

The Patrimony

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In modern Athens, the vehicles of mass transportation are called *metaphorai*. To go to work or come home, one takes a “metaphor” – a bus or a train. Stories could also take this noble name; every day, they traverse and organise places; they select and link them together; they make sentences and itineraries out of them. They are spatial trajectories. - Michel de Certeau¹

Mama died in her homeland in October 2000. The news of her death reached me in Australia when my sister rang, some twenty minutes later, after Mama last drew breath. By all accounts it was a long and slow and painful death. I spent the early hours of the morning calling relatives. Aunty Maria, mama’s lone, living sibling wanted to travel to the funeral by the next ferry but my sister who had kept vigil beside Mama’s bedside, would not divulge her whereabouts. I knew nothing of the funeral arrangements. All that Aunty could do to honour the departed was to don the black and soon the natal village knew that Mama was dead. Aunty and her family had never left Mama’s birth village, Mama was the one that had emigrated, only to return to die on native soil. Old men and women who had known Mama greeted Aunty with sorrow; some wept for Mama, some for the bitter cost of migration and some for the inescapable tragedy of their own mortality. Discreetly, the following morning, Auntie’s eldest daughter, Cousin Litsa, made her way to the office of the village notary and tried to charm the notary into disclosing the contents of Mama’s will.

Certeau declares, “every story is a travel story – a spatial practice” and that “narrative structures have the status of spatial syntaxes” which have set ways of linking space and place.² According to Certeau, connections may come about in a linear series: report of Mama’s death leaves Greece to reach Australia; news leaves Australia to reach Mama’s birth village. Sometimes, the series can embrace memory, as it is for the old people in Mama’s village who weep, recalling the days of the diaspora after the war when a stream of émigrés emptied the village of loved ones- never to return. Links may be causal: account of Mama’s death requires Cousin Litsa to take the prudent back way to the notary’s office. Certeau asserts that transitions between place and space also embrace an epistemological modality – a concern for knowledge. Mama’s death now means that the ownership of grandfather’s house is not *certain*. The family home that grandfather’s father built, Mama tore down and re-erected when she briefly returned to the village. It was Mama’s dowry. Cousin Litsa’s home and holdings border grandfather’s house and

land. A long time ago it was all part of one property but as per custom, the patrimony was shared amongst seven siblings. One sibling, the eldest son Uncle Mitsos, took his share in education. Neo-classical marbles proliferate about Uncle Mitsos's tombstone. As testament to his status, he is buried in Athens in the Próto Nekrotafio (The First Cemetery), which shelters everybody who was anybody in Greek public life this century and the last. His rapacious siblings never let him forget the sacrifices they had made on his behalf. From grandfather's house to the Próto Nekrotafio was a long way to rise.

"Spaces" and "Places"

The Próto Nekrotafio and grandfather's house are what Certeau calls *places* and *spaces*. For Certeau a "*place*" is a geometrical idea, which defines a field. Two things cannot exist in the same site at the same time. Accordingly he states:

The law of the 'proper' rules in the place; the elements taken into consideration are beside one another, each situated in its own 'proper' and distinct location, a location it defines. A place is thus an instantaneous configuration of positions. It implies an indication of stability.³

For the past two hundred years our ancestors have owned grandfather's land. Cousin Litsa's house is sited below Mama's house. The stability and order implied by the mutual obligation of dividing grandfather's land amongst siblings is manifested in the configuration of this *place*. Now, permanence and order are under threat until the substance of Mama's will is known.

Grandfather's house is not merely a *place* it is also a *space*. *Space*, for Certeau does not boast the static quality of *place*. Rather, "space occurs as the effect produced by the operations that orient it, situate it, temporalize it".⁴ Where *place* is static *space* is mobile: "A space exists when one takes into consideration vectors of direction, velocities and time variables."⁵ *Place* can be given a geometrical depiction within two dimensions whereas a pictogram cannot be made of *space* - even in three dimensions - as *space* inhabits time. Velocities can be captured by the moving picture image; they can be situated from different points of view, capturing to some extent what Maurice Merleau-Ponty, termed "anthropological space". However, time active on a vertical axis, where past, present and future co-exist simultaneously cannot be pictorially represented. Thus Certeau concludes that "space is existential" and "existence is spatial".⁶

