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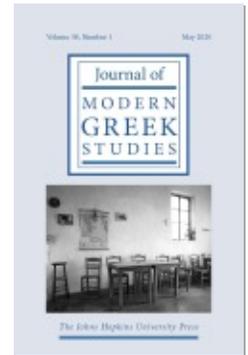
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Three Elenis: Archaeologies of the Greek American Village Home

Kostis Kourelis

Abstract

Greek migration to the United States in the period 1890–1924 produced two interdependent domestic environments, the Greek towns of urban America and the remittance villages of rural Greece. Both spaces experienced decline, abandonment, and demolition during the mid-twentieth century, which erased a unique spatial duality maintained across continents by material goods. With the progressive passing of Greek American lived memories, archaeology must take on the challenge of reconstructing the immigrant lifeworlds that are now a century old. Using the family histories of three contemporary Greek Americans, we explore how village houses can illuminate the bridging of transnational distances. We study the house careers of three Elenis from the Peloponnese, Epirus, and Central Greece. Each case study explores the materialities of a relationship between today’s Greek Americans and their lost familial domestic relics.

Introduction

In his poem “Solos,” Peter Jeffreys (Tsaffaras in Greek) directs our attention to the spatial disconnection between the ancestral homes left behind by Greek immigrants and their newly established colonies in the United States during the period of great migration of 1890–1924.

A lost ancestral dwelling,
a forfeiture incurred
while paths were sought
in less remote terrain,
fortunes in Greek cities
and abroad. (Jeffreys 2019)

Read in conjunction with a second poem “Arrangement in Black and Gray: *After Whistler*,” Jeffreys provokes the reader to think diachronically across the material remains of the diaspora. The main character of the second poem is Eleni, who migrated to Lowell, Massachusetts, the home of American painter James McNeil Whistler. The title of the poem refers to the 1871 portrait that Whistler painted of his mother, a masterpiece of American art that Jeffreys first encountered as a child in the Whistler house museum, located next door to the city’s Greek School.

A black-clad, somber midwife,
 a faith healer with a mending touch,
 my great grandmother, Manna Eleni,
 bought herself a house,
 a thing unheard of at the time
 for a woman émigré. (Jeffreys 2017)

The two black-clad mothers, Anna Whistler and Eleni Tsaffaras, participated through their houses in the urban history of Lowell across time. Jeffreys’ imaginary evocation is grounded on the materiality of ancestors’ homes both in Greece and the U.S. and provokes the historical archaeologist to study immigration as domestic forfeiture. When Eleni Gage reconstructed her grandmother’s house before she was executed during the Civil War, she also engaged in a narrative archaeology of a household supported by the immigrant grandfather Christos Gatzoyannis from Worcester, Massachusetts. One outcome of this reconstruction was Gage’s (2004) memoir *North of Ithaka: A Journey Home through a Family’s Extraordinary Past*. While writing the book, Eleni directed the workmen to collect all material finds trapped in the debris of the demolished house. Gage thus assembled a collection of excavated objects that include the material goods of immigration. The objects were cleaned and deposited in two exhibition cases in the basement of the house, where grandmother Eleni was imprisoned. Given the absence of an intentional Greek American archaeology in Greece, the assemblage of Eleni’s artifacts became a unique project in the formation of a discipline and the first time such remittance archaeology was presented in an academic conference, during the 109th Annual Meetings of the Archaeological Institute of America (Gage 2008). Finally, there is Margaret Mueller, a second-generation American who had never travelled to Greece, but sensed her ancestral home through the stories that her mother narrated. Eleni Katsibas migrated to the U.S. in 1927 from the village Karoutes, Phocis. Ruined during World War II, Eleni’s house foundations were identified in 2016 by the Lidoriki Project, an interdisciplinary archaeological collaboration

between Franklin & Marshall College, Maryville University, and the National Technical University of Athens. Eleni Gage, Eleni Tsaffaras, and Eleni Katsibas are three among thousands of women whose lives (and deaths) can inform the historical record of immigration. They come together in this essay for no other reason than to thematize archaeology's contribution to the study of the Greek village through migration. Traditionally, archaeological reports take the form of an exhaustive analysis of artifacts and buildings excavated, surveyed, and recorded by a particular site or project. Here, material remains from disparate projects intersect in the consideration of the lives of three Greek women.

