children traveled for the most part on foot" (Holland 1815 in Stoianovich 1994: 339). The kind of Balkan mobility characteristic of the Vlachs described in the above passage, was truncated during the Balkan wars, and especially after the creation of the Balkan nation-states borders. However, many Vlachs by the middle of the 18th century had already settled, forming a vital part of (or sometimes dominating) several bustling economic and educational urban centers in the Balkans (Brown 1997). There are two or three different theories about the origins of the
Vlachs, which are still contested. They seem to be one of the older inhabitants of the Balkans who speak a Latin based language. The linguistic similarity led Romanian nationalists, during the violent years of Balkan nation-state formation in Macedonia (turn of the 20th century), to propagandize among the Vlachs, thus laying thus claims over the still Ottoman, Macedonian territories. Some Vlachs left Greece for Romania after the Balkan Wars but most stayed in Greece remaining up until today staunch proponents of Greek nationalism. Throughout the Balkans the Vlachs had a great ability to assimilate in the different national cultures. Many of the Vlachs of Prespa today, still speak some Vlach among themselves, as a second language. Dimitris says that in his family, he was the first to be born under a steady roof. The Prespa Vlachs came to the region and settled Prespa mostly in the 1950s. They came after they were offered land and houses by the Greek government. These were confiscated land and houses that had belonged to the Dopyi who after the Civil War had fled along with the Communist Guerillas to the Eastern Block. The relations between the two groups can still today become suddenly volatile even though most of the time they intermarry and peacefully co-exist in Prespa. For bibliography on the Vlachs see Stoianovich 1994; Lazarou 1993; Divani 1995; Winnifrith 1987; Wace and Thompson 1972; Poulton 1991; Brown 1997.

19 Eva is a “Refugee.” The Refugees are one of the distinct Prespa communities: a large part of the people of Prespa are still called by that name after being settled in Greece for over 80 years. In 1923, a forced population exchange was agreed between the Greek and Turkish governments after the defeat of the Greek Army in the Asia Minor War (1920-22). It was the Treaty of Lausanne (signed July 1923 but not implemented until August 1924), which redrew the Greek-Turkish borders and set the precedent for the practice of “mandatory population exchanges” for the years to come. What followed was an internationally and institutionally sanctioned “ethnic cleansing:” the devastation of thousands of “Greek” and “Turkish” families. The criteria of nationality were religious. The “Greeks” (all the Christian Orthodox people of Turkey) were violently forced within a few days to leave their lives behind them in Turkey. They arrived to a poor and mostly inhospitable land that was considered their home country, their Nation. The burden, socio-economic as well as cultural, was immense for the young Greek Nation-State when over a million of people, who possessed only what they could carry, arrived in Greece, a country with the population of 6 million at the time. Almost half of these refugees were settled in Greek Macedonia. The massive settlement of Refugees in northern Greece, was an explicit policy of the Greek government, which at the time was trying to manipulate the composition of the ethnically heterogeneous Greek Macedonia. Indeed the official Greek census of 1928 recorded 1,237,000 Greeks; 82,000 Slavophones; and 93,000 others (Poulton 1993). The refugees from Asia Minor (and particularly Smyrna, what is today Izmir) and the Black Sea (Pontos) who were settled in Prespa were given the land and the houses abandoned by the Turks and Muslim Albanians who had living there before the exchange of populations. Some also inhabited houses left behind by “Bulgarians,” who had left the area after the voluntary exchange of populations that followed the treaty of Neuilly 1919. The same politics of settlement that took place in the 1920s with the Refugees was repeated 30 years later in Prespa when Vlachs were given similar incentives to settle there (1950s). The Refugees of Prespa, like the Vlachs, coexist and to some extent intermarry with the Dopyi and members of other communities. However, of the three major groups (Dopyi, Vlachs, and, Refugees or Pontics), they are the most insular. For example the first marriage between a Dopyos and a Pontic took place in 1953, and, to my knowledge, there have rarely been any marriages in Prespa between the Pontics and the Vlachs. Many of the Refugees speak a distinct dialect, the Pontic Greek, and some of the older Refugees both from Pontos and from Asia Minor, speak some Turkish. Each of these three different communities carries a very different past and a distinctive culture and language. With each generation the differences between the three groups become less pronounced and less painful. (About the Refugees, their

Unlike Dimitris, who is a Vlach, a bean cultivator and lives in Aghios Germanos, a village propped up on one of the mountain slopes surrounding Prespa, Phillipos, like Michalis, is a Dopyos, one of the fishermen who lives in the village of Psarades by the waters of the lake. Vlachs as a rule do not fish. They own or sometimes rent land and keep animals. There are no Vlachs living in the village of Psarades, except from one woman who was married into it. Psarades is the only village in Prespa that is a homogeneously Dopyo fishing village. The Psarades people usually own a cow or two, and they might have a small bean field as well, for some additional income. The village of Aghios Germanos, on the other hand, is ethnically mixed and almost every one in that community lives off of the bean fields located near the lake. That is the main source of income for most of the inhabitants of the 11 villages of the Greek Prespa, most of which are ethnically mixed as well. The other exception is the village of Vrondero, which is inhabited exclusively by Vlachs who own large numbers of sheep and goats.

The Albanian immigrants, most of them illegal, some of them legal, form a new Prespa community that has recently been added to the peoples inhabiting the Greek side of Prespa. Two or three families have acquired residents’ permits after providing some proof of Greek ancestry. They have been living here in Prespa for 3 or 4 years. Most of the Albanians are transient laborers who cross the border in order to work in the fields as farm hands for a few days or as seasonal laborers for a few months. Most of them come from the Albanian Prespa villages just across the border. In Greek Prespa they live in people’s barns or tool shacks. Most of them are ethnically the same as the Dopyi: they belong to the Slav-Macedonian ethnic minority of Albania and are Christian Orthodox in faith. The Dopyi of Psarades considered them family up until the economical devastation of Albania which became most pronounced in the early 1990s, the social crisis and the change from socialism to parliamentary democracy (1991). That’s when the stealing began: first the theft of fish, then nets and later boats or the engines of boats. For Phillipos and the other fishermen of Psarades, the Albanians became a serious problem; for them it is a matter of economic survival. The fishermen started going out into the lake regularly, in order to check if everyone’s nets where in place (see first story with Michalis). For the rest of Prespa the Albanians are perceived as familiar foreigners, and an economic necessity. Most of the farmers in Prespa (i.e., most of Prespa) depend on the low waged Albanians who cross the borders illegally to work in the fields. The bean cultivation is extremely labor-intensive: before the Albanians, Gypsies were the cheap seasonal laborers in Prespa. With the arrival of the Albanians the Gypsies have disappeared from Prespa. The Albanian immigrants are discussed further in Part. 3 Displacements, and Part.4 Threat of this work.