This experience is a relation to the world; in dreams and in perception, and because it probably precedes their differentiation, it expresses "the same essential structure of our being as a being situated in relationship to a milieu" - being situated by a desire, indissociable from a "direction of existence" and in implanted in the space of a landscape.⁷

Grandfather's house was such a *space* as Certeau describes. Once, it was a harbour, a sanctuary from troubles, a haven from the bitterness and strife in the outer community. In Greek village life the family is the principal and irreducible group of the society. The house is the physical structure, which embodies the values of the village culture. In Certeau's terms, it is a *space* rather than a *place*. In demotic Greek, the word for family and the word for house - σπιτι (spiti) are often used interchangeably. As well, the word for family derives from οικος which in the Katharévousa, the Greek of the church and the legal profession, signifies house. It combines with γενεα - referring to the stock deriving from common origins - to form οικογενεα, signifying family.⁸ The identity of the family is indivisibly linked to the physical structure of the house, which is more than a mere status symbol. Attack against any part of a property is always seen as more than an assault against *place*, as the very stones of a villager's house and the vines of his land embody his "direction of existence...implanted in the space of a landscape".⁹

Here the division between house and blood relations needs to be emphasised. The burdens of village life mean that the unyielding bonds in the society are among those that live in the same house. From the moment of the birth of the first child a married couple is committed to prioritising the interests of their σπιτι (spiti) ahead of any demands from their respective families of origin. However, once the needs of the σπιτι have been provided for, the obligation to respond to calls for help from kindred is still binding. Where the assistance sought from family might conflict with self-interest - self-interest is always granted primacy and no one is thought the worse for that. Thus, a pragmatic solution for life is agreed upon - in a milieu where resources are few and where government social security is a recent innovation.

In January 2000, Cousin Litsa wrote to me about grandfather's house:

The most serious thing I have to tell you is that your sister and your mother have given Theo - your sister's husband - power of attorney over all their properties. We intercepted the agent that Theo had organised to undertake the sale of grandfather's house in the village. In the condition that your mother is in, I can only wonder at what sort of public notary granted your brother-in-law power of attorney! Obviously, it was bullying of this type, which led to your mother's stroke. Your mother is bedridden, cannot go to the toilet, cannot speak and has difficulty recognising people. I am sorry to sadden you with this news. From what I can remember your mother willed grandfather's house jointly to you and your sister. I urge you to discuss this with a lawyer. Please remember that on this island you will always have relatives that love you and who will welcome you with open arms any time that you wish to holiday here.

With much love,
Cousin Litsa

In August 2000, Cousin Litsa and her family stayed in the village and fought the fires that raged through the terrain. As a consequence, grandfather's house was saved as it bordered Cousin Litsa's. One third of the island was scorched. By January 2001 things are desperate and I have had to borrow money to travel to Greece.

In Greece, my sister struggles with me when I try to raise the shutters that she keeps drawn day and night, while my niece runs naked through darkened rooms. After Mama's death, my sister, who is on the verge of a nervous collapse, moved back to the island. She and her daughter have no money for food so they live off me. They are in hiding from Theo – my sister's husband. If Mama's will is not opened within six months – relatives can lay claim to the estate. Assets need to be realised for cash and the family wants my sister and niece taken out of Greece. Theo must not be allowed to exert any further influence over family property. It falls to me to raise the money to pay off Theo and to get my sister and her child out of the country.

Cousin Giorgo, who is Cousin Litsa's brother-in-law, will undertake the custody case and the issue of a passport for my niece. He wants me to take my sister's testimony as to the violence and abuses meted out to her by her husband and deliver it to him promptly. Cousin Giorgo will then transcribe it into a statement for the court. I do not like him but we agree as to what sum I will pay him. If I choose another lawyer I risk the enmity of the family. His wife Cousin Georgia is an accountant within the tax office. Grandfather's house has been jointly willed to my sister and I. However, the estate is a mess; obtaining the necessary tax clearance to sell without Cousin Georgia's intervention could take years. Fortunately, I have found Kyrie Mitsakis, a fellow villager, who wishes to buy grandfather's house for his son. The family has agreed, albeit reluctantly that the sale must proceed. Cousin Litsa has been extraordinarily helpful in all sorts of ways. From the moment of the fires her business has been booming - she sells insurance on the island. Married to an army Colonel, Cousin Litsa can charm anyone for anything.