Between 1900 and 1915 one quarter of all working-age Greek males travelled to America for work (Moskos 1989, 11; Saloutos 1964, 44). During this period, Greeks sent home approximately 5 million dollars a year, which made up close to a third of the national domestic product (Gallant 2015, 305). Immigration to America (half a million people) was the most dramatic phenomenon in Greek history since the War of Independence and was matched only by the Asia Minor refugee crisis of 1922 (one million people). The collapse of the village economy in 1893 was the push factor of the first wave of mass migration and an early signal that the nucleated village was not viable in modernity. Greek immigrants in the US subsidized the agrarian economy for the first four decades of the twentieth century, delaying the ultimate collapse of village life to the 1960s. The Greek village of 1900–1940 looked traditional in its stone houses and rural folkways, but its material existence was buttressed by transnational labor and global capitalism.

Landscape archaeology has contributed to the historiography of the Greek countryside but has struggled to document American immigration, partly because of the ephemeral nature of its material culture (Bintliff 2012). At the same time, the field of historical archaeology has documented the effects of Greek immigration in a handful of American excavations, such as the Greek slave colony in Florida (Grange 2011), the Colorado Coalfield War in Ludlow (Larkin and McGuire 2011), and the textile mills of New England (Mrozowski, Ziesing, and Beaudry 1996). Regional surveys have traced the effects of immigration on the Greek side in the Southern Argolid (Sutton 2000), the Nemea Valley (Sutton 1995), Methana (Forbes 2007), the Western Peloponnese (Kourelis 2008), the Eastern Korinthia (Tzortzopoulou-Gregory 2010), and the Western Argolid (Caraher and Nakassis, forthcoming). Historians and archaeologists have demonstrated the fluidity of capitalist labor, the precarity of traditional farming, and the adjustments by Greek farmers in the rapid and unexpected changes of the global market. A significant impediment in the archaeology of first-wave Greek migration (1890–1924) is the devastation of both Greek

and American sites by occupational changes in late modernity. Greek ethnic neighborhoods in American cities were ravaged by urban blight, white flight, suburbanization, and urban renewal in the 1960s, while villages in Greece were either destroyed by a decade of wars (1940–1949) or depopulated by mass flight to Athens (1960s). The diaspora made communal investments in restoring old churches and constructing schools and houses. Immigrants also shipped material artifacts such as sewing machines, record players, pocket watches, writing implements, jewelry, studio photographs, and clothing. These objects make up the growing collections of diaspora museums, such as the exhibitions of the Hellenic Museum in Chicago or the Hellenic Cultural Museum in Salt Lake City (see MGSA 2019 for a complete list of exhibitions).

This essay turns to three case studies that tackle the incomplete and complex evidence of the Greek immigrant's domestic experience. Greeks in the United States built and sustained many houses in their homeland. Houses built by remittances from the United States are indistinguishable from houses of earlier generations since the architectural typologies had been established a century earlier. An epigraphic increase in marking houses with owner's names, however, may be related to the anxieties of identifying ownership when a large percentage of the population is absent and may, in fact, never occupy the houses that their remittances have built. The Morea Project's discovery of three inscriptions with the word AMERKA testify to a genre of commemoration that explicitly celebrates the source of income from absentee family members responsible for the construction (Figure 1). A 1908 house in the village Leontio was built by a Nikos Skourtas who labored in Pawtucket, Rhode Island. Ownership of the house passed to a newer family and all connections to the immigrant story were severed, save for the inscription (Kourelis 2008, 228–233). Recent studies on the remittance architecture of the Americas and Europe have shifted the focus of research to a category of domestic space that is both ostentatious and not lived in (Lopez 2015; Pistrick and Bachmeier 2016). "The building of a remittance house," writes Sarah Lopez, "implicates the migrant in a new status quo that exacts a heavy toll. This ambiguity and ambivalence is evident in the very houses migrants build. Crystalizing their contradictions, the remittance house demonstrates both migrants' successes and their uncertain future" (Lopez 2010, 50). Studying the remittance house of a migration that transpired almost a century ago creates methodological challenges of documentation. Without a home to return to, later generations of an immigrant family are thrown into an ambivalent relationship with houses that are there but not entirely theirs. Literary scholars of the diaspora have pointed out the role that homes have played in the narratives of later generations of Greek Americans (Klironomos



Figure 1. AMERKA inscription carved on corner block, Leontio, photographed June 24, 2018. Author.

2009; Kindinger 2015; Patrona 2017). This blossoming literary project also has archaeological dimensions that the case studies of the three Elenis address more directly.