The border policemen are another group of recent Prespa settlers. The first Greek policemen came to the region from southern Greece, to the so-called “New Lands,” along with teachers of Greek language, and other bureaucrats, around 1913 (See Part 2. Subject). Their power was greatly expanded through repressive policies during the Metaxas dictatorship of the 1030s, in the 1950s after the nationalist government “won” the Greek Civil War, and during the Military Junta, 1967-73. Policemen in Greece are usually not assigned in their native region; instead they rotate throughout the country. In the 1990s additional police forces where assigned to Prespa, with the influx of the Albanian immigrants. They are detached for several months at a time from their usual stations around the country and paid almost double their normal salaries to come to Prespa and guard the nation, the communities and their properties. They form the special border forces, created after a provision of the 1991 Greek Law for Aliens (L.1975/1991). This law was the
Greek government’s response to the large group of migrants (hundreds of thousands people yearly, mostly from Albania) that started entering the country at the end of the 1980’s (see following section: the Arbitrariness of Power).

23 People in Prespa live with their families until they get married. Traditionally the wife would go to live with the family of the groom. Today the newly married couples can either move into the groom’s house or make their own home. Often they live with the parents in Prespa, and keep a flat of their own in Florina, the near by town. They help with the fields in the summer and work in the town in the winter. One can still see around the Prespa villages, enormous houses made out of stone or mud bricks (depending on the wealth of the family), which once housed the extended families of the Dopyi. The large households went into decline as Prespa’s population became devastated during the wars and the ensuing massive political and economic migration to other countries.

24 Another important source of income for the people of the villages Psarades and Aghios Germanos, which are quite beautiful, are hotels and restaurants catering to the needs of mostly Greek visitors (national tourism). These visitors come to the area in the summer and during the winter holidays, usually for short periods of time. Most businesses created in Prespa during the last 10 or so years have been subsidized by EU founding managed by the Greek government.

25 At the very end of a small essay called “Of Other Places” written in 1967, Foucault speaks about ships and he says: “The ship is the heterotopia par excellence.” “[T]he boat is a floating piece of space, a place without a place, that is closed in on itself and at the same time is given over to the infinity of the sea and that from port to port, from tack to tack, from brothel to brothel… In civilizations without boats, dreams dry up, espionage takes the place of adventure, and police take the place of pirates.”

26 Bregovic whose father is a Croat, his mother a Serb, his wife a Muslim, and who wants to be a Yugoslav, wrote the music for most of the films of Emir Kusturitsa, another former Yugoslav. Many of the songs are actually Gypsy tunes and lyrics that Bregovic arranged for the movies. The films “The Time of the Gypsies” and “Underground,” and their soundtracks, became very popular in Europe in the late 80s and mid 90s. While in Athens everyone was dancing and singing to this music, at the borders it was suspect: considered expressive of pro-Slav/Macedonian sentiments.

27 “Autonomist” is a Dopyos who considers his people oppressed under Greek rule and wants self-determination for the territories in Greek Macedonian inhabited by the Slav-Macedonian ethnic minority. The connotations include the desire for the secession of some of the Greek territories and their annexation by the neighboring nation-state of Macedonia (FYROM). For most Greeks this translates into “treason;” the “dismemberment” of the Greek nation state. “Autonomist” is the most radical position within a spectrum of many different shades of ethnopolitical aspirations among the Dopyi. On the other side of the spectrum is total assimilation within the Greek State and full assumption of its national identity. The unfortunate assumption/fear of the Greek authorities that behind every Dopyos hides a potential “autonomist,” is precisely what motivated a series of policies repressive, towards the Dopyi (that peaked during the 1930’s Metaxas dictatorship and after the Civil War in the 1950s and 1960s) and the “stigma” that has marked the community.

28 This subject has come up several times in discussions in Prespa: how much I should or shouldn’t disclose about myself; whether I should act more demure and try not to say what I’m
thinking. I was told to be more careful in my presentation of self. The first few years that I was visiting Prespa were very hard: everyone seemed to be suspicious of presence there and chains of rumors about me were circulating. Usually Aris would argue that I should ignore them and that I should be as I want to be. In the end it will be better, he would say, for both of us, for me and for Prespa.

29 By “Macedonia” she is referring here to the Greek province of Macedonia, which covers most of the Greek North.

30 For a different point of view on the Civil War and the communist guerillas, a view from people of Prespa that fought along with them in the Civil War, see “The stories of Sotiria, Lefteris, Maria, and Dafni” in Part 3, “Displacements.” Keep in mind that in Prespa since the Greek Civil War, Slavic cultural characteristics have been equated with participation in the left wing politics and resistance. As Yiannis mentions here, the double label of being “Slavs,” thus “Communists,” thus double enemies of the Greek Nation, has stigmatized the Dopyi since. As a result, most Dopyi have suffered some sort of repression and social marginalization, while a few ended up in exile for long periods of time. Keep this stigma in mind when in the Displacement stories everyone is portraying themselves as passive agents in their interactions with the communist guerillas. It is always other members of the family, not present at the time, that were really on the communist side.

31 Muslim Slavs in Greek Thrace, particularly the North-Eastern border areas of the Greek state (see Tsitseklis and Christopoulos 1997; Poulton 1993).

32 For historical and ethnographic accounts of national awakening in the Balkans with a particular focus on the Macedonian Struggle see, for example: Perry 1988; Barker 1950; Hobsbawm 1983; Kaoudis 1904; Durham 1905; Brailsford 1906; Blinkhorn and Veremis 1990; Veremis 1995; Veremis 1994; Mazzower 2003; Karakasidou 1997; Kofos 1990; Palmer and King 1971.

33 In 1870 the establishment of the Bulgarian Exarchate (which is independent from the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Constantinople) inaugurated a new phase in the process of Bulgarian propaganda in the Macedonian area. The claim over the Slavic speaking peoples was now officially sanctioned: if two thirds of the population of a community spoke Slavic and declared the desire for a Bulgarian school and church, the later could be established. The main division of Macedonia was now between the Exarchists and the Patriarchists.

34 Serbia entered the picture with Austrian support, when Great Bulgaria started threatening to play a hegemonic role in the Balkans. Unlike the Bulgarian national movements, which were based on peasant populations and had established a locally based party, the “Chetniki” (Serbian guerillas) were mostly officers and students. Clashes with the Turks were incidental; both the Serbian and Greek guerillas often ended up collaborating with the authorities against the Bulgarians.

35 It is important to note here that one of the most important strategic moves of Bulgarian nationalism at the time was the creation in Macedonia of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (IMRO), a party opting for Macedonian autonomy. However (a point still debated in Balkan historiography), it seems that most of the time the IMRO had either overt or hidden aspirations for the eventual annexation of Macedonia by Bulgaria. The IMRO was responsible for the Ilinden Uprising, which in the Former Yugoslavilian Republic of Macedonia has been marked
and celebrated as the first Macedonian people’s revolt for national independence. It broke out on July 20th of 1903, during the celebration of Saint Elias day, and it was drowned in blood by the Ottomans a month later: one hundred and fifty villages were burned by Turkish and Albanian soldiers (see following Durham quotes).