Tours and Maps

Certeau concerns himself with practises organising space rather than the codes of the spatial order, thus he draws a bipolar distinction between "maps" and "tours" (tours are also called "itineraries"). Whether oral or written, Certeau views narrative descriptions of places as belonging to two categories: those that "map" the space and those that "tour" the space. Kyrie Mitsakis, the buyer for grandfather's house and I are trying to organise the space he is about to purchase.

It has been a while since Kyrie Mitsakis has visited grandfather's house so we decipher the space in our conversation.

"The kitchen upstairs is above the downstairs kitchen."

"The main bedroom is to the right of the entrance."

"The access way to the downstairs apartment is down the left hand side of the house."

According to Certeau, statements such as the above "map" the space. They involve "seeing", what Certeau calls "the knowledge of an order of places".¹⁰ These descriptions are tableau-like and static, arranged around the idea of a map "a plane projection totalising observations."¹¹ On the other hand, Certeau sees anthropological space as belonging to descriptions of the "tour" or "itinerary" type – descriptions that involve action and movement. For example, Kyrie Mitsakis tells me:

"If you keep descending down the access way you will come to the patch of ground where we used to tramp the vines for your grandfather."

"By circling the house you'll come to the shared irrigation channel that waters the fields."

These statements belong to the "tour" type, as they involve action within the space described. Such action inhabits the place and transforms it. Taking the pen from behind his ear, Kyrie Mitsakis pencils me a plan on a paper napkin. His map owes little to Euclidean geometry or to scientific method. He draws footprints round the outline of grandfather's house and every so often he rules a line, scribbling some words or an illustration between the footprints. Here a wine vat, there a chicken run, then arrows leading from the irrigation channels to the fields below, which I think is meant to indicate communal access, next there is a outline for the storage the farm tools, and after that a place to tie the goat where she can graze. Kyrie Mitsakis is drawing what he wants to buy for his son - the self-sufficiency of a traditional way of life. Once the sale goes through, Kyrie and Kyria Mitsakis, their son and their grandchildren will live in the same community and be bound by the same values. The villager is not just buying a place: he is securing the future.

For Certeau, the evolution of contemporary scientific discourse has meant "the map has slowly disengaged itself from the itineraries that were the condition of its possibility".¹² He laments its creation, alluding to the map as "a totalising stage on

which elements of diverse origin are brought together to form the tableau of a “state of geographical knowledge.”¹³ The contemporary map “pushes away into its prehistory or into its posterity, as if into the wings, the operations of which it is the result or the necessary condition.”¹⁴ Only in stories about space in everyday culture does Certeau see this process as being inverted. Stories talk about the *practise* of place; they mingle elements that have been disassociated from modern maps, which are now abridged to form “proper places in which to *exhibit the products* of knowledge, form tables of legible results.”¹⁵ In modern times, tours of space are encrypted in storytelling. Now, only stories enunciate “tours in places that, from the ancient cosmos to contemporary public housing developments are all forms of an imposed order.”¹⁶

Cousin Litsa rings me to tell me that the notary requires a proper survey done of grandfather’s house and land. Modernity has also come to Greece, which is now part of the European Union, making titles, and surveyors’ maps a necessity. A sale can only be processed legally if I provide the “map” of what my sister and I are selling. I promptly arrange that the money required for the survey be sent to Cousin Litsa. Thankfully, she has offered to organise the survey for me. I have my hands full with my niece and my sister. Kyrie Mitsakis has inspected grandfather’s house. My sister too, has been questioned closely about the traditional boundaries and Kyrie Mitsakis is very happy with what she has told him.

Marking out Boundaries

Miraculously, we have managed to arrive at the Public Notary’s office where the Mitsakis family are waiting to sign the sale documents. Until the sale was legally authorised, my sister and I agreed to refuse all offers of money. Knowing my sister’s financial situation, Kyrie Mitsakis has tried to press us many times to sign little pieces of paper in exchange for cash. By refusing to compromise, we have taken it to the wire financially but it looks like we have made it. Exhausted as I am, I find it difficult to understand the Greek of the Katharévousa. Kyrie Mitsakis also appears to sleep as the Notary’s legalese drones on interminably. However, once the survey is on display, he and his son leap forward to the table. They examine it closely. Regrettably, Cousin Litsa has been unable to get the survey to the Notary before today. I have apologised to Kyrie Mitsakis many times. Breathing heavily, leaning on the notary’s desk, Kyrie Mitsakis grabs the telephone and rings my cousin. They disagree violently. All hell breaks loose. Once he starts yelling Kyrie Mitsakis is evicted from the Notary’s office. In the heat of the moment, his son has already stormed away. I pull my sister after the family. The sale is off and I do not understand why. My sister is in la-la land so she is not going to help me.