Eleni Tsaffaras

Tucked into isolated mountains
 studded with fragrant pines—
 stark beauty and tranquil silence
 vying for ascendancy—
 the *pyrgos* stands alone,
 visited on a blue moon
 by progeny who harbor
 wistful claims. (Jeffreys 2019)

Jeffreys' poem "Solos" takes its name from the Greek village in the Peloponnese from which one side of his family originated three generations ago. Best



Figure 2. Soliotis Tower, Solos, photographed August 7, 2019. Author.

known for his literary scholarship on C. P. Cavafy, E. M. Forster, and the British aesthetic movement, Jeffreys uses poetry to excavate the history of his family, who immigrated to the U.S. in the late nineteenth century (Jeffreys 2006, 2015). The poem is illustrated with a tower house standing derelict in the mountain village of Solos in the region of Achaia. It is known as the Soliotis Tower and served as a historical family dwelling prior to the family's move to Massachusetts (Figure 2). Nikolaos Soliotis (1796–1841) was a revolutionary hero of the 1821 Greek War of Independence. He is best known for firing the first shot at Portes near Solos. Across the street from his house, he commissioned the church of Saint George, which is dated by a dedicatory inscription to 1806.

While the historiography of Greek architecture has accredited the tower in the national narrative, its significance in the American diaspora experience was lost in the ephemeral circumstances of immigration. The house was studied in 1995 as one of 3,000–odd houses documented by the Minnesota Morea Project and published in 2003 (Cooper et al. 2003, 402–403). The Morea Project recorded eleven houses at Solos. The Soliotis house (House No. 8) was surveyed by the author, who also interviewed its resident, an elderly lady. She narrated stories of hiding under the tower's steps during the violent skirmishes of the Greek Civil War in 1949. The village had been burned once before by Ibrahim Pasha in 1826. The narrative was impressive in its conflation of atrocities experienced during

the Civil War and an imagined revolutionary trauma from a century earlier. Two turrets projecting from the second floor are the architectural testament to its existence at the time of the revolutionary war. Turrets belong to an era of Peloponnesian clan conflict that was suppressed by the modern state. An 1834 law mandated the demolition of turrets in the Mani and criminalized the construction of new tower houses. In Jeffreys' poetic exploration, members of the Soliotis clan are, "brigand squires, well-served by their fort (turreted protection during a bloody freedom fight), stoking isolated insolence, sparking revolution, freeing a nation" (Jeffreys 2019). The premarital name of Jeffreys' migrant ancestor, Petimezas, links her story with yet another revolutionary family whose tower survives in the village Kato Lousi (Soudena), near Kalavryta (Christopoulos 1985, 28, fig. 38; Demakopoulos 1987–1988, 322–324). Jeffreys' great-grandfather Nikolaos Soliotis (grandson of the revolutionary hero) was the private doctor of King George I of Greece; he married Vassiliki Petimezas, who emigrated with her three daughters to Massachusetts. Unlike the Soliotis Tower, the Petimezas Tower remained in the family. It was heavily damaged during the Civil War but was restored by the admiral Golfinos Petimezas in 1972 and reinforced for earthquake resistance by Andreas Petimezas in 1989. The Petimezas Tower represents a monument not forfeited by immigration. Owned continuously by a family that maintained its political status within the state, it represents continuity. The Soliotis Tower is of equal architectural significance but orphaned by migration.

During the early nineteenth century, Agia Varvara and the surrounding villages of Solos, Zarouchla, and Vounaki (known as Kloukinohória) became the epicenter of a stone building trade. Without much fertile land, the mountain villages embraced itinerant stone building, which they had learned from traveling masons from Epirus in the eighteenth century (Konstantinopoulos 1983). Itinerant masons left their villages in winter and worked widely throughout Greece. The seasonal movement of the Peloponnesian masons prefigures the longer journey of immigration to Lowell. Passing through Solos in 1805, the traveler William Leake comments on the ruggedness of the terrain: "It rarely happens that a Turk ever enters these retired valleys, or rather ravines, for the hills rise so steeply on either side of the river and its branches, that the only cultivation is in terraces on the slopes. . . . The inhabitants of Solos, Mesorúghi, and Peristéra, are all masons, and are absent from November to Easter at their work in the large towns of the Moréa or Rúmeli" (Leake 1830, 159–160). Leake is also impressed by the chestnut forest above and around Solos, and the sublimity of the ravines furrowed by the torrents of Styx, the river that separated earth from the underworld in ancient mythology.



Figure 3. Soliotis Tower, Solos, photographed August 21, 1995. Morea Project.