36 Karakasidou, in her book *Fields of Wheat, Hills of Blood: Passages to Nationhood in Greek Macedonia 1870-1990*, describes the processes followed by the Greek state in order to establish its administrative and ideological authority over the New Lands. The chapter on the administration of these lands describes the introduction of the new presence of state power into the small communities of Greek Macedonia. This, argues Karakasidou, was not a unilateral top-down enforcement of policies; it was instead a complex process that involved renegotiations and redefinitions of both state and local interests, through the mediating agency of local elites with a national orientation.

37 Much has been written about Macedonia and the role that it played during the formative period of the Greek nation and nationalism, historiography and the educational system. The following three books cover a good range: Stavrianos, L. S. 1958. *The Balkans since 1453* is a comparative approach to Greek nationalism as an ideology competing with others within the Balkan context. An important work produced in Greece about Greek nationalism, is *Modern Greece: Nationalism and Nationality* edited in 1990 by Martin Blinkhorn and Thanos Veremis. Its essays include “From the National State to the Stateless Nation 1821-1910,” “Imagined Communities’ and the Origins of the National Question in the Balkans,” “Brigandage and Irredentism in Nineteenth-Century Greece,” “National Heritage and National Identity in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Macedonia” and “Continuity and Change in Contemporary Greek Historiography.” The last selected work on the subject is an ethnography by Anastasia Karakasidou. In *Fields of Wheat, Hills of Blood: Passages to Nationhood in Greek Macedonia 1870-1990* (1990), the author discusses the intricate connections between the ideological, the institutional and the material/economic reality of nation-state building in northern Greece, grounding it in historiographical, archival and ethnographic material.

38 For more on the Refugees and the “Exchanges of Populations” see endnote 19 of Part 1, “Border,” and the following chapter on Subject Formation. For bibliography see: Ladas 1932; Malouchos 1924; Mavrogordatos 1983; Michaelides 1997; Pelagidis 1994; Hirschon 1998; Tsimouris 1997; Karakasidou 1997; Cowan 1990; Vergeti 1994; Voutira 1991; Divani 1995.

39 Before I left Prespa, a man from Aghios Germanos gave me two handwritten manuscripts: the autobiography of his brother and the biography of his father. In reading through the touching details of the lives of these two men, what jumps from the page is the pressing need that motivated the writing of the two hundred pages. Both of these texts had been written in order to prove, beyond any doubt, that this family was Greek, that their consciousness had always been that of Greek nationals. The manuscript includes handwritten copies of several “official documents” signed by different Greek institutional authorities that provide further proof for their
cause. They had in fought many wars and lost loved ones for the Greek cause since the time of the Ottoman Empire. They associated only with the right people, the “Grekomans,” as the Dopyi who identified with the Greek cause were called. They might have been speaking another language, but culturally and politically they had always been Greek nationals.

40 Note Benedict Anderson’s emphasis on language in his discussion of the nation as an “imagined community” (Anderson 1983).

41 See the story of Lefteris in Part 3, “Displacements.”

42 All references to Althusser come exclusively from his essay “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses”, and are discussed from a performance theory perspective and Althusser’s contribution to it.

43 As I am writing this section of my dissertation during the George W. Bush administration’s war with Iraq (April 2003), the Marxist approach of the State as a repressive apparatus, a unilateral agent of power which has as its purpose not only the domination but also the exploitation by the ruling elite of all the ‘wretched of the earth,’ has particular resonance.

44 Benjamin writes that “Information . . . lays claim to prompt verifiability. The prime requirement is that it appears ‘understandable in itself.’ . . . Every morning brings us the news of the globe, and yet we are poor in noteworthy stories. This is because no event any longer comes to us without already being shot through with explanation” (Benjamin 1969: 89). A descriptive section about the economic and material realities of Prespa, a historical narrative with a set framework of causalities, categorical hierarchies and references, is much more digestible and seems more transparent as to its meaning, than does a story. The stories about Prespa, told and retold, manipulated and metamorphosed by several mediations, synthetic rather than analytic, seem more opaque as they bring together many realms of experience, leaving the reader with more challenges of interpretation, and hopefully achieving an “amplitude that information lacks.” (ibid.)

45 It is with the arrival of the refugee populations, and in opposition to the term Refugees that the term Dopyi, meaning the local, indigenous people came into use throughout Greek Macedonia.

46 For more on land redistribution in Macedonia and the Dopyi/Refugee relations see Vergopoulos 1977-78 and 1978; Koliopoulos 1999; Gounaris 1994; Michailidis 1997; Karakasidou 1997; and Yiannisopoulou 1998.


48 See Michailides 1997.

49 The Gypsies make their appearance in Prespa every now and then when they come with trucks to sell things around the Prespa villages. They had been a strong presence in Prespa during the harvesting of the beans but the lower paid Albanians now monopolize the scene. Once nomads,
today most of the Florina district Gypsies have been baptized and have settled in houses provided by Florina Archbishopric. Boeschoten also mentions the Arvanites, who however do not live in the Prespa region.

50 Most of the “hard” data about Prespa found in this section, regarding population estimates, agriculture, etc., were taken from Prespa: a Story About Nature and About People published in 1996 by the Society for the Protection of Prespa, written by Yiorgos Katsadorakis.


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52 Still, the young people that work for the Society are almost exclusively Vlach, or from other parts of Greece as well as from international backgrounds.

53 In Reading Capital Althusser pays homage to Foucault and especially his first two books.

54 “Macedonians” says Kofos, was the name “given by the Yugoslavs to the Slav inhabitants of upper Macedonia, in the attempt to invest them with a national identity” (1964: xvi). For a critical discussion of Koliopoulos’s point of view see Karakasidou 2000, and for a general critical discussion of the mainstream Greek nationalist perspective on the subject see Danforth 1995. For further information on the role played by the Greek communist party in relation to Macedonian identity see Kofos (1964) Nationalism and Communism in Macedonia, Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies; as well as Karakasidou (1993) “Fellow Travelers, Separate Roads: The Greek communist party and the Macedonian Question” East European Quarterly (Winter) 27(4): 453-77.

55 Althusser states that “it is not their real conditions of existence, . . . that ‘men’ ‘represent to themselves’ in ideology” but instead “it is the imaginary nature of this relation which underlies all the imaginary distortion that we can observe (if we do not live in its truth) in all ideology” (2001: 111).

56 Such irredentist views have justified several bloody wars all around the world and seem to be fundamental to the definition of the nation-state. In the Balkans today ardent nationalist factions
of all the Balkan nation-states currently express such views. Greece’s extreme nationalists believe that Istanbul and Asia Minor, as well as part of Albania and part of FYROM etc., should one day become Greek again. Macedonian (FYROM) extreme nationalists see Greek Macedonia as under foreign (Greek) occupation, and so on and so forth. Unfortunately, watered down versions of irredentist views linger, dormant, in the national imagination of whole population of the Nation-State; they are an integral part of national myths waiting to be “awakened” in times of “trouble.”

57 For a much more detailed and in-depth discussion of all the permutations and contestations of the name “Macedonia” and Macedonian identity formation see Danforth 1995.