There is no Titles Office in Greece. Titles incorporating “maps” of land recording boundaries are the innovations of modernity. Rarely, have villages undertaken the ruinous expense of paying surveyors to map the land so as to establish an Index of Landholdings. Furthermore, to have legal standing the Ministry of Agriculture in Athens and the local Public Records Office must jointly ratify such an Index. Traditionally, village land was transferred or owned by Contracts (Συμβολαιο) or deeds, which establish ownership in the following terms:

“Litsa Papas owns 20 stremata¹⁷ which is bordered on the left by the vineyards of Manolis Mitsakis, the right boundary is with the fields of Elias Rethimnon beginning below the stone wall.”

Allocating land by boundaries rather than by the invariable extent of proper “maps” does not take into account the fragmentation of the land. Elias may have sold his land or may have shared it amongst his children. A potential bridegroom may have demanded that land as part of a marriage settlement (although dowries are officially outlawed they are still informally organized). Consequently, if the topography of the right boundary is in question, the Contract may prove to be a singularly inadequate document for settling the dispute. In turn, this leads to Greek law determining title to land chiefly on the basis of the testimony of witnesses. For a court adjudicating such a quarrel, documentary evidence is a secondary consideration.

Thus the bench does not demand written proof; rather it seeks the vindication of personal memory and subjective witness. To elicit these stories the judiciary asks questions such as: “Who pruned the vines five years ago?” “What do you remember father saying about this land?” Who paid you to construct these steps? To which witnesses will reply:

“My father was called by Elia’s father to come to this field to tramp the grapes after harvest. He did this together with Elia’s father, as long he was fit to work. I remember this clearly because our house always had bottles of wine to serve - wine made from the harvest of Elia’s father, until my father could no longer walk. This field belongs unquestionably to Elias.”

Another witness will testify as follows:

“I built the steps for the widow Maria – god rest her soul. The widow paid me and supervised the construction. I never took a cent from anyone else. Because the access wasn’t theirs, her tight-fisted neighbours never outlaid a penny for the building work.”

As a result, the court judgement regarding the delimitation of boundaries is arrived through the stories that are told about the land. Within the Greek legal

system, to quote Certeau, stories “have the function of *spatial legislation* since they determine rights and divide up lands by “acts” or discourses about actions (planting a tree, maintaining a dung heap, etc)”.¹⁸ For Certeau, stories found spaces and the absence of story chronicles the “loss of space”.¹⁹

Creating a Theatre of Actions

Desperation means I must move quickly. It has taken too long for me to catch on. Cousin Litsa has forged the survey. She has annexed all the land surrounding grandfather’s house signifying it as part of her property on the survey. Her house sits below grandfather’s house, which means that grandfather’s house has been rebuilt to its boundaries. This is illegal. The house that Mama rebuilt cannot be sold – no one will buy a property built on illegitimate borders. As the previous notary was in collusion with the family I have transferred the sale and the settlement of the estate to another official. Cousin Litsa is refusing to disclose her deeds of title. My deeds show that I own the land surrounding grandfather’s house. I refuse to sign over the ownership of the land to Cousin Litsa, as it will render the inheritance worthless. Cousin Giorgio, the lawyer who is undertaking the custody case, is also acting for Cousin Litsa, hence he betrays me - in any case - Cousin Litsa is his sister-in law. “Your wife and child have fallen captive to the malevolent influence of her sister!” Cousin Giorgio writes to Theo, my sister’s husband, disclosing my sister’s whereabouts and begging him to come quickly. While I live in fear of Theo’s violence, at this moment Cousin Giorgio sees him as an ally with whom he can negotiate. After all, Theo loves capital. Mutual self-interest has formed new alliances. I have been cut adrift. To a man, the family have withdrawn their support and there is no money. A new story is being fashioned.