As a fourth-generation Greek American, Jeffrey laments the loss of root-
edness in a place that has no physicality other than a name in the family story. As a historian of modern Greek intellectual history, the Greek American scholar rediscovers the ancestral home but is frustrated by the century-long lacuna that separates dislocation from rediscovery. The village of Solos is first attested in historical sources in 1700, recorded by the Venetian surveyors of the Grimani census with a population of 150 (Panagiotopoulos 1985, 258). The village was burned by Ibrahim Pasha in his failed attempt to capture Kalavryta in 1826. Solos had 53 inhabitants in 1928 and no inhabitants in 1940, according to the national census. As Iordanis Demakopoulos points out, the semicircular arch and ironwork over the main entrance to the Solos house indicate a date around the 1820s (Demakopoulos 1987–1988, 320). Vasilis Christopoulos (1985, 30, fig. 46) photographed the house and included it in his monograph on the vernacular architecture of Achaia. The photo shows the building boarded up and its immediate environs taken over for gardening. The abandonment of the house reflects the demographics of the village. After complete abandonment in 1940, population increased to 30 in 1951, descended to 24 in 1961 and seven in 1971, and ascended to 19 in 1981 and 55 in 1991 (Stamatelatos and Vamva-Stamatelatos 2006, 711). The photograph taken by the Morea Project in 1995 captured the moment when the house was partly reoccupied by an elderly lady (Figure 3).

A wire reaches from a street pole and brings electricity to an exterior meter. A second wire brings the current into the house through the iron grill of the lunette above the main entrance. New window frames and wooden shutters have replaced the rotten ones. The small window to the right of the entrance has been covered by a piece of tin propped up by a stick. Finally, a porch of wooden supports and corrugated sheet metal has been added to the front door. Clothes are drying on a line hung by the occupant. A relative chronology for the house's state of preservation can be established by comparing the 1995 photograph with a 2019 photograph (Figure 2). Since 1995, the roof has been entirely redone, with a concrete foundation and new industrial tiles. The porch has been changed into a steel frame, but it is rusting, and the corrugated roof is missing. The sheet of tin in the lower window is still there and held in place by a stone. Splatters of concrete have been added to the exterior. During the 2019 interviews, the author learned that the house was caught in a complicated limbo of ownership with two different parties owning the two floors. It is neither occupied nor abandoned. Ownership of the upper floor has passed to a servant of the original Soliotis family (most likely through the elderly woman interviewed 24 years ago whose clothes were drying in the photograph). The interior of the upper floor is in bad shape (although its roof has been stabilized). The lower floor is owned by a different family who have taken care of the interior and occasionally lodged in the house with friends.

At the same time as the Soliotis family immigrated to the U.S., Swiss photographer Frédéric Boissonnas was commissioned by King George I to promote Greece's natural assets for the purpose of international tourism (Stathatos 2015). There was a paradoxical attempt by the Greek state to attract visitors at the same time as it was losing a quarter of its working population. Boissonnas's single image of Solos entitled *Chestnut Trees in Bloom* focuses on a young maiden who stands pensively under an impressive old tree in front of a house (Baud-Bovy and Boissonnas 1909, 65) (Figure 4). Conceptually blooming like the tree, the maiden fiddles with her handkerchief, traditionally a token exchanged between lovers. The house rising above her—not the Soliotis Tower—creates a diagonal interplay between landscape (tree), humans (maiden), and architecture (house). Fed by the waters of the Styx, the chestnut tree recalls the chestnut forest celebrated by Leake a century earlier. Like many of Boissonnas's photographs, this one is heavily staged to convince the viewer of the unchanging eternal beauties of the Greek countryside. There is no suggestion that the village of Solos is experiencing an exodus to the United States, or that the handkerchief handled by the maiden is likely manufactured in the infamous textile mills of Lowell, where many of the inhabitants of Solos worked. Boissonnas's portfolio



Figure 4. Fred Boissonnas, “Solos. Chataigniers en fleurs,” photograph published by Baud-Bovy and Boissonnas (1909, 64). Digital image courtesy of The Getty Open Content Program.

presents Greece in an eternal unchanging stasis. It explicitly hides the mechanisms of globalization that are anchoring the functional life of Solos through its absent labor force.

In order to complete the picture of the Greek village in 1908, we must turn to an exactly contemporary photograph published in an American portfolio with an entirely different agenda. The city of Lowell was founded in 1814 by Francis Cabot Lowell and other Boston entrepreneurs as a company town for textile manufacturing. Lowell grew to become the greatest producer of fabrics in America before the textile industry moved to the South (where there was no organized labor). Lowell was founded on Protestant Christian ideals that sought to diminish the horrors of oppression endemic to the textile mills of England as analyzed by Friedrich Engels. The Protestant solution was to hire young women, but they were eventually replaced by immigrants. By 1900, half of Lowell’s population was foreign-born. In 1908, Lowell had the third largest Greek population in America. With approximately 7,000 Greeks, Lowell ranked behind New York and Chicago, which had 20,000 and 15,000 Greeks respectively (Fairchild 1911, 259). Unlike many Greek settlements that were dispersed through the host cities, the settlement in Lowell was highly concentrated into a single geographical area known as the Acre (Stanton 2006, 70). Progressive reformers targeted the Acre