58 In one of my trips to Macedonia (FYROM) this was a recurring theme of discussions with the local intellectuals: the Greek claims were a nuisance, but the real danger came from Bulgaria, which was claiming the Macedonian people, based on linguistic and cultural criteria, as their own. Another view that was prevalent in Macedonia at the time, 1994-1995, was that the other large threat to the Macedonian nation-state was the internal existence of a large Albanian minority. Almost immediately after the constitution of the new nation-state, its Albanian minority (almost one fourth of the population) voted overwhelmingly in favor of “the political and territorial autonomy of the Albanians in Macedonia” and the formation of their own state, the Republic of Ilirida (Danforth 1995: 12).

59 Which is by definition impossible: every reiteration contains difference, as it is a diachronic concept (Butler 1993, 1997).

60 Not only the national ideologies (Serbian, Bulgarian, Greek, Romanian, Albanian) and their armies, but also political parties and their guerrilla forces played a very important role in the formation of unstable subject positions available and contested in the Prespa region.

61 For more on press coverage see Danforth 1995.

62 In the 1980s, as an undergrad at Wesleyan University in Connecticut, participating in a Yale women’s choir that sang Balkan songs, I was given the score of a song that under the song’s title had the word “Macedonian.” I remember thinking, “those Americans... they don’t really know anything about the Balkans. This is not a Macedonian song. If it were it would be in Greek and this sure is not Greek.” Apart from my ignorance, this anecdote relates the careful manipulation of the Macedonian issue by the Greek history books taught in Athenian high-schools in the late seventies and early eighties. The Federal Democracy of Macedonia that existed in Yugoslavia was mentioned in passing, if at all, as a concoction brought about by Tito, the creation of which was exclusively aimed at applying political pressure on the Greek Nation State. The issue was partially silenced, and, exactly because it produced extreme nationalist rhetoric, delegitimized. Thus it did not hold a prominent position in our schools’ national history. That history never mentioned the great cultural heterogeneity of Macedonia during the Ottoman Empire. We were taught that Macedonia was inhabited exclusively by Greeks, who were tortured by the Turks (and later by Bulgarians claiming the land), but who had kept alive the flame of the nation in their hearts—their culture and religion—through “secret schools,” during those dark, oppressive centuries.

63 I do not remember what were the exact words used, but I remember that there was mention of cultural and linguistic differences near the borders when I got to Thessaloniki. There was no such mention in Athens.
I had chosen Ethniko as my destination without knowing anything about it, because of its name and because it was right near the Greek/Macedonian (FYROM) border.

The fiestas (panigyria in Greek) in Prespa last for two days starting on the name-day of the patron Saint of a village, and continuing through the next night. The fiesta at the village of Podeti is a celebration of Saint Elias day. This is is also the date of the Ilinden Uprising, mentioned before, which Greek historiography either totally erases, leaving it out of the books, or considers a pseudo-revolt of no significance, organized and executed by Bulgarians. For more on panigyria, see endnote #72.


Greece still has extreme Greek nationalists as does Albania, Serbia, and others.

Danforth makes the point that some Dopyi (“local Macedonians” is the appellation he uses for the Dopyi) who have developed a Macedonian rather than a Greek identity, conceptualize the core-periphery relationship that exists between the Florina region and the urban centers Athens and Thessaloniki, in ethnic terms: as an opposition between Dopyi and southern Greeks. This is true, he says, even among some Dopyi with a Greek national identity. I have also noticed similar translations of power relations into ethnic terms not only among the Dopyi but also among (non-Dopyi) Greeks of Macedonia, including people of Thessaloniki who feel disenfranchised in relation to the national core, Athens. The Thessalonicans would claim, for example, that they are more “Greek” than the Athenians, that is, closer to the Ancient Greek culture. I have also heard many different Greeks in Greek Macedonia refer to the “State of Athens,” as a derogatory statement. It expresses the view that everything is decided in Athens and all the resources are spent for Athens.

There were three different people in Prespa who had given me such texts; I found it very interesting that so many people of Prespa wanted to write their experiences down.

For obvious reasons I cannot reveal the name of the Prespa village that they were referring to.

Note the emotional reaction to music as proof of ethno-national loyalties.

The “panigyri” is a grand celebration, which lasts in Prespa for two days and two nights. The festivities take place mostly at night and especially during the second night. Every village around Prespa has a panigyri once a year and these are probably the most important days in the life of the village. It is usually related to the patron saint of the village, i.e., the namesake of the main church of the village. The panigyria usually take place during the summer months and they are always outdoors: in the village square, the school yard, a field near the center of the village. During the fall or spring, when the weather is chilly, the people light large bonfires. During the panigyri people mostly dance to live music, performed by a local band. The music is loudly amplified, and there is a lot of drinking and eating. In the villages where there are no tavernas to take care of the panigyri food, there are always hotdog and souvlaki vendors around. The festivities last the whole
night long. Each panigyri has its character and its reputation. Some panigyria are more famous than others. The panigyri of Psarades is the most famous one in Prespa. People from the entire area come to it. The village of Psarades has a lot of tavernas and a lot of emigrants. In Perth, Australia alone live 700 people from the village of Psarades. There are probably a few hundred more living in the countries of Eastern Europe, in other parts of Greece, in Germany, Canada, and the US. Most of the emigrants who return to visit Psarades for the summer make sure that their stay includes the 15th of August, which is the day of the "Virgin Mary" and of the panigyri of Psarades. The population of Psarades, which during the winter is less than 100 people, during the middle of August, is quadrupled. All the houses that are inhabitable are packed, all the "rooms to let" are booked, and all the beds, sofas and most of the floor space of the Psarades homes are occupied by friends and family from far away. The panigyri is also the space in which ethnic tensions become most visible.

73 Pontos is a region of the Black Sea, home of many of the Refugees that had come to Prespa in 1922-23. The Pontic dances are famous throughout Greece for their beauty and their special quality of tension: some of their dances have a wild, almost frantic energy which is perfectly restrained within fast, small and precise footwork alternating with large steps that seem to slap the ground. Vlach songs, in contrast, are more languid, slow and proud dances, danced with big steps. They have none of the "tension" found in the Pontic dances. Vlach dances are not very complex even when they are upbeat. However, it is those Vlach dance songs that sometimes offer the best long, virtuosic, and heartbreaking solos from both dancers and instrument players. The Dopyri dances are usually upbeat; they are complex rhythmically and have beautiful melodies. Some of them have jumps, large skips, but not small restrained jumps like those of the Pontic dances.

74 A woman is "stolen" when, without her parents' consent to a wedding, the suitor "steals the bride" from her house and takes her to his house, thus forcing the process of the wedding to start. The term doesn't indicate whether the "bride" goes willingly or not.