For Certeau a story is a foundation – “it opens up a legitimate theatre for practical actions”.²⁰ The act of narration “continues to develop where frontiers with space abroad are concerned. Fragmented and disseminated, it is continually concerned with marking out boundaries.”²¹

Frontiers and Bridges

A “dynamic partitioning of space” is encoded in the intensity of the struggle for the land surrounding grandfather’s house land.²² For Certeau the essential narrative elements in this division are the “frontier” and the “bridge”. Under Mama’s stewardship the frontier between grandfather’s house and Cousin Litsa’s home was a fluid thing. From time to time, Cousin Litsa and the Colonel would encroach on Mama’s land. Whereupon my sister would walk down the access way and pull out their makeshift fence, once more creating open land. Kinship allowed

the flux of borders. Although each house would intermittently try and take unfair advantage, ultimately, the two houses were content to be defined by their interaction.

According to Certeau, the question of ownership is the abstract and practical problem of the frontier.

The river, wall or tree *makes* a frontier. It does not have the character of a nowhere that cartographical representation ultimately presupposes. It has a mediating role. So does the story that gives it voice: “Stop,” says the forest the wolf comes out of. “Stop,” says the river, revealing its crocodile. But this actor, by virtue of the fact he is the mouthpiece of the limit, creates communication as well as separation: more than that, he establishes a border by saying what crosses it, having come from the other side. He articulates it. He is also a passing through or over. In the story, the frontier functions as a third element.²³

Cousin Litsa and the Colonel do not want to share their frontier with Kyrie Mitsakis and family. Firstly, the family always had a certain status in the village – as reflected by Cousin Litsa’s marriage to a Colonel. Naturally, they are both enthusiastic right-wingers with aspirations to the *haute* bourgeois. Kyrie Mitsakis and sons are semi-literate peasants who have always been socially inferior to our familial house. They are staunch left-wingers. As grandfather’s house is sited on the high side, above Cousin Litsa’s home, the rather bovine Mitsakis clan will be able to look down upon the Colonel’s family. Resulting, in what Certeau sees as the paradox of the frontier;

created by contacts, the points of differentiation between two bodies are also their common points. Conjunction and disjunction are inseparable in them. Of two bodies in contact, which is the one that possesses the frontier that distinguishes them? Neither. Does that amount to saying: no-one?²⁴

Mama was “aberrant” but not “other”. The Mitsakis tribe is the embodiment of the “other”. Therefore, for the Colonel and Cousin Litsa, establishing their “exteriority” is the very essence of the matter. They must possess their “frontier”. Then there is the issue of the access way. Mama’s house contains two separate apartments: the upstairs apartment gains entrance from the street. The downstairs apartment and the house garden are accessed from the side lane - the very same side lane from which Cousin Litsa gains access to her house and garden. As a result, the side lane acts as a “bridge” between the two houses. Certeau allots this “bridge” a unique role:

The *bridge* is ambiguous everywhere: it alternately welds together and opposes insularities. It distinguishes them and threatens them. It liberates from enclosure and destroys autonomy.²⁵

According to the land survey, the Colonel and Cousin Litsa own the “bridge”, giving them the power to withhold right of way. They see the bridge the way that Certeau sees it - as a “transgression of the limit” representing the “betrayal of an order”.²⁶

Furthermore, the ambitions of the house of Mitsakis are indisputably dynastic. Their children and their grandchildren will occupy grandfather’s house. Cousin Litsa’s and the Colonel’s ambitions are similarly dynastic; they want grandfather’s house to augment their estate. Their children will be educated and will abandon village life, returning only to stay in grandfather’s house for the summer. Should my sister and I retain ownership of the house - the Colonel and my cousin know the house will remain uninhabited. (Hence the engineering of Theo’s reappearance - should my sister reconcile with her husband she will leave the island). Slowly, the dwelling will go to ruin. Encroachments of the house and land will not be fought off. Doors will be forced open and my Cousin and the Colonel will store their goods in grandfather’s house. In time, they may even go as far as forging receipts indicating they have contributed to its maintenance.