Figure 5. Herbert Dearden Hope, “Back of the Greek Church: Tenements Occupied by Greeks,” *Housing, Conditions: United States. Massachusetts. Lowell. Tenements in French, Greek, and Polish Districts: Environment After Immigration. Perpetuation of European Standards in America. Housing Conditions, Lowell, Mass.* Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum. Transfer from the Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts, Social Museum Collection.

and other ethnic slums. Seeking to mobilize political action through sentiment, Jacob Riis and other activists used documentary writing and photography to show the mainstream middle class how the other half lived. Documentation methods developed by Hull House and the new Chicago School of Sociology brought about an explosion of empirical data on immigrant living conditions, including those of the Greeks (Abbott 1909; Fairchild 1911).

The social reformer’s lens came to Lowell in 1903 when Herbert Hope recorded the housing conditions of the Acre (Hope 1903). The photo labeled *Back of the Greek Church: Tenements Occupied by Greeks* shows five well-dressed boys, possibly after church services (Figure 5). Although made out of wood rather than stone, the Greek tenements provide a tightly knit domestic environment. Factory chimneys in the distance make this neighborhood radically different from forested Achaia, but this image complements the social reality of Solos. There is no gnarled chestnut tree with blooming flowers, but we see a flower box with spices growing under a second floor window. Back in the Peloponnese, stone ledges placed next to upper story windows were a standard amenity to

hold the pot of basil that would refresh the air in the main living space. Jeffreys' paternal great-grandmother, Eleni Ploumbidis, bought a Victorian house in the Acre and made it the new domestic epicenter of the family, not far from where Anna Whistler had also created a home. The Whistler house became the home of the Lowell Art Association and opened as a museum in 1908. It is adjacent to the Hellenic American Academy, the oldest Greek school in the U.S. Founded in 1906, the Hellenic American Academy met in the basement of the newly-built Holy Trinity church, the first Greek Orthodox church structure in America. In 1959, the Academy moved to its own building on a lot adjacent to the Whistler House.

Jeffreys explores this American house through his poem "Arrangement in Black and Gray, *After Whistler*." The title refers to Whistler's painting *Arrangement in Gray and Black No. 1* (1871), a portrait of his own mother. The poem starts with a multilingual evocation—"Manna Eleni, Mother, Midwife, Grandmother, Μάννα Ελένη, Μάννα, Μαμή, Μάμμη"—of the many roles of Eleni Ploumbidis, who immigrated to Lowell in 1908 as the bride of Vasilios Tsaffaras. Both originated from the village Langadia in Arcadia, which (like Solos) was a center of itinerant builders. Beyond being the midwife who delivered Lowell's Greek American babies, Eleni made an important investment in buying a house.

A black-clad, somber midwife,
 a faith healer with a mending touch,
 my great grandmother, Manna Eleni,
 bought herself a house,
 a thing unheard of at the time
 for a woman émigré. (Jeffreys 2017)

In a studio photo with her daughter-in-law Angeliki and daughter Georgia, black-clad Eleni reigns as a matron of the Greek community (Figure 6). In Jeffreys' poem, the black-clad Eleni inhabits the same spaces at Lowell as another black-clad woman, the painter James McNeil Whistler's mother Anne, whose portrait Whistler painted in 1871. This painting is arguably one of the most iconic works in American art, and it has been called the American Mona Lisa (MacDonald 2003). For years it was on display in Paris, and it is now at the Louvre in Abu Dhabi; painted in London and eventually pawned by Whistler, *Arrangement in Grey and Black No. 1* was, like its author, an expatriate painting that lived its life abroad. The absence of the mother's portrait from the mother's house was rectified when an exact scale copy of the painting was made in 1906 by Edith Fairfax Davenport, a cousin of the painter. As a child, on



Figure 6. Eleni Tsaffaras (in black) with her daughter-in-law and daughter. Courtesy of Peter Jeffreys

recess from Greek School, Jeffreys and his friends would throw stones against the clapboard walls of an empty old house and encounter a homeless woman sleeping on its stoop. This was the house of Whistler that had been engulfed by a Greek ghetto, “Lowell’s Greek Acre, a city crammed with thousands of Greeks.” The new Tsaffaras home was a wooden New England townhouse built in the early 1900s. Bought by Eleni Tsaffaras in 1918, it became the home of the extended family where Peter was born. When Peter’s family moved to the Highlands neighborhood in the 1970s, only an elderly aunt remained. When she passed away, the house was sold. Under new ownership, it fell into neglect, and was engulfed in a fire on 18 November 2005. Left in irreparable shape, the structure was demolished and its lot sold in July 2010; a new house was erected in its place. Jeffreys’ poem recalls the original structure:

The house—ornate, imposing,
visibly Victorian
yet somehow gothic—
sprawled three stories high.
Built from fine New England wood,
somewhat pretentious
for a mill town—
High Victorian Italianate—
an architecture strange and new.