75 Between the two lakes, Large Lake Prespa and the Small Lake Prespa, there is a narrow stretch of flat land about a kilometer long. This land, which runs from East to West, separates the waters of the large lake to the North and the small one to the South. At its western-most side, where it is at its narrowest, there is a little channel, where the waters of the small lake flow into the large lake. The spot is called "Koula" probably from the Turkish word "koule," which means army outpost. Today this river runs under a cement bridge that is not visible under the asphalt road. This road connects the eastern, larger part of Prespa with all its fertile fields (Aghios Germanos, Laimos, Miliona, Plati, Lefkona, Kallithea, Karies, Oxia, Mikrolimni), to the more remote, western Prespa (Psarades, Pyli, Aghios Achileos and Vrondero). At Koula the road takes a turn in front of the Greek army outpost where the soldiers sit all day on its porch checking out the traffic. That turn comes right after the "Plaz," a low cement building, currently used as a café-restaurant, where almost no one I know ever goes to eat. Only buses with tourists in the middle of the summer sometimes stop for refreshments and a dip in the waters of large Prespa. The Plaz was build during the junta, along with the beach-like stretch in front of it, which was once covered with sand. Right after the army outpost there is a little restaurant tucked under some shady trees. This is frequented mostly by Vlachs, and mostly by the Vlachs of Pyli and Vrondero, two villages that do not have any cafes or restaurants worth mentioning. That little restaurant in Koula, as it is right on the road, is also filled with people who drink coffee or beer and watch the traffic all day long. Everyone knows which car belongs to whom. Everyone knows where everyone is or they could tell you when they went by. Koula is indeed still a guarding post: all movement in and out of the East part of Prespa is highly surveyed.
Lefkona is a larger village just downhill from Kallithea, Sotiria's village. As you turn off the main road to go up the mountain towards Kallithea—which means "Beautiful View"—you pass through the square of Lefkona before the road starts going up to Kallithea. Lefkona is an ethnically mixed village with the Pontics as the predominant element. Kallithea has some Vlachs as well as several families of Dopyi. The police station serving both villages must have been in Lefkona in the 1950s. The police headquarters are in Aghios Germanos, the administrative center of Prespa. Today that is the only police station in Prespa. In Psarades, however, there were always one or two policemen loitering in the village during the years that I visited Prespa.

I was taken once by some friends from Aghios Germanos to visit the cave near the foot of the mountain of Sfika. Many traces remained from the time the cave was used as a hospital. Fragments of little brown glass medicine bottles could be seen on the ground, and empty spaces with pieces of what seemed to have been makeshift beds where all around. It was chilling to think of people's suffering in this space filled with bats.

The final acts of the Greek Civil War—the final battles between the national army and the communist guerillas—took place at the last strongholds of the communist camp in Northwestern Macedonia, which were the prefectures of Florina and Kastoria. With the end of the Civil War (i.e., the defeat of the communists), the guerillas left Greece—and along with them entire villages afraid of reprisals by the right wing government and the national army. Betrayed by Tito, who at the last minute closed the borders to the north, the communist guerillas and the people who followed them left Greece through Albania, and from there they scattered all over the countries of the Eastern Block who opened their doors to the refugees. Many of the guerillas ended up in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, of the former USSR.

Bella Crkva is one of the villages of Macedonian (FYROM) Prespa, north of the Greek-Macedonian border. There are actually two villages with the same name: Gorna (Upper) Bella Crkva, with predominately Turkish and Albanian Muslim inhabitants, and Dolna (Lower) Bela Crkva with Albanian Muslims and Macedonian Christians (Sugarman 1997: 10-11).

According to local marriage rules, Sotiria (Nikos's bride) should have left her home in Kallithea after the wedding and moved to Psarades to live with her husband's family. This custom is still kept in Prespa. However, after the Civil War, a lot of land that belonged to the "Dopyi" was confiscated. That was especially true of the property of the people whose nationality was revoked; but it was also the general rule applied to all property that belonged to those who had "fled" after the Civil War to behind the iron curtain. Unless there were males present to claim them, the land and houses were confiscated by the Greek State and offered (in the 1950s and 1960s) to Vlachs looking for settlements. This was the second time the Greek State tried to change the ethnic mix of the area by relocating ethnic groups. The Pontiacs were brought to Prespa in the 1920s and 1930s for this purpose. In the case of Andreas and Sotiria, almost every one from both their families was either dead or behind the iron curtain. No one could touch Andreas' house in Psarades: Andreas had returned to Prespa after serving in the national navy police during the Civil War. Sotiria, however, was going to lose her father's house and land in Kallithea, as all of her brothers had fought with the guerillas. [Three were killed and one had fled to Macedonia (FYROM)]. Andreas moved in with Sotiria and her mother in order to put a claim on their land. They managed to keep only one fifth of the original property. As for the house in Psarades, it stayed empty for years. Andreas' brothers and sisters, after fighting with the guerillas, were also either dead or living away from Prespa. Maria and Ioanna, his two sisters, came and lived in the Psarades house for a few months every summer.
The so-called period of “National Reconciliation” came about by the joint will of the Greek Left and the Greek Right, i.e., the two camps which so violently opposed each other during the Civil War. The initiative was started by the coalition government of 1989 by a law validated by the Greek parliament for the “lifting of the consequences of the Civil War.” The big symbolic and very controversial gesture that signifies the Greek National Reconciliation was the burning of the files (on “communists” and other “enemies of the nation”) of the Greek National Security and Secret Services. See the story of Dafni.

According to later testimonies of members of the Greek Communist Party, it seems clear that the decision was taken by the Provisional Democratic Government which had contacted the host countries long before announcing the project to the local populations (see Mitsopoulos 1979: 19).

The Truman Doctrine. 1996-2002, The Avalon Project at the Yale Law School (website) in The Lillian Goldman Law Library in Memory of Sol Goldman. On June 3rd, 1947, the Marshall Plan was announced for the first time and on April 3rd, 1948, President Truman signed the Foreign Assistance Act. This was the legislation establishing the Marshal Plan to aid Western Europe’s recovery.

The following is a description of the film Incontinuo from the Macedonian Film Archive website:

“The film INCONTINUO (1998), by director Trajche Popov and director of photography Dragan Salkovski, is dedicated to the 50th Anniversary of the exodus of children from the Aegean part of Macedonia, 1948-1998, and the 10th Anniversary of the 1st Gathering of the children refugees and preparation for their 2nd Gathering this year which had its central convention in Skopje.

Using historical facts and archival materials, this film tells the truth of the genocide on the Macedonian people in this part of Macedonia carried out by the Greek administration irrespective of who was heading the Greek Governments in the period from 1912 to 1949 (the fall of DAG, the Democratic Army of Greece, in which many Macedonians fought), the division of Macedonia and the disastrous consequences of the Balkan Wars. During the Civil War from 1946 to 1949 the children of the Aegean part of Macedonia were exposed to the horrors of terror. In the spring of 1948, fleeing, hungry and thirsty, exposed to rain, winds and long walks, over 28.000 Macedonian children were led here and there by a mother refugee. Exhausted, they sought salvation in the Vardar part of Macedonia and former Yugoslavia, and many of them were left to the Children Refugee Acceptance Centers in the East European Socialist Countries. The film presents the memories of the surviving authentic once-children refugees taken during their 1st Gathering in Skopje.”