Eventually, the usurpers may even raise the matter in court, citing the Law of Possession (Νομος Κατοχής), which was passed in 1946. This law declares, that if a man has used the land, which is not his, for a period of ten years and there has been no complaint against him, then he can be awarded possession. Ownership of Greek land is always fluctuating, resulting in a state of affairs the legal system is willing to accommodate. Like the actors in Certeau’s story, Greek law relies on a “mouthpiece for the limit” an actor willing to articulate, “Stop!”. In the absence of such an actor, having stripped grandfather’s house of borders, my Cousin Litsa and the Colonel will make my sister and I some pitiful offer, citing the ridiculousness of selling an illegally built house. They will write to us, “In any case, given the state of ruin of your house, who else would buy it? Rats have gnawed through the roof timbers and the water has been cut off as the pipes have burst downstairs. At any rate it is common knowledge that your Mama (god rest her soul) rebuilt grandfather’s house illegally to its borders...”

Delinquencies?

A portrait of Theo eludes the language of the twentieth-century. My brother-in-law is a Dostoyevskian character. Theo is a braggart and egoist, a penitent and a sinner, violent yet self-sacrificing. Generous and humane to the afflicted, liar and cheat to the unsuspecting, sustained yet betrayed by his passion for money. Victim to his impulses yet incapable of premeditated cruelty, cunning and stupid, Theo is now taking care of business. At least Kyrie Mitsakis is relieved; he has been ill at ease trading with women. In the short term, the family’s scheme has proved to be both

subtle and astute. I was anticipating broken bones and bloodstains for my sister. However, within days of his coming my sister and Theo are back living together and she is revived and glowing. They are planning to augment the family by buying a parrot and my niece is being cared for. Besides, Theo has arrived with money relieving me of the burden of their upkeep – for that at least I am grateful. Cousin Giorgio has invited my sister and Theo to a meeting. There, they will discuss a settlement regarding grandfather's house. Seeing that I have not been asked to attend, I will not be going with them.

For all intents and purposes, in this quarrel I am a widow. Although I am married to an Australian, (whom they refer to as "the Englishman"), he has not got the language, spoken or cultural to negotiate. Widows are treacherous and disruptive incarnations of the darker powers of feminine nature. They are not contained within the bonds of marriage yet they are sexualised. Marriage restrains and defeats those elements in a woman's nature, which threaten society. Once a quarrel involves property or the material aspects and self-interest of the house, it becomes part of the man's world. A quarrel with a woman - even a widow who has no one else to defend her interest, can only be seen as conditioned by her feminine irrationality. The Colonel and Cousin Giorgio are the antagonists. If I fight them they will treat me with the brutality owing to a male rival and the contempt due to an irrational woman. Cousin Maria and Cousin Litsa, Cousin Kiki and Aunty Maria et al, will fight the territory assigned to women – they will be besmirch my honour and engage in tale telling about my moral reputation, alluding to infidelity, unchastity and probable drug taking.

Theo and my sister return from the meeting, swearing fidelity to my cause. Cousin Giorgio has offered them the same amount of money as Kyrie Mitsakis has offered for their share of grandfather's house. All they have to do is sell their share and effectively the Colonel and Cousin Litsa will gain ownership - for half of what the house is worth. It is a cash offer, so Theo and my sister will not be out of pocket. As for my share, Cousin Giorgio will tie me up endlessly through the courts and eventually I will have to leave the country. Defending the case will cost me more than my half is worth. Being a lawyer, more often than not, Cousin Giorgio knows that expedience can breach fidelity. Two days later he and the Colonel escalate the assault. Serving my sister and I with papers, the Colonel and Cousin Litsa launch a lawsuit apropos the borders of grandfather's house. No one will buy a house if its borders are contingent on the outcome of a court case. Court costs alone could be ruinous, but if the case goes undefended the court awards ownership to the plaintiff. Once the borders are stripped away legally, grandfather's house will be deemed unlawfully built and as a consequence forever unsellable. Thank God my sister is happy – except Theo is fast running out of

capital. The family are counting on the fact that she will sign for easy cash – mostly because of Theo's influence. Game, set and match to – the Colonel, Cousin Giorgo and Cousin Litsa et al...