But Manna Eleni knew houses.
Born into a town of master builders—
Langhadia—nestled in Arcadia’s
myth-drenched mountains.

As in the case of Solos, the Morea Project documented the village of Langadia where Manna Eleni and her husband were from. The masons of Langadia flourished a generation after the masons of Solos, and more of their works survive (Petronotis 1986, 68). Centrally located along the main Tripolis–Olympia road, Langadia maintained its demographic strength, with 3,000 residents during the 1940s and 1950s and 700 residents still remaining in the 1990s (Stamatelatos and Vamva-Stamatelatou 2006, 412). In 1991, the Morea Project recorded 149 houses (Cooper et al. 2003 215–219). In 2012, a group of local preservation activists formed Άνθη της Πέτρας (Flowers from Stones) to promote the study and revival of the Langadia stonemason traditions. Through the organization’s guidance, it was possible to identify the locations where the Tsaffaras and Ploumbidis family homes were located before Vasilis and Eleni emigrated in 1900 and 1908 respectively. They were in two different neighborhoods below the

main Tripolis-Olympia thoroughfare. A modern town hall now stands where the Tsaffaras property used to be. Similarly, in the general neighborhood of Ploumbideika, named for Eleni's family, there is no surviving house. Eleni's housing biography (1867–1933) can be reconstructed, but all of the houses' physical remains have disappeared. The recovery of the immigrants' Greek village life becomes an archaeological and museological project.

In his two poems, Jeffreys offers a provocation that suggests how to think about the Greek American experience across multiple forfeited houses. The Greek American home of the early twentieth century was a transnational habitat that incorporated material expressions from across continents. The problem for Jeffreys, one of the most articulate Greek Americans, is how to both physically and emotionally manage the two pieces of real estate whose threads of meaning become so increasingly frail as to disappear on both continents. At the same time, the problem for the Greek American archaeologist is how to capture the materiality of these two houses and reshape a narrative that, so far, has been written without taking their physicality into consideration.

Eleni Gatzoyannis

A second literary provocation comes from another luminary of Greek American letters, Eleni Gage, the granddaughter of the Eleni who was memorialized in Nicholas Gage's bestselling 1983 memoir and the 1985 film *Eleni* (Gage 1983, Yates 1985). However we might feel about the Cold War politics of Right and Left that have polarized the reception of the original work, we must remember the central role that immigration played in Eleni's execution. Her husband Christos was an American migrant who made the mistake of leaving her behind after his last visit in 1937. Eleni was targeted first by the Italian Army and then by the Communist partisans because she was American (the *Amerikana*), even though she had never been to the US. It was two objects, a Singer sewing machine and a Victrola gramophone, that materialized that otherness inside her own home, and both of these objects were confiscated when the Italians occupied the village (Gage 1983, 34). For Eleni N. Gage, who grew up in the shadows of a famous father and an even more famous grandmother, a journey home to Epirus became a domestic exploration (Gage 2004). After its matron was executed, the family home in Lia had collapsed and the garden had become a burial ground for 37 individuals who were eventually exhumed after the war. Like Jeffreys, Gage found a house that was forgotten, ruined, and unclaimed. Her project became the rebuilding of a house that wasn't only the home of her family, but the house in which her grandmother had been imprisoned and



Figure 7. Eleni Gatzoyannis house, interior photo showing reconstructed bridal bed, Lia, photographed July 2, 2018. Author.

tortured while her father, a boy of just eight years old, escaped first to a refugee camp in Igoumenitsa, and then to join a father in America whom he had never met (Gage 1989, 15). The house, as rebuilt by Eleni in 2008, is a reconstructed dwelling, a new memorial with multiple histories and potential re-inhabitations.