Aggeliki Rovatsou commented on the cultural differences between today’s urban/modernist sensibilities towards “children” and those in rural areas in the early twentieth century. It used to be common practice, for example, for children throughout Greece to be sent away by their families, often to urban centers, at a very early age (7, 8 or 9) to learn a trade as apprentices. For several years they were not paid but they were provided with room and board and expected to do housework. One of my favorite pieces in Greek literature, by Yeorgios Vizzinos tells such a story. Also relevant is a forthcoming study on the subject of children apprentices in Greece by Michael Herzfeld. I also remember one account I read while researching the “paidomazoma” of the Ottoman Empire, which mentioned that the Christian parents from poor areas of the Empire would fight among themselves about whose child would be taken out to “devshirme.” The children taken would no longer be an economic burden to the family. They would learn a trade and possibly achieve political status and riches.
In contrast to the term "paidomazoma," the term "paidopolis" sounds like a place where children have fun, something like "summer camp" or "playground." The Left used the terms "the Juvenile Delinquency Halls" or "Orphanages of Queen Frederika" to refer to these places. It seems like they were not such "fun" places; funding for these "homes" was not always readily available. The communists characterized them as "centers of monarcho-fascist terror and propaganda" where young children were taught to hate their parents, the latter being portrayed to the children as national traitors (Bartziotas 1981:128.) One of the arguments of the Communist Party was that the temporary "relocation of the children" to the Socialist Republics would save them from these establishments. The Left claimed that they took the children away to save them from the "orphanages" of the Queen while the Right claimed that they took the children away to save them from the "paidomazoma." At least as far as their inception is concerned, the removal of the children by Queen Frederica and the national Army seems to have been announced and established not prior to but very soon after the "paidomazoma" started taking place (Lagani 1996: 30-31). The Queen's "paidoupoleis" is another topic very few people in Greece know anything about. Most people not of the Left believe these places did not exist, that they are fabrications of communist propaganda. Further discussion, however, of Frederica's "paidopolis" is beyond the scope of this work. None of the people that I met during my fieldwork in Prespa had been to one of these "homes."

Foreign Office 371/7836 178062, # 1234, Ms Oliver Marcy, Report from the American Embassy in Athens to the State Department, 21 December 1948, cited in Lagani 1996:30.

I particularly like the use of the word "displacement" in the translation of "paidomazoma." According to the 1966 edition of Random House Dictionary of the English Language to *displace* is: "1. To compel a person or persons to leave home, country, etc.; 2. To move or to put out of the usual or proper place" but also "to remove from a position, office or dignity" and *displaced person* is "a person driven or expelled from his homeland by war or tyranny." No matter what actually happened, it remains that for many of the children and parents it was a grave and painful affair. I use various terms are to translate the word "paidomazoma" in the following discussion, intentionally.

The term "Southern Greeks," which is used interchangeably with "Athenians" for the same vague category of people, is an unofficial, local term used in Northern Greece in a slightly derogatory fashion. I use it here to indicate the relative ignorance of the South with regard to events that shaped the history of the North of the country. The strongest of these terms used in the North for the people of the South is "palioeladites," meaning "the old Greeks," which refers to the fact that the Greek nation-state existed in the southern territories almost a century before the northern territories where added to it. The connotations of this last term (and, to a lesser extent, of "Southern Greeks" and "Athenians" as well) are of the stupidity, arrogance and ignorance of the administrators, the police and the intellectuals who historically have come from the South to "rule" the northern populations. These terms also allude to a persisting perceived inequality and the supremacy of the "South" and the "capital" over the neglected "North." And while "Northern Greece" is an official administrational category of the Greek state, "Southern Greece" refers only to a vague geographical notion. There was, for example, a "Ministry of Northern Greece" which was renamed "Ministry of Macedonia and Thrace" in the late 1980s in anticipation of the resurfacing of the "Macedonian Issue."

The political context of the time was a seven-year military dictatorship, the fall of which, in 1973, brought about a Democratic Right Wing government which restored legal status to the
Communist Party. In the 1980s, a populist but toned-down Left Wing discourse became hegemonic within Greek society, a discourse that came out of the politics and rhetoric of the Socialist Government established in 1981 that centered around the figure of its leader, Andreas Papandreou. The same socialist party, but with quite a different leadership and agenda is still in power, two decades later, after a brief interruption of a few years of coalition governments in the late 1980s.

91 Koula is a point in Prespa between the Large and Small lakes, on Greek territory.

92 Dupeni is the Macedonian (FYROM) village closest to the Greek-Macedonian border. Laimos is one of the Greek Prespa villages, the closest on the Greek side to the same Greek Macedonian border.

93 Laimos is one of the Greek Prespa villages, the closest on the Greek side to the same Greek Macedonian border.

94 The crying of 1000 children!

95 The Macedonian (FYROM) village next to Dupeni. It is the third village from the Greek-Macedonian border.

96 Macedonian (FYROM) city several hours west of Prespa.

97 He is referring to Andreas Papandreou, the Greek Prime Minister, leader of the Socialist Party “PASOK” (Πανελλήνιο Σοσιαλιστικό Κίνημα.)

98 See endnote # 72.

99 Maria, narrating the story of her mother, at first used “Eleni,” the Greek version of the name. She then used “Lena,” the Slavic version of the name, which she used from that point on. As for Tzezda, Maria's grandmother's name, it is a Slavic name which means "star." Grigoris, on the other hand, is a common Greek name.

100 The fact that Spyros is stigmatized as a “Bulgarian” and driven out of Psarades, indicates that at the turn of the 20th century the village was split into two factions: the "pro-Greece" and the "pro-Bulgaria." The people of the so-called "pro-Bulgarian" faction might have supported an autonomous or independent Macedonia. This, at the time, played into Bulgarian interests. The "Greek" supporters must have been the majority in the village of Psarades. Spyros' third grandchild, Maria, the narrator, was born in 1935. Her mother Lena, Spyros's daughter, was born during the first decade of the 1900s. Assuming he was married around the 20th year of his life, and that he wasn't much older than his wife, and that he had children soon after, Spyros must have been born during the 1880s or earlier. During most of the 19th century, the village of Psarades was inhabited by Slavic speakers, many of whom must have had some kind of “Greek consciousness.” This, at the time, would mean: having a Greek education and sermons at the village church, possibly speaking some Greek as well, especially the men (learning the lingua franca), most likely supporting the annexation of Macedonia by the Greek nation-state, and probably primarily identifying themselves as Christian Orthodox subjects of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. By the end of the 19th century and during the first decade of the 20th century, any such proto-national identifications remaining in the region were forced to give way to national identifications forged by national ideologies, armed conflicts and wars. The newly formed Greek
and Bulgarian nation-states were putting claims over this land and its populations, at first by sending priests who taught the respective languages while trying to influence the loyalties of the local communities to either the Greek speaking Patriarchate of Constantinople or to the Bulgarian Exarchate. As the Ottoman Empire administered its mixed populations through the recognition of religious difference and by investing the different religious authorities with political power, naturally the conflict over Macedonia started at the level of religion. In 1870 the Bulgarian Patriarchate was, by the Sultan’s decree, allowed to establish Slavic speaking churches in the local communities whose population was predominately Slavic speaking. Eventually the newly founded nation-states of Greece and Bulgaria started sending armed guerrillas to the area, and soon Serbia joined in. The Ottomans reacted violently, suppressing the budding nationalism within their territories. Tzvezda and Spyros lived through this part of history, which spanned through the first decade of the 20th century. Then, as young adults, they lived through the Balkan Wars which ravaged the region, first overthrowing the Ottoman rule and then resolving the claims of the three countries over the land.