Beginning with a quotation about modern Greece, Certeau's chapter on spatial stories is littered with references to ancient Greece and Greeks. "What a map cuts up, the story cuts across. In Greek narration is called 'diegesis': it establishes and itinerary (it 'guides') and it passes through ('it transgresses')." ²⁷ Stories are not maps distributing divisions, composing *places*. For Certeau stories are about movement, about *spaces* wherein "Boundaries are transportable limits and transportations of limits, they are also *metaphorai*." ²⁸ Ostensibly, the story of the partition of my patrimony is a story about maps, limits and boundaries. But my patrimony is more than that; I am linked across two *places* Australia and Greece. My *space* embraces two continents. My movement across these continents reflects in microcosm, the upheaval that the shifting boundaries of modernity have brought about to a traditional way of life. As a consequence, for Certeau, my story becomes "delinquent":

If the delinquent exists only by displacing itself, if its specific mark is to live not on the margins but in the interstices of the codes that it undoes and displaces, if it is characterised by the privilege of the *tour* above the *state*, then the story is delinquent. ²⁹

The dicta of village life as lived by my parents were derived from a theocratic society. Such an existence had many failings, but when it was part of a living tradition it conferred dignity and meaning to rural lives. Increasingly, this way of life has been cut adrift from the cosmology that created it. For example, as per the requirements of being part of the European Union, sometime ago the Greek government proposed that "religion" be removed as a category from all Greek ID cards. Almost immediately the Orthodox Church warned that if the government persisted with this course of action it would direct its congregation to vote them out of office (98% of the population is baptised in the Orthodox faith). Yet, preserving the traditional way of life without understanding can turn dangerous. It can become fundamentalist, lead to inflexibility and barbarism due a lack of inner questioning and illumination. On the other hand, such a way of life can easily succumb an opposing system with a more readily comprehensible rationale. ³⁰

Symbolic patterns of life dying, ways of feasting, rejoicing, and mourning are being lost and with them their stories. As customs are abandoned due to their lack of meaning, Certeau urges that new stories are needed.

...where stories are disappearing (or else being reduced to museographical object), there is a loss: deprived of narrations (as one sees it happen in both the

city and the countryside), the group or the individual regresses toward the disquieting, fatalistic experience of a formless, indistinct and nocturnal totality.

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The gods are abandoning the Greek countryside, leading to the quest for progress, urbanisation and material well-being at all costs, which is supported by an equally limited, albeit logical way of thinking. Under the guise of globalisation, those moving statuettes, invented by Daedulus, those clever Greek *xoana*, whom Certeau says “mark out limits only by moving themselves (and the limits)”, are forming new geopolitical borders, in which the Greeks, like many others, are struggling to find “a direction of existence ... implanted in the space of a landscape”.³²

Epilogue

My sister and I sold the house to Kyrie Mitsakis and his son and I took my fair share of the capital. For at least one more generation, traditional life has been secured for the Mitsakis clan. In the short term, the avarice of the Colonel and Cousin Litsa has at least been curbed, if not altogether halted. Theo and my sister ran through her money before the year was out. My heroic myth of rescue, predicated on sisterly devotion was founded by a *xoana*. Thus, my story moved to concern itself with the vigorous pursuit of my self-interest. It was an epic struggle. Given the clout and the connivances of the family, the battle to sell grandfather’s house was colossal! There were new treacheries, new allegiances, new strategies, and new heroes and villains. But that’s another story...

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- ¹ Michel de Certeau, *The Practise of Everyday Life* (translated by Steven Randall: Berkeley University of California Press, 1988), 115.
- ² Certeau, 115.
- ³ Certeau, 117.
- ⁴ Certeau, 117.
- ⁵ Certeau, 117.
- ⁶ Certeau, 117.
- ⁷ Certeau, 117.
- ⁸ Juliet du Boulay, *Portrait of a Greek Mountain Village* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), 18.
- ⁹ Certeau, 117.
- ¹⁰ Certeau, 119.
- ¹¹ Certeau, 119.
- ¹² Certeau, 120.
- ¹³ Certeau, 121.
- ¹⁴ Certeau, 121.
- ¹⁵ Certeau, 121.
- ¹⁶ Certeau, 122.
- ¹⁷ Strémma (plural - strémmata) is a traditional measure of land. One strémma = 0.2471 acres.
- ¹⁸ Certeau, 122.
- ¹⁹ Certeau, 123.
- ²⁰ Certeau, 125.
- ²¹ Certeau, 125.
- ²² Certeau, 123.
- ²³ Certeau, 127.
- ²⁴ Certeau, 127.
- ²⁵ Certeau, 128.
- ²⁶ Certeau, 128.
- ²⁷ Certeau, 129.
- ²⁸ Certeau, 129.
- ²⁹ Certeau, 130.
- ³⁰ Boulay, 257.
- ³¹ Certeau, 123.
- ³² Certeau, 117.