While rebuilding the house, Eleni made sure that all the artifacts found by the workmen in the rubble matrix of the collapsed walls were rescued. Without thinking about it as such, Eleni carried out a systematic excavation and created an archaeological assemblage that is unique. By falling into itself, the house had created a sealed time capsule of the late 1940s and early 1950s. The assemblage, laid out for the first time on a white bed sheet in 2005, marks the inadvertent birth of Greek American archaeology, by virtue of the simple investment that Eleni made to save, preserve, and share these objects through her writing. In addition to agricultural implements, cups, plates, and weapons, the assemblage includes objects that connect Eleni to her absentee husband, such as the fragments of a brass bed (Figure 7). The last time Christos had visited from the US in 1937, he bought Eleni this bed. Having slept on beds in Worcester, Christos could not return to the traditional arrangement of sleeping on the floor on a mattress that could be folded every morning. (During the same visit, Christos paved the front of the house with concrete, bringing this new

material to the village for the first time.) The elevated bed was a curiosity. Eleni used the bed only during her husband's stay, endowing it with matrimonial and reproductive value.

While excavating the house's foundation wall, the masons also unearthed an Ottoman coin that would have been placed in the foundations at the ceremonies inaugurating the house's construction. In her memoir, Eleni describes how she sent the coin back home, and how her mother took it to a Mediterranean grocery in Worcester, where a Lebanese clerk translated the script and dated the coin to 1856 (Gage 2008, 50). In this most circuitous way, a Lebanese grocer in Worcester established the *terminus post quem* of a structure in Northern Greece. The excavated assemblage is currently stored in two display cases, and the artifacts are ready for further cataloging, photographing, and analysis. The collection contains a perfume bottle that still holds the faint fragrance that Eleni would have applied to her body on the special occasions of Christos's visits from America. The perfume was likely bought at Sherer's, a department store in Worcester that figured prominently in the lives of the Greek Americans there (Gage 1989, 34).

Eleni Katsibas

A third case study, similar to the two above, emerged through a survey of vernacular architecture in the region of Lidoriki, Phocis. Between 2010 and 2015, a team of students surveyed the Mornos Valley whose ecology was disrupted in 1969 when the Greek state constructed a reservoir that transported water to the city of Athens, 100 miles away (Brenningmeyer, Kourelis, and Katsaros 2016). The Lidoriki Project documented how Greek villages were depopulated through the simultaneous extraction of human labor (through migration) and natural resources (water). Within the study area, a spatial survey—through drone photography, terrestrial 3D modeling, and object inventories—of the deserted village of Aigion identified some remittance buildings, including a 1908 school and a 1915 house. Many of the emigrants from Aigion migrated to Milwaukee, Wisconsin and also to Chicago, where they concentrated around Hegewisch and founded the Assumption Greek Orthodox Church in 1924 (Sellers 2001). On 23 July 1943, the Axis Powers burned the village of Aigion and took all its residents to a concentration camp in Athens. As in the case of Lia, World War II and the Civil War left a tragic mark on many remittance villages of the 1910s. The following year, on 5 August 1944, the nearby village of Karoutes was the site of a battle between Germans and partisans and was also burned.

While doing family research online, the second-generation Greek American Margaret Mueller came across the Lidoriki Project's archaeological report on her family village of Karoutes. Margaret was born in the US and had never set foot in Greece. Yet she was passionate about her family history, which, like Eleni's and like most Greek Americans' families, was marked by war. In the battle of Karoutes, partisans ambushed an elite mountain unit, killing 97 Germans and capturing 105. As part of the reprisals, Margaret's uncle, the village priest, was locked inside the church along with the mayor and the schoolteacher, and burned alive. Every once in a while, Margaret goes online and Googles her village's name, Karoutes, and this is how she stumbled on our site report. She contacted the project directors by email and was interviewed by phone (Roseville, CA, 16 November 2015):

I've never been to Greece. My papou came to the United States in 1917. . . . I would ask my mother [Eleni Katsibas] a lot of questions about the village. There was a family compound. She remembers her aunt making a bed for her and telling her it was her little nest, she was a little bird in her little nest with blankets. The house was made of stone. There was a wide set of stairs and a veranda that went up on the outside of the house. She told me that in the summertime they would all sleep out in the veranda. And downstairs there was storage. And in storage were huge wine casks, and great barrels of lentils and beans. There was a chestnut tree.

The following summer, in 2016, the Lidoriki Project took Margaret's transcribed recording to Karoutes and identified the ruins of the Katsibas house (Figure 8). We found the threshing floor, the chestnut tree, and the foundations of the house that Margaret's mother left behind as a young bride in 1927. Returning to Margaret's interview, we read:

The yard came into a point. I know about it because my mother told me that they would sit on the porch at night and they would always see a candle floating in the air burning down in this corner and so she asked her aunts one time why does that candle burn there in the air? Oh, there's probably an icon buried over there [laughter]. So that's why I know there was a point in the yard.