The Balkan Wars lead to the Treaty of Bucharest, which resolved the issue of the Macedonian territories in 1913 by granting 51% to Greece, 38% to Serbia and 10% to Bulgaria. It is crucial to remember that until 1913 the whole of Northern Greece was not Northern Greece. It was with this treaty that Greek Macedonia, as well as Crete and Epiros, were added to Greece, thus doubling its territorial expanse and increasing its population by 80%. In the village of Psarades, Spyros, the Slav-speaking priest might have been involved in the ideological propaganda conflicts before the wars, possibly even belonging to the Bulgarian Exarchate. Or he might have been part of the Ilinden uprising of 1904, a general uprising against the Ottomans of all the Christian populations in the area, today still controversial as to its meaning. It was seen by the Bulgarians as an expression of the Bulgarian national consciousness of its participants. For the FYROM Macedonians, Ilinden represented an expression of the Macedonian identity and the Macedonian people’s will for self-determination and the autonomy of Macedonian territories. As for the Greeks, they described Ilinden as an uprising during which local populations were instigated to revolt by outsiders. When Spyros was branded a “Bulgarian” and driven from Psarades, it could have been a local, personal or family vendetta that was politicized and translated into the nationalistic terms which were the “conflict currency” of the time. It might well have been that he had formed some kind of identity, most likely Macedonian, which was not tolerated by the hegemonic Greek identity of the village. What seems certain here is that there must have been a strong pro-Greek consciousness among the villagers at the time. References for the history of Macedonia at the turn of the century and the coming about of national identities include: Stavrianos 1944, Barker 1950, Perry 1988, Jelavich 1990, Gounaris 1992, Karakasikou 1997, Vakalopoulos 1999, Dragoumis 1999, Veremis 1999, Divani 2000.

101 She is referring here to the Macedonian (FYROM) villages of the Prespa Lake. The local people often refer to FYROM as “mesa” i.e., “inside.” And it is so widespread that ironically even Vlachs or Pontics can be heard using the term “mesa” for that country with the “difficult” name.

102 One of the “inside” villages of what would have then been Yugoslavian Prespa.

103 The old Slavic name for Laimos was “Rabi.” It was once the most commercial village of Greek Prespa as it is the closest one to the Greek-FYROM border, and at different times (before 1913, during the wars and up until 1949, between 1961-67) Prespa people were allowed to cross the border near Laimos.
104 These are the two most remote villages of Greek Prespa, situated near the Greek Albanian border. Pixos was deserted after the Greek Civil War. The neighboring village of Vrondero (which used to be called Grasdeno) was also destroyed, bombed and burned during the Civil War. Vlach settlers in 1954 rebuilt this village using the stones and wood of the abandoned houses from the village of Pixos.

105 Maria used the word “retreat.” This is one of those loaded words whose usage affected policies and the livelihood of a large part of the Greek population. When the communist guerrillas (and along with them people afraid of the eminent repercussions: leftists or Dopyi) left the country after the end of the Civil War, fleeing through Albania to the Socialist Republics of Eastern Europe, their leader Nikos Zahariades, with a large group of Greek Communists, fled to Tashkent, USSR. Zahariades persisted in describing the flight of the Greek communists as a “retreat” instead of a “defeat” of the guerilla army. The radio emissions to Greece from the Socialist Republics transmitted Zahariades’s message, which was that the Greek Communists should have their weapons by their side, “at ease,” indicating that they should be at rest while waiting for further instructions. Zahariades’s position gave grounds for the Greek right wing government to consider itself still under attack and thus to persecute anyone who wouldn’t denounce communism with torture, exile, revocation of nationality and prohibition from reentering the country.

106 Skopje is the capital of FYROM but the whole country is often referred to as “Skopia” by the Greeks in an effort to resist any association of the word Macedonia with the former Yugoslavilian Republic.

107 The phrase that she used was very awkward syntactically for the Greek language: “οτιν ρατιδα μας, αλλου φι!” it would translate as “To our country—elsewhere no!” In addition, she used the word “patrida,” which is much more emotionally loaded than the word “country,” closer to the word “motherland,” or “fatherland.”

108 The nearby town, an important commercial and administrative center for the region.

109 “Tsarouhi” is a rustic, handmade shoe.

110 Between 1992 and 1997 I witnessed this happening to some extent among the women in Psarades, who would “barter” or “gift” in this way within the confines of very sharp divisions and great disunity that existed among the men. Sometimes the women would even transgress those lines of dissent, creating alternative secret networks among themselves. A great example is the women’s cooperative in Psarades, which brought together most of the women in a joint project—running a hotel—under great criticism and disapproval from many of the husbands. Some of the men claimed that the hotel and the women’s cooperative took their women away, and that the women were now neglecting them, the home and their duties. The husband of the president of the women’s cooperative was the most vocal. He felt degraded by his wife's liberties. They kept fighting for years about her working across the bay at the hotel. The economic and other types of independence that the hotel offered the women did not go down smoothly with the men of Psarades. The hotel was built in the early 1990s with EU and government funds. Large by local standards, it stands alone, prominent on the hill across the water. Allowing the women of Psarades extensive contact with outsiders, the hotel is a space outside of the socio-cultural confines of the village and even of Prespa. I was often invited to stay with them at night, though I had my own house. The phone would ring late at night and one of them would say, “We can see light at your window, why don’t you come?” They wanted to hang out away from the village,
and especially late at night. We would flirt with the police and army patrols guarding us, as we were scared of Albanian thieves and criminals who might be passing by the hotel, so close to the Greek-Albanian border. We made crank calls and chatted with potential lovers from afar. At night in bed we would talk about sex and giggle, and forty-year-old women whose children were sleeping at home, across the water, would talk about the “clitoris” and “orgasms” and there was an insatiable desire, as if we were all teenagers, to keep talking and talking all night.

In the spring of 2001 Thanos, the husband of the president of the women’s cooperative, took his own life by hanging himself in the family’s convenience store in Psarades. Thanos had a long-standing family feud with another man from Psarades over money, land, property, politics etc. This feud had been going on for years and divided the village. Lately he had fought a lot with his wife. Another Psarades man hanged himself recently, and these two suicides left the village shaken.

111 Maria here is clearly referring to the feud mentioned in the previous footnote between Thanos and the president of Psarades.

112 Prespa was under Italian occupation during WWII until the fall of Mussolini in September 1943. Some of the ultra-right Italian battalions stayed on under Hitler’s command. The rest were disarmed and used in auxiliary services or sent back. Up until the retreat of the Germans towards the end of 1944, Northern Greece was under triple occupation: Germans, Italians and Bulgarians.

113 This is a famous song, sung by the Communist guerillas during the Civil War. I remember learning and singing it secretly, silently, as a child, during the military junta in Athens (1967-74.) Friends of my parents and parents of my friends would sing it among other songs that were “illegal,” prohibited at the time. This one in particular was a slow, sad song that always moved me. I believe that the tune is from a Russian folk song, but the words are addressed to the Communists and state that in an unjust struggle for bread, freedom, and honor for everyone, find their grave.

114 Many people who left Psarades after the Civil War or during the “paidomazoma,” never returned to live there. Such is the case of the two siblings of Maria, who live in Skopia in FYROM. Possibly an even larger depletion of the village’s population took place after the Civil War due to external migration, both economic and political. In 1939, Psarades was a village of 800 people. In the 1990s, about 100 people lived there.

115 Πιστοποιητικό Κοινωνικών Φρονημάτων (see Dafni’s story).

116 Ptolemaida is a small city southeast of Prespa, close to Florina.

117 Grevena is another small city southeast of Prespa but further away than Ptolemaida.

118 Kozani is a city also southeast of Prespa between Florina and Grevena.

119 The Communist Party of Greece (KKE) was the larger of the two (10% to 13% of the national vote). The other was the much smaller Interior Communist Party of Greece (1% to 2% of the national vote) (KKE Εσωτερικού). Konstandopoulos came from this smaller communist party which denounced the KKE’s USSR-directed hard communist line and aligned itself with other European communist parties such as Italy’s. In 1989 these two parties—along with a few much smaller left and progressive parties and groups—formed the historical “Coalition” of the Left.
Nikos Konstandopoulos is currently the president of Synaspismos, a New Left Party, which was founded in June 1992 after the departure of the Greek Communist Party (KKE) from the “Coalition” of the Left that had been formed in 1989. Synaspismos, which means “Coalition,” kept the original name of 1989, and today identifies itself with the ideas and values of democratic socialism, ecology, feminism and anti-militarism.

The characterization of “communist” as an “enemy of the nation” or a “traitor” was reinforced by the so-called Macedonian Question and the role it played during the joint German and Bulgarian WWII Occupation of Greek Macedonia, as well as during the Greek Civil War. This equation between “communist” and “anti-nationalist” characterizations was effectively defused after the fall of the military junta (1967-1973), the legalization of the Communist Parties in Greece, and their participation in Parliament. This has not been the case, however, with another long-lasting equation existing between the characterizations “Dopios” and “a threat to the nation” (where “communist” may or may not be the third part of the equation). Slav-Macedonians cannot be recognized by the Greek nation-state as an ethnic minority and use of the term Macedonia is still a controversial issue.

In order to register at the University prior to the “National Reconciliation,” claim people from Prespa and Florina, one had to provide a “certificate of political convictions” issued by the security police of one’s region. Many people were not able to supply such a certificate due to their communist background, and were thus excluded from higher levels of education. In the case of the Dopii, they often could not acquire the certificate regardless of their political inclinations. They were branded as communists anyway. Up until the 1980s there had never been a Dopios policeman or public servant, and in the army no Dopios ever reached high rank (with very few exceptions). After the Socialists came to power in 1981, the police remained the last bastion out of reach for many Dopii.

Vrondero is the most remote village of Prespa. Tucked behind the Vrondero Mountain and separated from the rest of Prespa, it is inhabited exclusively by Vlach herdsman. The village of Vrondero is at the southwestern part of the Prespa plain very close to the Albanian border. Rumor has it that there is a lot of traffic in contraband between the Vronderoites and the Albanians, and that the former are basically “robbing the Albanians blind.” The rumors might be a result of the conspicuous wealth of some Vronderoites. The president of the community is considered one of the wealthiest men in Prespa and he reinforces that image as he zooms around Prespa in a bright red turbo model of Toyota “Celica.” They call him “o tseligas me to tselika,” which means “the shepherd with the ‘Celica.’” Most of the people in Prespa own pickup trucks.

Before 1991, during the Hotza regime, electrified barbed wires ran along the borders separating Greece and Albania. Guards with machine guns guarded the borders and shot whoever attempted to cross into Greece. Some of the Greeks who live near the borders say that Albania felt like a black hole, as if it didn’t exist. Some of the Albanians who now cross the borders say that they were happier then because they didn’t know—they thought they were living very well. Some Albanians succeeded in escaping under the barbed wires. Their families and alleged accomplices were immediately incarcerated. Today getting a visa in order to enter and work in Greece is both difficult and costly.

For more information on the Balkan “hero”/“traitor” border persona see Koliopoulos’ article “Bringandage and Irredentism in Nineteenth Century Greece,” and its bibliography in the edited
I would like to thank Tassos Kostopoulos for the information he generously offered on the subject of the border zones of Prespa.

I am not advocating some utopian critique of the police, mistrusting and passing judgment on its work against crime in general, either within national territories or near the national border regions. The border regions related offenses, in particular, are predominately organized crimes, involving border mafias that traffic and exploit the “irregular aliens” (immigrants, refugees, etc.), sell women for prostitution, children for adoption or for economic profiteering, human organs, weapons and drugs. It would indeed be absurd to argue against the significance of policing border crime, for instance. I am clearly not critiquing the police implementation of nation-state laws, but rather the modern nation-state itself.

Hannah Arendt in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* was writing about two “victim groups” that emerged after WWI “whose sufferings were different from those of all others in the era between the two wars; they were worse off ... [as] they had lost those rights which had been thought of and even defined as inalienable, namely the Rights of Man.” Those two categories are the stateless and the minorities who had “no government to represent and to protect them and therefore were forced to live either under law of exception of Minority Treaties ... or under conditions of absolute lawlessness” (Arendt 1973: 268-269). Much has changed since Arendt was writing these lines, especially after the Geneva Convention of 1951 and the additional New York protocol of 1967 and the international laws for the protection of refugees. Numerous bilateral and European agreements about the rights of ethnic minorities, Article #3 of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights, and significant institutions that promote and maintain international laws, today protect the people who fall between the cracks of the nation-state territorial organization of the world. However, as Hannah Arendt said back then, “contrary to the best intentioned humanitarian attempts to obtain new declarations of human rights for international organizations, it should be understood that this idea transcends the present sphere of international law which still operates in terms of reciprocal agreements and treaties between sovereign states; and for the time being, a sphere that is above the nations does not exist” (Arendt 1975: 298) Still today under the general rubric “irregular alien” many nuanced harsh realities are trying to fit into categories defined by international law that can provide some legal status of protection to stateless persons, asylum seekers for humanitarian reasons, illegal immigrants, undesired minority members, deported people, displaced persons, exiled persons, war, ethnic or religious hatred victims.
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