The plot of land is indeed triangular and merges into a point. The remaining stones and particularities of the house plot have a resonance. As ruins, they have no inherent archaeological value, and legally they belong to an edifice that falls outside the Greek nation-state's definition of archaeology. They are but stones of the present.

The study of the Katsibas house is only preliminary. Its identification would not have been possible from information gathered in the village alone. With a desertion date of a century ago, it has been slowly receding into an overgrown



Figure 8. Ruins of Eleni Katsibas house, Karoutes, photographed July 2017. Author.

state of nature. The Katsibas house is not alone. The comprehensive survey of the villages of Aigition, Karoutes, Skaloula, and Lidoriki has noted the visible remains of many house locations that cannot be identified with any particular family. There is no published text or archival repository for the thousands of Greek families who emigrated in the period from the 1890s to the 1920s and never returned. The Jeffreys and Gage case studies are extraordinary because of the intellectual commitment made by the families to translate personal history into public modes of narrative, ranging from memoir to poetry.

Conclusion

The geographical duality of migration disguises the physical interconnectedness of two distant places that must be archaeologically reconstructed. World War II and the Greek Civil War took a terrible toll on Greece's physical fabric, with 23.6% of all buildings destroyed, 18% of the population made homeless, and 1,600 out of a total of 6,500 villages burned by the Axis Powers (Doxiadis 1947, 62 and 65). An even more dramatic desertion of the villages took place after the war in 1960, when a third of the Greek population moved to Athens. The three case studies discussed above reflect the traumatic intermediary period of the

1940s–1960s that prevents the materiality of Greek America in the 1890s–1920s from being visible.

Susan Sutton (1998), the ethnographer of Greek migration, was the first to ask the question, “What is a ‘Village’ in a Nation of Migrants?” in a seminal essay with this title. Sutton, Hamish Forbes, Mary Clark, Harold Koster, and Jean Bouza partnered with the second wave of pedestrian surveys in Greece and worked side by side in the major Anglo-American projects of the 1980s. Sutton’s answer to her question was informed by the data these projects collected. She concluded that migration has been one of the main strategies with which Greek villages have been responding to external economic systems since the eighteenth century. The first- and second-wave transatlantic migrations to the United States (1890–1924 and 1960s) and the domestic migration to Athens (1960s) were by no means new phenomena (Sutton 1998, 204). Sutton revisited the question ten years later, and noted the persistence of a romantic narrative:

Glossing rural Greece as a generic, traditional Neverland resonates with broader narratives, including those impelled by tourism, nationalism, some types of archaeology, and the form of Orientalism sometimes labeled Balkanism. Of equal importance, such reductions also intersect with the logics of U.S. ethnic dynamics, including the foundational narrative of the rags-to-riches European immigrant story, a tale that says as much about the U.S. as it does about the countries from which the immigrants came. By exploring the abandoned hamlets and villages of 19th and 20th century Greece, as well as the new ones that formed at the same time, archaeologists can enter into some of the most critical debates on American ethnic history and restore the complexity of Greek immigration. (Sutton 2008, 8)

With its functional peak coinciding with the birth of the modern nation, the village has played an exaggerated role in the construction of national identity. Canonized by the theories of Romantic Nationalism that gave birth to Modern Greece, the village is a cultural construct. Comparable to an imagined classical antiquity, the village has served as the spatial repository of ethnicity, religion, and national identity. Folklore was the scientific discourse that brought the Greek village into its conceptual existence in the 1880s. The Greek village reached its discursive clarity at the very moment of its demise through massive migration. The exploration of the village as a deep conceptual category was framed by the foil of migration, which represented an undeniable engagement with modernity’s global labor market. Consequently, the nation state and its academic infrastructure defined the village as the opposite of migration.

During her fieldwork in the Nemea Valley, Sutton saw her interviewees physically pack and go, leaving the keys of their houses by the door, never

intending to return. The Greek village came into being as a socioeconomic urban form during modernity, when settlement nucleation could best serve the farm fragmentation of the Greek countryside. Offering resilience and mobile strategies of diversification, the modern Greek village flourished in response to the disruptions of global markets that required radical changes in crop monopolies with every passing generation. The mass migration of villagers to the US in the 1890s added a transnational dimension to the domestic lives of the Greek village. Having served as an imagined alternative to the traumas and dislocations of modernity, the Greek village has not been a common site for archaeological investigation. The case studies of the three Elenis provide some insights into the nature of archaeological recovery through—in descending order of detail—memoir, memory, and narrative.

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NOTES

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